

The Statue

The Statue

Cork's Monument to Father Mathew,
The Apostle of Temperance

Antóin O'Callaghan



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Foreword

This year we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the unveiling of one of Cork's best-known and best-loved landmarks, the statue of Fr Mathew on St Patrick's Street.

In thinking of this public monument, two things come immediately to mind: when Corkonians speak of 'The Statue' they mean only one, this fine sculpture. When it was suggested, some years ago, that the City fathers might find a better location for it, there was an outcry and the streetscape of the northern end of St Patrick Street was re-designed to leave Fr Mathew *in situ*, where the citizens believed he belonged.

The man himself, Fr Theobald Mathew, is well remembered, and indeed still loved, by the people of Cork. The 'Apostle of Temperance',

as he was known, came to the city from his native Tipperary as a young Capuchin priest, and became one of the most influential figures in the social life of Cork in the first half of the nineteenth century, gaining national and international recognition during the temperance crusade of the late 1830s and 1840s. He was also loved in Cork for his efforts to alleviate distress during the cholera epidemic of 1832 and the Great Famine from 1845 to 1850. One of his many legacies was the purchase of the botanic gardens



Cllr Mary Shields
Lord Mayor of Cork

in Ballyphehane and the establishment of St Joseph's cemetery on that site, a cemetery still in the care of Cork City Council.

Antóin O'Callaghan, the renowned historian, has, among other works, published an account of the Mayors and Lord Mayors of our city, from the earliest times. He is also, of course, the author of the standard work on Cork's main thoroughfare, St Patrick's Street, the street which has 'The Statue' as one of its main features. I congratulate Antóin for this very welcome, informative and readable book, and congratulate Cork City Libraries for publishing it.

Cllr Mary Shields
Lord Mayor of Cork

Preface

Cork City Libraries are delighted to publish *The Statue: Cork's monument to Fr Mathew, the Apostle of Temperance*. Antóin O'Callaghan, conscious that the 150th anniversary of the erection of the Fr Mathew Statue should not go unmarked, suggested that the story would be of wide public interest, and we were very happy to agree. Over recent years we have published a selection of books of Cork interest in this Occasional Series, including Thomas McCarthy's *Rising from the ashes: the burning of Cork's Carnegie Library and the rebuilding of its collections* and James P. McCarthy's *Bishopstown House: a summer residence for the Bishops of Cork and Ross*.

The Statue: Cork's monument to Fr Mathew, the Apostle of Temperance is in three main parts. Chapters 1 and 2 are biographical, recounting Fr Mathew's early life and ordination as a priest, and his time in Cork, particularly his spectacularly successful temperance campaign, but also covering the Famine era, the difficulties with his personal finances, and the little-known story of how he almost became a bishop.

Chapter 3 is the story of the commissioning and erection of the statue, which was unveiled in October 1864, almost eight years after his death. This chapter is a detailed account of who first proposed a monument to the dead priest, how the money was gathered, the involvement of two eminent 19th century Irish sculptors, Hogan and Foley, and the selection of such a prominent location for the statue.

The final chapter, quite different in character to the others, deals with what the Statue means now to the city and its people, and recounts the memories, observations and responses of eighteen people from a variety of backgrounds. This is just a selection from the much more extensive archive gathered by Antóin O'Callaghan, which will be available in full on www.corkpastandpresent.ie

Acknowledgements

This work might never have seen the light of day were it not for the encouragement of my good friend and fellow enthusiast Pat Poland. Over refreshments at his house in March of this year, while discussing Fr Mathew, the Statue and some aspects of the project to erect it that I had found while researching the Bridges of Cork; when I suggested that it was a shame that nothing was planned for the anniversary of the unveiling of the Statue and that it merited a book, he immediately encouraged me to undertake the endeavour. His enthusiasm for the work and continued advice and encouragement are much appreciated. I would also like to thank a number of my colleagues in RTE that unsuspectingly were subjected to an unscientific survey enquiring what the Statue meant to them. Naoimh Reilly, Aoife O'Callaghan, Paul O'Flynn, John Lynch, Niall O'Sullivan, Colm Crowley, Jennie O'Sullivan, Louise Hynes, Brian O'Dwyer and Rory Cobbe, without knowing it, helped to focus my thoughts as I researched and wrote. I want to thank them for their continued interest and support once they knew what I was up to.

I was also greatly encouraged by friends and fellow writers in the historical circle of which I am privileged to be a part of: Ronnie Herlihy, Tom Spalding, Dan Breen, Fireman Pat and Dr Dónal Ó Drisceoil are a fantastic bunch that are always full of enthusiasm and ready to offer help and advice, of which I have been a regular recipient. I especially want to thank fellow Blarney Street man and historian Michael Lenihan, not just for his support and encouragement, but also for helping me with images from his private collection and allowing me to use some of them in this work.

Fr Dermot Lynch of the Capuchin Order and based at Holy Trinity (Fr Mathew's) Church in Cork was another that gave me encouragement and support. Over coffee in the priory adjacent to the church, he listened to my story and helped me to understand some of Fr

Mathew's motivations in the context of their founder St Francis. He also paved the way for me to contact the Capuchin Provincial Archivist Brian Kirby, who was also more than helpful.

I want to give a special word of thanks to those that agreed to be recorded for the final section of the book and for imparting their thoughts on the Statue. Also to a number of friends and historians from UCC that offered advice and contributed to the project and whose ongoing support is much appreciated, especially Dr Diarmuid Scully and Professor Dermot Keogh. Thanks also to Dr Gillian Macintosh for advising and contributing. Their insightful analysis and personal recollections provided the best possible ending for the book.

The work would not have been possible without the support of Liam Ronayne and the Cork City Library. Liam was immediately full of encouragement once I suggested the project to him and it is only through Liam that publication was possible. I also want to thank Kieran Burke, John Mullins, and Stephen Leach for reading the text and for the layout of the book.

Finally, I have to thank the love of life, my wife Sandra, for again putting up with relentless historical conversations — this time about Fr Mathew — while writing this book. It was only with her enthusiasm and support, as well as her designing of the covers, that the project was completed. Thanks also to my children Lorna and Brenton and their other halves, Sean and Evanna, for their support.

Antóin O'Callaghan



Father Mathew statue, pre 1898. Courtesy of Michael Lenihan

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An Introduction

Among the actors prominent in the narrative of early to mid-nineteenth century Irish history, two names stand out for the missions that they undertook, the means whereby they pursued their goals, the numbers of followers that they attained and the legacies that they bequeathed to subsequent generations. From early in his career as a barrister, to his organising of the Catholic constituency and his election as a Catholic MP for Clare during the 1820s, the achievement of Catholic Emancipation in 1829, the reform measures of the 1830s and finally his leadership of the Repeal Movement, Daniel O’Connell was a colossus until his death in 1847. To the Irish Catholics of these decades he was the Liberator and through his achievements, subsequent generations had the freedom to express their religion and pursue their ambitions at the highest level of British and Irish politics. Contemporaneous with much of Daniel O’Connell’s career, the Capuchin priest Fr Theobald Mathew was the other stand-out name of the period. Following his ordination and appointment to the little chapel at Blackamoor Lane in Cork city, Fr Mathew worked tirelessly for the betterment of the living conditions of the poor in the city, provided a cemetery where the poor could bury their dead without interference, undertook to build a new church for the Capuchins serving in Cork, led a national and international temperance campaign that changed the lives of millions throughout the country, battled throughout the famine to aid the destitute and dying while still promoting temperance, before finally, exhausted and broken in health, he died in December 1856. The vast majority throughout the country saw Fr Mathew as the Apostle of Temperance. There was also, however, a number who vehemently opposed this mission, among them some of the leading Episcopal authorities, from whom he earned the dubious title of the

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Daniel O'Connell, the Liberator

Vagabond Friar. In Dublin, O'Connell and Mathew are memorialised on the capitol's main street, named in honour of the Liberator, while in Cork they share the Holy Trinity Church on the quay named in honour of the Apostle of Temperance. Holy Trinity Church is that which Fr Mathew built and is also known as Fr Mathew's Memorial Church and the great stained glass window behind the main altar is in memory of Daniel O'Connell. Cork's main street, St Patrick's Street, however, remains the preserve of Fr Mathew alone, with his statue dominating the entrance to the thoroughfare from the north and which was unveiled one hundred and fifty years ago, on 10 October 1864. Since that time 'the Statue' has stood as a memorial to the man and his mission, a representation of social change that occurred consequent on this endeavour, a landmark and an embellishment on the city's hinterland as well as an icon of Cork's identity.

On the occasion of the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of its unveiling, it is 'the Statue' that forms the primary focus of this work which consists of a brief account of the life of Fr Mathew prior to his assumption of the leadership of the Temperance Crusade in 1838; a description of the decade during which he led the temperance campaign and brought millions of people into that fold, but during which also, a number of factors, including his relationship with Daniel O'Connell as well as the tragedy of the great famine, led to a decline in the movement's fortunes; a narrative of the initiative to memorialise Fr Mathew in the form of a statue on the city's main thoroughfare and finally consideration of whether the statue any longer holds any real meaning for the people of the city. Details of Fr Mathew's life and crusade that appear in the early sections of the book are sourced from a number of biographical works that appeared between the 1860s and the 1940s. As this account does not seek to evaluate or interpret these accounts however, in making use of them as sources it is necessary to acknowledge that other historians have assessed them with varying outcomes.

The corpus of works dealing with Fr Mathew is not extensive. His close supporter, John Francis Maguire, published a comprehensive biography of the Capuchin within seven years of the friar's death. This ran to a number of editions, including a people's edition which followed the serialisation of the biography in Maguire's newspaper the *Cork Examiner*. Eleven years later Sister Mary Francis Clare, the Nun of Kenmare, also published a biography and in 1890, the centenary of Fr Mathew's birth, an abridged and re-edited version of Maguire's biography was issued by Miss Rosa Mulholland and was, according to *The Spectator* 'greatly improved in the process'.¹ In the same year, Father Mathew's grand-nephew, Mr Frank J. Mathew, also published a short biography. Early in the twentieth century Seán Ua Ceallaigh wrote an Irish language biography of Fr Mathew that was

¹ *The Spectator*, 24 January 1891, p.18.

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published in 1907 and yet another English account was published by Katherine Tynan in 1908. Almost half a century would pass before further biographical works on the Apostle of Temperance appeared. The first was by Fr Patrick Rogers in 1943, followed four years later by the work of Fr Augustine, himself a Capuchin. In 1983, another family member, Moira Lysaght, a great-grandniece of Fr Mathew, wrote a short account of his life which drew extensively on the previous works.

All of these biographical works are presented without any great degree of critical evaluation of either the man himself or the movement that he led. This point is forcefully made by two studies that appeared a decade apart in 1992 and 2002. Colm Kerrigan, in his *Father Mathew and the Irish Temperance Movement: 1838–1849*, writes that Maguire was ‘reluctant to form any but the most favourable judgements’ and that Sister Mary Francis Clare’s biography was ‘more hagiographical’ than Maguire’s. He credits Frank Mathew for not being inhibited by family ties but nevertheless suggests that the work ‘falls a long way short of his declared aim’, while regarding Tynan’s book, Kerrigan says that she quoted liberally from the work of both Maguire and Frank Mathew. Finally, Kerrigan praises Fr Rogers’s biography despite its neglect of some important sources, while the work of Fr Augustine contains a vast amount of interesting information but is not ‘critical, definitive or interpretative’.² Paul A. Townend, writing in 2002, describes the lives of Fr Mathew that were published up to 1947 as ‘a number of more or less hagiographical biographies’.³

In themselves, both Colm Kerrigan’s and Paul A. Townend’s works are detailed examinations of the Temperance Crusade that Fr Mathew

² Colm Kerrigan, *Father Mathew and the Irish Temperance Movement: 1838–1849*, (Cork University Press, 1992), pp. 4-5.

³ Paul A. Townend, *Father Mathew, Temperance and Irish Identity*, (Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 2002), p.1.

led, seeking to contextualise and understand the movement and locate it in the broader canvas of its period. Other published works also deal with aspects of the movement's history, such as Hugu Kearney's 'Fr Mathew: Apostle of Modernisation' in *Studies in Irish History* presented to R. Dudley Edwards. Kearney suggests that Fr Mathew's crusade had an urban thrust, 'its emphasis upon such values as literacy, thrift, and insurance against illness and its involvement in politics in some areas link it with other movements which were attempting to cope with the new problems of a changing world'.⁴ Elizabeth Malcolm's account of Fr Mathew's endeavours in her 1986 work *Ireland Sober, Ireland Free* locates his crusade in the overall context of the history of temperance throughout the entire nineteenth century.⁵ In all of these publications however, the Statue and its erection are but footnotes to a story that ended with the death of the famous Capuchin from Tipperary. In 1986, the Australian historian Ken Inglis dealt solely with the statue in his short essay 'The Making of a Monument in Cork', published as part of a study of cultural and political links between Ireland and Australia. Apart from that piece/ however, the Statue next endured public scrutiny when, early in the twenty-first century, under plans to reconstruct St Patrick's Street by the Catalan architect Beth Gali, it was proposed that the Statue be relocated to the junction of Winthrop Street. Through a campaign orchestrated by the *Evening Echo* newspaper, however, public opinion was mobilised to leave it at its historic location and there it remains.

The role of statues in history has prompted a wide range of studies by historians, geographers and students of ritual and commemoration.

⁴ H.F. Kearney, 'Father Mathew: Apostle of Modernisation' in Art Cosgrove and Donal McCartney, (eds), *Studies in Irish History*, (University College Dublin, 1979), p. 175.

⁵ Elizabeth Malcolm, *Ireland sober, Ireland free: drink and temperance in nineteenth-century Ireland*, (Syracuse University Press, 1986).

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Among those that have influenced this study are the writings of Nuala Johnson who says that ‘memory is not simply a recollection of times past, it is also anchored in places and visualised in masonry and bronze’.⁶ In her paper on the commemoration of the 1798 rebellion in public statuary she makes the point that monuments ‘represented self-conscious attempts to solicit public participation in the politics of the day’.⁷ Yvonne Whelan gives a comprehensive account of statuary in the shaping of Dublin in her 2003 study *Reinventing Modern Dublin*. She writes that monuments played an important part in ‘the powerful role of the past in legitimating authority and forging identity’, but also acknowledges that ‘each generation weaves its world out of image and symbol’.⁸ Gillian McIntosh’s examination of Unionist culture in twentieth century Ireland provides a framework for consideration of the memorialising of an individual in the form of a statue through her account of the erection of such a monument to Edward Carson in Belfast in 1933, a monument that would ‘testify to their gratitude to all time’.⁹ Driven by political analysis primarily, all of these sentiments nevertheless can also be applied to a monument such as that to Fr Mathew, the Apostle of Temperance, which stands on Cork’s St Patrick’s Street.

It is appropriate, therefore, on the occasion of the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the unveiling of this monument, that the man, his mission, his memorial and its meaning be recorded, recognised and considered.

⁶ Nuala C. Johnson, *Mapping Monuments: the Shaping of Public Spaces and Cultural Identities*, (SAGE Publications, London, 2002).

⁷ Nuala C. Johnson, *Sculpting heroic histories: celebrating the centenary of the 1798 rebellion in Ireland*, (Blackwell Publishing on behalf of the Royal Geographical Society, 1994).

⁸ Yvonne Whelan, *Reinventing Modern Dublin: Streetscape, Iconography and the Politics of Identity*, (UCD Press, Dublin, 2003, pp. 4, 241).

⁹ Gillian McIntosh, *The Force of Culture: Unionist Identities in Twentieth-Century Ireland*, (Cork University Press, 1999), p. 43.

CHAPTER ONE

Early years

Theobald Mathew was born on 10 October 1790, at Thomastown demesne, five miles to the west of Cashel, County Tipperary, the fourth son of estate agent James Mathew and his wife Anne Whyte of Cappawhite, also in Tipperary. Originally from Wales, the Mathew family first arrived in Tipperary in the early years of the seventeenth century when Captain George Mathew, son of Edmund who was High Sheriff of Glamorgan, and his wife Elizabeth settled on lands that had been the property of the family of Elizabeth's first husband, Viscount Thurles, Thomas Butler of Ormond. Captain George and Lady Elizabeth settled at the estate near Thurles in 1620 and had three children. About the year 1660 the family acquired lands at Thomastown, which had originally been the property of the Augustinians at Athassel until the suppression of the monasteries, following which these lands were received by the Ormonds. One son of Captain George and Lady Elizabeth, Theobald, inherited the lands



Thomastown Castle, Co. Tipperary

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Ruins of Athassel Abbey, Co. Tipperary

at Thurles, while another son, George, received those at Thomastown. Thus two branches of the family were living in different parts of the county. Three generations later, in 1737, on the death of another George, the descendant who was then head of the Mathew household at Thomastown, his sole heir was his grandson, also named George, that was a mere five years of age. In the circumstances, yet another George, now head of the Thurles branch of the family, became guardian of the young heir. Tragically, not long after this, the young child was drowned in a lake, following which the properties were joined into the single ownership of George of Thurles. Although this George had one daughter named Margaret, he left the estates to a cousin known as Thomas of Annefield, who in turn left them to his son Francis. Francis had four children, one of whom was a daughter, Lady Elizabeth, and she it was that eventually inherited the Thomastown estate upon the death of Francis which fact was to be a matter of significance in the Fr Mathew story. Meantime, a relation of Thomas of Annefield called James of Two Mile Borris, came to live on the Thomastown estate and when his second wife, Anne O'Rahill, died in childbirth, the child became known as James the Orphan. James the Orphan was reared by the now aging Francis

and his unmarried daughter Lady Elizabeth. He grew up on the Thomastown estate, became the estate's agent, married a cousin by the name of Anne Whyte from nearby Cappawhite and together they had twelve children, nine boys and three girls, the fourth son of which was named Theobald, the future Fr Mathew. Lady Elizabeth had the honour of being young Theobald's Godmother.

Theobald, or Toby as he was known within family circles, had a happy childhood. When he was five years of age, the family moved into a large farmhouse at the edge of the estate called Rathcloheen. According to Fr Augustine's biography, young Toby often went back to the castle on friendly visits and he also had a great interest in the nature that was to be found all about on the estate lands. 'He often rambled beside the little stream that flowed through the demesne, sometimes laughing in the sunshine and always prattling with a sweet voice, like a happy child when playing alone'.¹⁰ John Francis Maguire describes that 'from his infancy he was the favourite child of his mother' and that 'by his mother's side he preferred passing the hours the others spent in play: and he was consequently somewhat scornfully designated "the pet" by his brothers and sisters'.¹¹ Just eight years old when the rising of 1798 took place, Fr Augustine speculates on the many stories of atrocities that young Toby may have heard about from visiting travellers and concludes that 'these narratives profoundly affected the sensitive, impressionable Toby'. Thus 'the savage vengeance that followed the collapse of the Rising, apart altogether from any other consideration, led Father Mathew in his missionary years to discourage secret societies, to dislike open revolutionary organisations'.¹²

¹⁰ Rev. Father Augustine, OFM Cap. *Footprints of Father Theobald Mathew OFM Cap., Apostle of Temperance*, (M.H. Hill and Son, Dublin, 1947), p.11.

¹¹ John Francis Maguire, *Father Mathew: A Biography*, abridged and re-edited by Rosa Mulholland, (National Temperance Education Depot, Dublin, 1890), p.1.

¹² Father Augustine, *Footprints of Father Theobald Mathew*, p.14.

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All of the biographies recount an event that happened while the family were sitting at the table. Mother, Anne, was well known for her piety and had often expressed hope that, with nine sons, at least one of them would have a vocation to the priesthood. On this particular evening, not for the first time, she expressed the view that it was unfortunate that it appeared that not one of her nine boys seemed inclined to the priesthood. It is possible that this expression resulted from her realisation that one of the older boys, Charles, had been deemed the most likely for ordination, but that possibility seemed to be diminishing. On this occasion, when she spoke her feelings aloud, a silence fell on all at the table until ten year old Toby said 'Mother, don't be uneasy. I will be a priest'. Fr Augustine says that, from that moment, 'Theobald was looked upon as dedicated and belonging to the Church' and also that 'his influence over his brothers and sisters, which had been singularly great before, was confirmed and increased'.¹³

Education and Priesthood

Thus far in his life, Theobald was educated at Thurles at a school run by a man named Flynn, where he met and became friends with Charles Bianconi, who began the famous Bianconi transport enterprise that operated for many decades during the nineteenth century. He also received tuition from a priest by the name of Denis O'Donnell, a native of Waterford. His Godmother, Lady Elizabeth, however, was anxious that he would receive the best possible education and so she arranged and paid for him to go to St Canice's Academy at Kilkenny, run by one Rev. Fr Patrick McGrath and to which institution he moved in September 1800. That he performed and achieved well at the school is evidenced in that he won prizes in Greek, Latin, classics and English history in 1805 and 1806. The following year he

¹³ Father Augustine, *Footprints of Father Theobald Mathew*, p.15.

completed his studies at Kilkenny and applied to the Archbishop of Cashel, Most Rev. Dr Brady, to be accepted into Maynooth to study for the priesthood. On 10 September 1807 he matriculated, began his first year at Maynooth and signed the Matriculation book on 6 April 1808. Sometime after this an event occurred, however, that necessitated his departure from Maynooth. Maguire simply says that 'he did not finish his scholastic career at Maynooth'. Fr Augustine recounts that he broke one of the strictest rules of the college by inviting a few favourites to his room and aggravated the offence by entertaining them to a feast. Moira Lysaght describes the event as an informal party which was discovered by the Dean because of the sounds of merriment and that Theobald was suspended while his case was considered. In the event he did not wait for the outcome and 'left quietly one morning'.¹⁴ He had not lost his vocation however and so made his way to Kilkenny where he sought the advice of two aging clerics that, according to Fr Augustine, he often saw as he walked about on the streets or prayed in a chapel there and with whom he may have had conversations. The two men were Fr Thomas Murphy and Fr William Berry, serving at a small church known as the Poor House Chapel, adjacent to the Alms House. Having spoken to the two clerics, he applied to join the Capuchin Order and was accepted by the Provincial, Very Rev. Fr John Baptist Leonard. He began his novitiate on 4 February 1810 at Church Street in Dublin and, as was the custom, took as his clerical name in the Order, Andrew. Fr Augustine quotes a document in the Capuchin archives in Rome in which he is named as P. Theobaldus Andreas Mathew. While in training he was placed under the spiritual direction of Fr Celestine Corcoran for the duration of his novitiate year. Following this he spent another year in prayer and penance, after which he took his vows. He received minor orders on 12 March 1813, was made a sub-deacon the following day, was raised to the Deaconate on 13 April

¹⁴ Moira Lysaght, *Theobald Mathew OFM Cap: The Apostle of Temperance*, (Four Courts Press, Dublin, 1983), p.16.

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and finally ordained on Holy Saturday, 17 April 1813. His ordination took place at St Andrew's Church, Townsend Street in Dublin at the hand of Most Rev. Dr Daniel Murray, Coadjutor to the Archbishop of Dublin. On the following morning he said his First Mass, following which he made a short visit to his family home at Tipperary. This, however, was not the joyous occasion that it might have been. There is no record that his parents survived to see his ordination; Fr Augustine quotes Fr James Birmingham, Parish Priest of Borrisokane as saying that he 'lost his parents at an early period of his life'. His Godmother Lady Elizabeth was there to greet him however and also to hear him preach his first sermon at the parish church of Kilfeacle, just two miles from his home at Thomastown.

Shortly after his ordination and visit home, Fr Mathew was appointed to serve alongside the two aging clerics that had advised him to pursue his vocation some years earlier in the heart of Kilkenny. Sharing with them their humble abode in an old hay-loft, the young priest soon became known throughout the diocese for his charity, his earnest manner and most significantly his mild manner in the confessional. Large crowds came to receive absolution from him, but a dark cloud loomed. At this time, there were restrictions on the duties that clergy of the Orders could perform and which were reserved to the diocesan priests. Among such was the administering of Holy Communion at Easter Time. As Fr Mathew was hearing confessions one Saturday after Easter, a priest of the diocese handed him a note and having read it Fr Mathew told those waiting to enter his confessional that they should go to another as he no longer had the power to hear their confessions. Following information received that Fr Mathew had administered Communion the previous Easter Sunday, the acting ecclesiastical authority, Dr Richard Mansfield, withdrew Fr Mathew's faculties. The Capuchin Order was informed of the situation and awaited the outcome of an investigation. In due

course all was resolved when it was ascertained that Fr Mathew was actually in Cork on the occasion and so could not have committed the offending act. His faculties were restored and an apology was forthcoming but Fr Mathew did not serve in Kilkenny again. According to Maguire 'he determined to leave Kilkenny without delay and seek some other diocese; which intention he put into immediate execution'.¹⁵ Fr Augustine on the other hand says that 'there is no evidence whatever that he determined or requested to leave the city. What evidently happened was that the Provincial, having considered the circumstances of the case, thought a change would best ease the unpleasant situation'.¹⁶ His service in Kilkenny complete, Fr Mathew was requested to go south to the city by the Lee and so in 1814 he came to the little chapel at Blackamoor Lane in the city of Cork.

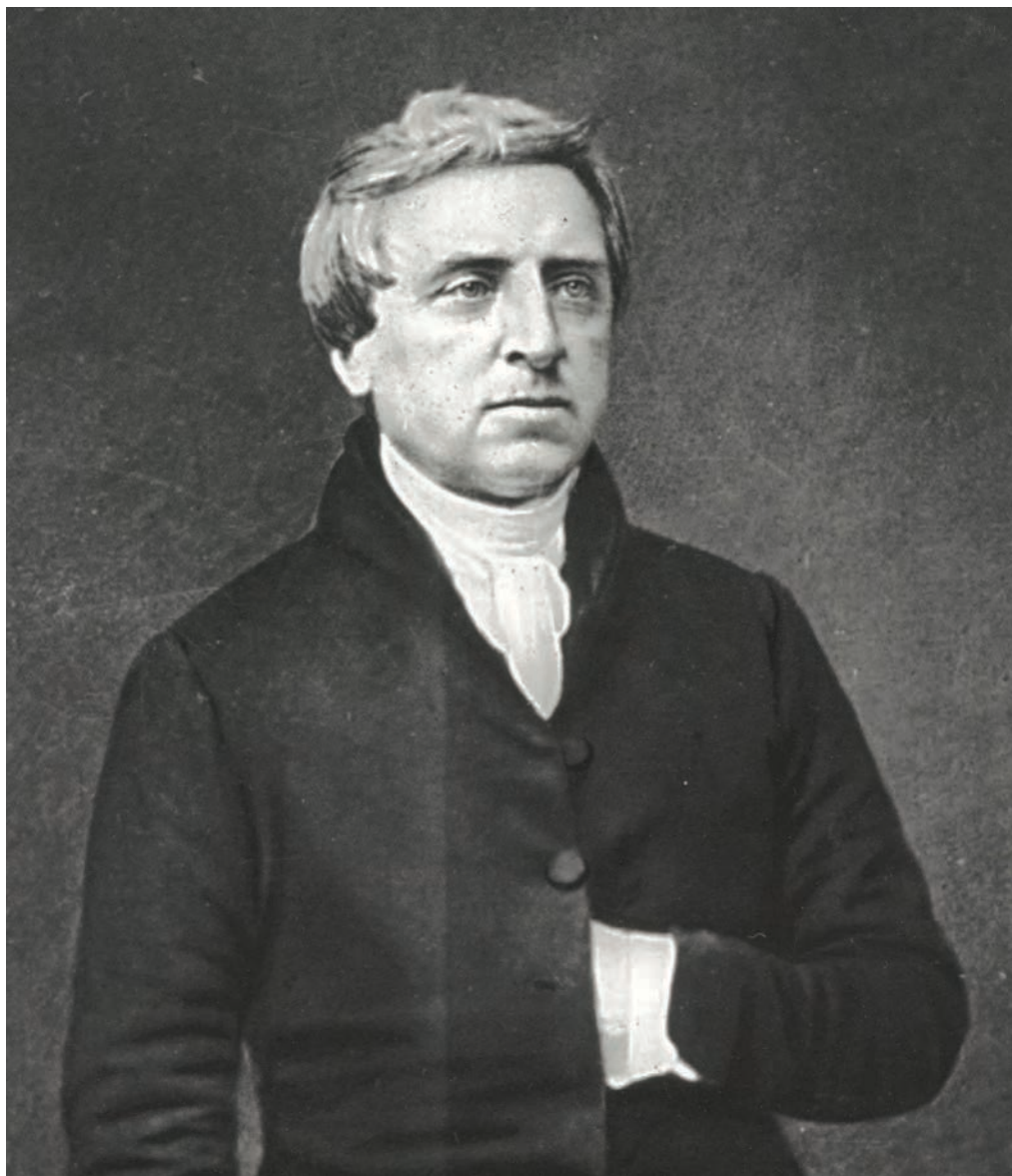
Cork

The Capuchins had come to Cork in the first half of the seventeenth century when Fathers Robert Comyns and Michael Cullinane persuaded the leaders of the Order that Cork was a place that would benefit from their mission. Having obtained the necessary permissions, they came to Cork in 1637 and set up a small home and church south of the river in a narrow laneway called Blackamoor Lane, just off where Sullivan's Quay is today. In the 1770s, Fr Arthur O'Leary, a native of West Cork who had spend many years in France, came to the city and realised that the small chapel no longer could meet the needs of the congregation that it was servicing. He therefore set about enlarging it and the resultant chapel became known as Father O'Leary's Chapel and also as the South Friary. It was still very small however, no more the thirty or so feet from front to

¹⁵ Maguire, *Father Mathew*, p. 6.

¹⁶ Father Augustine, *Footprints of Father Theobald Mathew*, p. 28.

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Photograph of Father Mathew taken by Mathew Brady, 1849
(Library of Congress)

rear, with two side galleries, behind one of which was where the clergy lived. When Fr Mathew arrived at Cork in 1814, he came to assist the serving Capuchin at the South Friary, one Fr Donovan, who was delighted to have a young priest to help him in his ministries. Fr Augustine quotes an occasion when Fr Donovan, in conversation with a lady of his acquaintance, asked her to congratulate him on now having a young priest to assist him. 'I hope Fr Donovan', she said, 'that you will be kind to him': 'kind to him? To be sure I'll be kind to him', was the older man's reply.

Fr Mathew soon settled to his duties at Cork and very quickly he gained the reputation that he had also had in Kilkenny, that of a kind, gentle and wise confessor. Fr Donovan benefitted also from his companion and once again it is Fr Augustine that recounts a story wherein a parishioner commented on how well he now looked 'since your little apostle has come to you'. It is not recorded whether this is the first time that the term apostle was used regarding Fr Mathew. Nevertheless, if accurate, it certainly was a statement with certain prophetic overtones.

Fr Mathew's workload increased significantly when, in 1816, Fr Donovan was appointed Provincial of the Capuchin Order, but to this task he faced willingly, delighted with the honour that had been conferred on his confrere. There are numerous stories of how he helped the poor in the city during these years. In 1817, for a period he made his way every morning to tend to a man who was struck with fever. In order that he would be a better confessor, he learned Irish that he may better understand those whose primary language it was. As his reputation grew, ever-increasing numbers flocked to his confessional such that he was forced to spend many hours giving absolution. Maguire says that often he would spend up to fifteen hours at a time in the box, both in the heat of summer and the cold of winter. A story is recorded that at the end of a long day, as he was

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leaving the chapel for home, four sailors came in seeking confession. Tired and hungry, Fr Mathew told them that he would hear them the next morning. As the sailors turned to leave, an old woman tugged at Fr Mathew's sleeve and said 'they may not come again sir'. Fr Mathew ran after the sailors, asked them for forgiveness and heard their confessions. Later he sought out the old woman and thanked her, saying that through her the Holy Ghost had spoken to him. According to Fr Augustine, 'it was indeed in the confessional that Father Mathew laid the foundations of his immense popularity'.¹⁷

The work which Fr Mathew undertook for the betterment of the lives of poorer people in the city took a number of forms. He believed that education could only benefit the young and so, acquiring an old store-house near to his chapel, he set up a school for girls, where they learned how to read and write and they also learned skills such as sewing from which they might possibly earn a living. By 1824, according to Fr Augustine, the school had nearly five hundred pupils, two hundred older girls in a loft upstairs and three hundred younger children in the store house below. A number of ladies of Fr Mathew's acquaintance taught at the school and from these the girls received 'lessons of piety and virtue' which 'prepared them to resist some of the worst temptations common to their condition of life. The school progressed and prospered and was ere long felt to be a blessing to the neighbourhood'.¹⁸ Fr Mathew was also instrumental in setting up a school for boys where, as well as literary skills, the boys were also trained to serve at mass and assist at devotions. He also directed the boys to help other youths less fortunate than them, many of whom spent their daily hours idle in the city. This endeavour was consolidated in 1819 when Fr Mathew formed the Josephian Society, an organisation described as similar to the present-day St Vincent de

¹⁷ Fr Augustine, *Footprints of Father Mathew*, p. 44.

¹⁸ John Francis Maguire, *Father Mathew: A Biography*, (third edition - the People's Edition, Cork, 1865), p. 8.

Paul society, in seeking to help the less well-off in society. According to Moira Lysaght, Fr Mathew's boys' school actually operated in the evenings and the pupils there were taught by the young men that were members of the Josephian Society. She also says that Fr Mathew had a dual aim: encouraging the better-off boys to help less fortunate others with their education and also getting them to visit and assist people in need, where possible in their homes.¹⁹ This they did in small groups and Fr Mathew considered the society one of his best achievements. Such was his pride in the society's members that he provided a small library of Catholic books for their use.

Fr Mathew's schools and the Josephian Society in particular were significant social initiatives in the early years of the nineteenth century in Cork and although overshadowed by his later temperance endeavours that dominate writings about him, nevertheless they are recalled in the biographies and identified as early foundations of other later initiatives that aided the poor. Maguire says that 'in establishing a school in which industrial was combined with literary training, and in forming associations at once educational and charitable, were the fruitful germs of undertakings of far greater magnitude, which were afterwards developed into widely extended and permanent usefulness'.²⁰

In February 1821, Fr Mathew's friend, adviser and confrere Fr Donovan died, an event which had a significant effect on him. He suffered from depression following the bereavement, but soon recovered through throwing himself even more into his work. Then, in June 1822, that workload increased still further when he was elected as Provincial of the Capuchin Order, to which office he was re-elected every three years over the following almost three decades. He was also helped

¹⁹ Moira Lysaght, *Theobald Mathew*, p. 21.

²⁰ John Francis Maguire, *Father Mathew: A Biography*, (People's Edition, Cork, 1865), p. 8.

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in his recovery by the arrival to stay with him of his younger brother Robert. After a short period however, Robert left for Africa to live with their brother Charles. Fr Mathew continued with his work on behalf of the Catholic poor of the city, in particular during an epidemic of cholera that broke out in the early 1820s. Inevitably this led to his officiating at many funerals, as well as offering prayers and consolation to the many bereaved families that lost loved ones in the prevailing conditions. He soon realised the difficulties that families had in burying their dead with the full rites and rituals of the Catholic faith. In order to read the proper Catholic burial service, priests were required to get the permission of the Protestant Bishop, because Catholics and Protestants largely shared the same burial grounds and furthermore they had to pay exorbitant burial fees. This requirement had become law with the enactment of the Burials Act in 1825 and unfortunately for Cork Catholics, Rev. Burrows, Protestant Dean of Cork, was disposed to see this regulation enforced. Matters came to a head on one occasion while the Catholic Dean, Fr Collins, was praying over the remains of a parishioner when a messenger arrived from Rev Burrows ordering him to desist. Dean Collins stood his ground and told the messenger to return from whence he came and to tell Rev. Burrows that he would pray to God when and where he pleased. This episode made an impression on Fr Mathew, who nevertheless realised that the only way to circumvent the regulation was for Catholics to have a burial ground wherein they would not be interfered with. His belief was that 'God's poor must be relieved of the crushing burden of burial fees and the Catholic clergy from the legal indignity cast upon them by the penal code'.²¹ In January 1830 therefore, Fr Mathew purchased a plot of ground to the south of the city that had been the Botanic Gardens belonging to the Royal Cork Institution, but which had fallen into disrepair. A month later, a large stone cross was erected in the centre of the grounds and

²¹ Fr Augustine, *Footprints of Father Mathew*, p. 78.

the plot was blessed and dedicated as St Joseph's Cemetery. Vaults could be purchased there at a cost of thirty shillings while a burial fee of half a crown was asked of those who could afford it. The poor, however, were interred there at no cost. A sexton and two grave-diggers were employed and, following the dedication ceremony, Catholics could now bury their dead without interference from the Protestant authorities. (Other denominations also could avail of the cemetery). With this project completed, Fr Mathew could now turn his thoughts to another that had been playing on his mind for a number of years. Conscious of the inadequacy of the little chapel at Blackamoor Lane for the numbers attending there, he had resolved some years earlier to replace it with a larger church as well as an adjacent friary that would be a home for himself and his confreres.

Proposals were invited for a design for the church and on 11 January 1825, 'the committee appointed by the Parish of the Holy Trinity, at a meeting held yesterday, have awarded the premium of £50 for the best plan of a church to G.R. Pain. There were four plans, two from Cork and two from Dublin'.²² Both the architect and the committee favoured a site on Sullivan's Quay, where the Fire Station was subsequently built, as the best site. Fr Mathew, however, believing that the owner was looking for too much money, opted for another site at Charlotte Quay on Morrison's Island. At this site, on 10 October 1832, Fr Mathew's birthday, the foundation stone for the new church was laid.

A number of factors occurring during the 1830s, however, dictated that the church would not be opened for worship for almost two decades. The 1832 cholera epidemic caused great hardship in the city and Fr Mathew became even more active in trying to help the destitute. The site chosen on Morrison's Island was a marshy location

²² *Cork Constitution*, (CC) 21 January 1825, quoted in T.F. McNamara, *Portrait of Cork*, p. 117

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Capuchin Church of the Holy Trinity, Cork.
Courtesy Irish Capuchin Provincial archives

so the marshland had to be drained and part of Pain's foundation design had to be changed. This entailed considerable extra cost. Fr Mathew had also personal differences with Pain, resulting in a legal battle that cost the priest three hundred pounds and finally, in 1836, George Richard Pain died. 'By 1840 more than £14,000 had been spent on the church and as all resources were exhausted, the builder, Mr Anthony, was unable to complete his contract and the work ceased'.²³

Despite his desire to see the project completed, however, his attention was now diverted to another social issue that was prominent throughout society, that of the effects that heavy consumption of alcohol was having on large numbers of people. It was in the cause of temperance that Fr Mathew now became totally immersed.

²³ T.F. McNamara, *Portrait of Cork*, p. 118

Temperance Crusade

At the start of his work on *Father Mathew, Temperance and Irish Identity*, Paul A. Townend says that ‘any understanding of the magnitude of the change wrought by the Cork Total Abstinence Association must begin by appreciating the dominant place of drinking in pre-famine Irish culture’.²⁴ ‘In both rural and urban areas in Ireland, prodigious drinking at patterns, fairs, wakes, weddings, christenings and stations was a long established custom’.²⁵ Diarmaid Ferriter describes that the situation facing Fr Mathew in his early tentative steps to address the issue of excessive alcohol consumption in society was of ‘a very definable and specific abuse’.²⁶ ‘Drinking was a social disease for poorer class Irishmen and women’.²⁷ Thus, historians are agreed that the abuse of alcohol was prevalent throughout society and further analysis shows that this contributed in many ways to the poverty and ill-health of large numbers of people. Drunkenness also was often a factor when people were brought before the courts for crimes committed. Attempting to address the situation, a variety of temperance associations had been formed in the early years of the nineteenth century. One of the earliest recorded was at Skibbereen, while another was founded at New Ross in 1829. Many that joined these societies, however, did so for only short periods of time and, furthermore, only abstained from certain forms of alcohol, while continuing to consume others. In 1836, the Dublin Total Abstinence Society was founded and in October of the following year the members held a banquet at the Rotunda in Dublin. Speaking at the

²⁴ Paul A. Townend, *Father Mathew, Temperance and Irish Identity*, p. 9.

²⁵ Paul A. Townend, *Father Mathew, Temperance and Irish Identity*, p. 10

²⁶ Diarmaid Ferriter, *A Nation of Exteremes, The Pioneers in Twentieth Century Ireland*, (Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 2008), p. 6.

²⁷ Prof. Dermot Keogh. See his contribution to the final chapter of this book.

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banquet, a Judge of the King's Bench, one Philip Cecil Crampton, declared that moderation, or the idea that one would abstain for short periods and confine consumption to limited types of alcohol, was ineffectual; in short, he advocated total abstinence. Attending the banquet and listening carefully was a Catholic ex-soldier from Cork, representing a number of groups that advocated temperance in the southern capitol. His name was James McKenna and on his return to Leaside he made contact with fellow-interested people to suggest that they should now advocate total abstinence. Those whom he contacted were the Rev Nicholas Colthurst Dunscombe, a Protestant clergyman at St Peter's in the city, Richard Dowden, a Unitarian merchant, and William Martin, a member of the Society of Friends or Quakers. These three were deeply influenced by Judge Crampton's views and set about promoting temperance with renewed vigour. There were many, however, that did not support the idea of temperance and, following the break-up of a public meeting being held by William Martin by a crowd that were anti-temperance, he was forced to bring those he was addressing back to his home on St Patrick's Street. There, he wrote a pledge which was taken by those present. It said:

I promise to abstain from all intoxicating drinks except used medicinally and by order of a medical man, and to discountenance the cause and practice of intemperance.²⁸

A movement such as that begun by a Protestant clergyman, a Unitarian merchant, and a Quaker was never going to draw large numbers to its membership however, given that over eighty per cent of the population in the city was Catholic. The organisers knew this and so they agreed that they needed a Catholic man of authority to join them in leadership and indeed to take the main lead in the endeavour. Fr Augustine quotes the mindset of William Martin. 'If

²⁸ Fr Augustine, *Footprints of Father Mathew*, p. 91.

only I could get Fr Mathew to join me, then my limping society would advance by leaps and bounds; more Catholics would be induced to join and thousands would soon be swept in on the flowing tide of the Capuchin's influence'.²⁹ Initial attempts to induce Fr Mathew to join the movement, however, were met cautiously by the Friar himself. Both James McKenna and William Martin ruthlessly pursued their quarry, however, never missing an opportunity of bringing to Fr Mathew's attention incidents where drink had caused extreme hardship to individuals and their families. Eventually Fr Mathew agreed that he would take a month to consider the matter, following which he would make his decision. Against his involvement was that he had many causes and commitments; was heavily involved in local affairs; had responsibilities in his capacity as Provincial of the Capuchins; had pastoral duties in Blackamoor Lane; had a school for both boys and girls; was responsible for the Josephian Society that he had formed; was the overseer of the burial ground that he had developed and also had undertaken to build a new church. On the other hand, in favour of involvement was his instinct that this was a divinely inspired calling. On 10 April 1838, at a meeting of William Martin's society, attended also by many others who were members of McKenna's and the Rev. Dunscombe's groups, Fr Mathew came to the podium to announce his decision.

My dear friends, I much fear that your kind partiality has made you overlook my many defects and attribute to me merits which I am very far from possessing. But if, through any humble instrumentality of mine, I can do good to my fellow-creatures and give glory to God, I feel I am bound, as a minister of the Gospel, to throw all personal considerations aside and try and give a helping hand to gentlemen who have afforded me so excellent an example.

²⁹ Fr Augustine, *Footprints of Father Mathew*, p. 91.

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Then, taking a pen in his hand he approached the table on which the new register of members of the Cork Total Abstinence Society lay, paused for a moment and was heard clearly to say 'Here goes in the Name of God'. He then signed the register: Rev Theobald Mathew O.C. Cove Street, No. 1.

In anticipation of just such a positive outcome, the temperance activists had prepared well. On the morning after the 10 April meeting, large numbers of posters and notices appeared throughout the city informing people of Fr Mathew's decision and inviting them to join the movement. Initially meetings were held in the little chapel, but such were the numbers attending that soon this proved too small. Fortunately, nearby was a premises known as the Horse Bazaar which could cater for considerably larger numbers. It was owned by Mrs O'Connor and, when Fr Mathew asked if his temperance gatherings could be held there, she agreed with his request. Between April and June, according to Maguire, twenty-five thousand people joined the movement and took the pledge to abstain completely from alcohol. This statistic, however, brings to attention an important point in the history of Fr Mathew's temperance movement. Maguire's figure of twenty-five thousand comes from an account by activist and secretary to the Association, James McKenna. Historical consideration however shows this to be an exaggerated figure. Fr Augustine, citing a letter from McKenna to the London Temperance Intelligencer, says the numbers recorded cannot be accepted and that the figure was nearer five thousand. Both Colm Kerrigan and Paul A. Townend address the issue of exaggerated figures, Townend saying that between March and May 1839 less than seventy people per week joined. This however changed after May when many more people began coming into the city from surrounding areas to take the pledge and numbers 'expanded at an ever-increasing rate'.³⁰ Thus, what can be said with accuracy is that from small beginnings

³⁰ Paul A. Townend, *Father Mathew, Temperance and Irish Identity*, p. 29.



Fr Mathew
Temperance Medal.
Courtesy Clare Museum

TEMPERANCE CRUSADE

in the city, the movement continued to expand and, as 1838 passed and 1839 beckoned, momentum increased and the rate of membership increased correspondingly. As those that joined returned from whence they came, armed with their temperance medal – literally a badge of honour – others were

encouraged to follow their example and made the pilgrimage to Cork to join also. Following an invite to visit Belfast, Fr Mathew politely declined, writing:

It would afford me great pleasure to accept the invitation of the committee of the Belfast Total Abstinence Association conveyed to me in such flattering terms by you; but it is utterly impossible for me to leave Cork at present for more than a day or two and even during that short period the poor people, who come here from all parts of the kingdom to take the pledge, would suffer great inconvenience. On this day, five hundred joined our Society and the average increase is over four thousand a week.³¹

Limerick and Beyond

Such was the momentum and rate of membership increase. A time did come, however, when Fr Mathew agreed to take his mission

³¹ Quoted in Fr Augustine, *Footprints of Father Mathew*, p. 109.

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beyond the confines of Cork and its surrounding area. In July 1839 a branch of the association was formed in Limerick and immediately sought to persuade him to visit and give the pledge to the many thousands that wished to join. Fr Mathew agreed and the visit, which took place in November 1839, has been described by Townend as 'a crucial turning point for Mathew's movement and that it inaugurated an entirely new phase in the CTAS's development'. By the time that Fr Mathew left after four days in the Treaty City, 'somewhere between 120,000 and 200,000 Irish men, women and children had taken the pledge at his hands'.³² The visit had not been without excitement. As news of his arrival spread, thousands gathered at the County Courthouse. Such was the volume of those attending that the railings broke and a number of people sustained injuries. While he was inside the building, the press of the numbers seeking access broke the doors and the weight of people on the stairs caused it to collapse. Outside, a stretch of balustrade gave away and several people fell into the Shannon. Eventually the Mayor had to call on troops to get the crowd in order. Following a number of long sessions administering the pledge, Fr Mathew's voice gave out and other clergy had to take his place to speak the promise.

Despite these happenings, such was the success of the Limerick visit that it could now truly be said that a national movement was underway. No less a personage than Daniel O'Connell was aware of the extent of the movement. At a banquet held in honour of Archbishop Crolly of Armagh at the Imperial Hotel in Cork in October 1839, during his address to the assembled guests, O'Connell said that 'there is a moral and majestic miracle operating - I attest to Father Mathew to bear me out - fifty or sixty thousand who have embraced the principle of temperance'. The crusade continued in December when Fr Mathew visited Waterford, arriving there on the evening

³² Paul A. Townend, *Father Mathew: Temperance and Irish Identity*, p. 39.

of Tuesday 10th. The lessons of Limerick had been learned and troops were deployed to keep order but even such advance planning couldn't prevent the huge crowds that gathered from breaching the cordon. More stewarding was called for and, as Fr Mathew took his place of administration at the Courthouse, only two hundred at a time were allowed enter. They came in through one door, knelt and recited the pledge, received their medal and then left through another door. Once again enormous figures are cited by Maguire as to the numbers that pledged in Waterford, thirty thousand the first day – over one-hundred thousand during the course of the visit. On this occasion Fr Augustine does not dispute the numbers. Returning to Cork through Mooncoin and Carrick-on-Suir, many thousands more joined the cause.

It was now twenty months since Fr Mathew had agreed to lead the movement and in that time, without question, huge numbers of people had pledged to abstain from alcohol. The initiative had been described by the authorities and also Daniel O'Connell as revolutionary, to the betterment of society at large where it operated. The impact on Fr Mathew himself, although not yet visible in the public domain, was nevertheless there. The seeds of future difficulties were sown. Thousands of medals and cards were distributed to those who joined the movement and yet there was no call on the recipients to contribute to the manufacturing costs; long hours without rest and proper food meant that Fr Mathew was regularly exhausted. His work had only begun however and as 1840 dawned he resolved to bring the movement even further afield.

Further Expansion

Within two weeks of the start of the New Year, he was again on his travels. In Kilkenny he received over ten thousand into the

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society in just two days following which he journeyed to Abbeyleix, Castlecomer, Thurles and Cappoquin. In February he visited Cashel, journeyed to Birr on 1 March, following which he then went to Galway. His visit there coincided with the Spring Assizes at which Daniel O'Connell was scheduled to make an appearance. Consequently the crowds in Galway at this time were enormous. Fr Mathew was welcomed to Galway by the Bishop Most Rev. Dr Browne and, according to Fr Augustine, over two hundred thousand gathered in the city to greet the two major celebrities of the time, Fr Mathew and the Liberator. The visit to Galway was a huge success with the *Freeman's Journal* estimating that over fifty thousand took the pledge and Daniel O'Connell once again referring to the Capuchin's mission, speaking of 'the mighty moral revolution now going on throughout the land'.

On his return to Cork, Fr Mathew was pleased to receive an invitation to visit Dublin and immediately set about planning what would be an important step in his national crusade of temperance. Acceptance by the Episcopal authorities in Dublin would encourage other clergy throughout the country to support his cause. There were also very many middle- and upper-class people in Dublin that would exert great influence should they become members of the association. Fr Mathew therefore decided that the visit to Dublin would require longer than he had spent anywhere else outside of Cork. Townend describes his planning as informed by the idea that the visit to Dublin would 'provide a national pulpit for temperance apologetics and propaganda' and success there would elevate the tone and increase the respectability of the movement.³³ He arrived in Dublin on 28 March and was greeted by Most Rev. Dr Murray, the Bishop who had ordained him some twenty-seven years earlier. Resting after his journey, on the next morning he preached a sermon on behalf of a

³³ Paul A. Townend, *Father Mathew: Temperance and Irish Identity*, p. 62.

female orphans' charity, before beginning the job of administering the pledge to those wishing to join the association and on that first day, it was reported that nine thousand came before him. When he arrived at the Custom house on the next morning, over six thousand were already present and the numbers grew steadily throughout the day. According to the *Freeman's Journal*, the crowds on the third day exceeded those on the first two days and included large numbers of women and children. That evening, Fr Mathew visited the Protestant stronghold that was Trinity College, where nine students enrolled in the movement. On Thursday thirty policemen were among those that took the pledge; on Friday 'the crowds were greater than on any previous day and even the enthusiasm had increased'.³⁴ Fr Mathew departed Dublin for Wexford to the cheers and waving of thousands of people. In the course of his week in Dublin he had enrolled more than seventy-thousand people. To what extent his other ambitions were achieved however, only time would tell.

Bishop Dr Keating was his host at his next destination in Wexford where he again was greeted by huge crowds that processed to meet him and, according to Fr Augustine, he enrolled more than eighteen thousand people, following which he returned to Cork via New Ross and Mitchelstown. Over the following weeks he again visited Limerick and Waterford as well as journeying to Dungarvan, Listowel and Killarney. His next trip was of great importance. Fr Mathew was well aware that crucial to the success of the cause was that the Catholic clergy supported him: with their encouragement, people would flock to take the pledge. Almost thirty years earlier he had left Maynooth College under something of a cloud. Now he returned triumphant, cheered by students and professors alike. In all he spent three days in Maynooth, pledging huge numbers in the market square of the town and also enrolling eight professors

³⁴ Fr Augustine, *Footprints of Father Mathew*, p. 143.

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Father Mathew administering the pledge in Dublin.
Courtesy Irish Capuchin Provincial Archives

and two-hundred and fifty students in the college itself. Departing Maynooth, Fr Mathew visited Naas, Rathkeale, Adare, Limerick for a third time, Galway, Aranmore, Clifden and Westport. People began speaking not in terms of thousands of members, but of millions. Fr Mathew's crusade, it seemed, could not be held back as he journeyed triumphantly throughout much of the country. But other forces too were stirring that would have a bearing on the success or failure of the temperance crusade. Not all of the Catholic authorities looked kindly on Fr Mathew, and Daniel O'Connell, in pursuit of his vision for the country, saw Fr Mathew's crusade as having a part to play in his ambition. On a personal basis, Fr Mathew began to accumulate significant debts because of his continuing to give out free medals and cards to the many thousands enrolling in the society and also because he was generous in donating to various causes and charities in the places that he visited.

Fr Mathew's Relationship with Fellow Clergy

Fr Mathew's relationship with his fellow Catholic clergy was, to say the least, complex. He knew and accepted that to visit parishes and diocese other than his own required the approval of the spiritual authorities in those places. Consequently, it was by invitation that he visited the various locations wherein he enrolled so many to his cause. Among his strongest supporters were Bishops Ryan of Limerick and Foran of Waterford, the first two places that he ventured outside of Cork. Also offering support were Bishops Keating of Ferns, Browne of Galway, Blake of Dromore, Cantwell of Meath, Feeney of Killala and Maginn of Derry. Bishops Murphy of Cork and French of Kilmacduagh and Kilfenora, while friendly, were not overtly supportive. Bishops Slattery of Cashel, Kennedy of Killaloe and Higgins of Ardagh opposed the cause. Explanations for such positions are varied – Murphy in Cork for example came from

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a brewing family which suffered losses because of the crusade and yet, as Bishop, he saw the moral value of the movement's ambition. That Fr Mathew was an ordered priest (a Capuchin) worked against him in that there were some among the secular clergy that believed the Orders deprived them of much needed income through offerings for masses etc. In Fr Mathew's case there were some who simply did not believe that he didn't always charge for medals and cards and that he was making a huge income from the poor people in distributing these. The revelation of the extent of his debts some years later evidenced against this belief. Towards the end of 1840 and in the first half of 1841, two events occurred that impacted on his relationship with important clergy, one of whom was a Bishop. On 12 December 1840, Fr Mathew wrote to Paul Cullen, future Archbishop and Cardinal, but then in Rome, seeking 'a transfer of obedience from my religious superiors to the Sacred Congregation'. In other words he wanted to relinquish his role as Provincial of the Capuchin Order and report directly to the Pope at Rome. The reason, he said, was that he was working to Divine Providence. Father Cullen passed the request on in Rome, where it was considered over the following six months. The reply, which Fr Mathew received in August 1841, was to deny his request but to bestow upon him a special Papal Commission for his mission. In effect this meant that he didn't have to secure Episcopal permission to visit another diocese; he had the right to travel anywhere he pleased with Papal approval. The second episode came about as a consequence of the first. Writing to Paul Cullen thanking him for endeavouring to secure what he had asked of Rome, he cited Archbishop John McHale of Tuam as an enemy and that he wanted to keep the people of Galway in ignorance and drink. Not unsurprisingly, when John McHale became aware of this, he was deeply offended and took issue. Already Archbishop McHale was ill-disposed towards Fr Mathew because, when he first visited the west of Ireland, the distribution of medals and cards, the Archbishop

believed, had provided an sizeable income and so he had asked for a portion of that monetary gain. Not believing that there was no such gain, the Archbishop was displeased upon Fr Mathew's refusal to hand over any monies. Also, Fr Mathew had on occasions delivered charity sermons to aid the development of national schools, the underlying structure of which the Archbishop disagreed with on the issue of religious education. Consequent upon this the Archbishop instructed all priests in his diocese not to invite Fr Mathew to visit. Following the Archbishop's discovery that Fr Mathew considered him an enemy correspondence ensued between them, but just when it seemed a diplomatic end was in sight, in June 1841, a resolution was passed by temperance campaigners in Westport that they would only support clergy that promoted their cause and they were highly critical of John McHale. Fr Mathew did not know about this development until another resolution was passed at Dublin that condemned the Westport resolution and also Fr Mathew for supporting it. When he did hear about the episode, Fr Mathew wrote to the Dublin group condemning their action and saying that he would have dealt with Westport but now could not as it was in the public domain. It was at this point that Archbishop McHale condemned Fr Mathew as 'a vagabond Friar'. Fr Cullen intervened in what was turning into an ugly dispute, following which McHale wrote to Fr Mathew withdrawing his insult, but pointing out that there were complaints about some of his sermons and that he was too liberal towards Protestants. Thus were highlighted two issues that further complicated the relationship between Fr Mathew and his fellow clergy.

According to Paul A. Townend, Fr Mathew was convinced that the movement had a Divine mandate, as evidenced in his letter to Rome and it was rare for him not to refer to this as he addressed crowds.

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'The movement was a Divine attempt at collective transformation'.³⁵ He used terms such as the Sacred Cause and that taking the pledge brought people closer to God. This belief climaxed in May 1842 when Fr Mathew requested that, subject to the usual conditions, a plenary indulgence be granted to teetotallers at the hour of their death. Bishops Slattery and Murray were asked to investigate, but both expressed reservations about the plan. Also now highlighted was the issue that Fr Mathew seemed to believe that the temperance pledge was a vow that brought people into the state of grace because he effectively claimed Divine authority and that his cause was that of moral custodian. He was also criticised for being too ecumenical and for allowing Protestants to partake in what he proclaimed a Sacred Cause. Theologically, all this was too much for many clergy and so support for Fr Mathew and his cause declined among them. Townend summarises a situation that did not feature in the earlier biographies of Fr Mathew.

The damage done to Temperance by these various theological objections is difficult to measure, but it was probably considerable. One example of how demoralising they could be occurred in 1843, when many of the students and priests at Maynooth wrote to Fr Mathew to renounce the pledge, apparently as a result of a theological controversy at the college about the pledge as a religious vow.³⁶

This complex and deteriorating relationship with fellow clergy was one battlefield on which Fr Mathew fought. Although he soldiered on, as will be seen, there were also other areas of discontent.

³⁵ Paul A. Townend, *Father Mathew, Temperance and Irish Identity*, p. 90.

³⁶ Paul A. Townend, *Father Mathew, Temperance and Irish Identity*, p. 158.

Overlap between Temperance and Repeal

Theological ambiguity had led to deterioration in relations between Fr Mathew and many among his fellow clergy. Another interpretative issue was seized upon by that most astute of politicians, Daniel O'Connell, much to the discontent of the Capuchin. From the outset, the message imparted by those advocating temperance was that it would lead to what James McKenna described as 'the collective regeneration of the Irish people from a state of national degradation'. As early as July 1838, an advertisement in the *Cork Standard* newspaper appealed to 'all patriotic Irishmen',³⁷ and following Fr Mathew's agreement to lead the association, in January 1839, McKenna again told an audience that 'they were assembled in the great cause of Ireland's regeneration'.³⁸ Such rhetoric impacted upon people. Townend records John Bowes, a Cork nailer, as saying that 'temperance would ...make Ireland what it ought to be, just, glorious and free'.³⁹ Watching, as it were, from the sidelines, was Daniel O'Connell, the man that had mobilised the masses to achieve Catholic Emancipation in 1829, had campaigned throughout the 1830s in pursuit of political reform and now had decided to devote his energies to the repeal of the Act of Union. O'Connell's biographer Patrick M. Geoghegan says that 'the temperance movement of Fr Mathew gave O'Connell confidence' while Townend says that 'O'Connell clearly recognised that the widespread embrace of the temperance crusade message of moral regeneration had crucial political implications'.⁴⁰ As thousands flocked to the temperance movement, despite Fr Mathew's own aversion to any political

³⁷ *Cork Standard (CS)*, 11 July 1838.

³⁸ *Southern Reporter, (SR)*, 26 January 1839.

³⁹ Paul A. Townend, *Father Mathew, Temperance and Irish Identity*, p. 21.

⁴⁰ Patrick M Geoghegan, *Liberator: The Life and Death of Daniel O'Connell, 1830-1847*, (Gill & McMillan, Dublin, 2012), p. 135; Paul A. Townend, *Father Mathew, Temperance and Irish Identity*, p. 198.



Temperance society membership certificate. Courtesy of Irish Capuchin Archives.

overtones and his emphasis on spiritual regeneration, they were nevertheless audience to pronouncements and participants in rituals that reinforced both temperance and patriotism. Parades and other mass events emphasised strength, while pageantry recalled the great and successful gatherings of previous campaigns. This was symbolised in that St Patrick's Day and Easter became two flagship occasions of temperance festival, with great processions and gatherings. In associating temperance with the patriotism of the National Saint's day and the rebirth celebration on the occasion of Christ rising from the dead, for a mainly Catholic people, the interconnection of the two great causes of moral and national regeneration was reinforced. Townend says that

...by placing questions of patriotism and particular historical understandings of Ireland's past and present at the centre of the Cork Total Abstinence Society's rhetoric, the movement's leadership risked reducing temperance to a supporting role in the principal task of uplifting the nation. This was dangerous given that Mathew's commitment to avoiding associating partisan politics with his movement was not shared by many of his followers.⁴¹

Daniel O'Connell certainly saw the potential. On 5 December 1839, at a banquet in Bandon, County Cork, O'Connell said that he was watching the influence of the temperance societies before unfurling the banner of repeal.⁴² When he did unfurl that banner, he explicitly mentioned temperance as an ideal that would assist his aims. On 15 April 1840, at the launch of his National Association of Ireland for Full and Prompt Justice or Repeal, O'Connell thanked God that 'there will soon be three millions of teetotallers to dignify their native land and

⁴¹ Paul A. Townend, *Father Mathew, Temperance and Irish Identity*, p. 113.

⁴² Oliver MacDonagh, *The Emancipist Daniel O'Connell, 1830 – 47*, (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1989), p. 183.

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to place Ireland in the high rank she should hold among the nations of the earth'.⁴³ The convergence of the two movements for repeal and temperance is easily understood, in that they shared a common constituency consisting of vast numbers of the people of Catholic Ireland. As identified above, shared sentiments in the rhetoric imparted to the masses led to a commonality of understanding. Both movements also indulged in similar rituals, utilising processions and mass gatherings, bands and banners. As Fr Mathew however, sought to keep the movements separate, constantly urging his members to avoid politics, Daniel O'Connell resolved to make a dramatic gesture. On 7 October 1840, at a repeal rally in Limerick, O'Connell declared his intention of becoming a teetotalter, an act described by Townend as more than political opportunism. It was 'a testimony to his political perceptiveness and to the nature of his relationship with the Irish people, as well as the powerful place that temperance had come to occupy in that peoples' self-conception'.⁴⁴ Aware of the implications of this statement of intent and with a general election looming in 1841, Fr Mathew ordered temperance bands not to participate or play at repeal political rallies until after the election. O'Connell himself was returned for both Meath and County Cork and chose to sit for the southern county seat. Overall however, the election outcome, that saw the return of a Tory administration, was a blow to O'Connell's ambitions. He therefore 'began working on new ways to promote repeal'.⁴⁵ As well as entering municipal politics and becoming Lord Mayor of Dublin, he also decided to reinvigorate his campaign that utilised the masses. Early in 1842, he resolved on another dramatic gesture – once again through the agency of temperance. He would be seen publicly and in one accord with Fr Mathew. Aware that Easter Monday was a day on which Fr Mathew would lead a large temperance procession in Cork, he sent word that

⁴³ *Freeman's Journal*, (FJ), 16 April 1840.

⁴⁴ Paul A. Townend, *Father Mathew, Temperance and Irish Identity*, p. 211.

⁴⁵ Patrick M Geoghegan, *Liberator*, p. 121.

as Lord Mayor of Dublin, he would attend the event. Strategically, his message was relayed late and, although Fr Mathew was disturbed by the development, there was little that he could do about it.

Easter Monday 1842

To assert that it was a great day for the South of Ireland would but poorly afford anything like an idea of the magnificent spectacle which the procession presented. It had magnificence in numbers, in countless thousands, but it had infinitely more of grandeur and magnificence in the causes which it celebrated.

In this manner the *Cork Examiner* newspaper reported on the great event that had taken place in the city that morning. In particular, the paper identified that of great interest was the presence of Lord Mayor of Dublin Daniel O'Connell, describing how the crowds reacted when the two men, Fr Mathew and O'Connell, met.

Who could tell the wild joyous shout that rent the very air as the two great men of Ireland, the political and the moral emancipators of her people, met together!⁴⁶

The rival Protestant newspaper to the *Cork Examiner* in Cork, *The Constitution* or *Cork Advertiser*, normally bitterly opposed to O'Connell, also carried an account of the procession.

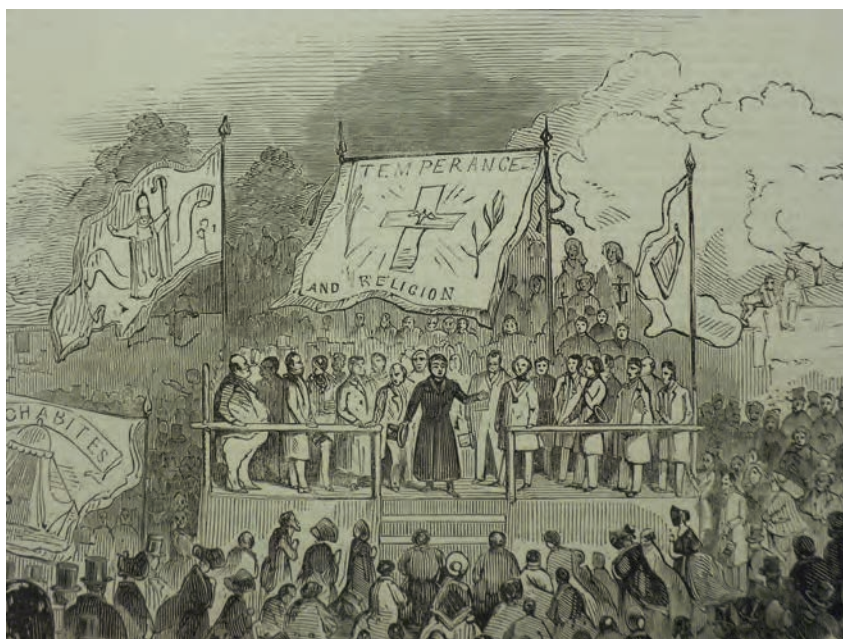
There was a procession yesterday of the Teetotallers in connexion with the Temperance Society established by the Rev. Fr Mathew. It was considerably larger than a similar procession which passed through our streets this day twelve months.

On the South Mall the procession was joined by Daniel O'Connell Esq. M.P., Lord Mayor of Dublin. This was the signal for long and continued cheers.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ *Cork Examiner*, (CE), 28 March 1842.

⁴⁷ *Constitution or Cork Advertiser*, (CC), 29 March 1842.

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Illustrated London News depiction of Father Mathew in London, August 1843

Favourable coverage would have been expected of the *Cork Examiner*. It is a statement of how impressive the occasion was however that the event should have been reported on in such a way in the *Constitution*. Both newspapers also reported that the Catholic Bishop, His Lordship Dr Murphy, viewed the procession from the house of one Dr Bullen on the South Mall and that Fr Mathew and O'Connell bowed to him as they passed. The newspapers also highlighted that having walked for a period together at the head of the procession, prior to taking his leave, Daniel O'Connell knelt before the Capuchin and received from him a blessing 'amidst a deafening cheer from his admirers',⁴⁸ 'amidst the rapturous cheering of the countless spectators'.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ *CC*, 29 March 1842.

⁴⁹ *CE*, 28 March 1842.



Illustrated London News depiction of Father Mathew preaching in London, August 1843

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To the 'countless spectators' present at this moment and to the many thousands that subsequently read the accounts of what had transpired, symbolically Fr Mathew had blessed both Daniel O'Connell and also his ambitions and endeavours. O'Connell had succeeded in his dramatic gesture. Townend says that O'Connell had 'finally achieved what had eluded him for two years – a public symbolic joint appearance with Fr Mathew'.⁵⁰ O'Connell would now increase the pressure on the British government in pursuit of repeal, declaring that 1843 was the year in which it would be achieved, helped greatly by a series of 'Monster Meetings' that would be held at symbolic locations throughout the country. Hundreds of thousands of those attending these meeting were Teetotalers as well as Repeallers. Analysing the 'Monster Meetings', Gary Owens says that 'Every procession featured Temperance bands, sometimes dozens of them, whose presence, said one paper, was vital because they inspired 'that species of martial peacefulness which keeps men together in one mind''.⁵¹ Fr Mathew however, was still opposed to any affiliation with political ambitions. When, in the summer of 1843, the various 'Monster Meetings' in support of repeal were taking place and gaining momentum, Fr Mathew decided to undertake a journey to England to meet his supporters there and to enrol people in his society. He left for Liverpool on 30 June, visiting Manchester, York, Leeds, Bradford, Halifax, Wakefield and London. While in the British capitol, a ceremony during which he administered the pledge to many thousands was reported on in *The Illustrated London News*. Fr Mathew is, the newspaper stated,

...a gentleman about fifty years of age, of mild and expressive features. His unaffected manner and deportment and

⁵⁰ Paul A. Townend, *Father Mathew, Temperance and Irish Identity*, p. 215.

⁵¹ Gary Owens, 'Nationalism without Words: Symbolism and Ritual Behaviours in the Repeal Monster Meetings of 1843-45' in J.S. Donnelly and Kerby A. Miller, (eds.), *Irish Popular Culture 1650-1850*, (Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 1999), p. 249.

the simplicity of his style when addressing his hearers, appeared to make a great impression on everyone. There was an evident sincerity about all his words and actions, which spoke more to the feelings of his hearers than all the speeches.⁵²

He remained in England until 25 September and then returned home to Cork via Dublin. The decision to go to England in the summer of 1843 'can be read as an attempt to distance the movement from repeal'. With the same motive, he remained at home in Cork for the rest of the year.⁵³ Meantime, the authorities, concerned that the ever-growing numbers attending the 'Monster Meetings' posed a threat, banned a proposed meeting to be held at Clontarf in early October. O'Connell called off the meeting at short notice. Shortly thereafter he was arrested, convicted and sent to prison for sedition. The consequences for repeal have been analysed by many historians. Repeal, however, was not the only movement damaged by the events of 1843. With the close overlap between repeal and temperance, Fr Mathew's movement too was damaged. 'The temperance movement never recovered the initiative it had ceded so completely in 1843. O'Connell and his supporters had so successfully entangled the two causes that the Cork Total Abstinence Association was unable to recover its autonomy after the collapse of the repeal movement'.⁵⁴

Fr Mathew's Personal Finances

While Fr Mathew was in conflict with some among the authorities of the Catholic church on the one hand and also at variance with Daniel O'Connell regarding the use of his movement for political

⁵² *Illustrated London News*, Vol. III, 1843, pp 85-86. Sourced at Local Studies Department, Cork City Library.

⁵³ Paul A. Townend, *Father Mathew, Temperance and Irish Identity*, p. 230.

⁵⁴ Paul A. Townend, *Father Mathew, Temperance and Irish Identity*, p. 234.

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purposes, his own personal financial situation was steadily deteriorating. No detailed accounts of Fr Mathew's personal worth have been recorded by his biographers. All, however, have written in detail of his generosity to the poor. Regarding his early years as a priest in Cork, Moira Lysaght says that

Alms-giving was a great speciality with the Friar: 'Give, give, have no fear of giving: what you have got from God', was his dictum. Money as mass offerings or as gifts started to flow in, but it went out as quickly to the crowd of beggars at the friary door. To a friend who argued that this encouraged professional spongers, the priest replied 'it is better to be deceived by nineteen imposters than to allow a deserving man to depart unrelieved'.⁵⁵

Fr Augustine records a number of episodes that illustrate his generosity, such as when two boys of his acquaintance were collecting for a destitute woman. Fr Mathew asked why they had not come to him for a donation and they replied that they knew he had more calls on him than anyone else and that he was always giving to the poor. Fr Mathew however told them that he was pained at being deprived of the pleasure of assisting the poor woman they were collecting for and donated five pounds.

Given his family background and his recorded generosity to the poor, therefore, it is reasonable to surmise that his personal worth was not inconsiderable. These personal resources were utilised in the forming of for example the Josephian Society and also, most notably, in the acquisition of the Botanic Gardens that became St Joseph's Cemetery. When he became the leader of the Temperance Association, he poured not just his energy into the endeavour, but his resources and wealth also.

⁵⁵ Moira Lysaght, *Fr Theobald Mathew*, p. 21.

Fr Mathew was well aware that to give each person joining the temperance movement a symbol of that membership would be of great benefit psychologically. He therefore attempted to ensure that each person was given a medal and a card on which the pledge was written. To each recipient the medal was a badge of honour, something for them to wear and be proud of. It also had the added advantage that it was a means of propaganda for the temperance movement, advertising the association wherever it was worn. The medals and cards, however, had to be manufactured and printed and Fr Mathew himself undertook the liability for such costs. Other expenses also were laid at his door. Many temperance groups formed musical bands and Fr Mathew provided finance for musical instruments to facilitate such formations. Many groups also set up reading rooms and once again it was Fr Mathew who financed the acquisition of reading material in many cases. As the numbers joining the association grew, so also did the drain on his resources, which drain increased even further as he took the movement beyond the local and onto both national and international stages. Also, whenever Fr Mathew visited other diocese, he was exceedingly generous in donating to charities in those places. Fr Augustine records that throughout 1840 his generosity was 'astonishing'. At Loughrea in May he added thirty pounds to the collection plate; in Boyle he gave one hundred pounds to the local priests to distribute as they saw fit; at Gort in October he gave one hundred and twenty pounds for the furtherance of education; forty pounds at Carlow for charitable purposes; fifty to improve the church at Lismore; the list goes on. If, for example, new churches were being built, it was not unknown for him to donate a chalice or a ciborium to the local priest. At Clones in December he donated forty pounds to the church and presented a splendid silver chalice to the parish priest – a gift he repeated on two other occasions to two different ecclesiastics'.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Fr Augustine, *Footprints of Father Mathew*, p. 360.

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Such generosity however, only added to his growing financial difficulties. By the end of 1841 he was seven thousand pounds in debt.

Neither the level of his expenditure nor the extent of his mounting debt overly concerned Fr Mathew however. He had always had the expectation that when Lady Elizabeth Mathew, that had featured so prominently in his early life passed away, he would inherit from her the Tipperary estate of the Mathew family, from which he could clear his debts and continue with his crusade. When Lady Elizabeth died in December 1841, however, it was discovered that she had left him nothing, fearing that to do so would result in the estate eventually coming into the ownership of the Capuchin Order. As a consequence of this situation, not alone did he have considerable debt, but it continued to rise over the following years, because he refused to compromise or pull back in his pursuit of his aims. Writing to one James Silk Buckingham acknowledging a donation he said, 'all my private resources have been exhausted. I have drawn too, a large amount upon my brothers, and all to promote that sacred cause to whose success I have devoted my existence'.⁵⁷ In February 1844 he wrote to a friend named Purcell saying 'It is sufficient to say that all my resources have been exhausted in my endeavour to meet the heavy bills furnished by the manufacturers'.⁵⁸ Finally, in August 1844, at a meeting in Chapelizod in Dublin, a bailiff that had been retained by the Birmingham firm that manufactured medals for Fr Mathew and as a result of which was owed large amounts of money, emerged from the crowd and served him with a writ of arrest. This sent shock-waves through the membership of the association, following which a number of his loyal supporters undertook a fund-raising initiative to help bail him out of the situation. Although this finally put the lie to any lingering beliefs that he was making money from the sale

⁵⁷ Fr Augustine, *Footprints of Father Mathew*, p. 367.

⁵⁸ Fr Augustine, *Footprints of Father Mathew*, p. 344.

of medals etc., only a small number of priests and bishops donated to the rescue fund. Many among the clergy had already by this time abandoned support for the temperance cause. Townend says that the extent of the decline in the support for Fr Mathew 'may be seen in the bishops' very tepid collective response to the requisition for the Mathew Testimonial in early 1843'.⁵⁹

The Famine Years

Alienation from many fellow clergy, the constant struggle to resist entanglement with the repeal movement and financial difficulties notwithstanding, Fr Mathew never weakened in his resolve to further the temperance cause. Speaking at Cork in January 1843 he told the assembled multitude that there were now five million people enrolled in the society. Later in the year, having returned from his trip to England, on 30 October, he attended the laying of the foundation stone for a tower built in honour of the cause near Glanmire to the east of Cork city. During 1844 he continued to visit various places throughout the country. By 1845 however, there was a noticeable downturn in the movement's fortunes. 'The teetotallers of Ireland in general seem to have been stricken with apathy, as if some strange influence were at work'.⁶⁰ His travels continued during 1846, journeying to Limerick, Ennis, Mitchelstown, Macroom, Dunmanway, Dublin, Tipperary and Birr, before returning as usual to Cork for the Easter Monday Temperance procession. Before the summer was over, however, he became aware that the potato crop was being affected by a fungal disease that caused it to turn black and rot in the ground. As destitute people began making their way into the city seeking aid, Fr Mathew travelled away from Cork less often and soon, although still advocating temperance, much of

⁵⁹ Paul A. Townend, *Father Mathew, Temperance and Irish Identity*, p. 189.

⁶⁰ Fr Augustine, *Footprints of Father Mathew*, p. 373.

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his time was taken up trying to help the unfortunate people that came to his door, many of them starving. In a relatively short time, there were more than six thousand people begging on the streets of Cork: many of them simply 'crawled into the lanes at night to seek a little rest'. Over the following two years Fr Mathew was to be found in those same laneways and shelters, seeking to bring help to the starving and destitute people. Maguire says that Fr Mathew expended 'his last shilling' and involved himself in 'new difficulties' to provide such help.⁶¹ Despite his efforts and those of many others, between 1 September 1846 and 1 June 1847, ten thousand bodies were interred in St Joseph's cemetery. Seeking to bring the attention of the authorities to the plight of the suffering poor, he began a campaign of letter writing to those he thought might be able to provide aid. In December 1846 he wrote to assistant secretary with responsibility for famine relief, Charles Trevelyan saying, 'I am grieved to be obliged to inform you that the distress is universal' and later in the same letter, regarding the actual potato crop, 'this resource has utterly failed as well as their own stock of provisions and they are now wholly dependent for their means of existence on public relief'.⁶² Far from improvement however, matters only deteriorated. Further crop failure occurred and governmental decisions meant that the relief efforts were not fully supported at the highest levels. The reasons for and implications of the approach taken by government in response to the famine conditions in Ireland have been dealt with in many volumes by historians since that time and are beyond the scope of this work. As a consequence of some of these decisions, in May 1847, the Cork District Relief Committee suspended its operations and food depots throughout the city were closed. The immediate consequence of this was that yet more people were thrown into destitution and those already dependent on these food depots could look forward only to starvation and death.

⁶¹ John Francis Maguire, *Father Mathew: A Biography*, p. 149.

⁶² John Francis Maguire, *Father Mathew: A Biography*, p. 144.

Recognising the impact that the closures would have, Fr Mathew set about reopening the Southern Depot that was nearest his own area in Cove Street, near Blackamoor Lane, in the city. In addition to the three large boilers already belonging to the depot, he had three more installed, and at a cost of one hundred and thirty pounds a week he was able to feed soup and bread to between five and six thousand people. Once again he called upon his own scant resources, aided by members of his family and any donations that he could solicit, to pay for this venture. Maguire recounts an episode when, at one point when the depot was closed for the night, a crowd of about twenty followed Fr Mathew and one of his agents back to his home on Cove Street. Before they got there however, the crowd had grown to several hundred and when they started distributing bread that was stored at the house, almost a thousand were packed into the narrow lane. At one point, Fr Mathew, frustrated with the way the agent was handling the situation and noticing that because of the press of the crowd, a cripple, unable to make his way to the front, was being bypassed, remonstrated with his official and took control, forming the crowds into orderly queues for fairer distribution.⁶³ The situation however, continued to deteriorate. Fr Augustine records that on one occasion Fr Mathew went into a house that had been closed for two or three days and found seventeen people lying on the floor, all with fever. Although they were taken to hospital, all of them died. In one fortnight three hundred coffins were required for a single street in the city. In his efforts, according to an acquaintance, one Frank Walsh, Fr Mathew risked his life daily.

Almost a Bishop

When, on 1 April 1847, Bishop Murphy of Cork died, as was the practice, the clergy of the diocese provided a list of three priests that were their preferred choices for the position. With a still loyal

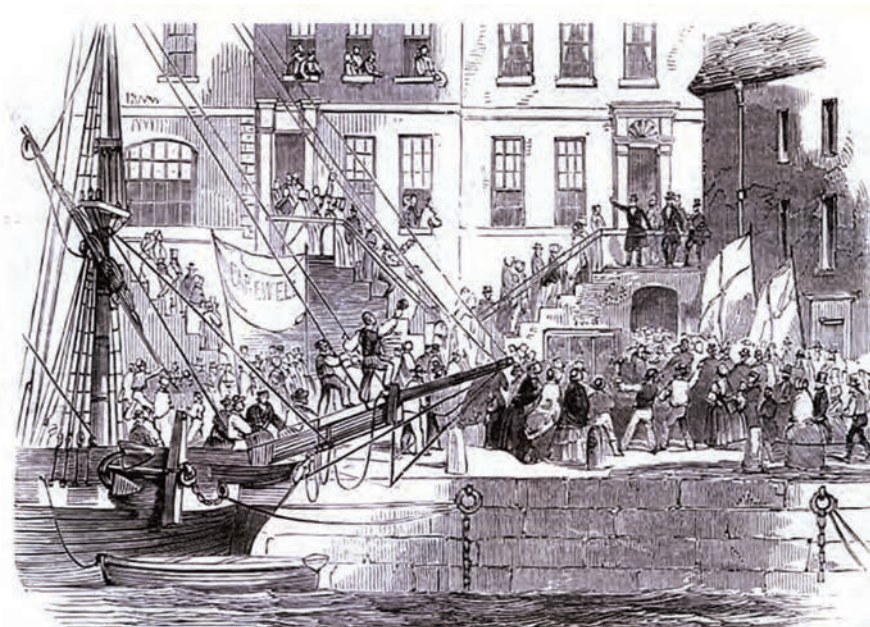
⁶³ John Francis Maguire, *Father Mathew: A Biography*, p. 158.

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base of support among the Cork clergy and also in recognition of his famine relief endeavours, Fr Mathew was the first name on the list provided and so seemed destined to become the next Bishop of Cork. An Episcopal commission charged with giving this the stamp of approval and sending it on to Rome, however, declined to support the Mathew nomination, instead recommending the name of William Delaney, a native of Bandon. In due course Rome accepted this recommendation and, in August 1847, William Delaney became Bishop of the diocese, which position he held until 1886.

Fr Mathew was now nearing sixty years of age and faced yet another season of failing crops and consequent despair among the people. The strains of his many years of effort towards various causes was telling on him and during Lent 1848, while 'observing his usual strict regime', as he rose from bed one morning, he fell to the floor and was unable to get up as a result of paralysis on one side. He recovered quickly however, but nevertheless went to spend some time of rest with his brother at Lehenagh just to the south of Cork city. Though recovering, his health was deteriorating however and his doctor wrote that 'he was no longer the brilliant advocate of temperance – though his gait was every day more enfeebled and intellectual labour became a struggle, still he worked with more ardour than at any time previously'. This was a time of decision making for Fr Mathew. Fr Augustine says that 'he knew it was no longer in his power to help the people at home; he felt that the sands of life were running low and determined to yield at last to calls from across the water and pay a visit to the United States, to where he had been invited on a number of occasions.'⁶⁴ His final meeting at Cork was held at the new Christian Brothers School on Blarney Street and on 23 May 1848 Fr Mathew left Ireland on the ship *The Asburton*, en route to the United States. He remained in America for two and a half years, travelling and administering the temperance pledge throughout

⁶⁴ Fr Augustine, *Footprints of Father Mathew*, pp. 481-485.



Illustrated London News depiction of his 1848 departure for USA

a number of states, in particular to many Irish communities that had developed there following emigration during the worst of the famine years.⁶⁵ Towards the end of his time in America his tiredness became ever more debilitating and so, on 8 November 1851, he sailed for home on *The Pacific*, landing back in Dun Laoghaire towards the end of the month. He was met by Archbishop Cullen who brought him news from Rome. The Pope had asked the Archbishop to offer Fr Mathew the Episcopal seat at Jamaica. Fr Mathew, however, declined the offer on health grounds and, having left Dublin on 4 December, arrived at his brother's house in Cork two days later. As he travelled through the city he saw for the first time the Church of the Holy

⁶⁵ Although a long time critic of slavery – he had met with the anti-slavery campaigner Frederick Douglas when he visited Cork – Fr Mathew declined to engage with this issue while in the United States despite meeting with a number of slave-owners. For this he was much criticised but held the view that he would do nothing that would interfere with the primary purpose of his mission, the promotion of temperance.

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Trinity on Charlotte Quay, the project that he had begun over twenty years earlier but which had remained incomplete because he had given all his energies and resources to the Temperance Crusade. The church was brought to completion in 1850 by a committee that was formed for that purpose and comprising many of Fr Mathew's best supporters. While the fundraising for the completion of the church was underway, there was also another national fund-raising initiative to commemorate Daniel O'Connell. With the permission of the O'Connell memorial people, monies raised in Cork were given to the church-building committee for the purpose of installing a great stained-glass window in Holy Trinity church behind the main altar in memory of the Liberator. The church became known as the Fr Mathew Memorial Church and so once again the lives of the Apostle of Temperance and the Liberator became intertwined.

As word spread that Fr Mathew was back in Cork, thousands flocked to see him and in turn he again advocated temperance, administered the pledge, though now to considerably fewer people, and also dispensed alms. His daily routine saw him rise at five in the morning; say mass and prayers; following which he spent many hours with those who flocked to see him. In January 1852 he was relieved of the office of Provincial of the Capuchin Order, which should have eased his workload. His health however was still poor and on 1 February, he again fell in his bedroom, a sign that his underlying weakness was not improving. He travelled to Limerick to give the pledge in July and on his return he again took up residence at Charlotte Quay with his confreres. The paralysis that he suffered in his earlier strokes now became debilitating and by 1854 he was unable to write. Friends enabled him to travel to Madeira where it was believed the good weather would help him and in January 1855 he wrote to Dr Hayden in Dublin saying that his paralysed limbs were much improved. In May he felt sufficiently recovered to return home to Cork where,

true to form, 'he again undertook duties to which his shattered health rendered him wholly unequal'.⁶⁶ Inevitably his condition soon deteriorated and he became depressed when he found that he could no longer say mass. Desiring not to be a burden on his family, in September 1856 he moved to the house of a friend, one John Sullivan, at No. 18, the Beach in Cobh. Early in December, once more he suffered a fall, following which, on this occasion, he could no longer speak. His brother Charles came to be at his side, where also prayed the Sisters of Mercy from the local convent. Knowing that the end was near, Charles enquired if he wished to be buried with the other members of the Mathew family. Fr Mathew, however, conveyed to Charles that he wished to be laid with the people he had served, in St Joseph's Cemetery, the former Botanic Gardens. At 14.30 on the afternoon of 8 December 1856, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, Fr Theobald Mathew breathed his last. He was sixty-seven years old and in his forty-fourth year a priest.

Fr Mathew's remains were brought from Cobh to Holy Trinity Church on Wednesday, 10 December, and placed before the high altar. Over the next two days, thousands visited the church to say farewell to their beloved pastor. Then, on Friday 12 December, Bishop Dr Delaney and seventy priests gathered to say their daily office which was followed by solemn requiem mass. A notice appeared in the press saying that the corporation of the city would attend as a body and each member was asked to provide himself with 'a scarf of black merino, to hang across the breast from the left shoulder and a hat crepe'. The same notice asked that those citizens partaking in the funeral procession would form four abreast, immediately after the hearse. Finally, the servants on any carriages participating were to appear in white scarves and hat bands. Following the mass, the polished oak coffin was brought to the hearse by the four pall-

⁶⁶ Fr Augustine, *Footprints of Father Mathew*, p. 536.

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Holy Trinity Church. Picture number 335 from the British Series, Liverpool. Courtesy Michael Lenihan

bearers, Fathers Brenan, Lyons, Maguire and Rearden and the chief mourners were his brother Charles and other relatives.

The procession was the largest in the character of a funeral which has ever been seen in this city. Its extent, from the head to the last portion, was over three miles. It occupied an hour and a half in passing our office.⁶⁷

When the cortege arrived at St Joseph's Cemetery, more than fifty thousand people had assembled to attend the laying to rest of Fr Theobald Mathew, the Apostle of Temperance.

⁶⁷ *CE*, 12 December 1856.

CHAPTER THREE

Cast in Bronze

Within a short period of Fr Mathew's death in December 1856, there were calls for some form of a memorial to be erected in his honour. Writing in 1986, historian Ken Inglis suggested that examination of monuments could be rewarding and he set himself the task of asking questions about the statue erected in memory of Fr Mathew and unveiled on St Patrick's Street on 10 October 1864. On a visit to Cork in 1982, Fr Mathew, Inglis said, 'filled my personal landscape' and 'I sensed an invitation from providence to study him a little'. The result of this study, entitled 'Fr Mathew's Statue: the Making of a Monument in Cork', included a short account of the unveiling ceremony, together with biographical snapshots of some of the leading actors, among them Fr Mathew himself; John Francis Maguire, Mayor and long-time supporter of Fr Mathew; Daniel O'Connell; John Hogan, the artist initially commissioned to execute the work; and he who brought it to completion, John Henry Foley.⁶⁸ The differing emphases of rival newspapers, the *Cork Examiner* and the *Cork Constitution*, were referenced and Inglis also compares the context of the Fr Mathew project with other memorials such as the O'Connell monument in Dublin and both the Boer War memorial and the National Monument in Cork. Such a short study, however, cannot give an overall picture of Fr Mathew the man, the work he undertook across the entire forty-four years of his priesthood, nor the broad context in which the memorial was planned and executed. So, for example - arguably correctly in the context of a short study and that the title of the statue erected is Father Mathew, Apostle of Temperance - Inglis's work treats Fr Mathew as a temperance crusader with little reference to his other charitable endeavours

⁶⁸ Ken Inglis, 'Father Mathew's Statue: The Making of a Monument in Cork' in Oliver MacDonough and W.F. Mandle, (eds), *Ireland and Irish Australia: Studies in Cultural and Political History*, (Croom Helm, London, 1986), pp 119 – 135.

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and broader social contributions to the society of the time. More recent studies on the nature of monuments however, tell us that embedded in such monuments are multilayered histories and that they are important signposts in the historical narrative and development of a place. Examining the development of a distinctly Unionist culture in Northern Ireland and considering the erection of a statue to Edward Carson in the 1930s, Gillian McIntosh shows that, for Unionists, that statue would ‘testify to their gratitude to all time’;⁶⁹ that it would locate a constant image in the iconography of the place and being such, would indicate and create a desire to hark back to an identity and image of the past. The planning and execution of the Carson memorial saw the beginning of ‘a process of mythologizing of the subject’, a necessary form of propaganda as the instigators were seeking to create not just a memorial but also a place of worship; an image of ideal leadership permanently positioned among future generations of adherents; a watershed point in history following which all changed and finally a narrative of the past created for the future. Such sentiments also underpin the planning and construction of the Fr Mathew Statue in Cork.

The Project Begins

In the first week of January 1857 notices appeared in the press from Mayor William Fitzgibbon stating that, following representations from friends and supporters of Fr Mathew, he would convene a meeting to consider how best to commemorate the recently deceased cleric. The meeting was set for Monday 12 January at the City Court House, but, when the day came, such was the severity of the weather and the intensity of the rain, that many stayed away rather than brave the elements. Thanking all that did come, the

⁶⁹ Gillian McIntosh, *The Force of Culture. Unionist Identities in Twentieth Century Ireland*, (Cork University Press, 1999), p. 43.

Mayor as chairman accepted a proposal to postpone the meeting by a week, because many that would wish to attend were unable to do so and also because it would be better if those that had come didn't have to sit for a number of hours in soaked clothes. Consequently, the meeting was rearranged for the following Monday and notices to this effect were published. The following week the weather was considerably improved and at midday the meeting, described as 'one of the most numerous ever held in the city', convened. The first sentence of the report also set out the ambition of the meeting. It was convened with 'a national objective' in mind.⁷⁰ Those present at the meeting were from all sectors and denominations of Cork society and included some of Fr Mathew's most loyal supporters, such as M.P. John Francis Maguire, Col. Beamish, John Arnott and both Richard and William Dowden. The meeting had a four-fold objective, to be achieved through the medium of resolutions. In a carefully choreographed structure, the formulae of words being proposed was chosen in advance, as were the people that would propose and second the resolutions, all of which were carried unanimously at the meeting. Given his relationship with Fr Mathew over many years, it is not surprising that John Francis Maguire should have proposed the first resolution. It stated:

... that while we deplore as a national loss the lamented death of our late fellow-citizen, the Very Rev. Theobald Mathew, the great Apostle of Temperance, we feel it to be a duty which we owe alike to ourselves, our country, and the cause of humanity, to testify to future ages, by some enduring memorial, our veneration of the character, and our appreciation of the services of that illustrious Irishman.⁷¹

⁷⁰ *CE*, 21 January 1857.

⁷¹ *CE*, 21 January 1857. The quotations used in the following analysis are taken from the same report.

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In form therefore, this resolution creates the platform for the ambition of positioning the memory of Fr Mathew and his work as an example to future generations. The language is strong and emotive; 'deploring the loss'; 'lamenting the death'; the use of the word 'testify' not alone imparts strength, but also suggests a binding legality to the undertaking. The word 'enduring' suggests permanency or at the very least longevity. Finally, to say that the purpose includes a dimension of veneration suggests that it is intended to place Fr Mathew on the road to sainthood. Speaking to the resolution, John Francis Maguire argued that many countries honour great and illustrious individuals.

Now if other nations and people have so honoured the memory of the statesman, the warrior, the ruler, surely we are bound to honour the memory of one who, while conferring great honour on his own country, shedding special lustre on his adopted city and diffusing inestimable blessings amongst the whole human race ...

In the course of a long speech, Maguire spoke of the 'bloodless triumphs of the man whom we have met this day to honour' and also of the

... nobler and holier mission it was to restore his fellow-countrymen to character, to honour and to happiness – whose greatest glory it was that he bound up the wounds of the broken hearted, that he dried the tear of the widow, hushed the wail of the orphan and brought back his repentant fellow-man to the paths of virtue.

This description is full of biblical imagery. Psalm 34 says that it is 'the Lord will heal the broken-hearted'; Jesus comforts the widows and orphans in the gospels and the re-embracing of the repentant is at the heart of the gospel message.

Elsewhere in his account of Fr Mathew's work that Maguire presented to the meeting, he referred to 'the mission he was called to undertake' and how his message was 'carried by the tongues of the emigrant, as by the voice of fame, to the uttermost bounds of the civilised world'. Once again this is a loaded statement, bringing to mind the biblical imprimatur from earliest Christian times that the teachings of the Church be brought to 'the ends of the earth'. In the latter half of nineteenth-century Ireland, such sentiments were expressed to a highly receptive Catholic audience and so the tone of Maguire's speech can be seen as beginning the process of mythologizing Fr Mathew.

Horace Townsend was the man chosen to second this first resolution and the thrust of his contribution was to highlight Fr Mathew as someone that brought about significant change in society, despite an acknowledged lack of success for the crusade.

Although his super-human efforts failed in giving that movement the extent and permanency he hoped for, expected, and worked for, yet let it not go forth that great benefits have not accrued from his exertions.

Townsend explained that prior to Fr Mathew's crusade, excess alcohol consumption was seen as good fellowship, an amiable weakness and was passed over lightly. Now, however, it was considered disreputable and disgraceful. The speaker however, was anxious to point out that Fr Mathew was 'not only the Apostle of Temperance but of Charity'. The proposed monument therefore would be a public record of his endeavour and so

... ages yet to come may see in such a monument a proof of the high opinion in which he was held by the age in which he lived and feel this charity and goodness revived by the observation of it.

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Illustrated London News portrait of Fr Mathew (1843)

The second resolution was proposed by M.P. William Fagan and seconded by Alderman Scott and stated

That inasmuch as the City of Cork was not only the city of Father Mathew's early adoption and the scene of his labours as a clergyman, but the very seat and centre of the great moral movement, which under his leadership spread its blessings to the uttermost boundaries of the civilised world, we look upon Cork as the place of all others in which a national monument should be erected to a national benefactor.

The thrust of this resolution is very much parochial, suggesting forcefully that Cork was the centre of the movement and should therefore be the location for the monument. The resolution also reinforced the implied biblical imprimatur that the movement had had, that of 'spreading its blessings to the uttermost boundaries of the civilised world'. In proposing the resolution, William Fagan looked to both the immediate and long-term future. 'I do hope and trust we shall find pilgrims coming to see the monument of that great man for generations yet to come'. The monument, Fagan said, would be worthy of such 'veneration', yet another example of purposefully-chosen wording. William Fagan finished by hoping that 'our fellow-townsmen, Hogan, will again immortalise himself in that monument'.

Seconding this resolution Alderman Scott spoke eloquently on the life and works of Fr Mathew. Before finishing, however, he brought proceedings around to the more practical matters of who would organise the memorial effort and who would pay for it. These matters were addressed in the following two resolutions.

The third resolution, proposed by Colonel Beamish and seconded by Richard Dowden stated:

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... that the aid and co-operation of friends and admirers of Fr Mathew and of the cause to which he devoted so much of his life be earnestly solicited; and that the following gentlemen (with power to add to these numbers) be a committee to carry out the object which we have here in view.

There followed a list of those persons who would serve on the committee, numbering more than forty and it is worth recording who was on this list of names. It included the Mayor; John Francis Maguire M.P.; Horace Townsend D.L.; William Fagan M.P.; Alderman Scott; Sir Thomas Tobin; Richard Dowden; Charles Sugrue J.P.; Timothy Mahony J.P.; John Besnard jun. J.P.; James O'Dwyer; Sir William Lyons; James Cleary; John W. Cleary; Michael Dunne; Thomas Lyons; Francis Lyons J.P.; John Shea J.P.; Joseph E. Treacy; Colonel Beamish; Sir William Hackett; Sir Thomas Deane; John George McCarthy; James Hegarty; Dr O'Connor; Edmund Burke; Alderman Penrose; Ebenezer Pike; Sir John Gordon; W.J. Shaw; Alexander McOstrich; John Arnott; Gregory O'Neill T.C.; Ralph Varian; Richard Brash; Sir John Benson; David Leahy Arthur J.P.; Paul McSwiney; Dr Barter; David A. Nagle. The three secretaries were named as Bernard Alcock; John Besnard jun. and Joseph E. Treacy.

Proposing the resolution, Col. Beamish reiterated that there was no question but that the mission that Fr Mathew undertook was a sacred one. However he disagreed with the sentiments expressed that the proposed memorial should be in Cork. 'I feel constrained to differ from my honourable friends in this particular and would prefer a national monument in the capital of the country'. Regardless of the decision however, he reassured the meeting that 'the contributions of those whom I represent shall not be wanting'. Richard Dowden returned to the theme of the importance of the memorial to future generations and said that 'pilgrimages would be made to his shrine

and the devotion which he felt for his fellow-men would be warmly roused, when they had looked at him'. Richard Dowden also referred to an aspect of the future that could be called part of Fr Mathew's legacy and for which the memorial also stands today. He quoted Fr Mathew himself as saying, 'we may not have made very many sober, my dear friend, but we have, thank God, changed the tide of public opinion'.

There are a number of important aspects to this resolution. Firstly, the nature of the people asked to serve on the committee is worth considering. Despite references such as a 'sacred cause' regarding Fr Mathew's mission and that pilgrimages would be made to the monument, there was nevertheless no clerical representation on the committee. Indeed, it could be said that all that were asked to serve on it were from the civic elite of the city, many from the upper echelons of society's pecking order. Consequently they were people of wealth, status and influence – they were, to all intents and purposes, main players in the city. John Francis Maguire was both an M.P and the owner of the *Cork Examiner* newspaper; William Fagan was also an M.P; Alexander McOstrich, John Arnott, Richard Dowden and Thomas Lyons were well known merchants in the city as well as being involved in politics; Sir John Benson was an eminent engineer and architect, as was Sir Thomas Deane. Others were Justices of the Peace and Town Councillors. For all such people, instigating, organising and participating in civic ritual and commemorative practice served to underpin their own status in society. Furthermore, many saw themselves as philanthropic and the final resolution and its practical implementation demonstrated this admirably.

Proposed by Charles Sugrue and seconded by Timothy Mahony, it sought 'that a subscription list be now opened and that the National Bank be appointed treasurer'. Throughout the nineteenth century, newspapers carried many such subscription lists, containing the

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names of those that contributed to a range of causes, as well the amounts donated by them. These lists can be read as having a number of purposes. Firstly, they served to underpin the status of the contributors in society, proclaiming to all how generous they were towards these worthy causes. Thus, they were admired and respected by their betters, their peers and many from the broader reaches of society. Inclusion of their names in such listings was both a reward for their generosity and a public statement of their status. Those who aspired to upward social mobility could not be found wanting and this applied regardless of where one was on the social scale. The very wealthy had to match their peers, as did those lower down on the scale. That the causes in themselves were worthy of the support of such influential members of society gave them a prominence above other causes and so the lists were a form of advertising or propaganda. Finally the lists were a statement of public accountability and transparency on the part of the organisers. Through them the monies accruing were made known to the public, demonstrating the rate of advancement of the project as well as the honesty and integrity of those charged with minding the funds.

When the final resolution was carried and the speeches ended, the subscription list was formally opened and a sum of nearly three hundred pounds was collected. The Mayor was the first to donate, giving five pounds. This was followed by donations as high as twenty pounds each from John Arnott, Beamish & Crawford and Thomas Lyons. Sir William Hackett, Alexander McOstrich and Michael Dunne each gave ten pounds while others donated figures ranging down to two shillings and six pence. Donations were also pledged from some people not in attendance. Ms Catherine Hayes, a well-known singer, promised ten pounds while S.C. Hall of London pledged twenty pounds.

The first meeting for the purpose of erecting a memorial to Fr Theobald Mathew, held on 21 January 1857, was a huge success. The project was launched; a committee of notable members of society was put in place to oversee the endeavour; a subscription list was opened and the not inconsiderable amount of three hundred pounds raised and the proceedings were well reported in the press. It was hoped that the memorial would be in the form of a statue in a prominent location and be executed by the famous Cork sculptor John Hogan. Thus the primary aims were achieved with full support. At another level the meeting also stated deeper ambitions. The memorial was to stand as a signpost in Cork and Ireland's historical narrative. It would be a declaration of gratitude for all time from those that benefited from Fr Mathew's charitable endeavours; it would locate a permanent image of the man among the people and, in the words of Horace Townsend, prompt those seeing it to revive his charity and goodness; the memorial would serve as a watershed in time, after which the tolerance of drunkenness and intemperance which had been the norm would be unacceptable. In this way the monument would be a symbol of improvement, a visual metaphor for change in the tide of public opinion. Finally, talk of pilgrimages, veneration and the accrual of benefits and blessings began the process of mythologizing Fr Mathew such that he would hold a special place in the hearts of minds of future generations and become a symbol of Cork's identity. All that remained now was to erect the Statue.

The Work Begins

The committee immediately set about fund-raising, targeting businesses for contributions. By Monday 26 January donations had been received from Tracy & Co. of St Patrick's Street, (£1); John Corkery, Prince's Street (£1); A. Sutton (£1); Thomas Daly, Leitrim Street, (£1);

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J.W. Bourke, South Mall, (£1); J.G. McCarthy, (£1); George Mazon, Mardyke, (£1); Francis Jones, George's Quay, (£1); Sir John Gordon, (£3) and finally W. Sherlock (£3). Soon donations were coming in from places other than Cork. Francis Leahy, Lord Shannon, wrote from Castlemartyr including a donation of five pounds while Jeremiah Hurley, owner of the Torc View Hotel in Killarney, sent in one pound. By Friday 30 January, just nine days after the first meeting, the *Cork Examiner* was able to report that the collection now stood at £400. The newspaper also stated

... we are glad to perceive that the ward collections are rapidly increasing in amount ...

and that special applications would be made to the Lord Lieutenant and to Her Majesty, Queen Victoria for assistance. Also, that leading inhabitants of cities and towns throughout the country would be asked to collect in their own areas. Lest the ordinary working classes be denied the opportunity to contribute to the fund, a structure was to be put in place

for collecting the sixpences, or even the pence, of the working classes; and from the affectionate veneration in which the name and services of Father Mathew are held by those who, of all others, were the objects of his most paternal solicitude, a considerable addition to the fund is anticipated.

The report concluded in saying that the first formal subscription list would be published the following Friday, but that it would only carry the names of those from whom monies had been received and not those that had simply pledged funding.

The structure of the committee was modified at the following meeting, held on 6 February. At this meeting, members were appointed to subcommittees in each of the seven city wards to organise and make full arrangements for the collection of monies in those areas. Eleven members would look after the north-east, north-west and north-central wards; ten the south and south-central; three in the central and a further three in the west ward. Notices to the effect that certain named members had been allocated ward responsibilities were published in the press.⁷² A matter of some concern to members of the public was also addressed at this meeting, 'as a good deal of anxiety is expressed as to the exact nature and character of the Mathew monument'. The public were reassured that it had been the unanimous feeling at the first meeting that a statue in a prominent location was the memorial of choice and that this was the general feeling at the present time also. It was acknowledged that other proposals had been mooted, such as a Reformatory School for delinquents, named in Fr Mathew's honour. However, public funding could become available for such an initiative. There was no doubt, however, a report on the meeting stated, that the first thoughts among those that had contributed and those yet to do so was that a visible representation in the form of a statue was the right choice for a memorial. Also, Mr Justice Willis, who had just sent in the generous donation of ten guineas 'expressed himself emphatically in unison with the general feeling'. The following week, beginning Monday 9 February, greater clarity on the issue was forthcoming.

The promised first subscription list was published on that Monday and showed that a total of £328- 18s-9d was in hand. £34-1s had been received prior to the beginning of the ward collections which then yielded £117-3s from the Centre Ward; £44-0s-9d from the

⁷² CE, 6 Feb 1857.

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North-West; £40-15s from North-Central; £38-5s from South-Central; £38-4s from the West; £12-10s from North-East and finally £4 from the South. In all, just over two hundred individual contributions had been made. Four days later, at a meeting held on Friday 13 February it was proposed by Richard Dowden and seconded by John Francis Maguire

... that this meeting authorise the secretaries to open a communication with John Hogan Esq., Sculptor, requesting his suggestions on an appropriate design for a statue of Father Mathew, with its intention to be placed in the open air in the City of Cork and also a statement of its probable expense.

It was further proposed that any funds in excess of those necessary for the erection of the statue would be used for some useful public charitable purpose.⁷³ Notices published in the newspapers informed the public of these resolutions, thereby allaying any fears that the monies collected would be used for a purpose other than the erection of a statue. Also published to coincide with the outcome of this meeting was the second subscription list which showed that a further sum of £138-19s-10d was received, bringing the total to £467-18s-7d. Some other matters were dealt with at this time also. It was stated that for the moment, weekly subscription lists would be published and also, given that certain wards were bringing in less money than had been hoped for, that extra collectors would be appointed in these areas. Consequently, for example, a further thirteen names were published as being nominated officially to collect for the cause in the west ward. Contributions continued to come in from a variety of sources other than the collections. One P.M. Barry, originally from Ireland but resident for many years in Australia, on a visit home, gave five pounds before embarking on the

⁷³ *CE*, 13 February 1857.

return journey to his adopted homeland. Rev. Dan O'Connor from the Augustinian Convent on John Street in Dublin sent one pound, wishing that he could send more. Peter Daly from Galway also sent one pound. When all the contributions for the fourth week were counted, the total on hand had risen to £563-11s-3d. The intake of this week included a sum of £12-8s-4d received from 'the Workingmen's' collection'. The following week, which saw the overall amount on hand rise to £640-19s-2d, the workingmen also contributed, in the amount of £10-4s-9d. Towards the end of March, when the seventh list was published, the total on hand had risen to £769-5s-5d.⁷⁴ What was noticeable however was that the collection amounts from the wards was dropping. On this seventh list, £6-11s was collected in the North-West ward while a mere 12s-5d came from the West ward.

While the monies were being collected on the one hand, officers of the committee were in consultation with John Hogan regarding the details of the project. Hogan was of the opinion that the choice of material from which the statue should be crafted lay between marble and bronze and his preference was for bronze. At a meeting held on 9 October 1857, he said that the cost of an eight-foot high statue cast in bronze would be in the region of twelve hundred pounds, approximately one thousand of which would be for the statue itself and the rest for the creation of a plinth on which the figure would stand. The plinth would be ten feet and so the overall monument would be just over eighteen feet in height. Thus it would be a physically imposing statue, an aspect of the sculpture that would be symbolic of the physically imposing presence among the people of Fr Mathew himself, when he lived and worked among them. As work could not begin until the summer, the target date for completion would be January 1859. There was a brief discussion on possible sites where the statue might be located but it was deemed too early in the process to get into this in any great detail.

⁷⁴ These figures are calculated from the published lists in *CE*, 13, 20, 27 Feb; 6, 16, 27 March, 1857.

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Father Mathew Statue

The first thing to be done was the making of a small model of the proposed statue to be approved by the committee and on 13 November, a two-foot replica, cast in white plaster, arrived at the Cork Institution for inspection. While pleased with some aspects of the model, for example the likeness of the face, the many folds of a large cloak covered the lower portion of the figure as well as one arm and so the committee asked Hogan to modify the casting to give more detail to the image of Fr Mathew. Two weeks later, a new model was presented, 'which we consider in many respects a great improvement upon the first'. The removal of the many folds in the cloak revealed the full figure of the man. 'The left arm is slightly retreating while the head is bent forward, as if the Apostle were in the act of urging his mission of mercy upon a crowd'.⁷⁵ The members of the committee were much happier with the second casting and so it was resolved that an agreement would be drawn up, following the signing of which by both parties, the project would get underway in the summer, especially since there now seemed to be a sufficiently steady inflow of money from the donations and collections being taken up to secure the necessary finance.

On 29 March 1858 however the *Cork Examiner* reported news that would stall the project considerably.

We deeply regret to learn the lamented death of John Hogan, the eminent Irish sculptor, whose chisel has done so much to maintain the character of his country and to impart the immortality of art to the immortality of his country.

John Hogan left behind a widow and eleven children and this was a matter of some concern to a number of the committee members. Although the contracts had not yet been signed, there was a strong feeling that some level of support should be shown to the family,

⁷⁵ *CE*, 2 December 1857.

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given that they would have had an expectation of income from the statue project. This issue came before the committee on Wed 7 April.

At the outset of proceedings, Bernard J. Alcock, one of the secretaries to the committee, informed the meeting that there was the sum of £877 in the bank and when interest due and some other monies not yet lodged were added, that total would rise to £900. Richard Dowden then asked what was to be done regarding the Hogan family. It wasn't just that certain members of the committee felt they would like to help, but that although contracts had not been formally signed, nevertheless John Hogan had already undertaken some work, both in preparing his tender submission and also in the making of the two sample models. John Francis Maguire then informed the committee that one Alexander M. Sullivan, editor of *The Nation* newspaper, had suggested that both the continuation of the project and assisting the family could be achieved by retaining Hogan's son – another John – to craft the statue. Hogan the younger's competence, allied to the fact that he would work with an experienced assistant of his father's by the name of Cahill, meant that there would be no issue regarding the quality of the work. He then read a letter from the young John Valentine Hogan, stating that he was 'deeply sensible of the grave responsibility of undertaking this contract' but reassured the members that he had been 'from almost infancy educated for my father's profession'. He concluded the letter by offering to create immediately a half-size model for the committee's approval or alternatively to go to Rome and create a full size model under the supervision of fellow-artist friends of his father, which he would then bring back to Cork for approval prior to bringing it to Paris for casting.⁷⁶ The issue was then debated and the general feeling was in favour of the proposal to commission young Hogan to take over the project, Maguire among those who said that it would be of great advantage to see a model and evaluate the

⁷⁶ CE, 9 April 1858.

workmanship. However, Col. Beamish was the one that posed the question as to what would happen in the event of the committee not liking young Hogan's model? Following further debate, a resolution was adopted authorising John Valentine Hogan to go on with the work and agreeing to pay £100 on account. However, should the model not be approved of, the £100 would close the transaction between the committee and young Hogan. The committee also agreed to pay half the costs of transporting a full sized model from Rome to Cork when the time came. In this way, some assistance and compensation for the planning and work already done was rendered to the family, while the project proceeded with an opt-out mechanism for the committee if they didn't like the model. The meeting concluded with the adoption of another resolution stating that

... looking to the high and distinguished position which Hogan held as an Irish sculptor, his numerous and successful works, his long and ill-requited labours, and the awful calamity which has deprived a wife and eleven children of their only means of support, we earnestly call upon the representative for Ireland to take such steps as may secure an adequate provision out of public resources of the country for the bereaved survivors.

This resolution was carried unanimously.

Eight weeks later, on 9 June, Richard Dowden wrote to the committee to say that John V. Hogan had called on him to say that a first small model was ready for viewing in his studio at Wentworth Place in Dublin. Dowden went to see the piece and expressed himself 'greatly gratified' to see the model before him. He also informed the committee that Hogan had in his possession a block of white Sicilian marble which would be much more interesting and pleasing than bronze. Consideration of this option, he said, should be inquired into

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with every caution.⁷⁷ The following week the committee met at the Athenaeum to see and discuss the model, which was made from Plaster of Paris.

The head is beautifully executed, the features being well and distinctly formed, the expression of the well known and beloved face happily caught, while the position of the arms is graceful and becoming. There seems to be an over fullness in the lower part of the figure and there is a little awkwardness in the pose of the left leg, but these slight defects are of a nature that it will not be difficult to remedy.⁷⁸

Subject to these adjustments, it was decided to adopt the model and also to allow the public in to see it, thereby encouraging further donations to the statue fund. The matter that Hogan had in his possession a block of white marble then came up for discussion. Hogan believed that 'a bronze statue, from its dingy appearance, would not be so ornamental or so calculated to give beholders a fair idea of the man represented, as a marble one'.⁷⁹ As against this, even if one accepted the argument, the cost of the marble statue would be £1,500 as opposed to £1,000 for the bronze. The committee could not come to agreement on the issue and so a public meeting of all subscribers was called for the following week to resolve the matter. That meeting was arranged for Thursday 24 June but before that a sub-committee set about ascertaining whether bronze or marble would be better, in order to make a recommendation to the public meeting. A letter was dispatched to the Superintendent of the Fine Arts Department at Crystal Palace in London where many statues were located. In the course of a comprehensive reply, the

⁷⁷ *CE*, 9 June 1858.

⁷⁸ *CE*, 18 June 1858.

⁷⁹ *CE*, 18 June 1858.

Superintendent, Thomas Hates, wrote, 'I fear your only chance of a suitable and durable material lies in bronze'. Armed with this letter, the recommendation to the meeting of the subscribers was that the original decision that bronze be used should be adhered to. A motion to this effect was proposed by Alderman Scott and seconded by Mr Julian. However an amendment to the effect that marble be used was put by Dr Boland and seconded by Mr Scraggs. Not a lot of discussion was held; the extra costs for marble, as well as the clear recommendation from London that bronze was the more durable material, were deciding factors. The amendment was defeated by a large majority and the original decision to cast the statue in bronze was upheld.⁸⁰

Difficulties

Over the following twelve weeks, a matter of disagreement arose between the committee and Hogan, however, resulting in an urgent meeting being held on 5 October 1858. The purpose was to consider a letter that had been received from Mrs Hogan, widow of the deceased artist. In it she indicated that young Hogan was now proceeding to Rome to make the full-sized model for the statue. As per the April meeting at which the commission was transferred to John Valentine, this model, when completed would be transported to Cork for inspection, before being transferred to Paris, the committee paying half of the costs incurred. The letter however,

... contained a dissent to this arrangement and a wish that the figure should be sent direct from Rome to Paris. The committee however, at their meeting of yesterday, after some consideration, decided on adhering to their former resolution.⁸¹

⁸⁰ *CE*, 25 June 1858

⁸¹ *CE*, 6 October 1858.

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The Hogan family however, were unwilling to comply and a long stand-off between them and the committee ensued. The disagreement did not last merely days or weeks, but months that dragged on into years. Eventually the frustrations of members of the public were evident in letters sent to the press.

Sir, I humbly submit they ought to proceed at once. There is, I believe, some money collected. But what is to be done with it is left to the public to conjecture. With all due respect I say, the Mathew Testimonial ought to take precedence of the Fitzgibbon Monument. Hoping Sir you will publish the above,

I am your obedient servant,

A TEETOTALLER.⁸²

Sir, Will you allow me to enquire through your influential journal what became of the funds collected for a public fountain in honour of Fr Mathew?

Yours faithfully,

PRO BONO PUBLICO

In reply to the latter, the editor stated that firstly the funds were safe where they were bearing interest. Secondly, that they were collected for a statue and not a fountain. Finally and significantly, the editor referred for the first time to what had been happening.

... the committee are only waiting to get rid of a certain difficulty, to which it may not be wise to refer publicly at

⁸² *CE*, 1 June 1859. The Fitzgibbon Memorial refers to a discussion that had taken place at a recent Corporation meeting where it was proposed to erect a monument to recently deceased former Mayor William Fitzgibbon.

present, in order to carry out the wishes of the subscribers without delay. We hope soon to be enabled to say that the difficulty has been set at rest and that the work is progressing.⁸³

It can be seen therefore that the ‘certain difficulty’ that had arisen, after two years, had still not been resolved. Even more time passed before, on 7 March 1862, the issue was mentioned at a meeting of the Improvement Committee of the Corporation. Discussing the recent removal of a statue to George II at the river end of the Grand Parade, Mr O’Flynn said that he understood ‘it was in contemplation to erect the Mathew monument’ there. On 10 April yet another letter appeared in the press.

Sir, - May I respectfully ask the committee of the Mathew Testimonial through your journal, whether the testimonial will ever be erected? Whether it has yet been commenced or when the public may be gratified by seeing it, if ever?

I don’t like long vague answers that in the end mean nothing. I simply put three questions and I respectfully ask for plain straightforward answers, if they can be given.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

James P. O’Donovan.⁸⁴

In the letter, the writer also referred to a rumour that the monies collected were to be used for another purpose. As to ‘plain straightforward answers’, he received none at all, short or otherwise. Finally, in the winter of 1862, a public announcement was made that explained what the committee had been doing in trying to resolve their dilemma.

⁸³ *CE*, 12 September 1861.

⁸⁴ *CE*, 10 April 1862.

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We are happy to state that the Mathew Monument is really in progress. The eminent Irish artist Mr Foley, to whom the statue is entrusted, has forwarded two sketches to the committee with a view to their making a selection and as soon as that selection is made – which, in all probability may be on Monday next – the artist will proceed vigorously with his work.

In both sketches, Fr Mathew is shown with outstretched hand, blessing his supporters who kneel before him. The difference between the sketches lay in the treatment of his cloak. In one it was light, while in the other it was heavy with many folds. Both sketches showed the figure mounted on a pedestal.

The friends of Father Mathew may feel assured that the work which is to do honour to his memory is in hands every way equal to the task.⁸⁵

John Henry Foley

John Henry Foley was born at 6 Montgomery Street, Dublin, on 24 May 1818. In March 1834, he left Dublin and joined his brother Edward in London, and in the following year became a student in the Royal Academy where he devoted himself entirely to sculpture. After winning the Silver Medal at the Academy, in 1839 he exhibited two works of great significance. They were his *Death of Abel* and *Innocence* and the response to them ensured that he became one of London's most influential sculptors. Throughout his life he was known for his unceasing energy, often working on many commissions at the same time. When the Houses of Parliament in London were being completed and embellished, he was among the exhibitors from whom the final art works were picked and his *Hampden* and

⁸⁵ *CE*, 27 November 1862.

Selden were chosen for the adornment of St Stephen's Hall. Among others of his important works were his Egeria and Caractacus, both executed for the Corporation of London; his statues of Burke and Goldsmith for Trinity College, Dublin, and the figure of The Prince Consort and the group of Asia, both for the Albert Memorial in London. He also did many portrait busts and church monuments. In 1866 he was given the commission to execute the O'Connell Monument for Dublin's main thoroughfare, but died on 27 August 1874, before it was completed.

A decade earlier, however, he embarked on the Fr Mathew project with enthusiasm. 'The Mathew monument will ere long be one of the ornaments of our city', proclaimed an editorial in the *Cork Examiner*, which also referred to other aspects of the effects that the delay had had. With eight hundred pounds in the bank, that was less than had been collected and so further monies needed to be acquired.

We may state that a larger sum than now in the bank was originally subscribed; but compensation to HOGAN and his family, together with unavoidable expenses – spreading over a period of six years – reduced it to the amount specified above.⁸⁶

The article also asked that the Corporation should contribute the necessary finance for the making of the pedestal. By April however, there was still no sign of any progress. John Francis Maguire once again, through the medium of his newspaper, revealed the cause of this further delay.

The delay which has occurred is not in any way to be charged to Mr Foley, the eminent artist to whom the work

⁸⁶ *CE*, 6 October 1863.

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has been wisely entrusted. Mr Foley completed the model several months since and entered into arrangements for its execution in bronze; but the person to whom the work was confided failed in business and was literally sold-out.⁸⁷

In other words, the person tasked with casting the bronze went bankrupt and, assets being seized and sold, the model was in danger of being lost. Happily, however, John Henry Foley was able to persuade the receivers to release the model back to him, following which he entered into another contract with Henry Prince & Co. Foundry in Southwark, London, which firm also cast the Albert Memorial situated in Kensington Gardens in London, as well as many other famous statues. Henry Prince promised that he would do his best to make up for lost time and that he would try to have the statue completed by the end of July such that it could be unveiled in mid August. John Francis Maguire finished by calling on all temperance societies to make arrangements and to prepare to be present at the unveiling.

The mid-August date was not met. Casting a bronze of the size in question was a delicate operation and if anything went wrong, several months' further delay could be expected. Consequently, great care was taken. On 17 August the *Cork Examiner* reported

...we have much pleasure in stating, on the best authority, that the statue of the Apostle of Temperance has been successfully cast. The Mayor has this day received a letter from Mr Prince to whom the responsibility of that delicate operation was entrusted; and Mr Prince states that the statue was cast on last Thursday week; that it was a very successful casting and that Mr Foley was much pleased with it.

⁸⁷ *CE*, 18 April 1864.

There was still work to be done to bring it to completion in the form of cleaning and polishing. Mr Prince, however, suggested that it would most probably arrive in Cork on the second or third of October, just in time to unveil it on the anniversary of Fr Mathew's birth, 10 October.

Location and Final Planning

Thoughts now turned to the more practical matters such as the precise location where the statue would stand. A committee delegation waited on the Improvement Committee of the Corporation on 19 August and, having informed them officially that the statue would be unveiled on 10 October, requested that a site on St Patrick's Street just to the rear of where a lamp-post and fountain had been erected near the bridge. They also requested that the Corporation remove the post and fountain and prepare the site for the statue. Finally the delegation told the meeting that they would formally be requesting of the Corporation that they fund the pedestal. In answer to a question from one Mr Collins, the Mayor said that it was John Henry Foley himself who had selected the site and the exact positioning of the statue. Mr Collins persisted that he was unhappy with one aspect of the proposal. From the map before them, he believed that the statue would face into William Street, with one profile to St Patrick's Street and the other to the bridge. He had never, he said, 'seen a statue whose face was presented to a mere bye-street'. Mr Scott argued that the position facilitated the beauty of the evening sun hitting the side of Fr Mathew's face, which would never occur if the statue was facing north. As the aspect had been chosen by John Henry Foley however, it was agreed to ask him to reconsider this positioning, given that many felt that facing north across the bridge would be better than facing into a side street further back from the bridge. As regards the other requests

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to remove the lamp-post and fountain, prepare the site and to pay for the pedestal, the meeting agreed unanimously to these wishes.⁸⁸

There were some expressions of dislike for the chosen position. James P. O'Donovan wrote that 'for my own part I do not like the intended position', but he bowed to wiser judges. Meantime, many people were anxious to establish the form that the unveiling would take. It was clear that it would be a day of great celebration. Without question, the occasion would be free of alcohol, given that it would be in celebration of the Apostle of Temperance. There was another concern, however, that there should be no political overtones expressed. This was the period during which the Fenian movement was gaining ground and the organisers were adamant that the event should not be used in any way to be seen to support such sentiments. Informing the public that on the day there would be a great procession of the trades, temperance societies and school-children, the organisers said that

... the demonstration of the 10th of October should be of the very same character as that of which Fr Mathew himself would have approved, were he still amongst us – that is, unpolitical and unsectarian.

Fr Mathew, though a devoted Catholic priest, belonged to all, loved all, served all without distinction; and though an Irishman strong in his love of country and filled with a profound attachment to her interests, he belonged to no party and wisely fled from the strife and passion of politics.

... we recommend and earnestly advise the entire absence of any banner or emblem which would not only be in direct

⁸⁸ *CE*, 19 August 1864.

opposition to the unpolitical and unsectarian career of the great and good man whom we all desire to honour, but which would be calculated to give offence to any class, any party or any opinion in the community.⁸⁹

On 15 September, a final announcement appeared in the press stating that, notwithstanding some alternative suggestions regarding the intended location of the statue,

... the committee has finally decided on placing the Statue of Fr Mathew nearly opposite to Mr Donegan's house in Patrick Street and within some eighty feet of the crossing or line, from Lavitt's Quay to Merchant's Quay.

Some of the issues that had to be considered in choosing the site were that a channel of the river runs beneath and also that to place it further down the street would be to locate it in a narrower part. There were suggestions that it be located at Winthrop Street and also at the confluence of Bridge Street and St Patrick's Bridge. The site chosen however was decreed the best. Also, John Henry Foley was now adamant, given the expressed view that the statue should not face a side street, that it should face northwards, looking across the bridge to the hills and country beyond. Works to lay the foundations began immediately and were completed on the morning of 21 September.

It was now almost eight years since the death of Fr Mathew and the subsequent decision to memorialise him in the form of a statue to be located at a public location in Cork city. In the intervening period, the practicalities of fund-raising; the death of the sculptor chosen to execute the work, followed by difficulties with his son

⁸⁹ *CE*, 1 September 1864.

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who took over the commission and finally the bankruptcy of the first firm contracted to cast the bronze dominated the workings of the committee charged with bringing the project to completion. The desire therefore to make Fr Mathew an iconic figure, not just for the present but for future generations also, took a back seat while these practical matters were being dealt with. Now that the finished statue was en route to Cork, the location decided upon and in readiness, and that the unveiling date was set, the planning of and the unveiling ceremony itself were a means to reinvigorate such aspirations.

In the days leading up to the great occasion of the unveiling ceremony, many groups and societies set about preparing for the event such that they would present the best possible face and also to do honour both to the ritual itself and also to Fr Mathew. The Young Men's Society issued a notice calling on all members to 'hold themselves engaged to join the procession in a body'. In this way the concurrence of the members with the sentiments of the occasion would be evident, not just as individuals, but as a collective body also. At a meeting of the City Council on Monday 3 October it was decided that the members would partake in the event wearing their robes. By doing so they were giving official sanction to the proceedings and, furthermore, by attending attired in their civic regalia, they were being seen by the populace as the power-brokers of society. Through their participation and acclaim of the proceedings by the populace, such civic hierarchy was perpetuated as the norm. Thus the ritual of the occasion served to underpin the civic structures extant at the time. The Odd-Fellows Society – a group committed to providing welfare for members in their hour of need - decided that they would do honour to themselves and the occasion by 'providing themselves with a costly and expensive banner of blue silk'.⁹⁰ Indeed such was the demand for banners and other embellishments that

⁹⁰ *CE*, 5 October 1864.

'Mr Hales of London, who supplies 'regalia' to the various orders of Masons, Odd Fellows and Foresters is now in Cork executing orders in connection with his art for the procession on Monday next'.⁹¹ There were calls that shops and businesses in the city would close for the day to facilitate the maximum number of people possible attending the occasion. Consequently notices appeared in the press advertising closures.

Mathew Procession.

The Queen's Old Castle Company's

Warehouse

WILL NOT OPEN

For Business

On Monday, the 10th instant.⁹²

The Citizen's River Steamers' Company announced that on the day of the unveiling, special sailings would run from Queenstown and Aghada and that, for the convenience of passengers, they would be disembarked at Albert Quay, adjacent to the Park from where the procession was planned to start.

Cork and Bandon Railway.

In order to afford the inhabitants of Bandon and its vicinity an opportunity of witnessing the great procession on the occasion of unveiling the Mathew Monument on Monday 10 October, 1st, 2nd and 3rd class tickets Bandon to Cork and Back will be charged as single fares per the 10.45 a.m. train returning at 5.15 p.m.⁹³

⁹¹ *CE*, 7 October 1864.

⁹² *CE*, 7 October 1864.

⁹³ *CE*, 8 October 1864

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19th-century glass lantern view of the Statue. Courtesy Michael Lenihan.

The statue itself duly arrived in the city and was taken to its place of mounting where it was uncased and made ready to be hoisted into place. Mr Atkins was commissioned to raise the plinth on which the Statue would stand. Finally, on Friday 7 October, final arrangements, including the planned route for the procession, were announced in the press.

The outline of the event, as published in the *Cork Examiner* on the weekend prior to the occasion itself, began by suggesting that ‘everything indicates that the ceremonial on Monday, including the procession of corporations, trades etc. and the unveiling of the Mathew Statue, will be one which both in its proportion and elements will be the most imposing that has taken place in this city for the last twenty years’. Thus the public were informed authoritatively in advance of the event of the large crowd expected. This self-fulfilling prophecy was designed to create an excitement about the occasion and make it such that no one would want to miss it. Writing about similar advance publicity regarding the unveiling of the Carson statue in Belfast, Gillian McIntosh says that ‘the idea and image of a large supporting crowd was thus established for unionists prior to its becoming a reality’.⁹⁴ In the *Examiner* report of October 1864, the very use of the word ‘ceremonial’, emphasised official and formal aspects of the upcoming ceremony.

The many trades’ societies participating in the procession drew lots for their position in order, all to march four abreast behind the series of carriages that carried the officials and dignitaries. Eighteen trades took part in the draw, first from the hat being the Cork Cutters, followed in order by the Cabinet Makers; Bakers; House Painters; Stone Cutters; Coach Makers; House Carpenters; Masons; Blacksmiths; Farriers; Tailors; Plasterers; Shipwrights; Curriers; Coopers; Boot and Shoe Makers; Victuallers and finally Sawyers.

⁹⁴ Gillian McIntosh, *The Force of Culture*, p. 45.

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Numbers 1 – 9 were directed to assemble on Monaghan Road while the rest would gather on Centre Park Road. Meantime all temperance societies were to meet on Victoria Road while assorted other bodies would gather at Navigation Wall. The official meeting time was 10 a.m. and the procession would begin from Albert Quay at noon. On arrival at the Statue the Temperance groups would occupy St Patrick's Street, trades 1 to 10 to cross the bridge onto Bridge Street, 11 to 14 would stand on Camden Quay while 15 to 18 would go to St Patrick's Quay. The bridge was to be occupied by societies such as that of the Odd-Fellows, the Foresters and the Sick Poor Societies, as well as the many school children that would march. Those not participating in the procession but watching along the route could then file into St Patrick's Street behind the Statue. All banners were to be placed in conspicuous positions in view of the Statue. It was anticipated that the procession would take one and a half hours and that the unveiling itself would occur at 2 p.m. The allocation of positions in this way had a two-fold purpose. Firstly, in everybody knowing precisely where they were to go, maximum organisational efficiency would be achieved. More significantly, however, at the moment of the unveiling, when the cover was withdrawn from the Statue, a scene reminiscent of the great meetings that occurred when Fr Mathew was engaged in his crusade would be re-enacted. Thousands would see him before them and symbolically he would see and reach out to them. The sheer physical size of the Statue, the solidity and strength of the bronze material, as well as the countenance of the figure, would reinforce the stature of Fr Mathew the man and remind all of both his power as a preacher and the importance of his message. A dramatic moment of theatre would be created that would live long in the memories of those attending and which they in turn would pass on in oral tradition to future generations. As Monday 10 October 1864 dawned, the people gathered to witness an event of great significance on a historic day.

The Procession and Unveiling

The *Constitution* or *Cork Advertiser*, a rival newspaper to the *Cork Examiner*, described the events of 10 October 1864 in surprisingly glowing terms given its usual disposition towards any occasion that had Catholic associations. Phrases such as ‘vast assemblage’ and ‘immensity of the mass’ conveyed the magnitude of the numbers attending, which, by 12 o’ clock, ‘when all were in readiness, it has been computed that there were 100,000 persons in the streets’. From early in the day, large numbers of people made their way to the city, seeking any available vantage point from which to view the procession and unveiling. Trains and steamers from the county and beyond offloaded those who journeyed over large distances to be in attendance. Every window along the processional route was occupied. Many roofs were taken by numbers of people, some waving flags. ‘A couple of hours almost before the procession commenced to move, ridge tiles and parapet walls were taken complete possession of, in many instances to the great danger of the occupiers, but fortunately no accident happened’. As had been carefully planned, the various bodies and societies gathered at the appointed places prior to the off.

Combined, they presented a most animated scene, with the scores of richly coloured banners floating in the wind and glancing as the sunlight fell upon them; while the long lines of men, decorated with sashes, rosettes, medals and various badges presented an appearance truly splendid and imposing.⁹⁵

Such embellishments brought a degree of theatricality to the proceedings as well as carnivalesque celebration. They were also symbols of unity and identity. Uniformly attired and walking four

⁹⁵ CC, 11 October 1864.

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abreast as those in the different groups did, the marching populace were like a victorious army having come through the crusade.

Despite the eloquence of the *Constitution* report, however, that in the *Cork Examiner* was far more extensive. It too began with a description of the numbers attending and participating, saying that there was no reservation of jubilant feeling. The report also says that, for those that knew Fr Mathew, the occasion was a remembrance of a man ‘that brought peace and happiness to the humble home, whose lips were ever breathing kindness and good will and whose hand was open as day to melting charity’. Where formerly alcoholic drink had destroyed the lives of many people, ‘now thousands enrolled themselves under his banner and not many years had passed by when the teetotallers in this land of drunkenness counted by millions’. Despite the familiarity with which many people recalled Fr Mathew, ‘for the completeness of our subject however, a brief sketch, though a hurried one, will be needful’.⁹⁶ Not unsurprisingly, the ensuing short sketch has many close similarities to elements in the published biography of Fr Mathew by John Francis Maguire. Phrases such as ‘in every measure of mercy he was foremost’, and describing his life as ‘beautiful and exemplary’, have hagiographical overtones. Regarding his death, the sketch says that ‘at last the time came when he had to yield up his spirit’, a description reminiscent of the death of Christ on the Cross. Through the use of such descriptive expressions, it was imparted to the people that the statue was erected such that both the present and future generations could worship the man and his mission.

Thus, before readers reached any description of the actual procession and the unveiling of the Statue, the proceedings were given a context that reinforced the deep significance of the occasion. This

⁹⁶ *CE*, 10 October 1864.

included gratitude for good works done; celebration of a victory over an unhappy past leading to a better future; worship of the Apostle that had achieved the victory and, finally, in the presence of the unveiled statue of Fr Mathew, the coming together for one last time of many thousands of people declaring to future generations that this is Fr Mathew; this is the Apostle of Temperance and we are a grateful people. To those future generations, the Statue was their legacy.

Shortly after twelve o'clock the great procession began its journey from the Albert Quay area towards St Patrick's Street. In the leading carriage were the Mayor, John Francis Maguire, along with Town Clerk A. McCarthy, the Mayor's secretary J. Franklin and City Treasurer Mr Humphries. The carriage was preceded by the Corporation Mace Bearers while the Sword Bearer sat on the front seat with the driver. Next came six carriages bearing members of the Corporation and other dignitaries and following these carriages, a further seven carried members of the Mathew Committee, as well as Mr Charles Mathew of Lehenagh, brother of Fr Mathew, and three nephews. After all of the carriages had started their journey, the various bodies of men participating followed, beginning with the Temperance Societies. First in order was the Globe Lane Society with sixty-two members marching behind their flag of green silk with gold fringe and bearing the name of the society. Among this group were four members that had been present on the inaugural night when Fr Mathew committed himself to the cause in 1838. Next, following their band of fourteen members, walked a large contingent from the last temperance society founded in Cork during Fr Mathew's lifetime, St Finbarr's. It was founded in 1854, when Fr Mathew was living at Lehenagh with his brother. One hundred and twenty members of the Barrack Street Association, along with their Temperance Band, came next. Each member was obliged to provide himself with a silver medal and green sash, worn across the shoulders, as well as a

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white rosette pinned on the breast. As well as these embellishments, each member also carried a mahogany wand painted green at the tip and from which streamed a white ribbon. Behind a flag bearing the name of the society and the national arms marched members of the Douglas Temperance group, followed by forty member of the Quarry Road society. In this group, each man wore his temperance medal and a rosette of white silk as well as carrying a wand tipped with green ribbon. To the rear of this grouping, two men carried the society's banner of green silk which was embroidered with the national arms and the name of the society in gold. Sixty-six from Ballintemple followed, each wearing a temperance medal and carrying white wands tipped in white ribbon and next, behind twenty-four band members, a contingent from the Queenstown society marched. They were followed by over fifty from Skibbereen, following which marched over five hundred from the Young Men's Society.

In its reporting of the proceedings the *Cork Examiner* says that 'the most important part of the ceremonials was the procession of the trades' and that 'in number and respectability it has never been surpassed in Cork since the days of O'Connell'. On this occasion 'it was calculated that a muster of four thousand men was made, arrayed under their several banners'. The cork-cutters marched behind a huge banner depicting the arms of the trade, a cork tree and on the reverse, a figure of Erin sitting by a harp and pointing to a round tower; alongside her stood an Irish greyhound. The Cabinet Makers' banner depicted the interior of a drawing room with beautiful furniture and behind it, the members each carried a polished wand with burnished tip, the effect of which, according to the report, 'was very striking'. Almost one hundred bakers were followed by over fifty house-painters, each wearing a green sash bordered in gold and carrying a wand with white streamer attached. Similar wands were carried by the stone-cutters. Thirty-four outfitters were

led by the banner of their trade and they also had a second banner to the rear. Made of green silk and bearing the harp and crown in gold, it had the mottos 'Céad Míle Fáilte' and 'Ireland for the Irish' emblazoned on it. One hundred and twenty house carpenters wore green scarves, followed by a similar number of stone-masons. They also wore green scarves as well as white aprons, embroidered with the square and compass. Each blacksmith also wore a green scarf and carried a wand, as did the farriers. One hundred and forty tailors marched behind a carriage carrying their banner and flags, the members again being attired with green sashes and carrying wands, while eighty plasterers, as well as their green sashes, had the square and compass emblems in brass suspended from their necks. One hundred and sixty shipwrights were followed by over three hundred coopers, after which came one hundred and fifty boot and shoe makers and a large number of victuallers. Next came seventy coach-makers, each wearing a green sash and a gold, white and blue rosette. Finally, a large contingent of sawyers completed the trades' section of the procession.

The next section of the procession consisted of a number of other societies, among them nearly two hundred members of the Odd Fellow's Society, followed by a large number of Foresters. 'This body made a most brilliant and imposing appearance and from the brilliancy of their dress, banners and decoration, attracted the greatest attention'. At their head were two mounted horsemen, dressed in the costumes of their claimed founders, Robin Hood and Little John, while 'the members were all dressed in full costume, tunics of Lincoln green, hats with ostrich feathers, bows and arrows'. Little wonder that they excited considerable interest. St Coleman's Society of Cloyne followed, after which came six hundred boys from the public schools. This section was completed with over two hundred from the Society of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

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By now the head of the procession was well under way, en route to the Statue. The leading carriages left Albert Quay and turned left into Anglesea Road. Then the procession travelled South Terrace, George's Quay, Sullivan's Quay, South Gate Bridge, South Main Street, North Main Street, North Gate Bridge, Pope's Quay, Camden Quay, St Patrick's Bridge, Merchant's Quay, Warren's Place (now Parnell Place), South Mall, Grand Parade and into St Patrick's Street. The procession reached two miles in length such that when the first carriages reached their destination, some sections of the procession were still as far back as North Gate Bridge. The scene at the Statue was spectacular.

The windows on every side were crammed with figures and from amidst the sea of heads rose up the banners, all ablaze with colour and, fluttering gaily in the wind, were the apparently countless streamers from the rods of the processionists. In the midst of the multitude rose the Statue in its red veil, a white wreath upon the head. Fully an hour passed before a sufficient proportion of the procession could be filed past; it being found quite impossible that the whole of the trades could pass previous to the ceremony, the inaugural address was delivered by the Mayor.

Before he had finished even the first sentence, in which he told the citizens that it was a proud day in which they did honour to a great man that had lived and died doing good among them, the crowd had broken in cheers. The Mayor said that throughout the world capitals and chief cities did honour to great men. Thus were to be seen statues and memorials to statesmen, warriors, patriots, philosophers, philanthropists, poets, historians, painters, sculptors, great bishops and holy priests. Notwithstanding, however, such honouring of greatness, splendour of intellect, magnitude of soul, heroism of self-sacrifice or whatever ennoble a person,

... we may still proudly ask of the world, where is the



Illustrated London News depiction of the unveiling of the Fr Mathew Statue, 10 October 1864

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name more worthy of honour than the name of Theobald Mathew? Where the man more entitled to an enduring mark of public respect than Father Mathew, the Apostle of Temperance.

This drew further loud cheering from the assembled multitudes. Mayor John Francis Maguire then gave an account of the labours of Fr Mathew, which served to remind those that had lived at the time of his charity and also to give to all others an appreciation of the great man that they were honouring. Throughout the Mayor's address, the cheers of the crowds grew ever louder. In the account of the proceedings published in the *Examiner*, bracketed references to the crowds interjections started as 'hear, hear'; then became 'cheers', then 'loud cheers'; then 'great cheers' and finally 'enthusiastic cheering'. Reminiscent of language used at the outset of the commemoration campaign designed to mythologise Fr Mathew, John Francis Maguire finished his brief account of Fr Mathew's life and labours saying

... he died a soldier of the cross with his armour on. He died amidst the tears and the benedictions of all men; and upon his sainted grave no hand has flung aught but a flower and no tongue has coupled his holy name with aught but a blessing and a prayer.

By now, nearly all of those participating in the procession had reached the Statue, in time to hear John Francis Maguire say

It is now my pleasing duty, in the name of the citizens of Cork, to unveil the Statue which is to stand henceforth in your city as an enduring memorial of its best and greatest citizen, and to present to the gaze of those whom he loved

and served in life the semblance of those features which are as familiar to their memories and so dear to their hearts. Let the Statue now be unveiled.

At this point the cord holding the veil was pulled: it fell away and the face of Fr Mathew looked out on an assembled multitude. Once more, thousands felt blessed by the outstretched hand of the Apostle.

A shout was raised which swelled along the street, and was caught up from point to point of the procession until it became a long and continuous roar that lasted for fully a quarter of an hour.⁹⁷

When the great cheering that echoed through the city had died down, Mr J. Taylor of London addressed the meeting. Representing the Temperance Association of England and the National Temperance League, he began by confirming that Fr Mathew was honoured throughout the world. He delighted in the fact that Fr Mathew was a man who loved all, no matter what their religious affiliations or beliefs, no matter whether they were the working man, artisan, merchant or professional. He earnestly advocated that the cause to which Fr Mathew dedicated himself, that of temperance, would be adopted by everyone and that 'this day may witness not only the inauguration of this most beautiful Statue, but the commencement of a new era in the history of the temperance cause'.⁹⁸ Mr James Haughton from Dublin said that it was a glorious day and that he rejoiced to be present 'and to take part in this great ceremonial of handing down to future generations – in this tangible form – the figure of our honoured friend'. The final speaker was the Rev. Nicholas Dunscombe had been a founding member of

⁹⁷ CE, 10 October 1864.

⁹⁸ CC, 11 October 1864.

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the temperance movement in the city. He recalled and contrasted the vast assemblage before him with the small beginnings that the movement had had more than thirty years earlier and he again called for a renewal of peoples' commitment to the cause. When he had finished speaking and as the vast crowds dispersed, the bands processed once more around the Statue, playing as they passed it. As the people made their way homeward and the music faded, Cork's main street, St Patrick's Street, was changed forever. A landmark had been erected, not just marking a location, but also a time in history.⁹⁹

It wasn't just the local Cork press that reported on the unveiling of the Statue. The *Freeman's Journal* of Tuesday 11 October carried an extensive report on the proceedings.

...the citizens of Cork raised and inaugurated, in the leading thoroughfare of their city, a monument to one whom it is not too much to say will be ever regarded as one of the purest philanthropists who has blessed the world with his labours. In Patrick's Street there now stands a life-like Statue of the devoted 'Apostle of Temperance' – the self-sacrificing Father Mathew.¹⁰⁰

The remainder of the report carried all the details that were also so eloquently reported in the *Examiner* and *Constitution*.

Conclusion

The primary purpose in erecting a Statue to Father Theobald Mathew was to express gratitude to and commemorate a man that had spend his life working to benefit the less well of in the society

⁹⁹ CC, 11 October 1864.

¹⁰⁰ *Freeman's Journal*, 11 October 1864.

in which he lived. He did this in many practical ways: giving charity and alms to the needy, the provision of education, ministering at the bedsides of those effected with terminal illness, easing the way that people could be buried, the development of better places of worship, giving practical relief during famine times and most notably the pursuit of a crusade advocating temperance. Fr Mathew's ruthless pursuit of his objectives meant that, while to his supporters he was a living saint, to others, his methods, his deviation from the norms of Catholic practice and his popularity meant that he was a man to be treated with caution. Nevertheless, within weeks of his death, his supporters undertook the mission to commemorate and memorialise him. From the outset it was not a project rooted in the contemporary. It was also conceived such that Fr Mathew would play a part in the lives of future generations. Those planning the project set about achieving this in a number of ways: the physicality and location of the memorial; mythologizing and deifying the man himself; as well as reinforcing that he was an icon to all throughout society regardless of class or creed. Such ambition was clear when the project began, as evidenced through an examination of the language utilised in the resolutions at the first meeting held towards the project. When the practical dimension of the endeavour got underway, matters such as fundraising, selection of design and choice of artist dominated the work of the committee. When finally, in October 1864, the Statue was finished and ready to be put in position, the unveiling ceremony presented a final public opportunity to reinforce the broad ambitions of the organisers and they took the chance with passion. A brief analysis of the reportage on the event demonstrates this.

All reports contained a description of the Statue and its location. Regarding the decision to position it facing northwards at the St Patrick's Bridge end of St Patrick's Street, the reports highlighted that for anybody coming into the city, they would be greeted by

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the face and outstretched hand of Father Mathew. Hence the intention was that it would become an identifying landmark of the city for future generations. The reports also complimented the work of the artist Foley, particularly for the realistic reproduction of Fr Mathew's features. Terms such as an 'expression of sweet and beaming benevolence' and 'a pose remarkably easy and graceful' were used. Thus people were told what it was they were seeing when they looked upon the Statue. Fr Mathew was also presented as a hero of the age. Following an outline of the works that he undertook, it was suggested that while memorials were commonplace to statesmen, warriors, patriots, philosophers, philanthropists, poets, historians, painters, sculptors, great bishops and holy priests, Cork could proudly ask if there was no one more worthy than Fr Mathew. Thus Fr Mathew deserved to be considered among the great heroes of the world, whose works would enter the annals of history. Language with biblical overtones was used throughout the reports. In describing his charitable works during the famine, it was said that 'he fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, clothed the naked and sheltered the stranger and the wanderer and protected the widow and orphan', sentiments reminiscent of those expressed in the Book of Isaiah.¹⁰¹ In describing that 'he died as a soldier of the Cross, with his armour on', Fr Mathew was once again positioned as a hero, a crusader and a Christ-like figure. Suggesting that 'no tongue has coupled his holy name with aught save a blessing and a prayer' is a strong submission aligning him with the holy names of Jesus and the saints, all towards the ambition that Fr Mathew was a man worthy of deification. All reports made reference to his universal acceptance, regardless of class or creed. The importance of the Statue for future generations was highlighted in phrases such as that of Mr Taylor when he said the he trusted that the day 'would witness not only the inauguration of this most beautiful Statue, but

¹⁰¹ *Isaiah: 61:1:2.*

the commencement of a new era in the history of temperance' and also James Haughton's comment that he rejoiced in taking part in 'this great ceremonial of handing down to future generations – in this tangible form – the figure of our honoured friend'.

There are many other aspects of the day pertaining to different motivations and agendas of the participating groups. For example, despite the call that no banners or symbols with political overtones should be carried, the extensive use of green, white and gold embellishment as well as the mottos on many of the banners, suggested that embedded statements of a political nature were indeed being imparted. That there was no official participation by the religious authorities in the city suggests that there had never been genuine reconciliation between Fr Mathew and the Catholic leadership. These, however, are beyond the scope of this work. It is clear that in erecting the Statue to Fr Mathew at its location on St Patrick's Street, those that did so created a landmark that became an icon and an enduring symbol of the city; made a statement to future generations that there lived among them a hero that deserved their gratitude as well as that of ensuing generations, not least because he helped create a better society for the future than that which had gone before; and erected a monument that testified to the unlimited charity of Fr Mathew, who carried out his mission in a holy and saintly way. Thus the Statue was deserving of a form of worship.

But did those who undertook this mission succeed? Did the people of future generations accept and live the ambitions of those who organised to erect and locate the Statue in Cork's main thoroughfare and what, if any, is the place of the Statue in the world of the twenty-first century?



Statue c. 1890
Courtesy Michael Lenihan

CHAPTER FOUR

Legacy

On 28 December 1864, a letter appeared in the *Constitution* regarding a practice that had recently been witnessed in the city, that of people worshipping before the Statue of Fr Mathew.

To the Editor of the *Constitution*:

Sir – It is a melancholy sight to witness poor women prostrated before Father Mathew’s Statue worshipping the bronze and limestone. Surely the Roman Catholic Clergy of Cork ought to have sufficient influence to prohibit such idolatry. The public, in passing through Patrick Street today, at 12 o’clock, could not avoid remarking two women on their knees in front of the Statue. Alas! That the poor creatures are not better taught.

Yours,

VIATOR. 27 December 1864.

It was normal for the *Constitution* to take any opportunity to pass critical comment on Catholic practice in the city. Nevertheless, the events described in the letter indicate that some people took to heart the sentiments of those that erected the Statue. In February 1866, it was the *Constitution* that again commented on matters concerning the Statue – this time anticipating events in our own time that happened in Ballinspittle, when it was believed that a statue moved.

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At Patrick's Bridge was seen last night,
A wonderful and curious sight,
The brazen Statue raised its head,
At least that's what the people said.

The gazing crowd looked on amazed,
And said they saw the finger raised;
They ran for all their friends to come,
And see his reverence move his thumb.

And this is how the matter lies -
Some say 'tis true, some say 'tis lies;
But we've come to the sure conclusion
That 'tis an optical delusion¹⁰²

In an editorial on the matter, the *Constitution* described the observances as 'a sad superstition', one that every respectable Romanist is ashamed of and asked whether some priest would not step forward and show those gathered to see the Statue move 'the stupidity of spending hours in the belief or the expectancy that the hands will move'. The following October, on the occasion of the Statue's second anniversary and the seventy-sixth of the birth of Fr Mathew, celebrations took the form of the Temperance Band of the North Parish marching around the Statue and through the principal streets, playing a variety of airs. As they did so, large crowds joined them, bringing a festive air to the streets.

¹⁰² CC, 5 February 1866.

In April 1874, a letter was published in the *Cork Examiner* newspaper from Mary Frances Cusack, Nun of Kenmare and biographer of Fr Mathew. Headlined 'Did Father Mathew Work Miracles?' the letter said,

Dear Sir,

I am now publishing in Dublin a small 'Life of Father Mathew', which I wrote a year since for an American publisher and which has had a very large sale in the States. I am anxious to obtain authentic accounts of any miracles which may have been worked at Father Mathew's tomb. If any miracles have taken place it would entirely be for the glory of God and the honour of our great soggart, that should be known.

I shall feel greatly obliged to anyone who read this and who may have heard of any miracle or miraculous cure, if he will kindly communicate with me without delay as the work is at present passing through the press.

Yours faithfully,

M.F. Cusack,

Kenmare, County Kerry,

This strongly suggests that there was some belief, knowledge or discourse regarding Fr Mathew's ability to perform intercessionary acts on behalf of people that laid their petitions before him and this in turn suggests that for a period at least, the ambitions of those that erected the Statue and sought to perpetuate, mythologize and deify the name of Fr Mathew were successful. The biographers of Fr Mathew that dealt with whether miracles were performed in his name also included, unsurprisingly, John Francis Maguire, Fr

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Augustine and Moira Lysaght. A document in the Capuchin archives in Dublin states

I am able to affirm that I have a distinct recollection of Father Theobald Mathew, known as the Apostle of Temperance. During his life he was held in reverence by the people of Cork as a priest of exceptional sanctity and many people attributed cures to his prayers and blessings. After his death people were wont to pray for favours at his tomb.¹⁰³

The document was signed by J.A. O'Callaghan, O.P., Bishop of Cork. Several other episodes are also recorded by Fr Augustine and referred to by Moira Lysaght, who in her short biography suggests that the cause of Fr Mathew's beatification has been unsuccessful because a modern generation has not 'been interested enough to persistently present his cause to Rome'.¹⁰⁴

Thus we have a picture of how Fr Mathew and his Statue were engaged with by the people in the twenty or so years immediately following the erection of the monument in 1864. As time passed, however, there was less and less public commemoration. The year 1889 on the other hand, had a twofold significance. It was the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Statue itself and was also when thoughts turned to the following year, 1890, which would be the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of the Apostle of Temperance. The Statue itself on St Patrick's Street was illuminated for that occasion and a special event was held in the great hall of the Assembly Rooms on the South Mall, which took the form of a lecture by Rev. Arthur Ryan, President of St Patrick's College, Thurles. A bust of Fr Mathew was placed on the table in front of the speaker and, prior to his talk, the Butter Exchange Band played a selection of airs. Fr Ryan said that Cork was indeed Fr Mathew's adopted home, but Cork 'must

¹⁰³ Father Augustine, *Footprints of Father Theobald Mathew*, p. 538.

¹⁰⁴ Moira Lysaght, *Theobald Mathew*, p. 45

let Tipperary share her pride'. Was not Fr Mathew, his father and his grandfather before him from the Thurles area, he asked. Calling for a renewal of commitment to the temperance cause, Rev. Ryan described Fr Mathew as the greatest rebel – the revolutionist who shattered the tyranny of drink. 'Let us wish God-speed to this blessed rebellion, this Heaven-blessed campaign against the deadliest foe of Ireland and of mankind'.¹⁰⁵

When Rev. Ryan had finished speaking a number of resolutions were adopted, among them 'that we highly approve of the decision of the Centenary Celebration Committee to complete the church which Fr Mathew himself commenced, as the most fitting monument that could be erected in honour of his memory'. Another resolution adopted was that the meeting wished God-speed to another Fr Mathew on his forthcoming journey to America on behalf of the Centenary committee. This Fr Mathew, bearing the same name as his illustrious confrere, was a major force in the reinvigoration of the place that the Apostle held in society. With the passing of time, Fr Theobald was in danger of becoming a fading memory of the past, evidenced not least by ever-increasing consumption of alcohol. The Capuchins set about ensuring that this would not happen and that Fr Theobald's memory would be preserved.

The completion of the church included the building of the spire that stands there today. Among other events held during the anniversary year were public meetings, a concert and public procession around the Statue. The place of Fr Mathew in the hearts and minds of the people however did not return to former levels. At a meeting in the hall of the Young Men's Christian Association in October 1894, the Chairman, Mr J. C. Newsom, said that 'the cause of temperance was not laying hold of the people as it ought'. He had been requested that evening to draw attention to the amount of intemperance

¹⁰⁵ CE, 12 October 1889.

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that existed.¹⁰⁶ Speaking at the formal celebrations in honour of Fr Mathew's anniversary, Very Rev. Canon Maguire (brother of John Francis Maguire), said that

It was only that day that looking around the city of Cork that he said to himself, where is the name of Mathew? Had that man lived in America; had he lived in the city of Kansas, his name would be honoured this day.'

Thus it would appear that there was little feeling on the streets that it was the anniversary of Fr Mathew that day. Canon Maguire continued, saying it was a disgrace to the city that when he went to the Statue, of the drinking fountains that had been placed either side, one was dry and the other was defiled with filth.

There was a time when the citizens of Cork were glad to honour the man and when the Statue was illuminated; but it was dark and dry now, and a disgrace in the city of his labours.¹⁰⁷

There were illuminations however, at the Holy Trinity Church and Friary, as well as at the rooms of the Barrack Street Band.

There is no way of knowing precisely how much of an effect the criticisms of Canon Maguire had in the city. Nevertheless, over the following twenty or more years, the occasion of the anniversary of Fr Mathew came to be celebrated more prominently. Generally it took the form of a lecture by some well-known speaker and a celebratory concert. There were also, on occasions, processions by temperance bands through the city streets and there was also greater reportage of the proceedings. In 1895, Rev. Fr Rudolph McCarthy O.S.F.C. from Peckham, London, was the keynote speaker, on 'The Life and Labour

¹⁰⁶ *CE*, 11 October 1894.

¹⁰⁷ *CE*, 11 October 1894.

of Fr Theobald Mathew, the Apostle of Temperance,' and this was followed by a concert. Commenting on the anniversary occasion, the *Cork Examiner* said that 'it is considered by some that an annual procession and demonstration in the city would not be expecting too much of the people among whom the Apostle of Temperance laboured, lived and died'.¹⁰⁸ The following year, however, it was again an address followed by a concert, this time led once more by Rev. Canon Maguire. On the occasion, gas illuminations on Holy Trinity Church spelled out the name Mathew for all to see. In 1900, the Statue on St Patrick's Street was brilliantly illuminated by the gas company, as was the church on Charlotte Quay and, at eight o'clock on the eve of the anniversary, the bands of Greenmount Industrial School and St Francis, Queen Street, under the direction of Mr J. F. Lynch paraded the streets accompanied by large numbers of people, many bearing lighted torches.

On arrival at the Statue they formed a circle around it, the whole making up a very pretty scene. Having remained here for some time, all marched to Trinity Church, in the vicinity of which there was an extremely large crowd. The band played and from the top of the beautiful edifice came rockets that developed into pretty designs. It was an interesting scene, indicating that the memory of the great Apostle is as revered in the city as ever.¹⁰⁹

The following year similar proceedings took place. On this occasion, the Greenmount School and St Francis bands were joined by No. 1 Barrack Street, Blackpool, and Fr Mathew Total Abstinence bands. The press reported that 'the community of the Holy Trinity (Father Mathew's Church) must be congratulated on the success of their endeavours to keep alive reverence for the name of the Apostle of

¹⁰⁸ *CE*, 9 October 1895.

¹⁰⁹ *CE*, 10 October 1900.



Father Mathew Statue, Cork.

Father Mathew Statue with Gas Illumination, courtesy Michael Lenihan

Temperance'.¹¹⁰ In 1902, the event on the eve of the anniversary was described as a 'unique and remarkable celebration' and a 'monster demonstration'. While such public events were held on the eve of the anniversary, on the actual day itself there still continued to be a lecture and concert, events that were attended by large numbers of people. 1906 was the fiftieth anniversary of the death of the Apostle and this was marked by an even bigger procession than normal through the city. Fr Mathew himself, it was said, would have been thrilled to see 'the great multitude of men, women and children who with an un-lessening eagerness of attention and intention, hung rapturously on the accents of the eulogists of the great benefactor'.¹¹¹

After 1906, however, the public element of the celebrations waned somewhat and the primary focus again reverted to an annual lecture, now held in the recently completed Fr Mathew Hall on Queen Street (today's Fr Mathew Street), followed by a concert. Other celebrations took place also. For example the Barrack Street Band regularly held an event at their rooms. In 1910, the Statue was again brilliantly illuminated and a feature was an 'exquisite wreath' placed there on behalf of the Knights of Father Mathew from St Louis, U.S.A. At their request it was designed by Ms Kay McCarthy of St Patrick's Street and bore the inscription, 'As a tribute of respect and veneration from the Knights of Fr Mathew, St Louis, U.S.A.' It was recorded also that the man who had placed the order had received the pledge at the hand of Fr Mathew himself.¹¹²

The troubled decade from 1912 to independence made it virtually impossible for public demonstrations to take place. The anniversary celebrations therefore continued as heretofore, in the form of lectures and concerts. The reporting of the occasions continued,

¹¹⁰ *CE*, 10 October 1901.

¹¹¹ *CE*, 15 October 1906.

¹¹² *CE*, 11 October 1910.

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although reduced somewhat in extent. In 1918 the *Cork Examiner* said that 'these celebrations are annually availed of by the citizens to manifest their civic pride in Father Mathew's memory and we feel assured that this year's celebrations will equal in enthusiasm those of past years'. In this vein, the anniversary celebrations continued through the independence years of the early 1920s and beyond. However, as the years passed and memories faded, the celebrations became smaller and smaller. An exception was in 1956, the centenary of Fr Mathew's death, when celebrations included the transmission of a documentary on Radio Éireann, a pontifical High Mass in Holy Trinity Church on Sunday 7 October, presided over by Bishop Dr Lucey, followed that afternoon by a grand concert in City Hall. Bishop Lucey also travelled to Dublin to give a centenary lecture on the history of temperance in Ireland and the part that Fr Mathew played in it. In seeking to define the legacy of the man, during his lecture he said of Fr Mathew that

...his was the inspiration of all modern temperance work in Ireland: his the foundation on which all subsequent societies had built. Of all the great Irishmen of the last century, he was the greatest, judged alike by the impact he made on his own generation and the inspiration he had been to the generations since.¹¹³

Such a definition was certainly valid for the many that recognised Fr Mathew's significance as the Apostle of Temperance, such as those in the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association and groups affiliated with the Capuchins, among others. However, for the majority of Cork people, then and since, the Statue is perhaps regarded with different feelings. As the famous poet priest, Francis O'Mahony, or Fr Prout, wrote expressing his sentiments for that other famous icon of Cork, Shandon's bells, so also can it be said that the people of Cork

¹¹³ *Evening Echo (EE)*, 10 October 1956.

regard the Statue 'with deep affection' and that affection has, over the decades, been shown in a number of different ways. One of the most famous couplets in Cork folk lore and song is an expression of such feelings. In the years before modern sewage treatment, when streams of effluent flowed into the river, the Boys of Fairhill were concerned that,

...the smell from Patrick's Bridge is wicked.

How does Fr Mathew stick it?

This is not lampoon or ridicule. Rather it is the best of humour, incorporating the features and facets common to everyday life in the city. In it, Fr Mathew is the representative of every Cork person who has to endure the effects of the effluent being deposited in the river. As such it is an expression of affection for the Statue. The Statue features in a similar way in many other such songs. Another famous one, written by Jimmy Crowley, has the lines,

If you'll go down to Patrick Street

You're sure to meet with Fr Mathew

A temperate man of high degree

Sometimes for short he's called the Statue.¹¹⁴

Another way in which the famous monument is held in such esteem is that it is rarely called by its full title. It is simply known as 'the Statue' ... as if there were no other statue in the city. For decades public transport busses listed that their destination was either at or via 'The Statue'. Pity the unfortunate tourist seeing this and wondering which statue and where? They were not to know that

¹¹⁴ Jimmy Crowley, 'A Sad Lamentation' in *Jimmy Crowley's Irish Song Book*, (Mercier Press, Cork, 1986), p. 31

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‘the Statue’ is now the very heart of the city, a meeting place and point of reference from which much else in the city is described or measured.

In other ways too, various individuals or groups have recruited Fr Mathew to their cause. For example, it has been known that around the time of big sporting occasions between rival city teams, Fr Mathew has been found – usually early in the morning – attired in perhaps a scarf or hat in the club colours of one or other of the participants. He has been a flag-bearer and has also supported banners. On occasions also, with a bottle or can strategically located on his person, wags have suggested that his out-stretched hand is a gesture that means that he had been drinking since he was so-high. Once again, there is no malice or intent of vandalism in these actions. Rather, as with the folk-songs, these are actions of humour and affection. When what was interpreted as an act of vandalism by officialdom was proposed early in the twenty-first century, the people of Cork responded in no uncertain terms and the iconic status and place of the Statue in the hearts of Cork people was reinforced with vigour. When it was announced that as part of Beth Gali’s plans to revamp the street, Fr Mathew would be moved to a new location at the junction of Winthrop Street, there was an outcry. Those with an interest in heritage were prompted to lead against the plans, among them notably the writer-historian Jim Fitzpatrick. The *Evening Echo* newspaper did a poll of Cork people and the result was 85.6% to 14.4% against the move.¹¹⁵ On Friday 21 July 2000, columnist T.P. O’Mahony wrote that ‘whatever is intended for St Patrick’s Street, it is a big enough street and wide enough place to accommodate change without messing with one of its features, something that is part of the very texture of the street – the Father Mathew Statue. The message of the people of Cork is clear: Leave

¹¹⁵ *EE*, 13 July 2000, p. 1

the Father Mathew Statue alone.’¹¹⁶ In November the headline in the *Evening Echo* summed up the outcome. ‘You win the day for Father Mathew’. ‘He shall not be moved and it’s all thanks to people power. The famous Father Mathew is staying put on St Patrick’s Street following a public outcry’.¹¹⁷ The plans were modified and the Statue retained its place as the very heart of the City of Cork.

In January 2007, a play on the life of Fr Mathew opened in the Half Moon Theatre in Cork city. Written by Sean McCarthy, the play dealt with certain controversies in the life of the Apostle of Temperance, among them his relationship with fellow clergy, whether or not he made money from his campaign, whether in fact he suffered from an addiction to alcohol and how he dealt with certain slave-owners while in the United States. Dramatist McCarthy says of Fr Mathew however that ‘he was a great social reformer, and also a great liberal thinker. Arguable he was a liberation theologian long years before the term was even invented’.¹¹⁸

Future historians will evaluate the place and meaning of the Statue in contemporary Cork of the early twenty-first century. For example Prof. John A. Murphy says that ‘Fr Mathew was more in line with the Victorian notions of social reform and betterment’ and that for a modern generation, ‘you can have an attachment to the Statue but that doesn’t necessarily mean an attachment to the man’.¹¹⁹ The Statue is not a place of worship. Fr Mathew is not adored and his crusade is now but a part of history. But the tribute of a grateful people still stands: the Ireland where consumption of alcohol had a ‘dominant place at weddings, wakes, fairs etc.’ and where ‘prodigious drinking’ was commonplace never returned: the Statue

¹¹⁶ *EE*, 21 July 2000.

¹¹⁷ *EE*, 13 November 2000.

¹¹⁸ In conversation with the journalist Brian O’Connell, January 2007.

¹¹⁹ In conversation with the journalist Brian O’Connell, January 2007.

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is a significant landmark, part of Cork's identity and indeed an icon of the city. It also holds a place in the hearts and minds of every Cork person and for future generations, it is worth recording a small number of such individual perspectives, starting with His Lordship, Dr John Buckley, Catholic Bishop of Cork and Ross.

Most Rev. Dr John Buckley, Bishop of Cork and Ross

The Statue has been a landmark on St Patrick's Street for one hundred and fifty years. I remember when I was a student in Farranferris, we used to get days off. Some would be going to homes in the city, others would be going to films and so on, but we'd all like to come back together; where would we meet – at the Statue. I remember on one occasion we were in the semi-final of the Harty Cup in Farranferris and I was Captain and we got permission to go down town and celebrate and we went our different ways; some met their girl-friends and all the rest of it – young people at the time - and we assembled again at the Statue at seven o'clock.

In Farranferris we studied history and they used to talk a lot about Fr Mathew and the fact that he was such a prominent Capuchin; the man who built Holy Trinity Church and was so involved in the temperance movement, which was praised so much by Daniel O'Connell. So the Statue has been a landmark down through the years. It figures very prominently in poetry and prose and I think it's something that the citizens of Cork are proud of. When there was some effort to move it, there was a reaction to that – people just wouldn't accept it; they said this is staying – it's a permanent fixture here in St Patrick's Street.

I think we are all aware of the increase of alcohol taking among young people. It could be, sadly, the beginning of a progression towards more serious drug-taking – they say that about alcohol -

and I think Fr Mathew's message of temperance - it literally swept the country at the time – started in Cork and I think something that Cork will always be associated with. I think it's something that we should be aware of and especially at this time. So I think that Fr Mathew could serve as an example and an inspiration for people today as we try to confront and challenge that question of drink-taking, especially among young people, which is such a sad feature of life today and has led to many disturbances which we are sadly aware of here in the city.

Pat Poland, Retired Firefighter, Historian and Author

Fr Mathew Statue, Mangan's Clock and the Fireman's Rest were a trio of Victorian Street furniture that dominated the northern end of St Patrick's Street for decades. Unfortunately only two still remain; the Fr Mathew Statue and Mangan's Clock. Howsoever, from the fire-fighters point of view the Fr Mathew Statue will always be associated with a shelter or a hut for decades called the Fireman's Rest. Just to put it in context, when the Fire Brigade was formed in Cork in 1877, the fire appliances at that time would not carry heavy rescue ladders, so they got over this by stationing these heavy rescue ladders at various points around the city and I suppose the most well known of them was near the Fr Mathew Statue in St Patrick's Street. In order to give the fireman in charge of the rescue ladder a modicum of shelter, in 1892, the Council had built a shelter which they called the Fireman's Rest; it was built by Walter McFarlane's of Glasgow for about sixty pounds. It was unusual in that it was an early pre-fabricated building, but also in that it was one of the first structures in Cork to have a functioning telephone. It was first situated outside Grant's on the Grand Parade, opposite Great George's Street, Washington Street. It was moved after the proprietors of Grant's, Lyonses, cribbed to the Corporation

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Above: Statue and Tram Inspector's Hut. Courtesy Michael Lenihan
Below: Statue, Fireman's Rest and Wheeled Escape



that it was spoiling the facade of their newly built department store, so reluctantly the Council changed it in 1894 up to Lavitt's Quay, outside the Opera House, where it remained until 1904. So in 1904, lock stock and barrel, the Rest was moved once again and it supplanted a small tram inspector's hut which stood right next to the Fr Mathew Statue. The idea of the hut, as I say, was to give the fireman in charge of the rescue ladder a modicum of shelter. He took up position at eleven p.m. at night where he remained until seven a.m. the following morning and then the hut was taken over by the electric tram people. It was used by the Fire Brigade until 1930 when they acquired the first fire engine capable of carrying the heavy rescue ladders which, incidentally, were called wheeled escapes. After that the firemen had no further use for the Fireman's Rest and it was handed over to the tramway company initially. When the trams eventually ceased to function in 1931, it was then taken over by the bus people and it remained in situ until 2002 when Beth Gali and the powers that be decided that it was out of sync with the Victorian street-scape and it was shifted around from post to pillar and I understand it's currently in Fitzgerald Park and it will probably be used as a security hut or some such like.

I think Fr Mathew should be commemorated and celebrated for what he did in his time. I believe that his campaign didn't last after his death – what he stood for and what he campaigned for really faded out within some years of his death - that it didn't survive him, regrettably. I suppose another source of regret really is that his church in Blackamoor Lane - another connection with the Fire Brigade there of course because it stood right behind what was subsequently Fire Brigade headquarters built in 1893 - that was knocked down some years ago in controversial circumstances and I don't know whether there's even a plaque up in Blackamoor Lane to commemorate Fr Mathew's Church and where people took the pledge and where his great campaign was launched actually in 1838 with his immortal words, 'Here goes in the Name of God'.

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Conal Creedon, Writer and Broadcaster

Well, I suppose the fact that it's called the Statue is in itself a statement that in a city that has so many statues - you have the National Monument and all these places - the fact that there's one that is head and shoulders above all the rest and it's just known right across the board as the Statue says a lot. For me personally growing up Fr Mathew didn't mean an awful lot. I didn't understand what he was about or what he stood for, but I knew that at one point, in this town, he must have been a very important man because of this big statue on St Patrick's Bridge. But then I suppose as you get older, I suppose initially what it was, it was the location. That part of town was known as the Statue – not the Statue itself – you know busses, every bus going to the north side would be on the Eason's side of the street. Every bus going to the south side left from the Roches Stores side of the street. That's changed now but that was the terminus. So when a bus was finished its round, what went up on the notice board was 'the Statue' or else 'An Dealbh', so that even in a corporate sense, the area was known as the Statue. For dating couples, or even now meeting guys to go somewhere, we say the Statue, and it didn't mean literally to stand at the Statue, it meant the Statue was that part of the city. For example, if people are looking for directions, you always give the Statue as being the sort of the starting point - 'well you go down to the Statue and then you can, you know...'

And then as time went on, the essence of Fr Mathew and what he was about sort of creeps into your life, your broader knowledge, and I suppose the big one I remember as a kid for example, it was a commonly used phrase here for fellows that were giving up the drink for lent or whatever, they'd say, 'I'm on the tac' – 'you know I'm on the tac now at the moment', or 'he's on the tac' and ... I never really figured out what that was about until later on I realised the tac was the T A C – the Total Abstinence Crusade, you know, that went right

back to Fr Mathew's time and ... when people gave up the drink they would join the Total Abstinence Crusade and so they'd say 'I'm on the T A C, I'm on the tac'.

And then I suppose on a different level totally there's, what would I call it, anarchic Cork humour where you've this man, the Apostle of Temperance and he's standing there on St Patrick's Bridge and there's a few sort of – they're not even urban myths, but they're known. So he stands there and he's got his ledger in one hand, probably for signing up for the TAC and he's got his right hand out and the line in Cork is that what he's saying, is that 'I haven't touched a drop since I was that height'. And then what you find is ... I suppose you'd call them wits or witlesses, whatever they are, or half-wits, on the way home from the pub, would put a pint bottle into his arm you know, so there was the Apostle of Temperance with a pint bottle of Guinness in his arm.

I think even beyond that there's an interesting little side shoot - these days they'd call it a side bar –in that this is a huge sculpture and to its right hand side there is what I would guess is the smallest piece of public sculpture in the country if not in the world. It's a small, maybe six inches tall and maybe about one and a half feet long and basically it was sculpted by Seamus Murphy, who was, you know, a sort of God in these parts, and basically it's a water trough for dogs and it's still there. The Old Kentucky restaurant would fill it with water every day for dogs and written along is 'madraí'. And there's sort of this sense of irony that, there's Fr Mathew saying give up the drink and then Seamus Murphy is saying, '... just give a dog a drink'.

I do like the idea that as you cross the bridge it sort of stands for something and it's where people from outside actively engage with. What is this thing? Who is this person? And so I suppose that's in a way what it means to me. It's not fundamental to my time. It's

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from a different time totally but it's certainly fundamental – very close to where I live - and I remember a while ago there was talk of moving it – I think ... to the left, to make St Patrick's Street more stream-lined, and I'm usually not that vocal but I just thought that was outrageous – like, leave it there you know, and they did in the end and long may it be there.

And what's interesting too, even if it is a statue, if you look at the Cork street ballad the Boys of Fairhill, even within that it's elevated to an animated – human status when the line goes 'the smell for Patrick's Bridge is wicked, How do Fr Mathew Stick it' – and there's a real sense of outsiders saying who's Fr Mathew? That's the Statue you know. And then the reality of a statue smelling you know ... so yea, it certainly has - by its own doing really - and by the general populace, a hugely important place from the point of view, not just the structure and where it stands and the location, but I think in the myth, folklore and the current culture of the town .

Yea ... totally engage with it.

Pat O'Connell, Fishmonger and Businessman

I suppose my earliest memory of the Statue would be my mother, because the number three bus from Ballyphehane, where we lived at the time, was right in front of the Statue. So my earliest memory would be of my mam telling me about Fr Mathew and the temperance movement and what it meant to Cork city - I suppose as iconic as the English Market is at this stage. It's just part of the character of Cork and you know, you come onto St Patrick's Street and you see Fr Mathew's Statue and you say - you know – home. And for a Corkman, it means an awful lot obviously and very proud of it.

I think a couple of years ago they wanted to move it a few feet and there was absolute uproar. And it's amazing what people think of

monuments like the Father Mathew Statue, until somebody tries to do something with it and then all of a sudden you realise, you know, people really so recognise this and respect it for what it is and you know – you ain't moving this one. And I suppose they are my memories of it. But I mean, for a Corkman, it's just iconic.

It's very important to celebrate it because, you know, sometimes you don't see the wood for the trees as the fellow says and you don't realise the connections these have with your past and with your history. And again, as a trader in the English Market you're very much aware of how important tradition and heritage is to a city. And I suppose as a trader in the English Market, sometimes you think - do people realise how important it is? But they actually do. Because when something comes up about something like moving a statue or doing something to the English Market that might be out of context with it, there's generally absolutely a mass movement against it. And I suppose, that's when you see what people really do think of these iconic statues or fixtures and Father Mathew Statue certainly comes into that classification.

Tim Keane, Owner, Michel Jewellers at the Statue

I suppose my first memory was when I was in school in Christians and one year we won the senior rugby cup and we all marched in and put a flag on the statue – that was a kind of a tradition. And then as I got older I suppose I remember it as a meeting point that you hoped you might meet a young lady at or nearby. And then when I went into business it was a marker for where my business was. We used to say Michele Jewellers near the Statue and it is part of Cork's history and I would always love to say that it should stay there. It is part of Cork and it should stay where it is.

I know personally who Fr Mathew was and the founding of the temperance movement and all that, but I would say ninety per

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cent of people, well now I'm wrong now, maybe fifty-five per cent of people don't know what it commemorates.

We should celebrate the Statue. We should celebrate anything that's history in Cork – you know from that point of view I think it would be a good thing to do.

Roger Herlihy, Historian and Author

The Statue, the Statue, the Statue ... I always was aware of the Statue because where I grew up on Cove Street was literally just around the corner from Fr Mathew's old chapel where he started off his mission in Cork. Growing up my mother used tell me about Fr Mathew, this great man who actually lived on Cove street, literally just two or three doors from where I was growing up. Going in town then, I could see the Statue – I made the connection all the time, so I suppose that's how I became aware of the story of Fr Mathew. And even later on when there was these historical plaques going up in the city, around 1985, they put up a series of plaques to various different people and the Fr Mathew plaque at that stage was actually put on our house on Cove Street because there was just a car park where his house used to stand so there was nothing to put it on. Ours' was the nearest house to it so they put it up on our front wall and that was something again that kind of piqued my interest in the man himself and in the Statue. And in school in 1979 ... we all did various historical projects for one particular year and the one I picked was Fr Mathew – myself and two others guys – I kind of forced them along. They wouldn't really have been aware of him as such like. Anyway I said we're doing Fr Mathew. That's grand so. So again the Statue came into it.

And then later on in life, I suppose the Statue became a landmark in the city. Nobody called it Father Mathew Statue; it was just the

Statue as they say, going back for a hundred years it was just the Statue, where the trams and the busses stopped and all the rest. Later on, as we went through our teens and into our twenties, ... probably the GAA games and the home-coming. You'd be standing behind the Statue and watching the teams coming down from Paddy Barry's corner and going on to Bridge Street - and the Statue would be all dressed up of course in the colours as well you know.

He was just part of Cork – he wasn't a Cork man but he was part of Cork and ... for everybody that is alive today in Cork, there was never a time that we didn't have Fr Mathew, so in that sense ... it's always been there. We know the history of it or most people would know the history of it. He doesn't have any specific meaning to most people these days and maybe if I wasn't living on Cove Street where I was living, he probably wouldn't have had the same meaning to me other than through the history side of it which I got to know later on. Forty odd years ago probably the mental connection with Fr Mathew was probably lost I'd say, to what he was to Cork and what he did for Cork back 150 or 160 years ago.

I think there's always room for celebrations. He was the temperance man of course, so do you have a tea-party like they did of old? Or maybe hold it in the old temperance hall in Fr Mathew Quay where they started – do a march from the Statue over to the side of the Holy Trinity. I think why not. I mean it is always good to celebrate and a man like that – with that connection to Cork all his life - would certainly deserve it. It would be nice to see.

Michael Lenihan, Historian and Author

My earliest recollection of the Statue would be I suppose the trips into town. It was always there. That's the one thing about the Statue: the Statue is always there - in our fathers' memory – in our

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grandfathers, it was always there. It's a fixed permanent object in St Patrick's Street, even though if you asked many Corkonians who was responsible for erecting the Statue, for sculpting the Statue, they couldn't tell you; they probably couldn't tell you what year it actually went up. Now they will make the connection with Fr Mathew being the Apostle of Temperance – well the older generation anyway - particularly because I think we all remember taking the pledge at school, so the connection was still there with Fr Mathew at the time.

And the other thing of course about the Statue is the fact if you went on a bus it always ended up at the Statue – that was a fascinating thing. Being Corkonians, we all knew where you ended up when you went to the Statue, but - a foreign person abroad in Cork and all of a sudden you're getting a bus into town, into the Statue, I mean you often wonder what they thought. They said, where is the Statue? What is the Statue? It had no name. It was THE statue. I mean Shandon has its name. It has the bells, its clock. But I think it could only happen in Cork that you would actually have a Fr Mathew memorial to the Apostle of Temperance and it's just known as the Statue. You couldn't escape the fact that the Statue was there and behind the Statue was the busman's hut and the two they were inseparable really for a long time. If you want your timetable; if you want to know when the next bus was coming; if you wanted directions, I mean it was all there, it was all at the Statue.

The other thing you remember, if there was any major football match or something going on, if Cork were playing Kerry, invariably Fr Mathew would be decked out, and as youngsters you'd remember that, you'd relate it to games. And you can imagine the time when President Kennedy, when he came to town, that at one stage he passed the Statue, and there was throngs and throngs of people and again it's just the shortest throw from the Statue to St Patrick's Bridge, so it all lines up beautifully into the city and that is what the Statue is basically for me.

We never considered that Fr Mathew wasn't from Cork. We adopt somebody in Cork; Rory Gallagher, it's the same thing - he was Donegal. Getting more local, look at Frank O'Connor, I mean Blarney Street claim him, Douglas Street claim him. At the end of the day, if Cork people decide to adopt somebody, that's it, they are fully blown Corkonians – done and dusted – and the fact that he did so much in Cork, the temperance movement started in Cork. So you just wouldn't bother with a triviality about where he was originally born, that doesn't come into the equation at all.

It's very important to commemorate it, extremely important to commemorate it, because it's an opportunity to get the Statue out there again and let people know what it's about and why it's actually in St Patrick's Street for 150 years and has survived - and been LOVED. I mean not alone has it survived, it's been very much loved by people and still, the Statue, many's the person that had a meeting at the Statue, their first date, their first jag as the man said, at the Statue. It's one of the landmarks, icons really of Cork. You have Shandon, you have the Shakey Bridge, you have the Statue, it's right up there, it's up there in the top ten, you have the English Market, it's right up there in the top ten - and that's where it should stay.

Now a very interesting thing that I find, being a historian and looking at images of Cork, the amount of postcards that existed, whether they were Lawrence postcards, Valentines postcards, Eason's postcards, Signal series, it's just amazing, Fr Mathew is in all of these postcards. It was sent all over the world – so there are postcards in the States, in Australia, Britain, any part of the world, of Fr Mathew, taken at the turn of the century. But something I've never been able to figure out was Fr Mathew in his guises, because I've seen some very early views of Fr Mathew and he has this wonderful wrought iron surround and he has these kind of corbels then to protect the carriages from hitting it. And then in another guise you'll see him

and he has these four lovely gas lamps, and then in another guise, you'll see when the whole thing is gone.

I'm very afraid for it. We saw what happened to the busman's hut, that's languishing now in Fitzgerald's Park and there are so many memories entwined in that and it's part of our heritage. I would be afraid if anything happened to the Statue in the morning; if for instance something collided with it; if for some reason it started to subside, that it would be taken out and it could be lost, it could be lost to Corkonians forever

Billa O'Connell, Famed Performer of Cork

Oh, the Statue was a part of Cork. How many girls and fellas had dates at the statue and they wouldn't say 'the statue' at all; they'd say 'the statcha'; the real Cork fast voice like.

I'll see you at the statcha – ok Kid – God bless Ya.

And the Statue and Mangan's clock – sure both of them are neck and neck, 'I meet you at Mangan's or the Statcha'. And then of course the line -

The smell from Patrick's Bridge is wicked

How does Fr Mathew stick it

Here's up 'em all says the Boys of Fairhill.

And, look at Fr Mathew Statue. What's looking down on him? Shandon – you can see Shandon from Fr Mathew and vice versa. You have the north side, Gurranebraher, all looking down over St Patrick's Bridge. It's a wonderful place I think, the Statue. And one more thing I would say to you now is, do you remember the crowd that brought out the Langer song, Natural Gas, they're bringing out a song very shortly, they're bringing out

Let's all go down to the Black Ash

The black Ash out in Togher (sung)

And Billa's doing little lines through them and two lines I brought
up only last week was

Fr Mathew is sick in his teeth

Since they stopped brewing Beamish in the South Main Street
(Laugh)

There's only one Statue in a Corkman's head. That's THE Statue, Fr
Mathew. You don't have to say anywhere else; City Hall or Fr Mathew
Street or the old Trinity where there are many beautiful statues;
there's only one Statue, the Statcha.

That's lovely isn't it – there's only one Statue, the Statcha.

Now his hand stretched out - Fr Mathew's telling the people of Cork,
they're drinking since they're that height - isn't that beautiful - and
it's no one else would get that, only in Cork.

And there was a pile of side-cars where the taxis were – where the
taxis are, the side cars were and I can tell you that for definite because,
I knew one man, Johnny Cremin, he used to have a side car down the
end of the park there, that's where he had a stables, and I often helped
Johnny Cremin when he was fixing his horse coming home and they
used to pick up their fares by the Statue. Sure you couldn't get a nicer
scene. Fr Mathew, the river and the Shandon. Happy days – great days.

The smell from Patrick's Bridge is wicked

How does Fr Mathew stick it

Here's up 'em all says the Boys of Fairhill

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Fr Mathew is sick to the teeth

Since they stopped brewing Beamish on the South Main Street

Here's up 'em all says the Boys of Fairhill. (sung).

Brian O'Connell, Author and Journalist

I've a sort of love hate relationship with the Fr Mathew Statue. I don't drink any more. I gave up alcohol about ten years ago and I sometimes think that Fr Mathew has cast a long shadow. If you talk about not drinking in Ireland, you're accused of being an Fr Mathew wanna-be. So my relationship with the Statue is a love/hate one. I know when there were plans or when it was proposed that they were going to move the Statue, I didn't think that was a great decision. I've grown to accept the Statue more than like it and I think it's something that should be left there. I feel he was a pioneer in many respects in terms of beginning to spark a debate in Ireland or a conversation around alcohol, one in which I've contributed to in some small way one hundred and fifty year later. And I remember spending time and looking and seeing that, you know, he had a lot of flaws as well, Fr Mathew, and I think that made me like him even more, the fact that the guy was very human. He made a lot of mistakes in his life. And I love that Cork saying as well – people say when he's putting his hand out, that he's saying 'that's the age I started drinking at – I was that high'. It's that Irish sense of humour and with myself and my relationship with not drinking, I like to have a bit of fun with it as well so – yea, I think that I've grown to love the Statue and I'd hate to see it being moved anywhere.

I don't think it means a lot to the modern generation. I mean one story that has probably been forgotten is the impact Fr Mathew had in relation to serious illness in Cork in the middle of the nineteenth century – that work that Fr Mathew did for illness in Cork would still

have been strong in folk memory, but I don't think it's as strong now at the moment. And then the ballad tradition has waned a little I think, so he's not being remembered in song to the same extent by the younger generation than he would have by the older generation. But I do still think that people can like a statue without really knowing a whole lot about the person and I don't think they have to know much about his life either – they just come to accept that it's part of Cork – maybe someday they might look into it and maybe this project might help bring awareness to people about what his life was about and who he was and so on.

I think it's great to celebrate the Statue and I love that line in the song 'the smell from Patrick's Bridge is wicked. How does Fr Mathew stick it?' I mean that's just a great line for any song and even for that line alone the Statue shouldn't be touched.

Jerry Buttimer, Teacher and Politician

The Statue was for us growing up the place where the number eight bus went to and started from. I suppose in many cases we didn't know what the Statue was about until much later in life when we discovered it's about Fr Mathew, the temperance movement and about the issue of Corkonians drinking too much to excess. But growing up, you got the bus from Bishopstown into the Statue, or if you were coming from Mayfield, you met your friends at the Statue, in St Patrick's Street. So it was about a meeting point and then, later, it developed into the importance of the temperance movement.

I think it is important to celebrate it for a number of reasons. First of all, it's about the whole issue of temperance and where we had come from as a society, which Fr Mathew, Theobald Mathew, was trying to move away from. And in many ways we're probably at a different place as regarding alcohol, in terms of how we consume and use

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alcohol, and I think, given that we are celebrating the number of years of the Statue, it perhaps is no harm that we bring back what Fr Mathew strove to achieve in regard to the use of alcohol and the consumption of alcohol. Whilst he may have had a different approach to alcohol than we have today, the Statue in some cases has lost its significance, but I would hope that as part of this centenary celebration we can renew and reinvigorate to the people of Cork the importance of landmarks like the Statue. You know, we've done a huge job in transforming Bishop Lucey Park, Fitzgerald Park. We've enhanced the public realm of the Grand Parade and of St Patrick's Street and I think in doing that, it behoves all of us with pride in our city and a pride in our culture and our heritage, that we take as an example the history of the Statue and the history of Fr Mathew and we bring it back to the people and outline to them the importance of it and the significance it can have today in our lives.

Jennie O'Sullivan, Broadcaster and Reporter

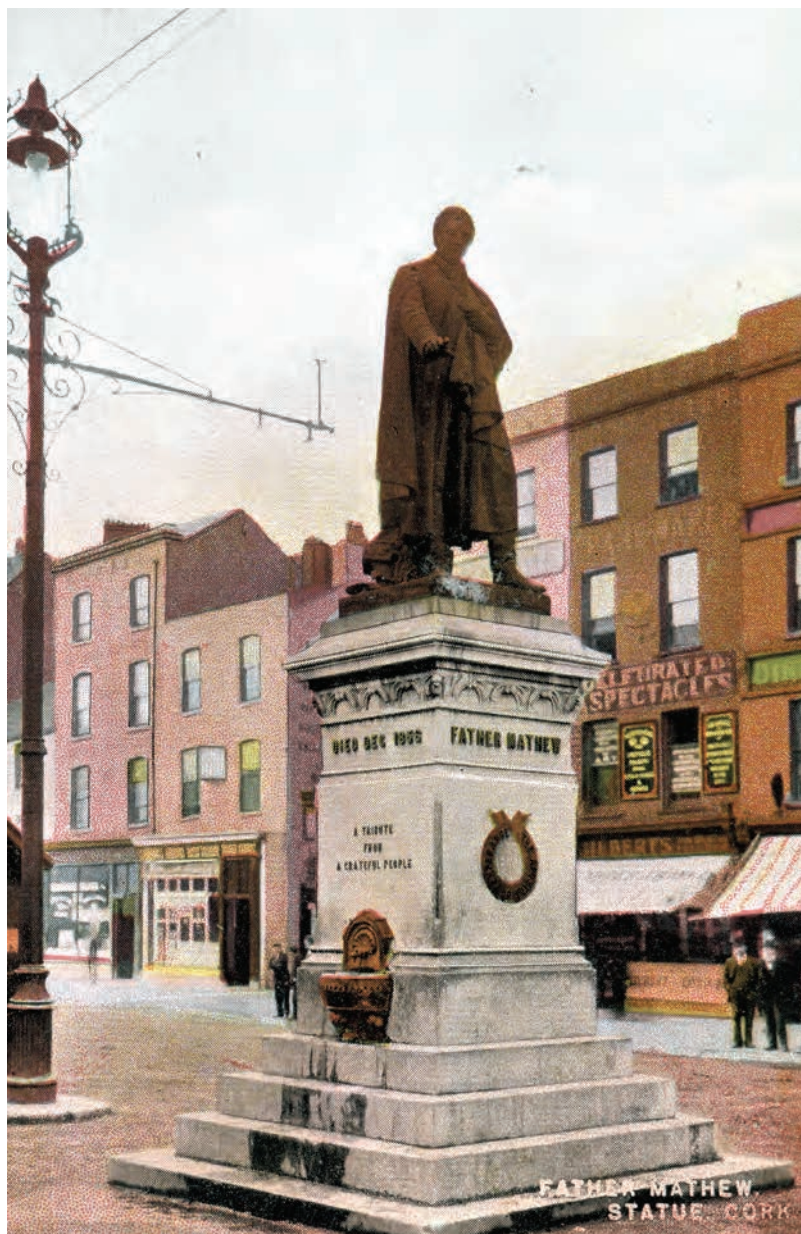
I suppose for me it was always the Statue. For a long time I didn't realise it was Fr Mathew – you know it was just the Statue. Statue is the word that as a child and as a teenager it was always a case of the bus; get the bus to the Statue; you'll meet somebody at the Statue and you know, recently I was thinking about the Statue; in other places they call it the monument, but in Cork it's the Statue, and you wonder why was Fr Mathew called the Statue? And then you think that maybe it's a Catholic thing; that they had St Anthony's and Holy Mary's, and there was the Statue. But then, you have this huge thing that's about four thousand times the size of a statue at home, in the middle of St Patrick's Street and I actually figure, thinking about it long and hard, it has more to do with the fact that Statue rhymes with Mathew. We like the lyricism of it and we can't help ourselves and nobody in Cork, no matter how refined you are, calls it Fr Mathew Statue, it's always the Statue.

For me the first memory of the Statue and what I will always associate it with, is being a teenager and getting the last bus home because, you'd have to go the Statue and the last bus always left at a quarter past eleven. You would have the busses lining up facing southwards or northwards on either side of the street. And they were almost like dogs in traps. You could almost feel the engines were getting ready to leave the trap because, once you got on board, the inspector used to come out of the bus hut, which was under the shadow of the Statue, and blow his whistle, and the busses took off. And no matter how often I was on the bus at that hour of the night you were always with a sense of waiting for the whistle to be blown by the inspector under the Statue, and they took off, and I suppose you felt the excitement that they were finishing their day and you were actually getting home and you weren't going to be killed because you missed the last bus from the Statue.

So I suppose they're my associations with the Statue. I think it's intrinsically Cork. On a romantic level, Fr Mathew has seen everything from famines to feasts to festivals. I wondered the other day what happened during the burning? Did he witness that as well? Was he standing there wondering what was going on? There's a calmness that the Statue brings and it's hard to imagine the city centre without it because, he's just there. As long as Fr Mathew's is standing serenely at the top of Patrick's Street, all is right with the world.

I don't think it means much to modern kids, not consciously anyway. I don't think that they're as romantically involved with it as we were – you know they don't get off the bus at the Statue as such, or they don't have dates under Mangan's Clock at the Statue. But I think as they get older, you can't help it, it seeps into you. It's part of your DNA as a Cork person.

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Father Mathew Statue

Celebrating is a funny old word - treasuring I think is what I would say. Celebration is something that happens and it's over whereas I think with Fr Mathew- it's just to be treasured and I suppose the best part for us is, when you think about it, when Beth Gali suggested removing it from St Patrick's Street and suddenly people who had never thought about it, people who passed it by, day in day out, suddenly stopped went, 'oh no, that's not going to happen'. So I think really, as I said about kids, whether it's in their consciousness, they probably aren't aware of it, but they will be. Maybe if it happened in ten years time would they miss it? Would they react like we would? Yea, I'd say they would, because it is – Cork.

Colm Crowley, Head of Production at RTE Cork

The statue means to me that I'm on St Patrick's Street. It's a childhood memory because I used to get the number eight bus outside the Savoy theatre and the two landmarks really were the Statue, the Savoy theatre as it was then and probably Cash's or Brown Thomas as it is now; that little triangle there, that was the top of St Patrick's Street. That was the epicentre of downtown Cork as far as I was concerned.

I knew who he was. I didn't know the timeframe – I think it's around the 1840s. But I knew he had a moment in Cork, well more than a moment – decades - that he was very influential and drove the temperance movement. I didn't realise at the time it was a major political movement, because so many people used to drink. It was the scourge of the classes; so it was far more than a moral crusade; it was about trying to help people raise their standards of living by not drinking and weaning them off the culture of drink, which obviously affected the poor more than most. So it was a social movement. Now I found all that out later. Initially, when I was a kid, it was just take the pledge, don't drink and that was that.

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It doesn't mean much to today's generations I don't think – not an awful lot. I was shocked when my twelve year old told me the other day that he had been in school and he was taking the pledge and did I take the pledge? And it brought back memories from forty years ago, when I would have been the same age talking the pledge. Everybody took the pledge when I was in school and we meant it until about maybe eighteen and then we felt guilty when we broke the pledge. But my twelve year old last week shocked me when he took the pledge because I thought all that was gone – obviously it's not.

I think there are iconic figures in every city that you have to hold on to, and I think in the nineteenth century Fr Mathew was a domineering figure in Cork. So I think it's absolutely right that we celebrate people like that because they made meaningful change and were a tremendous force for good.

Fr Dermot Lynch OFM Cap.

Fr Mathew's Statue: Heartbeat of Life in Cork;

I love the stories in St Luke's Gospel. Location has a central place in each story. The annunciation story in Chapter 1 begins by spelling out the town and then the actual place in the town. The Gospel ends telling us of the tomb on their way to a named village and even how many miles that village is from Jerusalem. With St Luke, location was huge. For the people of Cork the erection of a statue to this iconic nineteenth century social reformer was huge. They were spot on, not only in 1864, but especially today. Alcohol contributes to road accidents. This is a reminder to us all of a statue located in the middle of the main street of the city of Cork with traffic buzzing on either side, a timely reminder of the need not to drink and drive. We know that today alcohol continues to be a major factor in road

accidents. Fr Mathew would be shocked to discover the nation's on-going addiction to alcohol; to binge-drinking and under-age drinking – to say nothing of our addiction to drugs. He would want to know why? Why, having rid ourselves of the excesses of oppression, we allow ourselves to be trapped by addictions, by all sorts of addictions. It seems to me that the cause of our excessive drinking today is the same one that drove the people of Fr Mathew's day to drink - namely a futile attempt to hide from ourselves; a basic lack of self-acceptance and self-respect; a constant failure to manage our relationships; our friendships. In a word, what we're missing is the fundamental Christian value of love, not so much that we should love, but that we are loved. In this after all, lies our greatness – that God loved us first.

Fr Mathew's Statue, standing in the middle of Cork's busy St Patrick's Street, reminds us that balance in our life and moderation in our drinking habits remains for us Irish people today, as much as the Irish people of the nineteenth century, a challenge which must be overcome. I think what inspired Theobald Mathew was this extraordinary love for someone that lived like Christ on earth – the very same as Pope Francis today is hugely inspired by the very same person that inspired Theobald Mathew – that's inspiring us all now – this extraordinary Saint Francis of Assisi, whose constant message to us all is – and I think that's why Pope Francis likes him so much, that's why Theobald Mathew liked him so much – that Francis is saying, as he said in his own life, don't be looking at me; don't be thinking about me; think about Christ. Francis is saying – said to Theobald Mathew – is saying to Pope Francis - is saying to me and to all of us, 'I did what was mine to do. May Christ now teach you what is yours to do'.

So as we celebrate this, I hope we will look up at Theobald Mathew and he will say 'stop looking at me. Look instead at Christ'.

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John Spillane, Songwriter and Performer:

I grew up out in Wilton and, getting the bus into school every day, the bus used to say 'The Statue' on the front of it and sometimes it used to say 'An Dealbh', so that's my first memory of An Dealbh or the Statue. I suppose it's just part of Cork. It was the place where all the busses went. It was the centre of Cork – the dead centre. So it was the centre of operations in Cork and you would meet people at the Statue – 'I'll see you at the Statue' - the Statue was just there.

I have a riddle about the Statue and the riddle is this. What has two eyes but can't see; two ears but can't hear; four legs but can't walk and can jump as high as Fr Mathew's Statue inside in St Patrick's Street? And the answer is a dead donkey. Now people don't get that straight away. You see a dead donkey has two eyes but can't see; two ears but can't hear, four legs but can't walk, but it can't jump at all. Neither can the Statue of Fr Mathew. The Statue can't jump you see, being made of stone, so the dead donkey can jump just as high as the Statue.

Now the Statue is not made of stone. It's made of some kind of a cast metal and ...

Oh the smell from Patrick's Bridge is wicked

How does Fr Mathew Stick it.

Here's up them all says the boys of Fairhill. (sung).

So it's famed in song and in story. There was an awful smell down by the Statue when I was a child. The river used to be green and there was a pong off the river on a hot summer's day. It was a fairly serious pong - that's why Fr Mathew found it hard to stick it.

Fr Mathew was a most revered character and it's only the other day I was at his grave out in the Botanic gardens, St Joseph's Cemetery in

Ballyphehane and the funny thing was, the cross was put up before he died at all, so the dates are strange on the grave.

But anyway – that's the Statue.

Ah sure it's fabulous. I mean you go to Barcelona and you see Christopher Columbus; you go to Cork and you see Fr Mathew. You know what I mean – he's our own man and you know it's a brilliant story – the story of the temperance movement. I believe they had five million members at one stage in Ireland and England signed up for it. It hugely benefitted people really. Things were bad and the drink didn't make it any better I suppose. I think he worked on the cholera epidemics and he worked with the temperance movement and he said, 'Here goes in the Name of God'.

I was asked to write a song about Fr Mathew one time and I wrote...

A child and his mother were walking through town,
They were passing a statue as the sun was going down.
Said the child who is that figure all wrapped up in stone?
Son that's Fr Mathew, the temperance man.
Come back Fr Mathew, We're sorry we drove you away.
Come back Fr Mathew, Come back and show us the way.

Imagine son Ireland in the 1840s,
The spectre of famine stalking the land.
A million drowning in a sea of troubles,
Fr Mathew, he reached out his hand.

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Come back Fr Mathew, We're sorry we drove you away.

Come back Fr Mathew, Come back and show us the way.

That was my song about Fr Mathew.

Micheál Martin, Historian and Politician:

The Statue means an awful lot to me in terms of my childhood memories going to the city centre in Cork. It was where my father would either start his working day sometimes, or finish it, and the mother would often say that she was shopping in Roches Stores and that she would meet the father at the Statue. He was a bus-driver and the bus-driver's hut was adjacent to the Statue. So I have very fond memories of going in there with the mother, meeting the father, meeting some of his colleagues, seeing the camaraderie between the CIE workers, the conductors and the drivers and the Statue was the nerve centre for us anyway as a family; we had that sense of it. It was the nerve centre of Cork, busses began and ended their journeys at the Statue and that goes back a long time, predates my father's time. But first there was that family connection to the Statue and to the CIE hut, as being an important place.

You better ask the modern generation if it means anything to them, but probably not, although I note that in fairness to our schools, there's a strong focus on history in all our Cork schools. I've been involved in that myself and I've no doubt they have had references to Fr Mathew, the Apostle of Temperance. Kids would always ask questions – why is that Statue there; what is it about? I think obviously there won't be the same level because the street-scape has changed somewhat in more recent times, but nonetheless, I think it will always be a focal point for the citizens of Cork and a point of interest and enquiry, and curiosity will always lead to people finding out more about it.

I think it's an essential part of Cork's history and I think it should be celebrated and it should be reflected upon. In modern times, whereas absolute temperance is not a popular thing, it will always be part of the equation, part of the discussion. And particularly in a world where addiction, difficulties with substance abuse and so on, there's a relevance to what Fr Mathew was about and so in that sense it's very much part of the current debate. Certainly it is something that we should of course reflect on and just to give you an illustration which surprised me some years ago, I got a phone call as Minister of Foreign Affairs to come to the City Hall, that Ian Paisley was arriving with his wife on a private visit; he had been in Cobh earlier. And he was delayed somewhat coming to City Hall and we were told that he was paying a visit to the Statue, to Fr Mathew. What we didn't realise, and when I asked him, 'you've an interest in Fr Mathew', he said, 'yes, he would have toured Northern Ireland and the temperance movement in Northern Ireland in that period was very familiar with his work and he would have addressed meetings there on the issue of temperance and abstaining from alcohol'. And I thought that was a footnote really in history; here was one of the leading figures in the history of this island for quite a long time and actually having a strong connection with Cork through the Statue, through Fr Mathew and the temperance issue, and I found that fascinating and it just showed me there's an awful lot more behind the Statue: there's an awful lot more behind that man that is of interest to historians and those interested in their past.

Dr Gillian McIntosh, Historian and Lecturer.

Father Mathew has been a point on Cork's compass for one hundred and fifty years. And still, as a schoolgirl (between 1972-1986) I passed him at least twice a day with my sisters and paid him absolutely no attention at all. With the passage of time, as with a lot of figurative

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public statues, he ceased to represent an individual who had lived in the city. He became nameless. He was simply 'The Statue'; a marker on a journey, a direction or rendezvous for friends or visitors; 'get off the bus at the Statue'. It was only when I moved to the other end of the island, to Belfast, and worked as a historical researcher on a temperance project, that I came to see Father Mathew and his history from a fresh perspective. He worked with temperance groups in the north-east of Ireland, and the Belfast Total Abstinence Association named several of its groups after him, or after his adopted city. Those involved in temperance work in the nineteenth century were typically not limited to encouraging sobriety, but motivated by a belief that alcohol impoverished lives, particularly those of the working classes. This is of course why the Statue is more than a representation of the 'Apostle of Temperance' but a drinking fountain, providing a free public source of refreshment to Cork people, an optimistic alternative to the public house. His influence reached beyond Ireland of course; is this why his statue faces out of the city and into the world? The 'Statue' for me now bears witness to the combined ecumenical efforts of myriad temperance groups driven by Christian endeavour, active in early nineteenth century Ireland, and at a basic level striving for sobriety as means of social improvement. And, of course, it remains a place for social rendezvous.

Dr Diarmuid Scully, Medievalist, Historian and Lecturer:

What it means has changed a lot in the last few years. This is the decade of centenaries and commemorations. I'm interested in the First World War – military history - and one thing that is really noticeable is that this is one of the very few cities where the main statue, the main public commemoration, is for somebody dedicated to peace. You compare it with what it's matched with at the other end of Cork, the National Monument and the Cenotaph of the

Great War. Those are important commemorations, but I think it's a really good thing that this city is not dominated by war. And this is something that I began to realise only very recently and what a very positive thing it is to have somebody like that commemorated in such a central position in town.

I think until a year ago or so I would have said it didn't mean anything to a modern generation. I would have been surprised if you said people didn't know what it was, but what has changed for me in the last year or two would be in a very indirect way – I have students who study English and are interested in politics as well and are very interested in the narratives of Frederick Douglass and in the anti-slavery movement in the States. So I knew Douglass came here – came to Cork - and I read about it myself and there was Fr Mathew - and the man came to life. So you're suddenly seeing that this man was a tremendous force for good. He's an ecumenical, he's a social reformer, he's standing up in an age of institutional racism, for freedom. So that is something I didn't know about and I learned about it in an indirect way though some of my students. So these are young guys – eighteen, nineteen, twenty – so I think there is actually, at least in some places, there's a re-emergence of a knowledge about him and from a very unexpected angle as well.

Think about where the Cenotaph is now and wasn't there on the corner a statue of one of the George's – King George of England – what is it 'Look out for Ireland King George of England' – I think it was possibly him - that ended up in the river didn't it? So that tells you, if you want to know whether statues are important enough, that they are if people go to the habit of destroying them. So to have a statue of somebody in the most prominent place in St Patrick's Street - and there he is talking – you can see he's addressing – he's giving a speech. What's he doing? Even to ask that question - he's somebody with a message and we're commemorating him. And

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just look at the next several years. The next ten years is going to be commemorations of war and rebellion and revolution and killing and here is a Statue for somebody who was a tremendous force for good. So to commemorate him is, I think, an incredibly valuable thing. And especially you look at this particular year, you look at the results of the European elections; you look at the emergence of seriously nasty people – you know – racism, whether openly acknowledged or not, seems to me to be clearly on the rise and you go back – you go back to the 1840s and you're seeing somebody in a sectarian age who's ecumenical; in an age of institutional racism, when there was still slavery in America, somebody who was standing up for freedom. So the idea that that man was associated primarily with this city is something tremendous. I think it should be commemorated.

Professor Dermot Keogh, Historian and Author

There is every reason why this anniversary should be marked with a political, a popular and a scholarly response. Fr Mathew OFM Cap., was one of the most influential and significant figures of Ireland in the first half of the 19th century and beyond. His extraordinary works of charity during the famine, leaving to one side for a moment his temperance crusade, deserves to be reviewed in an objective and nuanced way. His life's work, the pursuit of temperance in Ireland, was very enlightened. Drink was a social disease for poorer class Irishmen and women. Finding refuge in alcohol was an epidemic and something had to be done about it. Appeals for moderation simply did not work amid such deprivation, poverty and outright destitution. Mathew provided a very blunt but successful instrument - the pledge - to rescue people from the excesses of drink. Drinking was a social disease, and Fr Mathew confronted that challenge and achieved significant results which made for more serene domestic living.

The statue raised to Fr Mathew is of enduring aesthetic and didactic value. It is a handsome statue showing the power of a great preacher. But it also has a teaching or educational value. I know from contacts in different charitable organisations how drink continues to play a most ruinous role in the lives of many families in the city of Cork. Fr Mathew, naive by today's 'sophisticated' standards, is a role model for the youth of modern Ireland.

After teaching thirty years in University College Cork, I am aware of what it means to see young people, particularly on a Thursday night, abusing alcohol, or rather, being abused by those who sell alcohol. I recall a time when drinks' companies were allowed to offer prizes of a 'keg' to student rag week activities. Drinks' companies were given easy access to the campus in older times and they reaped the commercial rewards. Mercifully, that has now stopped but not for the sponsorship of sporting organisations and events.

So, the Fr Mathew Statue on St Patrick's Street is a historical solitary 'voice' against excess and where drink can't be handled responsibly, total abstinence. I am sure that the St Vincent de Paul society, for example, would have a good insight into the abuse of alcohol in Irish society. Getting young people hooked on alcohol, before the age of 18, is a good commercial proposition. But it is irresponsible. I think that, as in the United States, a card system should operate and if you are not 21 then you are not sold drink in bars or restaurants or off-licences.

Fr Mathew today may be considered a witness for another era, a great man who has nothing to say to people today. Think again. His statue is a challenge to those who wish to hook young people on alcohol by making it attractive, sporty and likely to make one popular. It does none of those things. Think again.

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Thomastown Statue, erected 1938

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Appendix



Rare view: In the month of June, with an early-morning cloud-free north-east sky, the sun can shine for about seven minutes on the *front* of the Fr Mathew statue. This photograph was taken during those minutes, at 6:02 a.m., on Sunday, 9 June 2013.

Photograph courtesy of John Mullins



Photograph showing detail of bronze work.

Photograph courtesy of John Mullins



Plaque at 18 West Beach, Cobh, Co. Cork where Fr Mathew died

Photograph courtesy of Emmett Heffernan

