

## Pat Poland

Well, Fr Mathew Statue, Mangan's Clock and the Fireman's rest were a trio of Victorian Street furniture that dominated the northern end of Patrick Street for decades. Unfortunately only two still remain, the Fr Mathew Statue and Mangan's Clock which incidentally, regrettably isn't working. Howsoever, from the fire-fighters point of view the Fr Mathew Statue will always be associated with a shelter or a hut for decades again 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. Eventually there was about 8 or 9 points from St Luke's cross, up to the Vincentians in Sunday's Well, Rocksavage, various points as I say; the Court House in Washington Street 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; 'twas built by Walter McFarlands 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, at the junction of – opposite Great George's Street, Washington Street. It was moved after the proprietors of Grant's, Lyons', cribbed to the Corporation 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. Both the hut – the tram inspector's hut – and the Fireman's rest are useful ways of dating photographs of the northern end of Patrick's Street. The hut is a much smaller structure than the subsequent Fireman's rest. Also the hut has an A roof where the Fireman's rest that supplanted it in 1904, has a hip roof. Howsoever, 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. So from 1904, as I say the hut was next to the Fr Mathew Statue and 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. So the first wheeled escape carrying appliance was purchased in 1930 and 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's Park and it will probably be used as a security hut or some such like. So there you go.

Q: What does the Statue mean to you personally then with your connection to the fire serviced?

Well as I said to an older generation of firemen – well of course it was long gone being used by the fire service before my time, even before I was born – as I said it ceased to be used by the fire brigade in 1930 but I suppose whenever we spoke about the Fr Mathew Statue long ago we always thought instinctively or automatically of the Fireman's rest which stood right adjacent to the Fr Mathew Statue.

Q: Is it important to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Statue?

I think it is. **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 – sort of - what he stood for and what he campaigned for really faded out within some years of his death, that it didn't survive him, regrettable. 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 head-quarters, 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'.