

Hibs' Fans Present Plaque to St Patrick's Parish Church



Hundreds of Hibs fans braved the poor weather conditions to witness Club legend Pat Stanton unveil a plaque commemorating the birthplace of Hibernian FC inside St Patrick's Church in the Cowgate at the weekend.

The plaque was commissioned by members of the St Patrick's Branch of the Hibernian Supporters Club and after discussions with the Archdiocese, Trustees and Parish, it was agreed that the ceremony would take place on St Patrick's Day.

The beautiful plaque is set on Connemara Marble and reads "St Patrick's Parish, the Historic Home of Hibernian Football Club. Hibernian FC was founded on 6th August 1875 by the then parish priest Father Edward Joseph Hannan and Michael Whelahan, member of the St Patrick's Church CYMS. Presented by the St Patrick's Branch of the Hibernian Supporters on 17 March 2013."

The ceremony was conducted by Douglas McLeod, Chairman of the Supporters Club who thanked the representatives of the club who attended including manager Pat Fenlon, Chairman Rod Petrie and directors including Amanda Jones, Brian Houston, Bruce Langham, Garry O'Hagan and David Forsyth.

He also extended his gratitude to a number of branch members from Groningen in the Netherlands who had travelled over for the event and also to sample the St Patrick's Day celebrations in the capital.

The supporters' club was formed in 2010 with only five members but currently has 170, with membership throughout the world, including Christchurch New Zealand.

Responding on behalf of Hibs, Rod Pattie said: It's my pleasure to be here today as Chairman of Hibernian Football Club along with the board of directors and manager Pat Fenlon, to witness the unveiling of this plaque which commemorates the founding of Hibernian in 1875. 138 years later, Hibernian Football Club is one of the leading football clubs in Scotland. It challenges for honours, not just in Scotland, but also in Europe and it has a standing in world football. Two weeks ago in this city, Sepp Blatter, President of FIFA, the Governing Body of World Football told me of his first memories of Hibernian Football Club; of Eddie Turnbull and the other members of the Famous Five Forward Line, and the importance of our club.

"It all started here. The Club was born out of the church, born out of poverty, born out of unemployment and born out of human struggle and we have faced up to these challenges.

"Just as it did in 1875, Hibernian today touches the lives of ordinary people and hopefully you are proud of how Hibernian has evolved."



Hibs legend Pat Stanton said: "My father was born in this parish years ago to a Hibs daft family. I was born in Craigmillar so it was St Teresa's for me. I think on St Patrick's Day, if my dad was still here in St Pats watching his Patrick doing this; you couldn't have written this. It's part of the history of the city. Hibs were founded by young people with the help of the parish priest all those years ago so it's right that we don't forget our history. For me to be standing here today, I'm absolutely chuffed."

Edward Joseph Hannan was born in Ballingarry, County Limerick in Ireland on the 21st June 1836. He was ordained as a priest on the 13th May 1860 and initially continued his studies, being appointed as a Professor of Classics until, while on

holiday in Scotland, he was persuaded by the Bishop responsible for the Church in the East of Scotland to move to Edinburgh. After arriving on the 17th April 1861, he began what would be a 30 year service at St Patrick's Church in Edinburgh's Cowgate.

In October 1861 Father Hannan, as he was then known, was appointed as a junior curate at St Patrick's. The Father decided to tackle some of the social problems in the area of the city known as 'Little Ireland' by seeking to open a branch of the Catholic Young Men's Society, an organisation founded by the Father's uncle, the Right Reverend Monsignor Richard B. O'Brien DD VG, Dean of Limerick, in 1849. He was successful in his efforts and the St Patrick's branch of the CYMS was officially opened on the 5th October 1865. As the branch flourished, Father Hannan approached Edinburgh Corporation and permission was given for the erection of a hall to be called the Catholic Institute but which the people knew as St Mary's Street Halls. On the 2nd April 1869, the Lord Provost laid the foundation stone for the building which was to play such an important part in the formation of Hibernian Football Club some six years later.



Father Hannan became priest-in-charge at St Patrick's in 1871 and continued his work by expanding the church's devotional societies, Sunday schools and educational facilities including the building of a new St Patrick's boy's school. Indeed his work in the field of education was such that he was elected to the Edinburgh School Board.

Following an approach from a 21 year old member of the St Patrick's CYMS, Michael Whelahan, Father Hannan was instrumental, along with Whelahan, in paving the way for a football club to be formed as part of the CYMS and that football club, Hibernian, was launched on Friday, the 6th August 1875 as part of the celebration at the St Mary's Street

Halls to mark the centenary of the birth of Daniel O'Connell, the champion of the Catholic Emancipation. Father Hannan was elected as the Club's Manager and Life President with Whelahan appointed Captain.

Canon Hannan died on the 24th June 1891, at the age of 55, after being stricken with pneumonia following a severe bout of influenza. His funeral took place on Friday, 26th June 1891 and, after the Requiem Mass, the coffin was carried by members of St Patrick's CYMS to the hearse on the High Street which then proceeded to the Grange Cemetery in a procession which numbered 2,000 with many thousands more lining the route.

Within a few days a committee was formed to raise funds for a suitable memorial. Those funds came in the form of subscriptions, large and small, from the people of 'Little Ireland' and beyond in the city of Edinburgh and, such was the Canon's standing in the community, the monies raised were sufficient to pay for a memorial tablet in St Patrick's Church and an inscribed Celtic cross at the city's Grange Cemetery. Furthermore, the monies left over were such that they were used to set up the Canon Hannan Memorial Fund for Orphans which was used to feed, clothe and board the orphans of 'Little Ireland' and Leith in St Joseph's Industrial School in Tranent.

In 2006, the Hibernian Historical Trust funded the repair and restoration of Canon Hannan's Memorial, and on the 20th August 2006, held a Re-dedication Ceremony at the Grange Cemetery in Edinburgh to mark their work to repair and restore the memorial erected in honour of Canon Hannan on his death in 1891.

The Trust contributed a sum of £3,000 to the project and the commemorative event was attended by the Canon's great-nephew, Tom Burke from County Limerick.