

Monument in Old Parish is rededicated to Richard J Daly

County's Chicago connections remembered

Historic ties linking Dungarvan, its surrounding Gaeltacht area and the Irish diaspora in the United States were marked at a ceremony on Saturday last in Old Parish, where a monument was rededicated to the memory of the late Richard J Daly – the renowned long serving Mayor of Chicago.

Speaking at the event, the Mayor of Dungarvan, Cllr Fiachra Ó Céilleachair, said the memorial at the N25 roadside in Móin na Mian was a symbolic one.

First voted into the Illinois legislature in 1946, Richard J Daley was elected Mayor of Chicago on six successive occasions between 1955 and his death in 1976. He was the grandson of Maurice Daley, an emigrant who left Old Parish in the late 19th century. Richard M Daley, a son of the previous Mayor, is currently Chicago's first citizen and has served in the post since 1989.

The present Mayor's brother, William Daly, was US Secretary for Commerce under President Bill Clinton from 1997 to 2000. When the Daly monument was first unveiled in 1959, Dungarvan Town Council was represented on the occasion by its then Chair, the late Tom Kyne. Now, 47 years later, the monument has been renewed to feature an Irish language plaque – its unveiling timed to coincide with 'Seachtain na Gaeilge'.

Cllr Ó Céilleachair, who is also the elected Údarás na Gaeltachta representative for An Rinn/An Seana Phobail, said that while "there are aspects of the sometimes controversial Daly political legacy that don't appeal to me, nevertheless, city government in Chicago saw it remain a prosperous place for the latter half of the 20th century, whilst similar metropolises crumbled in the USA's 'rust belt'. This positive was something many an Irish emigrant from these parts appreciated".

Mayor Daly, he said, also played a crucial role in delivering a victory for John F. Kennedy in the 1960 US Presidential election – "an event that gave hope to the modern world. Old Parish also benefited from Daly's generosity, as evidenced from his significant donation for the building of the new church there in 1970.

"Today, the Daly monument stands as a reminder of our relationship to the US. It marks the achievements of those who were rent from these shores. Significantly, this ceremony occurs at a time when the Kennedy/McCain Bill is before the US authorities for consideration. Latter day emigrants from Co Waterford hope the regularisation of their position in the USA will be the result."

The Mayor concluded: "As we celebrate "Seachtain an Gaeilge" – something that marks our cultural diversity – it is also important for us to reflect that recent times have seen many people making the journey here to Ireland in the hope of having a better life. One hopes that our communities, like Chicago in the case of the Dalys and the Irish, will benefit from the contribution of those who have come to live and work in our midst."