



## The Statue of Our Lady

In 2018, whilst clearing out the garages at the back of St Patrick's Church Grangetown Cardiff, which were full of all sorts of rubbish, old scenery, broken furniture, lots and lots of discarded items, with absolutely no room for a vehicle of any shape or form, there in the corner underneath cement bags and covered in muck was ... a statue of Our Lady. Who put it there?

It was severely damaged: most of the paint had come off, it was minus part of one hand, and had holes, chips and lumps out of the cloak and gown.

There was no way it could remain there, and throwing it away was totally out of the question. The statue was removed to a place of safety, where it was cleaned and assessed. But there was something very familiar about it.

There is an old photo of the interior of the old Church ( now demolished ) and there is a remarkable similarity between the Sacred Heart Statue now standing on our Sacred Heart altar, and the Statue of Our Lady. It is possible that they are a pair and that when they were furnishing our new Church, they brought some artefacts from the old. The bases of the two statues are very similar in style and shape. That would make these two statues coming up to 100 years old. Our Lady has the word HEREFORD written underneath and at that time many statues were purchased from the Nuns in that place.

But what had happened to it? In the early 1970's, St Patrick's Church underwent big changes: there was an altar placed in the centre so the priest could say Mass facing the people, the Church was Consecrated, and both chapels were given new altars. The Sacred Heart altar was designed to incorporate mosaics from the pulpit ( which was no longer required) and Our Lady's Altar was completely new. It came from Italy and is extremely heavy, bearing statues of Our Lady and St Bernadette. It is thought that the altar as well as the statues were donated by the Dimacio family. The Sacred Heart Statue was placed on its new altar but the original statue of Our Lady disappeared, possibly being used during May time for the Crowning Ceremony. However, where she was placed during the rest of the year is a mystery.

The May Procession after some years ceased to be arranged and the bier that was used to carry the statue relegated to the cupboard under the stairs to the choir. It is still there.

Having worked out that the statue is possibly very old, a sensitive approach was needed. It was gently cleaned, some of the missing parts replaced and some of the larger holes filled. It is made of plaster and this needed to be stabilised. The statue was recoloured in pale shades, but the lumps and bumps it had received over the years are still there for all to see. It was a miracle that it survived.

It is now kept in a very safe place during the year and in 2019 after an absence of almost 40 years we crowned Mary once again on Good Shepherd Sunday ( 12/5/19). Hopefully Mary's Statue will last for some years yet.

**Our Lady of the Garages Pray for us**