



# RDS



Comhairle Cathrach  
Bhaile Átha Cliath  
Dublin City Council

# John Henry Foley

## in Ireland, Britain and Beyond



This symposium is convened as a joint initiative of Dublin City Council and the Royal Dublin Society to mark the 150th anniversary of the death of John Henry Foley (1818 – 74), one of the foremost sculptors of the Victorian period in Ireland and Britain. Long overdue, the symposium will assess the legacy of Foley in Ireland, Britain and beyond.

21st - 23rd  
November 2024

Wood Quay Venue  
D08 RF3F

The symposium is an action of the Dublin City Strategic Heritage Plan 2024 – 2029. It takes place as Dublin City Council embarks on a conservation management plan for the historic public sculpture and monuments on O’Connell Street and College Green. This plan will produce a detailed condition assessment of each sculpture. It will identify best conservation practice methods for the stone and bronze monuments and will guide the Council’s conservation and maintenance of each of these important works.

The Royal Dublin Society has a special interest in John Henry Foley. A former pupil of the RDS drawing and modelling schools, Foley bequeathed his original casts to the Society. Today, under the care of a keeper-curator, the RDS Art Collection is gradually being restored to its former splendour. As custodian of this precious heritage collection, the Society is committed to preserving Foley’s fragile plaster casts so that the work of this outstanding Irish sculptor may continue to enlighten and inspire for years to come.

### Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Professor Paula Murphy for her support and advice in organising this symposium.

### Timeline and Booking Links

<b>Thurs 21st Nov</b> 18h00 - 20h00	Launch of <i>The Matter of Monuments</i>	Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland 63 Merrion Square	<a href="#">Book here</a>
<b>Fri 22nd Nov</b> 09h00 - 17h15	Symposium	Wood Quay Venue	<a href="#">Book here</a>
<b>Sat 23rd Nov</b> 10h00 - 12h00	Walking Tour	O’Connell monument	<a href="#">Book here</a>

### Cost:

Tickets for the symposium on Friday 22nd November cost €10.00. All other events are free.

### Accessibility

The Wood Quay Venue is fully accessible. ISL interpretation or else live captioning will be provided.

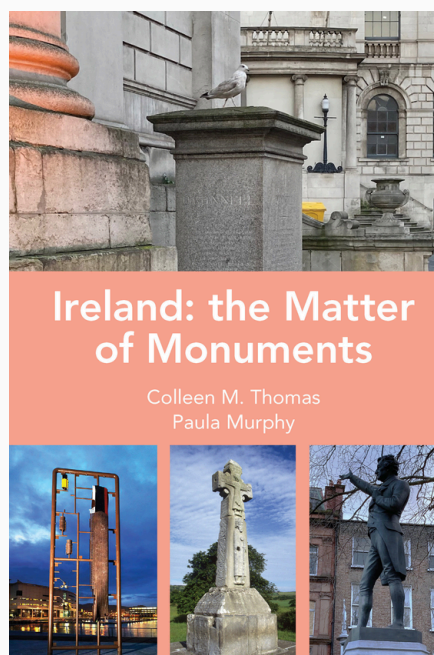
## ***Ireland: The Matter of Monuments***

**Colleen M. Thomas (Author, Editor), Paula Murphy (Author, Editor)  
(Liverpool University Press, 2024)**

This collection considers Irish monuments from the medieval to the modern era. The essays presented here challenge the notion that these works are one-dimensional and instead acknowledge the plurality of values associated with Irish monuments. Taking a holistic approach to the topic, the volume contains contributions from art historians, archaeologists, historians and heritage practitioners. The multidisciplinary and intersectoral contributions are placed in dialogue with one another, providing a discussion of Irish monuments that is unique in its comprehensiveness. The integration of research on early Irish monumental work with that of the more modern period, situating all Irish monuments on a continuum of shared concerns, is a significant pioneering element in this field. The range of perspectives represented in the book reflects the complexity of cultural heritage in contemporary life and opens the conversation to include a wider range of views.

The book will launch on Thursday 21st November 2024 at the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland, 63 Merrion Square, Dublin 2. You are invited to join using the [booking link here](#).

For more information or to buy the book, [click here](#).



# John Henry Foley

## (1818 - 1874)

Born into Dublin's working class, John Henry Foley began his art education at the RDS drawing schools. Subsequent training at the Royal Academy in London was followed by his debut at its annual exhibition in 1839, and by the mid-1840s he was in receipt of significant private patronage. It is for his public monuments that he is widely known today, and his statues of statesmen and soldiers can be found as far afield as India and America. Foley died aged just 56, leaving his original cast models to the Royal Dublin Society, and the final touches to his many unfinished works to his accomplished studio assistants.

*John Henry Foley, Ino and Bacchus, 1840*  
© RDS Library & Archives





# Programme at a Glance

9h00 – 9h30	Registration
09h30 – 09h50	<b>Welcome Remarks</b> <b>John Dardis</b> , President of the Royal Dublin Society Lord Mayor of Dublin, <b>Cllr. James Geoghegan</b>
9h50 – 11h20	<b>Session 1: Selected Portrait Sculpture by John Henry Foley</b> Chair: Charles Duggan, Heritage Officer, Dublin City Council
09h50 – 10h20	<b>Harriet Wheelock</b> , <i>Creating ‘the Irish Medical Walhalla’: Foley’s statues in the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland</i>
10h20 – 10h50	<b>Sophie Reynolds-Lerner</b> , <i>Conserving two plaster maquettes by John Henry Foley</i>
10h50 – 11h20	<b>Leticia Azcue Brea</b> , <i>An almost unknown sculpture by Foley at the Prado Museum, Madrid (via Zoom)</i>
11h20 – 11h45	Tea and Coffee Break
11h45 – 12h45	<b>Session 2: Keynote 1</b> Chair: Ruairí Ó Cuív, Public Art Advisor
11h45 – 12h30	<b>Paula Murphy</b> , <i>‘The eminent Irish sculptor who resides in London’</i>
12h30 – 12h45	Session 1 and 2 discussion
12h45 – 14h00	Lunch
14h00 – 15h30	<b>Session 3: Colonial and Equestrian Works by Foley</b> Chair: Nicole Collins, Curator, Royal Dublin Society
14h00 – 14h30	<b>Ronan Sheehan</b> , <i>Foley’s Asia: a personal perspective</i>
14h30 – 15h00	<b>Richard Barnes</b> , <i>John Henry Foley’s works in Kolkata and Mumbai</i>
15h00 – 15h30	<b>Rebecca Minch</b> , <i>John Henry Foley’s equestrian works</i>
15h30 – 16h00	<b>John Byrne</b> , <i>Misneach: A monumental celebration of youth</i>
16h00 – 16h15	Comfort break
16h15 – 17h15	<b>Session 4: Keynote 2</b> Chair: Dr Philip McEvansoneya, Trinity College Dublin
16h15 – 17h00	<b>Philip Ward-Jackson</b> , <i>John Henry Foley and his contemporaries in England</i>
17h00 – 17h15	<b>Alan Phelan</b> , <i>Closing remarks</i>

## Session 1 - Selected Portrait Sculpture of John Henry Foley

Chair: Charles Duggan, Heritage Officer, Dublin City Council

### **Harriet Wheelock, Keeper of Collections, Royal College of Physicians**

*Creating 'the Irish Medical Walhalla': Foley's statues in the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland*

In 1864 the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (RCPI) moved into their newly built home at 6 Kildare Street, Dublin. Over the following decade they would commission three portrait statues from John Henry Foley for the new College hall, creating what one contemporary described as 'the Irish Medical Walhalla'.

This paper will explore Foley's works in the context of the creation of a professional identity for the College and its members. The mid-nineteenth century has been characterised as the 'golden age' of Irish medicine, and the medical profession dominated the social and cultural life of the city. Against this background an increasingly-confident medical profession commissioned a building, ceremonial regalia and artworks, including those by Foley, which celebrated the achievements of Irish medicine. The new visual identity created was 'characteristic of Ireland', but saw the country as part of a wider United Kingdom.

Harriet Wheelock is Keeper of Collections in the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, with responsibility for the management and development of RCPI's Heritage Centre. This comprises the unique library, archive and historic items relating to the history of RCPI, and the history of medicine in Ireland. In 2018 the Heritage Centre received Full Accreditation under the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland, becoming Ireland's first accredited medical museum.

Harriet worked as an Archival Student in the National Library of Ireland and completed her MA in Archives and Records Management from University College Dublin. She is currently a PhD student in the TU Dublin School of Creative Arts, where her research focuses on the development and historiography of RCPI's heritage collections. She is the co-author with Dr Mary McAuliffe (UCD) of *The Diaries of Kathleen Lynn. A life revealed through personal writing*, (UCD Press, 2023).

### **Sophie Reynolds-Lerner, Conservator, RL Conservation**

*Conserving two plaster maquettes by John Henry Foley*

This talk will start by looking at the artists' maquette, its functions, materials and fabrication techniques, with reference to John Henry Foley. Two of Foley's maquettes will then be discussed in detail. The first case study will touch on the collection of Foley's maquettes which belong to the Royal Dublin Society, before focusing on the conservation works to *Ino and Bacchus* which took place in 2018. The second case study will look at the historical research and scientific examination of his Goldsmith maquette, which belongs to Longford County Council.

Sophie Reynolds-Lerner graduated with a BA Conservation Studies from City & Guilds of London Art School. She ran her sculpture conservation practice 'RL Conservation' in Dublin from 2015 to 2024. She currently works as a Stone, Wall Paintings and Mosaic Conservator at the British Museum, London.

## Session 1 - Selected Portrait Sculpture of John Henry Foley

Chair: Charles Duggan, Heritage Officer, Dublin City Council

### **Leticia Azcue Brea, Senior Curator of Sculpture and Decorative Arts, Prado Museum, Madrid**

*An almost unknown sculpture by Foley at the Prado Museum, Madrid*

At Rothamsted Manor, Harpenden, in the county of Hertfordshire, UK, there was a life-size marble statue of Charles Bennet Lawes (1843 - 1911) in Carrara marble, executed by John Henry Foley, dated c. 1872. Lawes was a great athlete, a connoisseur and an art collector, and a sculptor who trained with Foley. In 1902, after the death of his father, Lawes became Baronet and thus became Sir, and added the name Wittewronge to his surname Lawes.

Barely mentioned among Foley's works, the statue was acquired at auction by the Prado Museum for its sculpture collections. The subsequent discovery of documentation and photographs relating to the commission and its display at the Lawes mansion has helped to complete the catalogue of Foley's sculptures.

Dr Leticia Azcue Brea has been a member of the Facultative Body of Museum Curators since 1985. Her previous roles include Curator at the Ministry of Culture, Curator and Deputy Director of the Museum of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando, and Deputy Director of Cultural Action and Historical Patrimony in the Ministry of Defence. Since 2004, she is Senior Curator of Sculpture and Decorative Arts at the Prado National Museum. She was elected Academician at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando, Madrid, in 2022. She was president of the Spanish Committee of ICOM (International Council of Museums) from 2004 to 2007. She is a researcher on Spanish and Italian sculpture from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, museology and museography, and legislation on historical and artistic heritage. She has brought to light and published, in collaboration, the unknown production of photosculptures in Spain and other international collections of this singular typology dated between 1860 and 1868. She is currently writing the catalogue of the nineteenth-century sculpture collection of the Prado Museum.

Some of her nearly 100 publications are available at  
<https://museodelprado.academia.edu/LeticiaAzcueBrea>  
<https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/autor?codigo=189353>

*John Henry Foley, Charles Bennet Lawes as a  
Victorious Athlete in Repose, c.1872,  
©Museo Nacional del Prado*



## Session Two - Keynote Lecture One

Chair: Ruairi Ó Cuív, Public Art Advisor

### Paula Murphy, Emeritus Professor, UCD School of Art History and Cultural Policy

*'The eminent Irish sculptor who resides in London.'*

Although based in London, John Henry Foley was commissioned for much work in Ireland, most of which was for Dublin. However, he did not receive his first Irish commission until well after he had achieved success in the metropolis. Monument committees in Ireland were ultimately swayed as much by his renown as by his ability. While there was considerable opposition among nationalists to Foley being offered work and no competitive process was held for the commissions he undertook here, the sculptures were largely greeted with approval. This paper will consider how Foley was received in his native land.

Paula Murphy is an emeritus professor in UCD Art History and Cultural Policy. She has published widely on Irish sculpture. Her books include *Nineteenth-Century Irish Sculpture, Native Genius Reaffirmed* (Yale, 2010) and *Sculpture 1600-2000, vol. 3 Art and Architecture of Ireland* (RIA & Yale 2014). She was awarded an RHA Gold Medal in 2015. She held a Terra Foundation Senior Fellowship at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in 2016/17 and a Senior Fellowship at the Capitol Historical Society in 2017.

John Henry Foley, *The Mother*, 1851  
© RDS Library & Archives





## Session Three - Colonial and Equestrian works by Foley

Chair: Nicole Collins, Curator, Royal Dublin Society

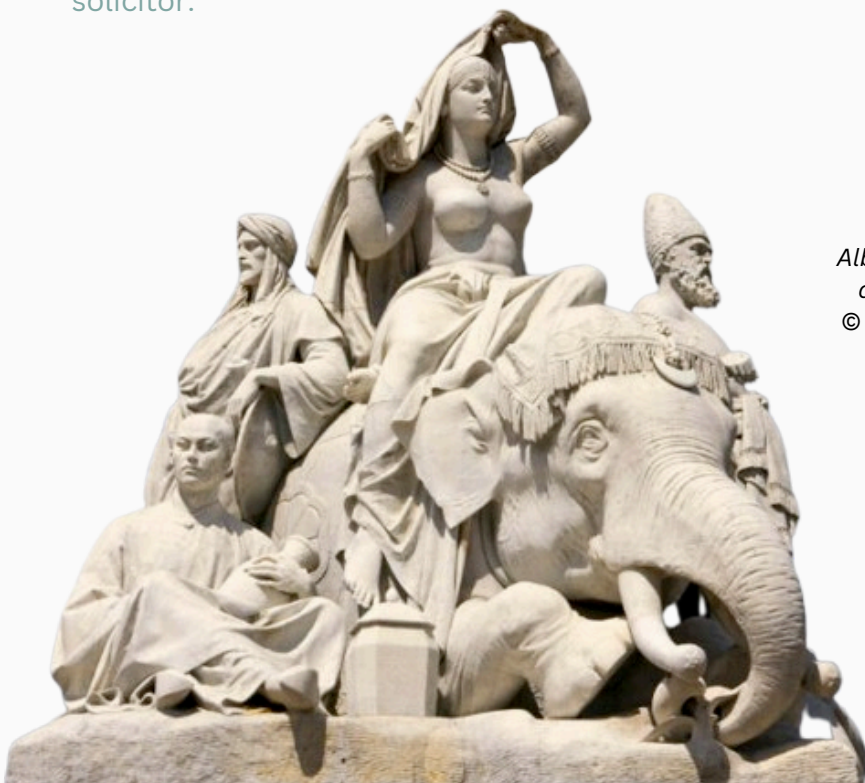
### Ronan Sheehan, Writer

#### *Foley's Asia: a personal perspective*

Four groups of statuary, each of which represents a continent, surround the central figure on the Albert Memorial in Kensington Gardens. It is the quintessential Victorian public monument. Sir Gilbert Scott in his design, which includes a colossal statue of the Prince - a commission that ultimately would be offered to Foley - appears to place the world in an inferior position. The group representing the continent of Asia is also by Foley.

In his book, *Foley's Asia*, Sheehan examines the image of 'the serene woman on the elephant with her magnificent torso ... who feigns no interest in the doings of the busy British people behind her'. He proposes to discuss this view of the memorial, a view that is not widely shared, but which is grounded in the response of a contemporary of the sculptor. This view forms the basis of the book which explores the experience of nineteenth-century Asia through the lives of Imperial figures carved by Foley, and by recording the actions of a self-styled revolutionary group whose aim was to undermine the empire by attacking Foley's imperial statues.

Ronan Sheehan is the author of *The Tennis Players* (The Irish Writers' Co-operative, 1977), *Boy with an Injured Eye* (Brandon / Mount Eagle Publications Ltd, 1983), *The Heart of the City* (Brandon Books, 1988) and *Foley's Asia* (Lilliput Press, 1999). He won the Rooney Prize for Literature in 1984 and his writings have been included in third-level teaching. His activities include: member of the Irish Writers Co-operative; editorial board of *The Crane Bag*; founder of North City Folklore Collection Project; editorial board of *Studies*; founder of John Philpott Curran Association; and so much more. He has also practiced as a solicitor.



*Albert Memorial, Kensington Gardens. Group depicting Asia by John Henry Foley, 1872  
© Christopher Hope-Fitch / RIBA Collections*

## Session Three - Colonial and Equestrian works by Foley

Chair: Nicole Collins, Curator, Royal Dublin Society

### **Richard Barnes, Public Statues and Sculpture Association (UK)**

*John Henry Foley's works in Kolkata and Mumbai*

John Henry Foley made nine works for India, including three memorials, a bust, a marble figure inside the Asiatic Society, and a public statue of a Parsi gentleman. By far the most significant works were his two outstanding equestrian statues, both of which escaped the ignominy of removal or destruction during the West Bengal administration of the 1960s. A third equestrian statue for Calcutta had been sketch-modelled in miniature by Foley, but was completed after his death by his pupil, Thomas Brock, who continued to fulfil Foley's numerous commissions. In this illustrated talk Richard Barnes will discuss the sculpture of John Henry Foley in India.

After the Photographic Arts BA course at the University of Westminster, Richard Barnes toured Britain on horseback, worked as a copywriter and as an archaeological photographer, before freelancing and eventually establishing a publishing imprint. Interest in a nineteenth-century sculpting ancestor led him to join the PMSA, now the PSSA (Public Statues and Sculpture Association). He wrote a biography of the sculptor, John Bell, followed by *The Year of Public Sculpture – Norfolk* (Frontier Publishing, 2001), and a book about monumental obelisks in Britain. He also co-authored *British Sculpture in India* (Frontier Publishing, 2012), and produced *The Art of Memory: Sculpture in the Cemeteries of London* (Frontier Publishing, 2016), both with the assistance of the Henry Moore Foundation. He is a member of the editorial board of the Public Sculpture in Britain series and is involved in all aspects of the book producing process.

### **Rebecca Minch, Principal Officer, Creative Ireland**

*John Henry Foley's equestrian works*

This talk will explore the equestrian monument in the work of John Henry Foley, with particular reference to the horse. The sculptures will be examined in terms of historical symbolism, as well as from the technical perspectives of equine anatomy and equestrianism.

Rebecca Minch graduated from UCD with a Master's Degree in History of Art in 1990, having completed her BA (Hons) in History of Art and History there in 1989. She subsequently lectured in a number of organisations, including Limerick School of Art & Design and the National College of Art, and was a contributor to the *Dictionary of Irish Biography* before taking up the inaugural UCD Fellowship of the Faculty of Arts in the History of Art Department. Since 2000 Rebecca has worked in the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of the Environment, Climate & Communications, dealing primarily with energy and climate issues. She currently works in the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media. She has a strong personal interest in horses and rides regularly.

## Session Three - Colonial and Equestrian works by Foley

Chair: Nicole Collins, Curator, Royal Dublin Society

### John Byrne, Artist

*'Misneach: A mounumental celebration of youth'*

In the context of a general discussion of the artist's work, this talk will focus on a major public art commission that he completed as part of the regeneration of Ballymun. This involved making a copy of *The Gough Memorial*, formerly located in Dublin's Phoenix Park until it was blown up in 1957. The bronze horse was faithfully reproduced via moulds taken in situ at its new home in northern England. A new rider, representing the youth of Ballymun, was modelled to replace the original figure of Field Marshall Gough. The equestrian sculpture was unveiled in September 2010.

John Byrne was born in Belfast. He went to the art college there before attending the Slade School in London (1984-86) and has been living and working in Dublin since 1996. He's responsible for a number of high-profile public artworks including Dublin's Last Supper (2004) and Misneach (2010), a monumental equestrian sculpture in Ballymun. He has a background in performative work including The Border Interpretative Centre (2000) and Would You die for Ireland (2003). In May this year he unveiled an initial iteration of his ambitious new public artwork The Contest for Fingal County Council. This will be installed permanently in the new Cultural Quarter in Swords. He was elected to Aosdána in 2015.

*John Byrne, Misneach: A Monumental  
Celebration of Youth, 2010  
© John Byrne*



## Session Four - Keynote Lecture Two

Chair: Dr Philip McEvansoneya

### Philip Ward-Jackson, Art Historian

#### *John Henry Foley and his contemporaries in England*

John Henry Foley's main rival in sculpture in England, Carlo Marochetti, paid him the compliment of describing him to a potential patron as "clever in composition and excellent in execution". Before Marochetti's arrival in England in 1848, Foley had already made his mark with his entries to the 1844 Westminster Hall Competition, which brought him two commissions for the new Houses of Parliament. Even so, he would be humiliated by seeing his 1854 designs for a tomb of the Duke of Wellington turned down without reason given, when it was wrongly assumed that Marochetti would win the commission.

A series of energetic equestrian statues, starting with that of Lord Hardinge for Kolkata in 1858 justified patriotic claims that Foley was on a par with his continental rival's celebrated excursions in this genre. Certainly, by the end of the 1850s the huge demand for Foley's sculptural services in England indicated that these men stood neck-and-neck in the market. Foley's being commissioned, after Marochetti's death, to create the central figure for the National Memorial to Prince Albert, has come to seem like a victory in this battle for sculptural supremacy.

Quite apart from this interpersonal rivalry, this talk will aim to show precisely what it was that made Foley's work so quintessential an expression of high-Victorian values.

Dr Philip Ward-Jackson is the retired Conway Librarian of the Courtauld Institute of Art. In that function, until his retirement in 2004, he curated a large collection of photographs of European architecture and sculpture, most of which is today accessible online. He has contributed two volumes on London's public statuary, to the Public Monuments and Sculpture Association's National Recording Project. He has written many articles, mainly on the subject of sculptors from mainland Europe working in nineteenth-century Britain. He is at present working on a three-authored volume on the sculptor Carlo Marochetti (1805-1867).

*John Henry Foley, Manockjee Nusserwanjee  
Petit, A Parsi Merchant, 1863  
© RDS Library & Archives*





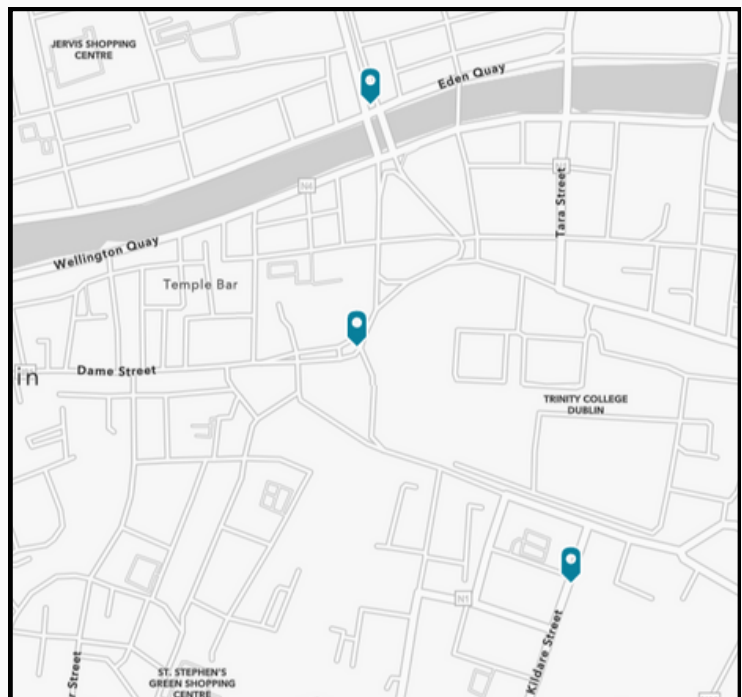
## Foley Walking Tour

We will meet at 10am on Saturday 23rd November by the O'Connell monument on O'Connell Street. The tour will last approximately 2 hours, aiming to finish at 12pm.

**Stop 1:** O'Connell Monument - the national monument to Daniel O'Connell

**Stop 2:** College Green - statues of Oliver Goldsmith, Edmund Burke, and Henry Grattan

**Stop 3:** Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, Kildare Street - portrait statues



*John Henry Foley, O'Connell Monument,  
Dublin, 1866-1883 © Dublin City Council*



Comhairle Cathrach  
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Dublin City Council

# This symposium is convened by Dublin City Council and The Royal Dublin Society

The RDS is a social impact organisation that drives positive social, cultural and economic change across the island of Ireland.

## **RDS Library & Archives**

Royal Dublin Society  
Merrion Road,  
Ballsbridge,  
Dublin 4, D04 AK83.  
Email: [info@rds.ie](mailto:info@rds.ie)  
X/Twitter: @TheRDS  
Website: [www.rds.ie](http://www.rds.ie)

## **Heritage Office**

Planning and Property  
Development Department  
Dublin City Council,  
Civic Offices, Wood Quay  
Dublin 8, D08 RF3F.  
Email: [heritage@dublincity.ie](mailto:heritage@dublincity.ie)  
X/Twitter: @Heritage\_Dublin  
Website: [www.dublincity.ie](http://www.dublincity.ie)