

**Plaque unveiling for James Franey who donated the park at  
Haliday Square to the City,  
*Lord Mayor of Dublin, Councillor Ray McAdam,*  
Halliday Square, Stoneybatter, Dublin 7.  
January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2026.**

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Go raibh maith agat Brendan agus Athbhliain faoi Mhaise Daoibh.

A dhaoine uaisle, good morning everyone — and fáilte go léir.

It's a real privilege to stand here with you today in Halliday Square,  
in the heart of Stoneybatter,  
to unveil this plaque at number 27  
the home of Margaret Ryan —  
in honour of James Franey,  
and in celebration of the kind of Dublin that is built not just by big moments,  
but by quiet, generous lives.

I want to extend a very special welcome to James Franey's family —  
Maura, Frances and Sé —  
three siblings of eight children in the Franey family.

It is right, too,  
that we remember their brothers and sisters who cannot be with us today:  
Hilda, Bill, Melda, Phyllis and Alice.

When family gathers to honour a life, something important happens:  
a city remembers.

The theme of my Mayoralty is **Celebrating Dublin** —  
and not in a shallow way,  
not as a slogan,  
but as a choice:  
to recognise what is good,  
to protect what matters,  
and to lift up the people whose decency holds our neighbourhoods together.

Because heroes come in many forms.  
Some make speeches.  
Some lead marches.  
Some are written into history books.

And some — like James Franey —  
simply show up, day after day, for the place they love.

Born in 1912, James lived, just down the road, at 32 Viking Road,  
and worked for many years as a baker in Boland's Mills.  
He was a committed member of his community,  
and one of the founding members of the Halston Street Parish Credit Union —  
part of that proud Dublin tradition of neighbours looking out for neighbours,  
and communities building their own strength.

And in his garden,  
his bakery,  
his kitchen —  
James was ahead of his time.

Today we have phrases for it:

“locavore”,

“farm to fork”,

“kilometre zero”.

In James’s lifetime, nobody talked like that.

But he lived it.

Here, in an urban street on the northside of Dublin,

in the 1970s,

he was already a pioneer of the dinner plate —

growing, cultivating, sharing.

A simple idea, carried with care.

On his retirement, he purchased the plot here at Halliday Square from the

Whelan family of 35 Manor Place,

with the intention of keeping himself active.

And for years he cultivated fruit and vegetables,

with the help of his friend Kevin Downes of 147 Oxmantown Road —

a former groundsman at Áras an Uachtaráin.

Two Dubliners,

doing what Dubliners do best:

making something better, quietly, without fanfare.

And then came the act that brings us here today.

As he grew older and was no longer able to maintain the plot,

James Franey **donated the land to the people of Dublin** through Dublin Corporation on the 28th of July 1997.

That is a remarkable thing to do —  
to look at a piece of ground and say:  
*this won't be mine; this will be ours.*  
To turn private ownership into public good.  
To leave a gift that outlives you.

Halliday Square itself has a distinct history.  
When these houses were built by the Dublin Artisans' Dwelling Company in 1907, they were conceived as solid, high-quality homes — carefully planned and well-constructed — reflecting an ambition to provide durable, decent housing for working families.

And as we know, the wider area carries older layers still.  
With a deep awareness of place,  
Viking names were given to the surrounding streets and squares — a nod to the Ostmen who settled here and helped shape what was, in effect, Dublin's first suburb:  
the original northside of the city.

So when we stand in Stoneybatter,  
we're not just standing in a neighbourhood.

We're standing in a story.

And what James Franey did was add a beautiful chapter to that story.

The space he donated has become a valued community amenity —  
used by residents for recreation,  
for quiet reflection,  
and for neighbourhood gatherings.

His gift has become a focal point of community life in Stoneybatter,  
and an enduring benefit to the wider city.

And today, in the presence of his surviving family —  
including three of his eight children,  
and so many of his grandchildren and extended family —  
we formally acknowledge what the community has known for a long time:  
*that this was an act of real civic generosity.*

There's a line I often come back to when I think about Dublin:  
the city is at its best when it is **close to the ground** —  
when it is rooted in people,  
in place,  
and in practical kindness.

James believed in that long before it became fashionable.

Today, everything James believed in is “in fashion”.  
Communities work to turn waste ground into green, edible spaces.  
Chefs boast about local produce.

Magazines and TV shows celebrate those who “grow their own” as if they just discovered it.

One wonders what James would have made of it all.

I suspect, from what I’ve learned about James, he would have smiled — and gotten back to work.

And to help preserve and strengthen that legacy for the benefit of all,  
On foot of my intervention, the Council’s Parks Department will soon  
commence upgrade works here in the square.

These works will help address anti-social behaviour,  
improve safety,  
and enhance the amenity for local householders, residents and the wider  
public.

They will include replacing those former high shrubs with low perennial species  
and lower shrubs,  
adding additional seating,  
and redesigning the existing paths to improve accessibility.

The new planting has been carefully chosen to improve visibility,  
support pollinators and local wildlife,  
and provide colour and texture across the seasons —  
so that this square is not only safer,  
but more welcoming, even more beautiful, more Dublin.

May I also take this opportunity to say something personal,

because this moment matters to me.

I'm here not only as Lord Mayor —

but as the local councillor for this area,

and as someone who Stoneybatter was home for so long.

This community has given so much to me over the last 17 years:

friendship,

community,

perspective,

and support.

Stoneybatter has shaped me.

It has grounded me.

And it is a privilege to be able to stand here,

in Stoneybatter,

and unveil a plaque that honours a man who embodied the best of this

neighbourhood —

and the best of Dublin.

I wish to commend Paul Maher for promoting this plaque.

Our commemorative plaques are considered and approved by the

Commemorations & Naming Committee,

chaired by Cllr Donna Cooney,

and I want to acknowledge the members for the work they do —

this is the 72nd plaque they have approved.

And we could not erect these plaques without the co-operation of property

owners. So I want to thank Margaret Ryan,

the owner of 27 Halliday Square,  
for granting permission for this plaque to be erected.  
Thank you Margaret!

In closing, I want to thank you all for being here —  
and once again,  
to James Franey's family:  
thank you for sharing him with Dublin.

Today, we celebrate a life that didn't chase attention, but earned respect.

We celebrate a gift that turned into a gathering place.

And we celebrate a simple truth:  
that the greatness of Dublin is found, again and again,  
in people like James Franey  
people who loved their city enough to leave it better than they found it.

Go raibh míle maith agaibh.

And I now look forward to unveiling this plaque in his honour.