

# Fingal Historic Street Elements Audit 2025



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# archaeology plan

HERITAGE SOLUTIONS

## PROJECT NAME

Fingal Historic Street Elements Audit 2025

## CLIENT

Fingal Heritage Office

## PROJECT REF

AP25-13

## DATE

28/11/2025

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## Report Version

V2 AG 28.11.25

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# Section 1 Introduction

## Report summary

Fingal Heritage Office, with the assistance from the Heritage Council, commissioned Archaeology Plan to undertake an audit of historic street elements in Fingal. The project aimed to identify the locations of historic street elements, specifically historic kerbstones, cobbled surfaces and related stone elements; historic lamp standards, post boxes, water pumps, drinking fountains, horse troughs, milestone and bench marks, bollards and jostle stones. As a starting point, a detailed survey was carried out in four of the historical towns in Fingal.

This report sets out the results of the Fingal Historical Street Element Stocktake project. Section 1 introduces the project, sets out the methodology and discusses the extent of community engagement. Section 2 details what is meant by the term street furniture, outlines existing protections and policy, and reviews the available historic sources. Section 3 sets out the results of the detailed survey of four towns in Fingal - Balbriggan, Howth, Malahide and Skerries. This section should be read in conjunction with the Gazetteer (Appendix 1). Section 4 is a discussion of the survey results including recommendations for a wider survey and suggestions for the future care of historical elements in our towns. Section 5 provides recommendations for the recovery and restoration of street furniture, as well as outlining the potential for extending the survey.



Post box SK43 on Church St, Skerries with water pump SK41 in background



Archaeology Plan surveyor, Anslay McCraw, recording a wall mounted post box HW02 on Harbour Road, Howth

## Methodology

In the summer of 2025, Archaeology Plan conducted a detailed survey of all historic elements identified within the historic towns of Balbriggan, Skerries, Malahide and Howth. The survey began with research into the historical background of each town. This was supplemented by research into the available cartographic sources, such as the historic Ordnance Survey Maps (1st edition 6-inch map, 25-inch Ordnance Survey Map and the last edition 6-inch map) and other available map sources (e.g. the Taylor and Skinner road maps of Ireland, which show milestone locations). Research into available photographic sources, relevant digital databases and published literature on historic street furniture was carried out with a particular focus on literature on street elements in Fingal and the wider Dublin region. This was supplemented, for comparative purposes, by an examination of national and international publications on historic street elements. An additional aid to this research included contributions from members of the public.

Fieldwork was undertaken to create a metric record of the individual surviving elements. The record included important information such as an individual element number, description, condition, photographs and location. The location data was plotted onto a set of maps for the towns of Balbriggan, Skerries, Malahide & Howth. The photographic record included images of each historic element and its context, important details such as maker's marks and monograms were captured and finally the condition of the item was carefully noted including if it was still in use.

The numbering system included an abbreviation of the town and a number. For example, BB01 was the first element recorded in Balbriggan, HW = Howth, MD = Malahide and SK = Skerries. A standard record sheet was compiled to ensure that as much information could be harvested as possible and in a consistent and methodical manner. The section headings in the record sheet were then transferred to column headings in a spreadsheet. This spreadsheet was used to create a gazetteer which included an amalgamation of the data collected by the team of surveyors from Archaeology Plan, any relevant entries from the

**DESCRIPTION:**

Manufacturer's name/Insignia/Ornament/Roadside/enclosed area/addition elements

Made by Tonge and Taggart Foundry, Windmill Lane, Dublin. Installed in 1911 (according to an article in the Drogheda Independent on 15/02/1911). Cast to the specification of Anthony Scott, District Architect and Engineer of Balrothery Rural District Council.

The Foundry mark and Deanta I Neirinn insignia is distinguishable due to its form, albeit heavily coated in paint and illegible. The pump cap was removed some years ago and a neighbour made a replacement top out of a series of circular plywood discs stacked to form a pyramid silicone was used to fill the joints, then over painted.

The pump was painted most recently in dark green paint, with details picked out in black paint.

The pump base is a concrete platform which is believed to be original also. A concrete block wall encloses the pump and forms a bay recessed on the east side of the road (L5100) at the location known as Dornaville.

A concrete trough remains at the front of the pump which forms part of the concrete platform/drainage tray.

A square timber plank flower bed is planted around the pump base, concealing the bolt heads and base plate of the column.

**STORY:**

Is there a story/folklore memory associated?

The water pump was installed following a meeting of Balrothery District Council in February 1911, as there were representations made by residents of six nearby cottages in need of water supply. According to an article in the Drogheda Independent in 1911, local residents previously gathered water from ditches fed by a series of springs at a field at the west of Dornaville Cross (Reynoldstown) and at summertime the only other suitable nearby water source was from a well on a laneway at the hills of Tullog north-west of Dornaville, over the Delvin River in Co. Meath.

In 2019, during the Fingal Field Name project, the author interviewed an elderly local resident who provided the field names for Reynoldstown. The resident recalls his late father telling him about three fields north-west of Dornaville (Reynoldstown) Cross known as 'The Well Fields'. These were named 'well fields as there were a series of springs in the fields which were once a source of water for local residents (evidenced by 1911 article). The First Ed OS map shows a well on the NW corner of the crossroads, which the resident referenced and it is believed the boring of this well may have caused springs to form in these adjacent field. The well was never a success and allegedly failed and was abandoned. See Field Name Records here: <https://meitheal.logainm.ie/fingal-fieldnames/>.

A local resident also recalls intervening when workers attempted to remove the pump in the past.

Recording sheet detailing description and associated oral history for water pump in Naul by Ian Lennon (above and bottom right). Photo of St Sylvester's Boys School, Old St, Malahide, shared by local resident Willy Sherry during Malahide survey (bottom left)



National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH), historical maps from the Ordnance Survey Cartographic Collection and records submitted by members of the community.

The detailed survey documented all identifiable historic street furniture elements within the four towns, describing each element in detail, including precise GIS location data. The elements were surveyed using a GNSS Rover to record an accurate GPS location using the Irish Transverse Mercator (ITM) coordinate system. The GIS schema produced point/linear and polygon data compatible with ESRI. These locations, along with their unique element number, were then plotted into maps of the four historic towns.

## Community engagement

Community engagement was central to this project. A launch event took place in Malahide village on 2nd of May 2025 to mark the start of the Fingal Historic Street Elements Audit. It was attended by Fingal's Mayor, Cllr Brian McDonagh; Paddy Ryan of the Malahide Historical Society; Fingal's Heritage Officer, Christine Baker; and the survey team from Archaeology Plan. Photographs from the event were circulated to the press and social media, announcing the launch to raise awareness and encourage Fingal's communities to contribute. A dedicated email [fingalheritage@archaeologyplan.com](mailto:fingalheritage@archaeologyplan.com) was set up for members of the public to submit information for inclusion in the countywide survey. The community submissions were an important part of

Malahide's Lord Mayor Cllr Brian McDonagh with members of the Archaeology Plan team Hannah Preston, Alva Mac Gowan and John Cronin at the project launch in Malahide



this project. Input from local communities in Malahide, Blachardstown, Rush, Swords, Oldtown, Skerries and Naul all proved invaluable in creating an overview of what survives, while at the same time demonstrating a pride in local heritage. Many of these submissions included local lore of how the elements were used but also when they were restored. Ian Lennon of Naul Community Council submitted several detailed entries on Naul's water pumps including an article on their restoration as part of the Naul Village Conservation Project 2020 (the article is available at the following link: <https://m.independent.ie/regionals/dublin/fingal/nauls-water-pumps-restored-to-former-glory/39780298.html>).

During Heritage Week 2025, historian John Cronin of Archaeology Plan led a walking tour of the historic street elements in Skerries drawing attention to the town's rich heritage of street furniture from historic kerbing to post boxes and



MD06 Water pump on Old St, Malahide

Local resident, Willy Sherry standing outside his home at 5 Old Street with MD06 water pump





Pitcher water pump (now gone) taken c. 1990 at the corner of Rathbeale Road and Watery Lane (opposite JC Savage's house) in Swords submitted by Anne and Tara Murphy.

lamp standards.

Whilst carrying out the fieldwork members of the survey team met locals on the street who shared interesting stories about some of the historic street elements. This information has been incorporated into the report findings.

During our survey on Malahide's Old Street, one of the street's residents, Willy Sherry came out for a chat. Willy was 74 years old and had lived in the same house all his life. He had a lot of stories to share about Old Street. Firstly that the street numbers are all muddled, at the beginning of the 20th century the street was mostly thatched cottages, gradually sections of them were replaced by three different builders who doubled up on house number. For example there are two houses

addressed 5 Old Street, however one is on the West side and one on the East. Bisset's Strand on the coast road around the corner was named after the builder who developed the houses there in the late 19th century. Outside Willy's house, there was an old Gaslamp standard and a water pump. Installed c.1900, the pump had originally replaced St Sylvester's Well across the road on the corner of Fountain Lane as the main water source for local residents. St Sylvester's Well used to have a pattern day to honour Our Lady on the 15th August and apparently they used to put an eel into the well to purify the water. Willy showed a photograph of himself as a child with his classmates at St Sylvester's Boy's School on Old Street that closed in 1953. He recalls the pump's water supply was cut off some time in the 1960s, this would correspond with our research which

found that 10% of the private households in Malahide were still relying on pumps, fountains and wells for their water supply in the mid-20th century.

During the survey in Balbriggan, locals stopped to ask us what we were doing and soon enough, supplied us with stories of working in Balbriggan's famous hosiery factory and walking home late at night under the old lampposts.

## Walking tour

On Saturday afternoon, 23 August 2025, a free walking tour of Skerries, designed to highlight the Historic Street elements of that town was carried out. Some 12 people attended this event. The walking tour was intended to last 90 minutes. It ended up going on for closer to 150 minutes. There were two reasons for this extension in the duration of the tour. Firstly, Skerries is a town rich in Historic Street elements and secondly, the attendees were enthusiastic. They proved keen to see as much as they could, to ask questions and learn, and also to contribute. One participant in the walking tour helped locate the benchmark,

recorded as SK59, on the east side of the Hamilton Monument in Skerries. Another contributed his memories of regularly playing with the lift pump that was originally in Pump Lane while attending primary school nearby in the 1990s. None of the participants left early, instead staying throughout the 150 minute tour as we completed a circuit of the town's Architectural Conservation Area.

The tour highlighted the general interest in Historic Street elements and also showed that there was a willingness to use them as a means to learn about the community. One participant even travelled from Dublin city to join, being motivated to attend by childhood memories of regular summer holidays in Skerries. It also underlined how these elements contribute to a community's sense of place. For the latter individual the Street elements were physical reminders that the town was his family's holiday venue of choice. For another, as we have seen, the water pump in Pump Lane was a landmark on his route to school and part of his daily routine. It thus acted as a physical reminder of his ties to Skerries. In short, the walking tour highlighted that Historic Street elements are often more than mere utilitarian objects to a community.

Historic street element walking tour of Skerries for Heritage Week 2025



Poster for Historic Street Elements of Skerries: Walking Tour



## HISTORIC STREET ELEMENTS OF SKERRIES: WALKING TOUR

**SATURDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> AUGUST, 2-3.30PM**

**Meet at SKERRIES LIBRARY, Strand Street**

The Fingal Historic Street Elements Audit aims to record and highlight our street kerbing, old post boxes, milestones and pumps.

Join Archaeology Plan's John Cronin for a tour of Skerries and learn more about its timeworn street kerbing, old postboxes and lamp posts from yesteryear.

We'd also love to hear from you. Add your knowledge, memories and photos to this valuable heritage project.

Learn more at <https://www.fingal.ie/historic-street-elements-audit>

**No need to book in advance: all are welcome!**

**Comhairle Contae Fine Gall**  
Fingal County Council



**An Chomhairle Oidhreachta**  
**The Heritage Council**

## Section 2 Broad Historic Street Furniture Review

### Introduction

In this section of the survey the following areas will be covered. First, street furniture will be defined and its historic and cultural significance will be explored. Existing policies for its protection will be set out. Following this, an overview outlining the history and characteristics of the major elements of street furniture encountered while carrying out this survey will be provided. This will be followed by a description of the major sources that can be used when writing a history of street furniture. Finally, the methodology used in carrying out this survey will be described, before the potential for extending this survey to the wider Fingal area is assessed.

### Defining street furniture

Street furniture is the body of objects placed or fixed in the street for public use, such as post boxes, road signs, lamp posts, kerbstones and benches. Those just listed are amongst the most familiar, but it is not a complete list. We can include other objects, like bench marks, bollards and jostle stones. Essentially, as Kenneth Hudson stated, they are the 'working part of the street' (Hudson 1979, 7), designed to make life more comfortable and safe for the general public.

Post box SK17 on Strand St, Skerries

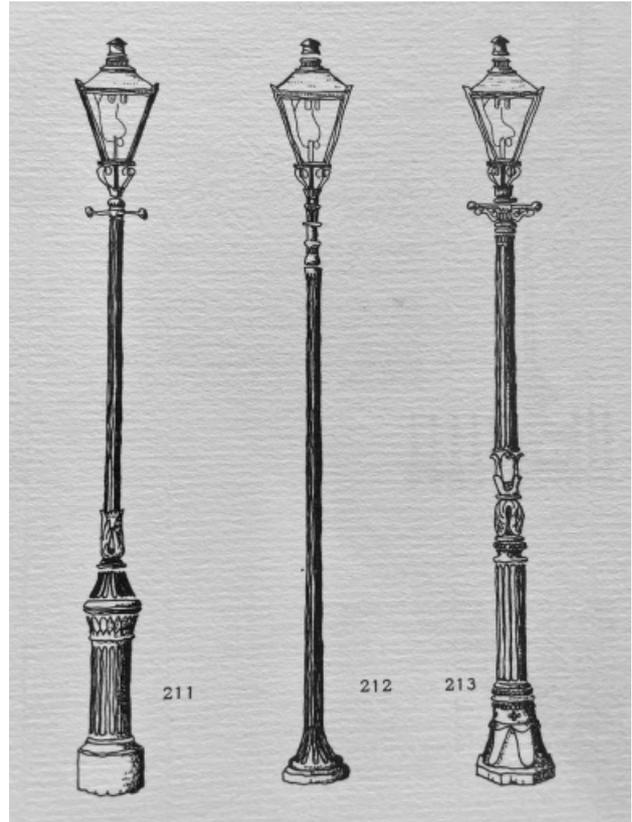


## Policies for protecting HSF

Existing policy protects historic street furniture in a number of ways (Helena Bergin pers. com).

Firstly, several elements are included on the Record of Protected Structures for Fingal, for example milestones, or within the curtilage of a Protected Structure, for example jostle stones at Bedford House, lamp standard to piers of Balbriggan Railway Station. These are specifically protected under the Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029 (FDD 10.5.2.1).

Secondly, several elements are located within the boundaries of the 33 Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) in Fingal, which the Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029 (FDP) specifically states include the streetscape (FDP 10.5.2.2). Policy HCAP14 (ibid) on Architectural Conservation Areas aims to 'Protect the special interest and character of all areas which have been designated as an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA). Development within or affecting an ACA must contribute positively to its character and distinctiveness and take opportunities to protect



19th-century Gaslamps from the Phoenix Park from (O'Connell) The Antique Pavement - An illustrated guide to Dublin street furniture (above).

Historic photograph of Holmepatrick, Skerries (National Library of Ireland).



and enhance the character and appearance of the area and its setting wherever possible. Development shall not harm buildings, spaces, original street patterns, archaeological sites, historic boundaries or features, which contribute positively to the ACA.’ Section 14.19.3.3 of the FDP sets out direction for development within ACAs (Table 14.24) and states that development within ACAs should ‘Retain original building materials, finishes and features including windows, doors, roof coverings, boundary treatments (such as stone walls, hedges and railing) and other features of interest that contribute to the special character and enliven the streetscape.’ and ‘Retain any surviving kerbing/paving and items of street furniture that contributes to the character of the ACA.’ It further states that for public realm works within an ACA ‘Elements of existing street furniture such as original kerbing, paving, setts, post-boxes, railings, bollards etc. should be identified and retained’. These directions also form part of Objectives DMSO186 and DMSO187 of the FDP (Chapter 14).

Thirdly, the Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029

(FDP) contains policy and objective on historic street furniture that would apply to elements not on the Record of Protected Structures or within an ACA. These are set out below.

***Policy HCAP21 Built Heritage Assets***

Protect and enhance the historic environment and built heritage assets, including elements of historic street furniture, paving and historic boundary treatments

***Policy HCAP26 Historic Townscapes***

Recognise the importance of historic townscapes or streetscapes in creating a sense of place when the urban fabric or groups of buildings are read together and how the gradual attrition of historic fabric or detailing, or the demolition and replacement of individual modest buildings can fundamentally alter the character of the place.

***Objective HCA039 Character of Historic Townscapes***

Maintain and enhance the character and quality of historic townscapes or streetscapes by seeking those interventions to the exteriors of existing buildings are appropriately detailed and use good

Historical kerbing HW10 on Howth's Balscradden Road





Main Street Skerries with historic kerbing on both sides of the road (NLI)

quality materials. Original finishes/fabric should be retained or replicated.

**Objective HCA040 Public Realm Works**

Require that public realm works, proposed infrastructural and public utility works do not remove historic street furniture such as limestone or granite kerbs, cobblestones, cast-iron post boxes, water pumps, milestones and historic street-lamp standards, except where an exceptional need has been clearly established.

**Objective HCA041 Modern Street Furniture**

Sensitively design, locate and rationalise modern street furniture and elements such as utility boxes, cables, bins, bike racks, poles, wires, antenna and signage. Defunct or obsolete telephone boxes/kiosks should be removed rather than replaced.

**Objective HCA043 Historic Street Elements Audit**

Commission a study to map historic street furniture, stone setts, historic kerbing and historic pavers/ flags, and associated features in the public realm, to be protected, conserved or reintroduced.

Types of street furniture

**Historic kerbing and related elements**

Historic paving comes in a variety of forms, ranging from rounded cobbles used in vernacular farmyards, gardens or in early streets; to setts, cut blocks of hard stone used in roadways; to flagstones of limestone, slate or granite used on urban footpaths, stone steps or kerbstones. Less commonly, brick, fireclay or wood-block pavers were used as well (Paving 2015, 5). The majority of historic paving found in Ireland today dates, at the earliest, from the 1700s (ibid, 7), though much of what survives today was put in place in the 19th or

even the early 20th century.

Granite paving and kerbstones used in footpaths tended to originate in County Wicklow, south Dublin or even Carlow (ibid, 15). Many localities, however, used stone sourced in nearby quarries for paving and kerbing footpaths (ibid); a tendency which undoubtedly led to the use of limestone in many parts of Fingal. That being said, granite kerbstones are found in towns along the eastern seaboard as well, with narrower granite kerbs being common in Victorian residential areas and on side streets, and usually in conjunction with poured concrete pavements, which became common in the 20th century (ibid, 15).

One of the earliest means of paving a traffic-bearing surface was through the use of rounded stones, or cobblestones, gathered from beaches or river beds. (ibid, 16) 'These undressed stones ... are often egg-shaped and naturally occurring.' (ibid). Public paving with cobblestones was

Vent Pipe HW13 on Howth's Dunbo Hill (right) and historic photo of post box SK17 on Strand St, Skerries (below)





Post box HW23 Thormanby Road, Howth



Post box SK09 on Holmpatrick Terrace, Skerries

generally restricted to towns and other heavily trafficked areas and allowed a surface to be used all year round. Cobblestones were also commonly used to pave courtyards, farmyards and stable yards on private property. Usually, they were set with the pointed end placed downwards in sand, or directly onto earth, and were then packed tightly together or bound with mortar. They were laid at right angles to buildings, generally, to allow surface water drain away from the base of a wall. (ibid).

Setts, by contrast, are cut blocks of hard stone, frequently laid in regular square or rectangular patterns, to provide a higher load-bearing capacity than cobblestones. They were to be found in most major streets in Ireland by the beginning of the 1900s, though many have now disappeared (ibid). Stone for setts in Ireland could come from diorite sourced near Arklow, or was imported from Scotland (ibid, 17).

### ***Jostle Stones/Bollards***

Bollards, including the variant referred to as a 'jostle stone', can be amongst the oldest surviving pieces of street furniture in a community. They exist to protect buildings, parry traffic away from particular places, and to protect both structures and persons. Famously, some of the earliest examples, from the 18th and early-19th centuries, were re-used inverted cannons, and this still influences the shape of modern bollards today (Spalding 2009, 28). It is not uncommon for some examples to be made of stone. Two sets of historic bollards were identified in this survey: one in Howth and one in Skerries (HW30 and SK33 respectively).

This brings us to a closely related piece of street furniture, known as a 'jostle-stone', 'cart stop' or a 'wheel-guard'. It existed specifically to protect vulnerable masonry at a building's corner, or at an archway or entrance way and could be made of either metal or stone (ibid). Their use to protect

vulnerable buildings dates back to medieval times. They also had other practical applications, including ‘beefing up the land under a corner [of a built structure] to increase stability’: (Wiltshire Buildings Record: in defence of interesting stones). They also possibly served as boundary markers, helping to define properties and boundaries, and because they were re-used stones, could even have re-employed some other historic stone element. This survey identified 17 different jostle stones in the four surveyed towns: four in Balbriggan, four in Howth, one in Malahide and eight in Skerries. Most examples were made from limestone, though other stones, like granite, were also represented.

### **Historic water pumps**

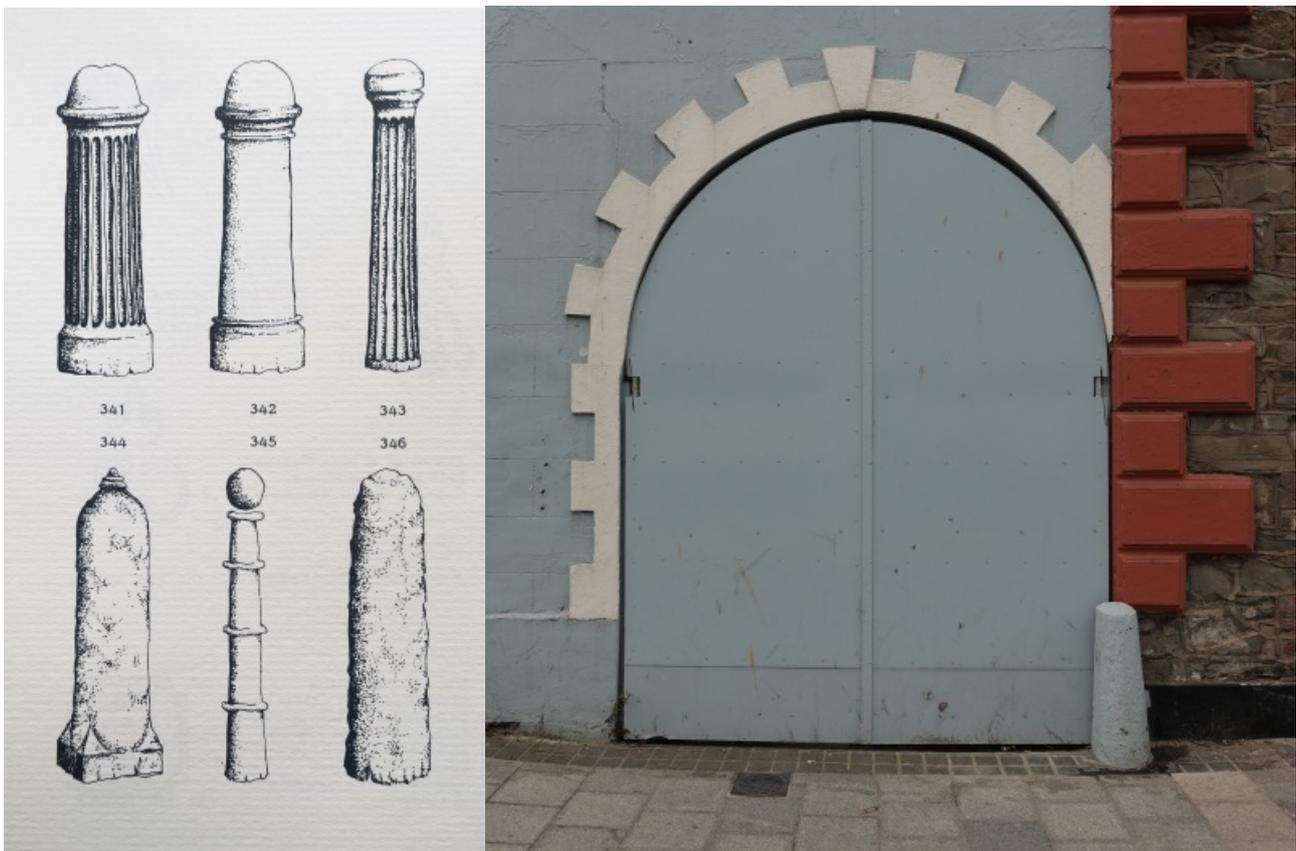
Water pumps began to become a common feature of Irish streets and roadsides from the mid-19th century onwards, when considerable efforts were made to clean and improve public water supply. Central to this was the 1878 Public Health Act, which empowered local government bodies to provide a clean water supply and provided further

impetus to pump-installation efforts (Rynne 2020, 7-8).

Archaeology Plan identified 11 pumps in the four surveyed towns: one in Balbriggan, four in Malahide, and six in Skerries. A further two pumps were also surveyed by Archaeology Plan in Garristown, giving a total of 13.

Broadly speaking, two types of object/element feature as a water pump in this survey. The first of these is not technically a water pump at all, but a pillar fountain. Pumps raise water from an underground well by using a pumping handle to generate suction. Fountains, in contrast, dispensed water from a pressurised water system by turning a knob (Historic Environment Division 2021, 6). That being said, these fountains, if marked on historic Ordnance Survey maps, were described as a pump, and were referred to in local government debates as such as well (Rynne 2020, 8). Popular memory also refers to them as pumps. All of these fountains in the four surveyed towns were made

The six most common Dublin bollards (below left). 344 and 346 are of granite, the other four being of cast iron from 'The Antique Pavement' (O'Connell). Jostle Stone BB18 on the right side of an archway on Bridge St, Ballbrigan (below right).



by the Kilmarnock based company of Glenfield and Kennedy Limited. This latter company only came into existence in 1899, when two neighbouring firms, Glenfield Co., and Kennedys Patent Water Meter Co., amalgamated (Grace's Guide: Glenfield and Kennedy). This means that the fountains surveyed here must have been installed in the 1900s. There were a total of seven pillar fountains found in our survey; six in Skerries and one in Malahide.

The second type is the manual 'lift' pump or 'pitcher pump' with the distinctive 'cow-tail' handle. The latter handle's name comes from the similarity that the distinctive handle used to pump the water, which was usually curved and had a weighted end to aid pumping, bore to that bovine feature (Rynne 2020, 8). These pumps usually had a central pillar with a spout at the top, and the aforementioned handle, which was used to manually pump or lift the water out of a well below, fitted into it. The pillar of these pumps was usually cylindrical in shape, though pumps with rectangular pillars existed as well and there were numerous examples in Fingal. A photograph of one example from Kilsallaghan can be found in the UCD folklore archive (UCD folklore archive, The Photographic Collection, A041.06.00001). The remaining pumps surveyed by Archaeology Plan were of this type.

Makers' marks, and other insignia, can also be used to broadly date these lift pumps. In the surveyed examples, two makers' marks were noted: 'Tonge and Taggart', as well as John Collins, Shop St, Drogheda'. The latter firm, based at Windmill Lane in Dublin, existed from 1869 until it went into liquidation in 1987, specialising in the manufacture of village pumps during the early 20th century (Grace's Guide: Tonge and Taggart). John Collins Limited, on the other hand, existed as a business in Drogheda from the 1770s until 1986, and appears to have been manufacturing pumps in the late 19th century (Village pumps, the pump makers).

Some historic pumps in Fingal carry roundels bearing the text 'Balrothery District Council'. As rural district councils only existed for 27 years, from 1898 to 1925 (Crampsie 2014, 24), the manufacture of these pumps can be definitively dated to those years. One of the pumps included in Archaeology Plan's survey, in Garristown, bore this



One of the last water pumps SK21 in Fingal that is still in use, located at 7, The Cross, Skerries

insignia. Furthermore, Rush Tidy Towns identified two examples in their local survey. All had square pillars, suggesting that this shape was distinctive to pumps commissioned by Balrothery Rural District Council.

Pumps, whatever form they took, were usually located near crossroads, schools, churches, or near labourers' cottages built under labourers' dwelling acts (Rynne 2020, 8). Furthermore, they were often placed on a purpose-built platform above a well, or spring, and within a clearly defined space or alcove (Rynne 2020, 11). Crampsie also notes that pumps such as this became focal points for community interaction, becoming a point at which different people could meet each other (Crampsie 2014, 44). She also notes that the erection of new pumps in an area created new patterns of interaction, bringing people who would not necessarily have met previously together (ibid, 36-7).

### **Postboxes**

Uniform Penny Postage was introduced into Britain and Ireland 1840, and there was a rapid growth of correspondence following its introduction (From Pillar to post: post boxes). This growth created a problem for the letter carriers, however, as they were initially charged with both delivering and collecting the mail (ibid). In an effort to resolve this, pillar post boxes were initially installed in Britain and Ireland from 1852 onwards. The system started in Jersey, and spread rapidly elsewhere (Spalding 2009, 35).

This was initially done on the recommendation of a civil servant who was principally based with the post office in Ireland at the time; the author Anthony Trollope (ibid). They were employed in Ireland by 1855. The first post-boxes in Ireland

were initially olive green in colour. This was soon found to be too dull, however, and made them hard to see. So, in the 1870s, Irish post-boxes underwent a colour change to royal red (ibid). With independence in 1921-2, however, the colour changed again to bright green.

These pillar post boxes were also not necessarily cylindrical, with hexagonal post boxes being used in places up until 1879. Non-cylindrical examples proved problematic, however, as letters could go missing in them, with mail getting lodged in dark, inaccessible corners of the post box (From Pillar to post: post boxes). So, from 1879, they were replaced with cylindrical 'handyside' pillar boxes, initially made by the Derby-based firm of Andrew Handyside & Company. The letter slot was initially at the top of these, but was later lowered to its

Milestone MD01 on the Dublin Road, Malahide



modern position on the cylinder, so as to allow larger letters and packages to be posted more easily and without causing damage (ibid).

In November 1887, the last notable design change took place, when it was realised that the pillar boxes did not bear royal insignia or any indication that they were Post Office property (ibid). By the end of that year, a new design with the Royal Cypher on the door and the words 'Post Office' on the collar, below the rim of the roof, was approved (ibid). The royal insignia featured on all Irish post boxes after that date.

With independence, the new Irish government department of Post and Telegraphs took the practical decision to continue to use the existing post boxes. Many were repainted green and, in some cases, the royal insignia was removed (Spalding 2009, 36). Any pillar post boxes erected after 1922 tended to bear the 'P7T' symbol, or, since the 1980s, the An Post logo. These pillar boxes were initially manufactured by a Scottish firm, Carron of Stirlingshire' and, from the 1980s, the Irish firm of Tonge and Taggart (ibid, p.37).

Other types of post box included the wall-mounted, and the lamp-mounted, post box. These were commonly installed in suburban areas as a cheap alternative to a pillar box. Wall-mounted boxes tended to be rectangular in shape. The earliest examples in Ireland date from 1858 (Ferguson 2009, 26). It is widely held in popular tradition that wall mounted post boxes were often placed close to landlords' and 'Big' houses, in order to benefit their residents. The academic literature only states that they were designed to extend collection into rural areas (Ferguson 2009, 26). The location of certain examples found on Harbour Road in Skerries and at The Glebe House in Oldtown would support this tradition.

One firm closely associated with their production of wall-mounted boxes prior to independence was the London business of W.T. Allen & Co., though other manufacturers were also used (Spalding 2009, p.39). After 1922, these boxes continued to be employed, though royal ciphers could be removed, or new doors were inserted bearing more politically-appropriate symbols (ibid). Any wall-mounted post boxes after this point were either supplied by the



Pitcher water pump, Kilsallaghan, Co. Dublin (Duchas website)

aforementioned Carron of Stirlingshire, or by firms in the south-east of Ireland, such as Jessop Davis (ibid).

The second type is the lamp-box, also known as the 'havis-top post-box', because its distinctive curved roof made it look like the famed loaf of bread. These were initially modelled on American examples, and were introduced after the year 1896 (Ferguson 2009, 26). Irish examples from prior to 1922 tended to be made by Handyside & Company, but after 1922 they were made by Irish manufacturers, including the aforementioned firm of Jessop Davis of Wexford (Cork City Museum: objects of the Irish Revolution). None of these were identified in the survey.

A total of 16 post boxes were identified in the survey of the four towns. Of these, 10 were wall-mounted post boxes. Balbriggan had one wall-mounted, cream-painted, post-box on High Street, with the marking 'P7T'. This was originally a

havis-style, lamp post box, however, and has clearly been re-used. Six other wall-mounted examples were found in Howth. One of these, located at the Train Station, bore the logo 'P&T' and was manufactured by the Jessop Davis firm of Wexford. A second, on Church Street, carried the 'VR' Monogram, dating it to the reign of Queen Victoria. Another on Abbey Street was manufactured by W.T. Allen & Co, and bore an 'ER' monogram, dating it to the early-20th century, during the reign of Edward VII. Two others, on Thormanby Road and Balkill Road, lacked monograms, but were manufactured by W.T. Allen, and thus probably pre-date 1921. The door of the final example, also on Thormanby Road, suggested it was of 20th century date, and it may not have been in its original location.

Two wall-mounted postboxes were found in Skerries. The former, on Harbour Road, was in poor condition, while the latter, at the junction of Station Road and Dublin Road, was still in use and had been manufactured by W.T. Allen & Co. There was one example of a wall-mounted postbox in

Malahide, on the Mall.

The remaining six were pillar boxes. Two of these were in Malahide, on the Mall and Estuary Road. The former was manufactured by McDowall, Steven & Co. and had the 'ER VII' monogram. The latter lacked a monogram but was manufactured by the Carron Co. of Stirlingshire.

The remaining four were in Skerries. One example, near the Kybe, lacked any distinguishing features. The next example, on Strand Street, was a double post box, with the monogram 'P7T'. The example on Church Street had an 'ER VII' monogram, while the pillar box at Wildcat Lane, near Mourne View, was manufactured by A. Handyside & Co. and had a 'VR' monogram.

### ***Milestones***

Milestones, or mile-markers, are quite old features in the broad scheme of things. The Romans used them along their network of roads in the Classical Era, for instance (Hudson 1979, 13). Milestones were placed along roads in Ireland in the 18th and

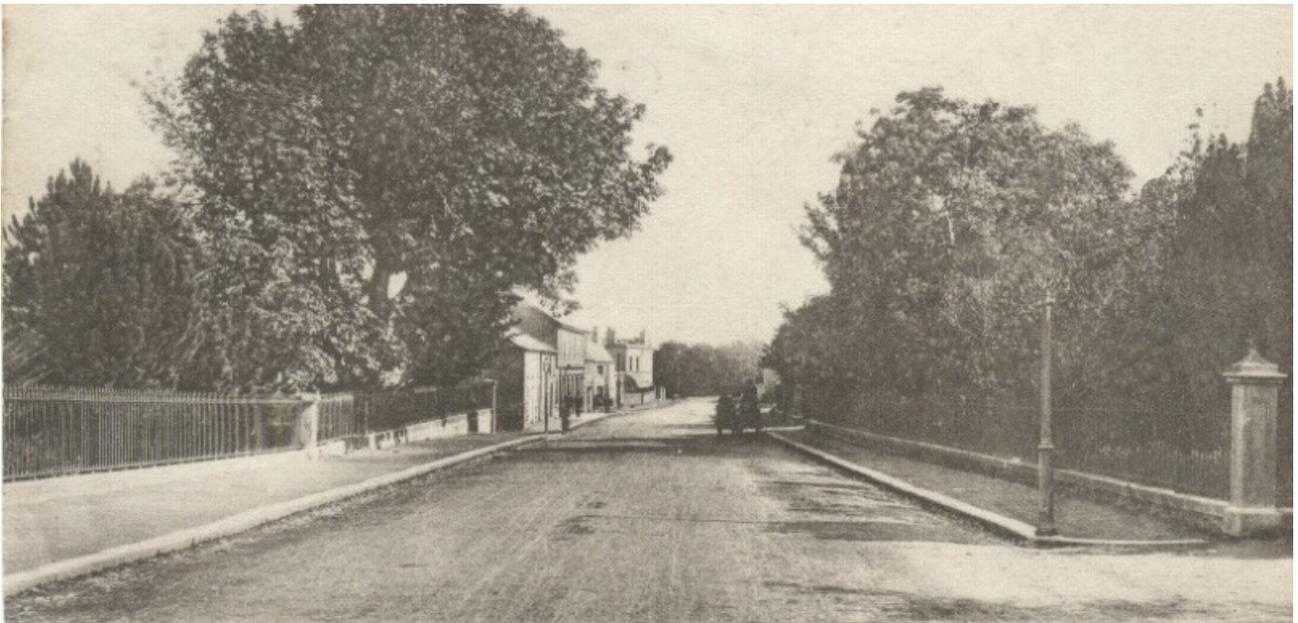
R.I.C. Barracks with historic kerbing visible in historic photo from the Malahide History Society



Church exterior Howth showing Historic kerbing, cobbles, numerous gas lamp standards and electricity poles (NLI)



Station exterior, Howth showing kerbing on right side of picture (NLI)



Historic photos showing Malahide streets provided by the Malahide Historical Soc, from 'Malahide Snapshot 1901' (Kingston)



19th centuries to mark distances between towns. The unit of measurement employed prior to 1826 was generally the Irish mile, made up of 2240 yards. After this date, statute miles were used (McCabe 2010, 29). A range of different bodies, grand juries, turnpike trusts and, in the 19th century, the Post Office were responsible for erecting them (ibid). In some cases, individual landlords took responsibility for erecting localities (Murphy & Murphy 1982, 24). This, combined with regional variations, means that a great variety of styles exist. Also, there is no consistency in positioning, with some being placed high on a wall, and others by the side of the road (Hudson 1979, 13-14).

In the 18th century, the location of many milestones was shown in traveller's almanacs and references, most notably Taylor and Skinner's Road Map of Ireland from the 1770s. Also, Historic

Six-Inch Ordnance Survey maps have, since 1890, marked the location of milestones (Murphy & Murphy 1982, 21).

Two different types of milestones are found in Fingal. One type is often referred to as 'Post Office' milestones, as they measure distance from a specific location to the General Post Office (GPO) in Dublin (Murphy & Murphy 1982, 24). They are also known as 'Telford Milestones', after the engineer who designed them (Pearson 2022) and they typically date to the 1820s. They are freestanding cast-iron plates, set into a cut granite stone. They bear the letters 'GPO', the distance to a particular location and the distance to Dublin. The location of many of these in Fingal are marked on the last edition 6-inch Ordnance Survey map, and also on the 25-inch Ordnance Survey map, though not necessarily in a consistent manner. This type is generally found on the old Howth Road from

Gormanstown Map, 1775



Dublin city, as well as on the old Malahide Road from Dublin.

The second type is a freestanding four sided trapezoidal-shaped, hard limestone marker, which can date from the 18th century. Most of these are found along the old Dublin to Drogheda Road, between Swords and Balbriggan. There is also one on the Ashbourne Road (Murphy & Murphy 1982, 23).

### ***Lamps and street lights***

Public lighting made its first formal appearance in Dublin in the 17th century with the candlelight law, requiring every fifth house to 'display a light within prescribed hours of the night for the guidance of street-users' (From Pillar to Post: streetlights). Public lighting was first undertaken in certain sections of the city by contract by the late-1690s (ibid). In the 19th



Above: Balbriggan St, Skerries with historic kerbing visible (NLI). Below: Royal Hotel, Howth with kerbing visible on both sides and two ornate lamps (NLI)



century gas lighting began to make its mark, with the larger Irish towns developing their own gasworks to supply the fuel (O'Connell 2015, 407), which remained in use in some areas until the mid-20th century. Electric lighting first began to be used in Dublin city in 1892, however, and spread outwards to the rest of the county from there, with electricity being supplied by privately-owned generators and corporation-owned stations (O'Connell 1975, 14).

Gas lamps were certainly in use in Balbriggan in the late 19th century. Róisín Halligan, in her series of articles on the town, noted that Thom's Directory of 1875 described Balbriggan as 'being lighted with gas' (Halligan 2017, 207). We are fortunate to have digitised records of the Balbriggan Town Commissioners available to us, which contain references to the cost associated with the upkeep of these lamps. In March 1895, for example, £5, 6s. was spent on repairing lamps, with another £2, 15 s, 6d being spent in 1897 to repair, glaze and fit lamps in the town (Balbriggan Town Commissioners, Meeting Minutes). By 1913 calls were being made for the introduction of electric lighting in Balbriggan (Drogheda Independent, Saturday, May 31, 1913; Page: 2). It took some time for it to arrive, however, with Balbriggan being included in the electricity supply from the Shannon Scheme in the late 1920s (Manning & McDowell 1984, 48). Street lighting was also being installed by mid-1930 by the Electricity Supply Board (Drogheda Independent, Saturday, May 10, 1930; p. 12).

Older electric lamp standards generally fall within two sizes in the Dublin area. The larger type, approximately 9 metres high, were found on main routes within Dublin city (From Pillar to Post: streetlights). The smaller type, could be approximately 4.5 metres high, and featured on less important routes and residential areas (ibid). Gas lamps tended to be shorter than the successor, electric lamps, as they needed to be reachable by the lamp lighters (O'Connell 2015, 407). Some places, such as St Patrick's Bridge in Cork, saw gas lamps converted to electricity lamps (Spalding 2009, 46).

### **Vent Pipes**

Vent pipes can often be confused with lamps, mainly because of a structural similarity (From Pillar to Post: Sewer Vents). However, there is no

light on the top of these poles and they served a very different purpose, highlighted by a variety of alternative names employed for them: sewer vents, stink pipes, stench poles, or stench pipes (Pearson 2022). The purpose of vent pipes was to release noxious fumes to the environment (ibid). Some examples can feature lettering at the base, which varies according to the local administration of the area (ibid). Pearson also notes that there was normally some minor decorative element at the top of the column as well (ibid). They are now largely redundant due to modern plumbing (ibid). Seven examples were found during this survey: five in Skerries (SK08, SK18, SK56, SK61 SK62) and two in Howth (HW13, HW26).

### **Other forms of street furniture: Boundary Markers**

The above examples of Street furniture do not constitute all those found in Fingal. There is, for example, a boundary marker on the Hearse Road into Donabate. This is described as an '18th century limestone marker stone, located to the rear of "The Cottage" ', and has received Protected Structure status from Fingal County Council (RPS 862). There could yet be other, unidentified, examples in the county. In Lusk, for example, there are boundary markers for Remount Farm, some in their original locations, but others now incorporated into private gardens. Unfortunately, this survey did not identify any examples.

## **Research and resources**

The obvious method to employ when identifying historic street elements is to walk the streets and survey them. Through this means surviving elements can be identified, recorded and preserved. This is a task which benefits from modern technology, especially the increasing accessibility and usability of tools like digital cameras, digital mapping, etc. These tools not only make it easy to record, but also to share discoveries.

It is not enough, though, to simply record what survives. Efforts need to be made to date those elements that survive, to identify elements that have been lost, to identify the purpose they meant to serve (e.g. water pumps obviously provided water) and what purposes they actually served (water pumps are historic meeting points in communities and, increasingly, they are decorative

items), as well as to understand the technology used and find out where the individual elements came from. This requires research. Fortunately, a range of resources are available for research and many of these are increasingly available online.

The first place to start is with the local community. Street furniture is important to people as, by acting as physical anchors for their memories and providing them with physical landmarks, it helps give them a sense of place. Consequently, people have memories of these objects, which are often recorded, sometimes indirectly, in oral testimonies and folklore collections. Increasingly, testimonies of this nature are being collected by history groups and made available online. The most famous collection nationally is that of the National Folklore Collection in University College Dublin which, for example, contains details on a water pump in Kilsallaghan, milestones in Balbriggan (including one where King James II is supposed to have slept after fleeing the battle of the Boyne) and alternative uses for lamp posts in Oldtown (in this case, as a hitching post for a horse and cart). Alternatively, the Heritage office of Fingal County Council have been conducting their own Oral History Project in 2025 and, as part of this, they have produced an audit of oral heritage recordings relating to Fingal.

Local History groups are also valuable sources of information. These bodies can produce information on street furniture in print. The journal of the 'Old Dublin Society', the Dublin Historical Record, for example, contains an article by Patricia Flavin on the history of Church Street, while Skerries' own historical society produces a journal, Time and Tide, which is informative on topics such as the introduction of electricity into the town. Similarly, Malahide's Historical society maintains an archive on the local community, publishes newsletters with articles of local interest and maintains a website, which, amongst other things, provides histories of many local streets, and documents lost items of street furniture, such as water pumps and gas lamp standards. The same can be said for the Howth Peninsula Heritage Society.

Increasingly, local history groups are also taking to social media to document their community's history as well, and this includes images, which contain details on street furniture, and discussion

from contributors on their significance. Good examples are the Facebook group 'Old Howth Photos', which features numerous images of the town through the years and the Balbriggan Heritage Group.

This brings us to the 'stock in trade' of many of these social media sites: old photographs and historic images. These are vital in documenting where historic street elements were located in particular areas and also, through comparison between images of different time periods, to understanding how a street environment, and the street furniture on it, has evolved over time. Dating photographs also allows certain street elements to be dated as well. Important repositories of photographs include the National Library of Ireland, which have digitised many of their photographic holdings, and Dublin City Library and Archives, which have also digitised much of their collection. The National Folklore Collection has also digitised much of their collection of photographs, which includes many town and village streetscapes. Similarly, The Local Studies Archive of Fingal County Council has a considerable collection of useful resources and images, often organised by locality.

Historic maps are another resource that cannot be overlooked when it comes to street furniture. Ordnance Survey maps, first produced for Ireland in the 1830s and 1840s, and updated a number of times over the decades, often marked important items of street furniture on their depictions of localities. These include, but are not limited to, pumps (often, but not always, marked with the letter 'P'), letter boxes (frequently signified by the letters 'LB'), footpaths in urban areas, and milestones. Historic Ordnance Survey maps are available at a number of websites. The researcher should not confine themselves to Ordnance Survey maps, though, as other maps can also be useful. Taylor and Skinner's Road Map of Ireland, from 1777, for instance, shows the historic location of milestones along the main coach routes of the time.

When researching historic street furniture, looking at the records of those responsible for installing them in the first place, the organs of local government, is unavoidable. The records of the various bodies charged with caring for local infrastructure, be they town and city corporations,

grand juries (which cared for counties) poor law guardians, or the more recent county councils, rural district councils and urban district councils (created in 1898, but only the first of which trio survives today), are bound to be helpful. Increasingly these are accessible through archives and libraries. The National Archives and the National Library are two repositories which hold pertinent records. Local Archives cannot be overlooked either, however. Fingal Local Studies & Archives, for instance, is a branch of Fingal County Council which is charged with collecting, preserving and making available historic records relating to Fingal. They hold records relating to various Rural District Councils and Boards of Guardians in Fingal, and they have also digitised some of these records, most notably the minute books of the Balbriggan Town Commissioners from 1860-2010. Many local government records also can be accessed through historic newspapers, as local and regional newspapers in 19th and early-20th Ireland often carried detailed, near verbatim, accounts of proceedings in the meetings of local government bodies. These can be searched through digital archives which are increasingly available in local libraries. Newspapers, of course, are not just a resource for local government records, as they can be usefully consulted for images and other references to local infrastructural developments.

The resources touched on above can be seen as central to undertaking a study of local street furniture and street elements. It is not an exhaustive account of available resources, however. There are others available, such as the catalogues of pump manufacturers, business directories, and various online databases, such as that of National Inventory of Architectural Heritage Database. All can be usefully and fruitfully consulted.

## Section 3 Detailed Town Surveys



25 inch OS map of Balbriggan (1888-1913)

### Balbriggan

The town of Balbriggan yielded 25 examples of street furniture.

This included 309m of historical kerbstones, four jostle stones, one bench mark, one millstone, or milestones, no historic pumps, no original post boxes and evidence for four lamp standards/vent pipes were evident during the Balbriggan town survey.

#### ***Historical kerbstones and related stone elements***

A total of 309m of historic kerbing survives in Balbriggan. Eleven sections were recorded during the town survey with stretches surviving on Dublin Street, Church Street, High Street, Quay Street, Clonard Street, Convent Lane and Railway Street. Apart from one section outside 19 Clonard Street, that was made from cut granite, the

historic kerbstones of Balbriggan are made from a locally sourced cut limestone that is dark grey in colour and smooth in texture. A small section of historic kerbing, BB01 located at the entrance to the Maxol Garage on Dublin Street, would most likely have been associated with the Corn Mill building c. 1860, now converted into modern apartments. A small section of historic kerbing, BB01 located at the entrance to the Maxol Garage on Dublin Street, would most likely have been associated with the Corn Mill building c. 1860, now converted into modern apartments. The kerbstones sit flush between the road and footpath, rendering it seemingly useless as the new path and road threaten to cover it.

Measuring just over nine metres, a complete kerbed footpath made of limestone (BB03) survives in the laneway next to Balbriggan's Courthouse c.



Jostle stones BB07 with black staining visible on Church Street

1842 (RPS 0042). High Street and Church Street contain the highest concentration of historic kerbs ranging in date from c. 1750–1840. The dates are an approximation based on the surviving historical buildings on Church Street, that was still referred to as George’s Street on the 25 “ OS Map that was surveyed in 1906 (Sheet: DN002-13) after St George’s Church. A section of historic kerbing on Convent Lane survives next to the southern entrances to the old convent which is no longer in use. For the most part, the historic kerbing in Balbriggan is in poor condition and seemingly constantly under threat of removal rather than conservation, the fact that two small sections of limestone kerbstones survive on Railway Street is testament to their vulnerability. This is regrettable as limestone kerbing adds a high quality finish to a street and creates a degree of order and uniformity that can unite discordant styles of architecture.

#### **Wheel mould**

A wheel mould (BB16), used to fashion iron rims for cart wheels embedded in the modern tarmac surface on the south-east side of Clonard Street,

has to be the most unusual street element recorded in this survey. According to Brian Howley, Chairperson of Balbriggan & District Historical Society the wheel mould came from McGarry's old forge dating back to c.1880 and it continued in use up to 1950's at least when the Blacksmith was registered as Elizabeth Burke. It was difficult to find as it was hidden beneath a parked car and highly vulnerable with cars parking on it daily. Made from limestone, the wheel mould is substantial and was either broken or cut into four pieces, making it easier to move, prior to its current placement. It is in poor condition, the edges are chipped and cracked. Next to it is a planter with a railing around it. If this railing was removed and a new one extended to encompass the millstone, it would be less vulnerable and more visible. It has a history, there is a reason why it was placed there and kept. Keeping it hidden from view and vulnerable to further damage means that its story could be lost forever.

*‘There are three forges in the parish. The names of the*

*smiths are Mr. Lacy, Mr. Malone and another Mr. act. These people have been smiths for many years. Mr. Lacy's forge is situated in the Back Lane. Mr. Malone's forge is situated in Dublin St., Balbriggan and Mr. Lacy's forge is situated in the hills ... Some of the smith work is done in the open air. It is usually done outside the door of the forge, for example putting tires on wheels.'*

(Molly Craine, of Mill Street, Balbriggan relaying facts told to her by a Mr Gosson also a resident of Mill Street. Saints Peter and Paul School, Balbriggan, in August 193X, The Schools' Collection, Volume 0783, Page 435 © National Folklore Collection, UCD.)

### **Jostle stones**

The Balbriggan survey turned up two pairs of jostle stones and two single jostle stones. The first pair (BB07) flank the gate posts leading to a flight of four steps at the entrance to Bedford House. Too narrow for large carts or automobiles. It is possible that this pair were moved from a carriage entrance next to the house. If they are contemporary to the house, the stones could date to the 18th century. Bedford House, (RPS 0049) is a very fine detached five-bay three-storey over basement former rectory, c. 1750, once occupied (1903–19) by Reverend Dr. Charles William Benson (1836–1919), Rector of Balbriggan (fl. 1903–19).

The second pair of jostle stones (BB23) flank the secondary entrance (now blocked) to Balbriggan Railway Station c.1843–1844. One has been reduced to a stump while its partner, for now, still stands tall. This narrow laneway sees large buses carry commuters from the station umpteen times a day- a very different type of traffic than what the street was originally built for. A single jostle stone (BB02) stands on its own guarding the corner of 40 Dublin Street c.1850 and Market Green, ready to jostle with any large carts bringing goods to and from Balbriggan's Market House c. 1811. Aside from their removal, the two main adversaries to these elements appear to be traffic and dogs, the latter using the points for centuries to mark their territory. This blackens the stone – usually of granite or limestone – thus leading to the stones being painted over the years in an effort to hide the staining. The last solitary jostle stone leans on the right-hand side of the coach entrance to 10



Pillar mounted gaslight BB21 outside Balbriggan's Railway Station

Wheel mould BB16 embedded in Clonard Street



Bridge Street. All that remains of this section of historical streetscape are the façades within the ACA and awaiting development.

### **Historic water pumps**

The last surviving historic water pump (NIAH Reg.11304004) was recorded in Balbriggan in 2000 by the NIAH. The pump was located next to a derelict vernacular house called 'Bremore Cottage' (NIAH Reg. 11304003) on Hamlet Lane. Sadly both the cottage and pump have since been replaced by modern housing.

### **Post boxes**

Dating to c. 1925, Balbriggan's Post Office (RPS 0061) at 9-9a Dublin Street was closed for business several years ago. The town's old post boxes appear to have closed with it. A wall mounted post box (BB12) located next to the main entrance to Kincora (RPS0048) house on High Street which lies

within Balbriggan's ACA appears to be a re-use of a salvaged lamp box installed by the current owners from elsewhere as this is not a historic location for an official post/letter box. The post box does not contain a Royal cypher but rather a P 7 T symbol dating it to between 1922 and 1946. The condition of the post box is poor with corrosion setting in, its characteristic green colour has been painted over in cream.

### **Lamps & streetlights**

Possible remnants of surviving examples of street lamps were recorded in Balbriggan. All were of the same design c. 1900-1915. Unfortunately all of them were in very poor condition. It is worth noting that vent pipes used the same base so it may be the case that some, if not all of these elements were in fact vent pipes. However, the situation of at least two of these elements, standing next to modern street lights, would

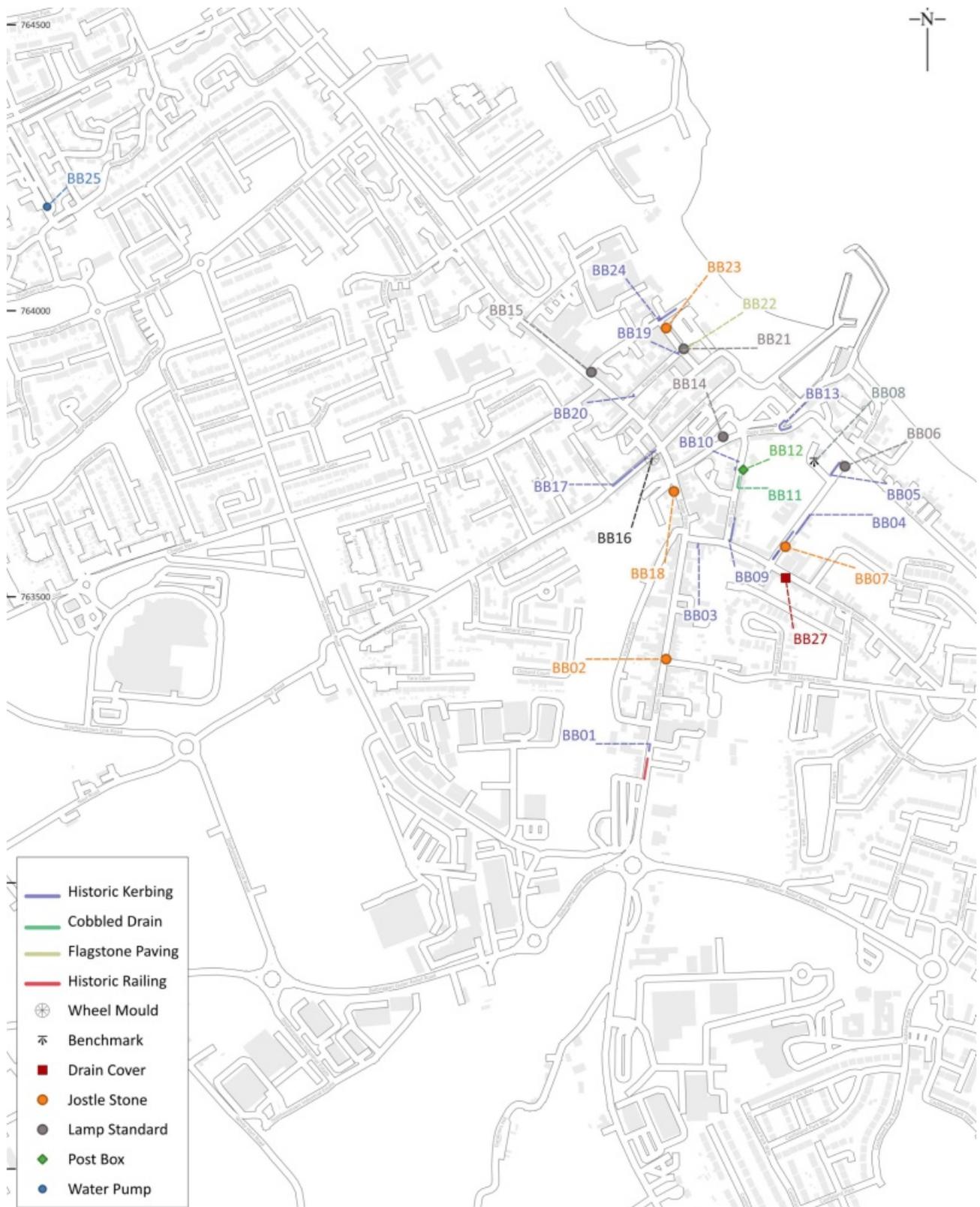
Historic Kerbing BB1 on Dublin St

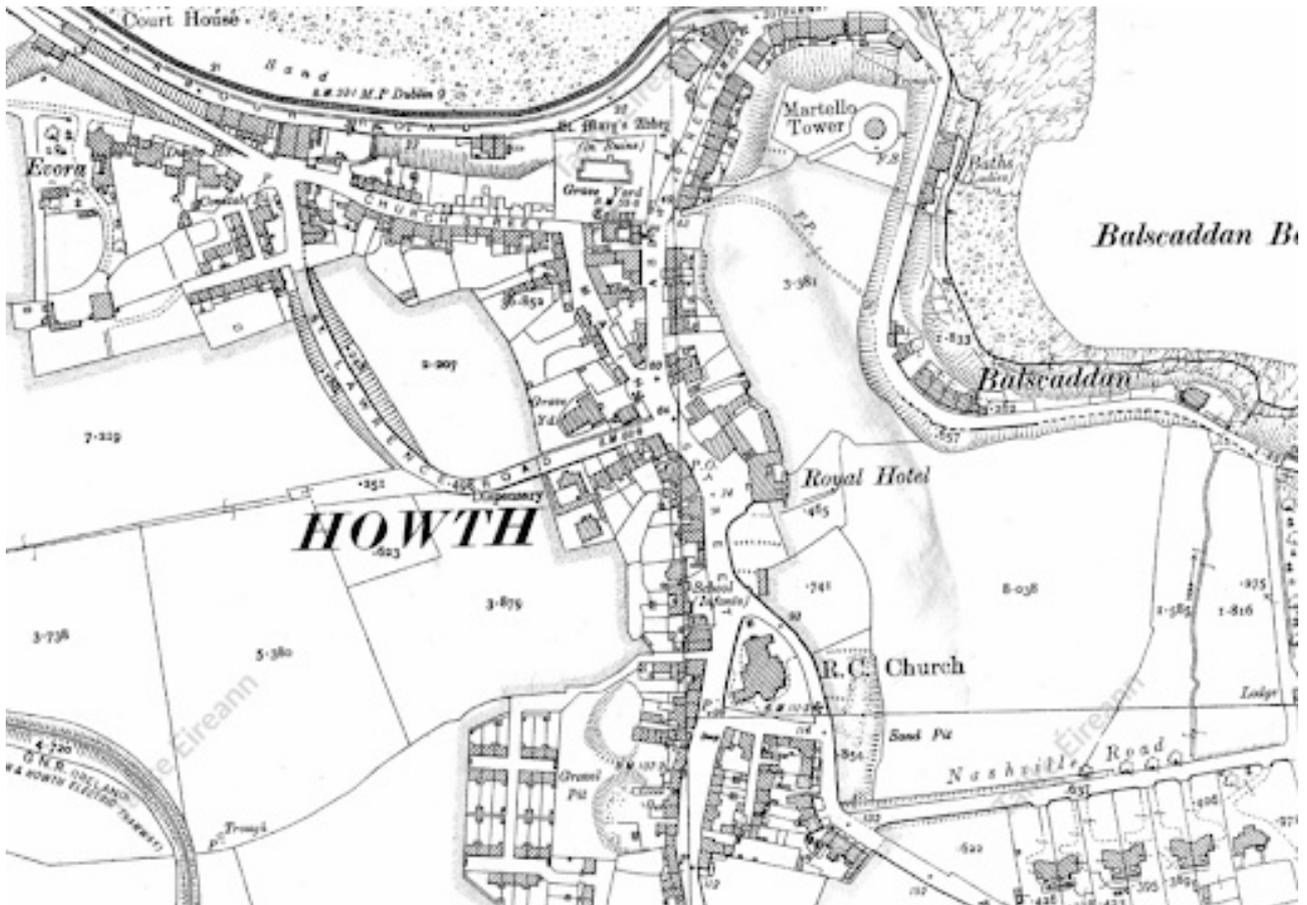


Historic kerbed footpath BB3 beside Balbriggan's Courthouse



Survey map of street furniture in Balbriggan





25 inch OS map of Howth (1888-1913)

indicate that these examples may have been lamp standards.

Located at the end of Church Street, next to a modern street lamp, only the base of lamp standard BB06 survived which was filled with concrete left to rust. Lamp standard BB15 had secured the same fate, located on the corner of Drogheda Street and Convent Lane next to a modern street light. The third lamp standard or vent pipe stands with its tall shaft still in place but with no lantern atop, located along the River Bracken opposite 9 Quay Street. A pillar mounted light (BB21) made from ornately moulded cast iron and with the lantern missing stands on one of the pillars at the entrance to Balbriggan Railway Station c.1843-1844. This would have originally been a gaslight, fixed to the pillar of rusticated limestone blocks. Depicted as still working in a photograph dating to 1900, today there is no light evident on the opposite pillar. There may only have ever been one light on this pair of pillars. Reconstruction would be possible using the photograph (NLI).

## Howth

Thirty historic street elements were recorded in Howth. This included nine sections of historic kerbing, four jostle stones, one bollard, six wall mounted post boxes, two milestones, two vent pipes and three benchmarks. Three historic lamp standards were recorded outside the Abbey Tavern, however they could not be included in the final tally as, after consulting historical photographs they turned out to be salvaged. One of the milestone plaques (HW04) on the West pier had also been moved from its historic location and had to be removed from the audit. It was also noted that sadly not one historic water pump survives in Howth.

### **Historic kerbing**

Of the four detailed town surveys, the longest continuous stretch of historic kerbing (HW08) was found on Howth's Balscadden Road where just over 434m of limestone kerbstones were surveyed lining the footpath. If you add all of the sections of historic kerbing on this road it comes to 532m.



Benchmark HW05 at West Pier, Howth



Benchmark HW05 on Abbey St, Howth

Milestone HW04 at West Pier, Howth



Milestone HW06 on Harbour Road, Howth





Historic kerbing HW 27 on Main St, Thormanby Road

Sections were also found on Church Street, though these were more fragmented and composed of a mixture of granite and limestone kerbstones, this did not appear to be an aesthetic choice, but more a question of repair and updating. This may also have been the case was at a section (HW09) of granite and limestone kerbstones on the corner of Balscadden and Kilrock Road, a narrow bend that undoubtedly received a number of knocks since its original instalment some time at the end of the 19th-century.

#### ***Milestones and benchmarks***

One of the more unusual elements discovered in Howth was a benchmark (HW05) that had been carved into the granite paving on Howth's West Pier, close to the original Coast Guard Station. No doubt this feature goes unnoticed by the crowds who pass over it on a daily basis to enjoy the breathtaking view of Ireland's Eye. A benchmark was also found in the street facing façade of The

Old College building, the owner wasn't aware of what was hiding underneath their honeysuckle climber. The third benchmark spotted was carved into the granite pillar below the iron plaque of one of Howth's milestones on St Lawrence Quay that read 'GPO Dublin 9/Howth'. These markers belong to a set of milestones that line the Howth Road from Dublin city and measure distance from a specific location to the General Post Office (GPO) in Dublin. Many still exist and were included in the NIAH Survey recorded in 2000. They are included on the Record of Protected Structures and their locations clearly marked on the Fingal Development Plan Map viewer.

#### ***Postboxes***

The extensive collection of wall mounted post boxes in Howth range in date from those produced during the reigns of Queen Victoria (1882 - 1885), Edward VII (1901 - 1910) and then onto the establishment of the Free State (1922 - 46). It was



The wall mounted post boxes of Howth. Clockwise from above (left): HW02 on Harbour Road, HW25 on Ballykill Road, Edwardian Post Pox HW24 on Thormanby Road, Victorian post box HW11 on Church St, HW23 on Thormanby Road and HW21 on Abbey St.



Salvaged lamp standards HW29 in front of the Abbey Tavern on Abbey St, Howth (not in historical location)



noted that the maker's mark did not always fit with the Royal insignia indicating that occasionally post boxes were modified perhaps by using parts of redundant boxes. This practice can be seen on HW25, a wall mounted post box on the Balkill Road. The maker's mark WT Allen & Co. indicates the element originally dates to the 19th century however, the door does not contain a Royal Insignia, which would imply it was replaced at some stage in the past. Below is a list from the Gazetteer of the postboxes from Howth, illustrating their wide range of insignia and maker's marks.

HW02	Jessop Davis Enniscorthy   P&T
HW11	VR monogram
HW21	W.T. Allen   monogram missing
HW24	W.T. ER Monogram   Allen & Co London,
HW25	W.T. Allen & Co London   monogram missing

### ***Jostle stones/bollards***

The jostle stones recorded during Howth's survey tell us something of how the streets were once used before automobiles owned the roads. A surviving jostle stone (HW17) associated with the 19th century public house on the corner of Church and Main Street, would have received many a knock in the days when it serviced this sharp corner that was the main route into Howth before construction of the Harbour when Church St was the original entry road into Howth. Its survival to this day should not be overlooked, as many of these types of ordinary elements tend to be. A pair of ornate cast iron bollards outside a house on Abbey Street stamped with the maker's mark JACOB CLONMEL 1847 caught our eye, as they match the lamp standards outside the Abbey Tavern across the road, that were found to not be in their original location. This coincidence begs the question that these street elements could have been salvaged from another location in Howth itself?

### ***Lamps and street lights***

Lastly the set of three lamp standards belonging to The Abbey Tavern are either salvaged or replicas, so not in their historical location. No original street lights turned up in the Howth survey, a pattern noticed throughout the detailed surveys.

Of the two vent pipes recorded in Howth, HW13 on the Dunbo Hill is a fine example of one that is still fully functioning. Albeit it would benefit from some restoration so it can continue with its

important work for years to come.

## Malahide

A total of twenty-one street elements were recorded in Malahide, these included ten sections of historic kerbing, one jostle stone, four historic water pumps, three post boxes, one milestone, a pair of pillar lights and one horse trough.

Malahide is the only historic town or village in Fingal with a planned layout, influenced by the local landlord, the Talbots of Malahide Castle. The earlier settlement was concentrated on Old Street but in the 19th century the centre of the town moved eastwards with the laying out of The Diamond with four buildings forming the corners and four wide roads radiating from each side (New Street, Dublin Street/The Mall, Church Street). The Diamond acted as the focus for grander developments in Malahide including the terraces of Castle Terrace, Killeen Terrace, Windsor Terrace, Carlisle Terrace and James Terrace. In the first edition OS Maps (surveyed 1837 and published 1843) there is a fountain marked in the centre of The Diamond but it is not there in the 1869 edition.

### ***Historic kerbstones and related stone elements***

The stretches of historic kerbing were recorded on the Dublin Road, Castle Terrace, The Mall, Church Road, James Terrace, Old Street and New Street. In fact, Old Street was almost completely lined with granite kerbstones except for a single limestone kerbstone outside Nos. 4 and 5 on the West side. Granite was the favoured material for kerbstones in Malahide. New Street is also well furnished with some of its original kerbstones, however their condition has deteriorated significantly from tree root activity on the western side and basic wear and tear, the same fate can be observed on Malahide's wide avenue, Church Road, where the fine granite historical kerbing has been lifted by tree root activity.

### ***Historic water pumps***

The historic water pumps in Malahide are all of the same design – the late 19th century pillar fountain. Designed and manufactured by Glenfield & Kennedy Ltd. the design consists of a fluted cast iron cylindrical column with moulded domed cap, some have retained their original finial that

Survey map of street furniture in Howth







Historic kerbing MD07 on the west side of Old Street

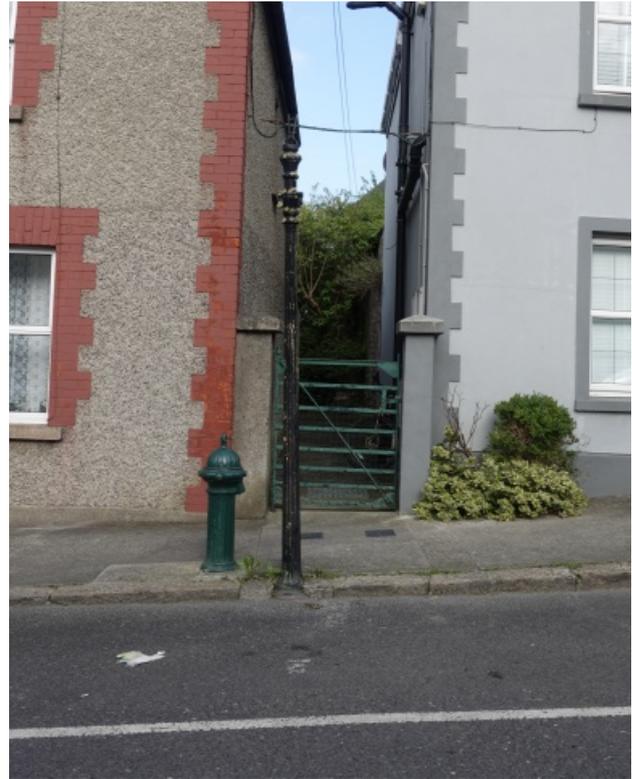
source of water. It is not too difficult to imagine the residents of Old Street filling buckets with water under the lamp.

As with the other towns in this survey, water pumps were introduced into Malahide in the latter decades of the 1800s. There was already a pump by the school in Malahide in 1886, for example (Drogheda Independent June 25, 1886, page 5). Efforts to improve water supply in the town continued throughout the next decades, with old wells being deepened or new wells being sunk. In 1899, for example, Balrothery District Council put out a tender to sink a well in the Yellow Walls townland (Drogheda Independent, February 18, 1899, page 1). Members of the Balrothery District Council also felt at this time that a small expansion of the pump network in Malahide (which

contained at least five functioning pumps at the time) would provide the village with sufficient water, despite the efforts of the Local Government Board to get them to agree a region-wide water supply scheme, which would embrace settlements such as Skerries, Balbriggan and Swords (Drogheda Independent December 21, 1901, page 5). Consequently, in 1902, a motion was passed to provide Malahide with two new wells, as well as to improve an existing pump on Malahide Hill (ibid, November 15, 1902, page 6). One of the pumps subsequently erected was in the Diamond (ibid, May 16, 1903, page 7). The pumps, however, proved insufficient. Firstly, there were fears about whether the water from the existing pumps was sanitary (ibid, October 14, 1905, page 3). Secondly, pumps also had a tendency to break down, as happened with the Yellow Walls pump in 1906,



Water pump MD04 on Bisset's Strand



Water pump MD06 and gaslamp MD05 located on Old St

which was a wooden pump (ibid, October 13, 1906, page 3). Finally, the pumps simply could not supply enough water, especially in summer (Freemans Journal, July 03, 1907, page 19). By 1907, plans for Malahide to be included in a comprehensive waterworks scheme were being implemented (ibid). This did not however mean that pumps became redundant; as late as 1946, according to the census statistics from that year, there were 362 private dwellings recorded in Malahide. Some 34 of these were still reliant on public water pumps for their water supply, with another two using private water pumps and one using a well (CSO. 1954. 166). In other words, 10% of the private households in Malahide were still relying on pumps, fountains and wells for their water supply in the mid-20th century. None of the pumps in Malahide are still functioning.

#### **Post boxes**

Still in use MD10, the last surviving pillar box in Malahide village, takes centre stage on Malahide's

main street, opposite the town's Carnegie Library. This element has been turned and the door changed since the NIAH recorded it in 2000, the original door faced east and was embellished with an 'ER VII' insignia but sadly had to be replaced due to an act of vandalism. Just a few meters away, a wall mounted post box (MD09) has no insignia just 'POST OFFICE' written on the opening, sadly this has been blocked. The NIAH survey records show that this post box was still in use in 2000.

#### **Lamps and street lights**

Next to the historic water pump on Malahide's Old Street stands a redundant gaslamp decorated with a fluted column and moulded capping. This lamp standard is very similar to the oldest type of gaslamp standard found in the Phoenix Park which dates to c. 1825 (O'Connell, 1975). The light would have illuminated the drinking fountain next to it and the well across the road.

Moving towards James Terrace, a fine pair of pillar

mounted lights mark the entrance to the terrace that was built between c. 1820 -1850. The light outside the Garda Station has been well taken care of, however the lamp on the other side of the road requires maintenance. Across from James' Terrace, on the corner of the Tennis Lawn and Croquet Club, a pump and trough are strategically situated, where horses could have stopped to drink. The railed enclosed area of Malahide's Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club, founded in 1879, was originally designed as pleasure gardens situated between James Terrace and The Grand Hotel in Malahide demarcate the only historic designed urban park in Fingal. The park was free to use for occupants of the hotel and residents of houses that Fagan was permitted to build on a portion of the lands (James Terrace). Other households in Malahide could use the gardens by acquiring a key for a set annual fee. Towards the end of the 19th century and throughout the 20th century the original design was eroded by the construction of buildings and facilities for different clubs or organisations.

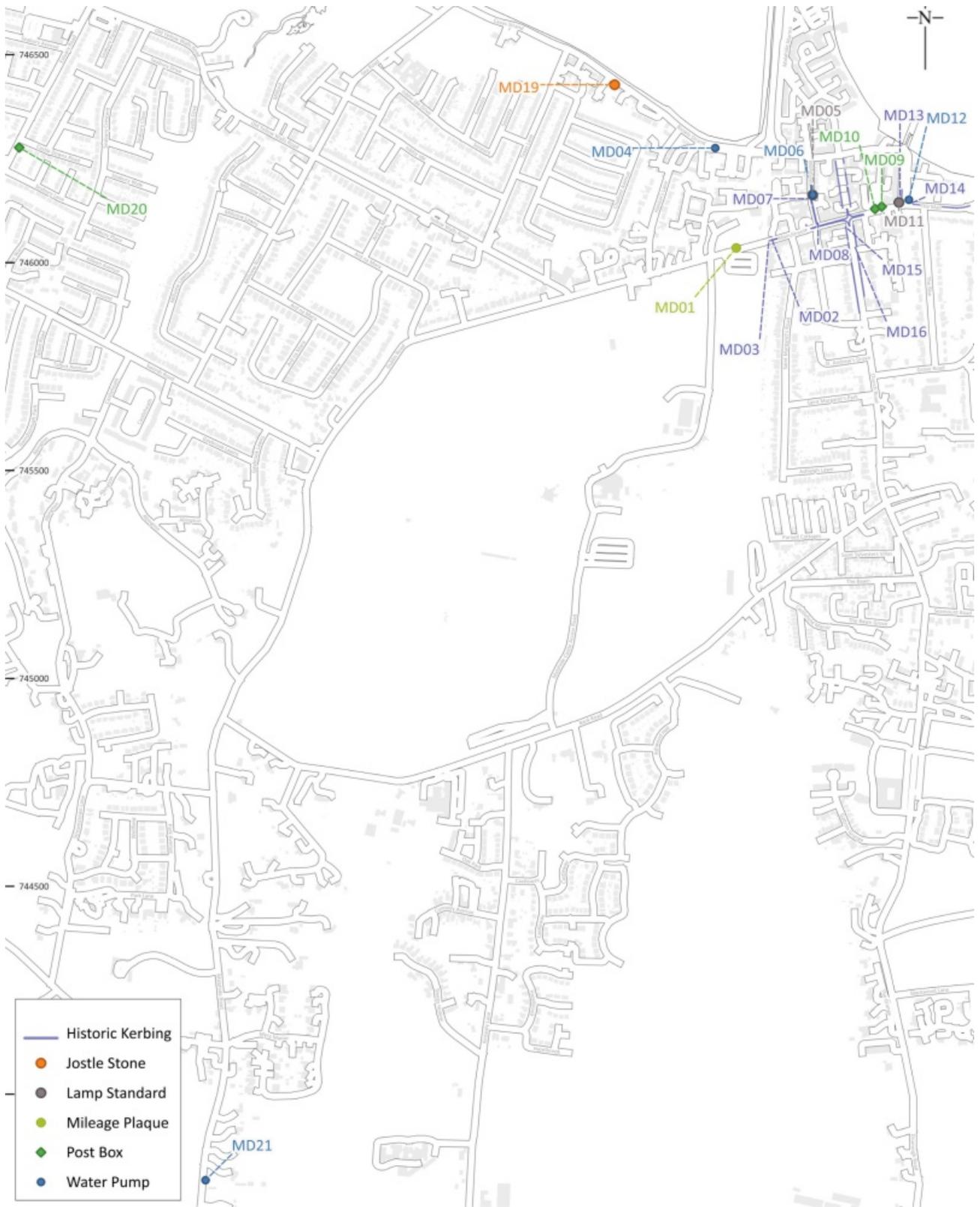


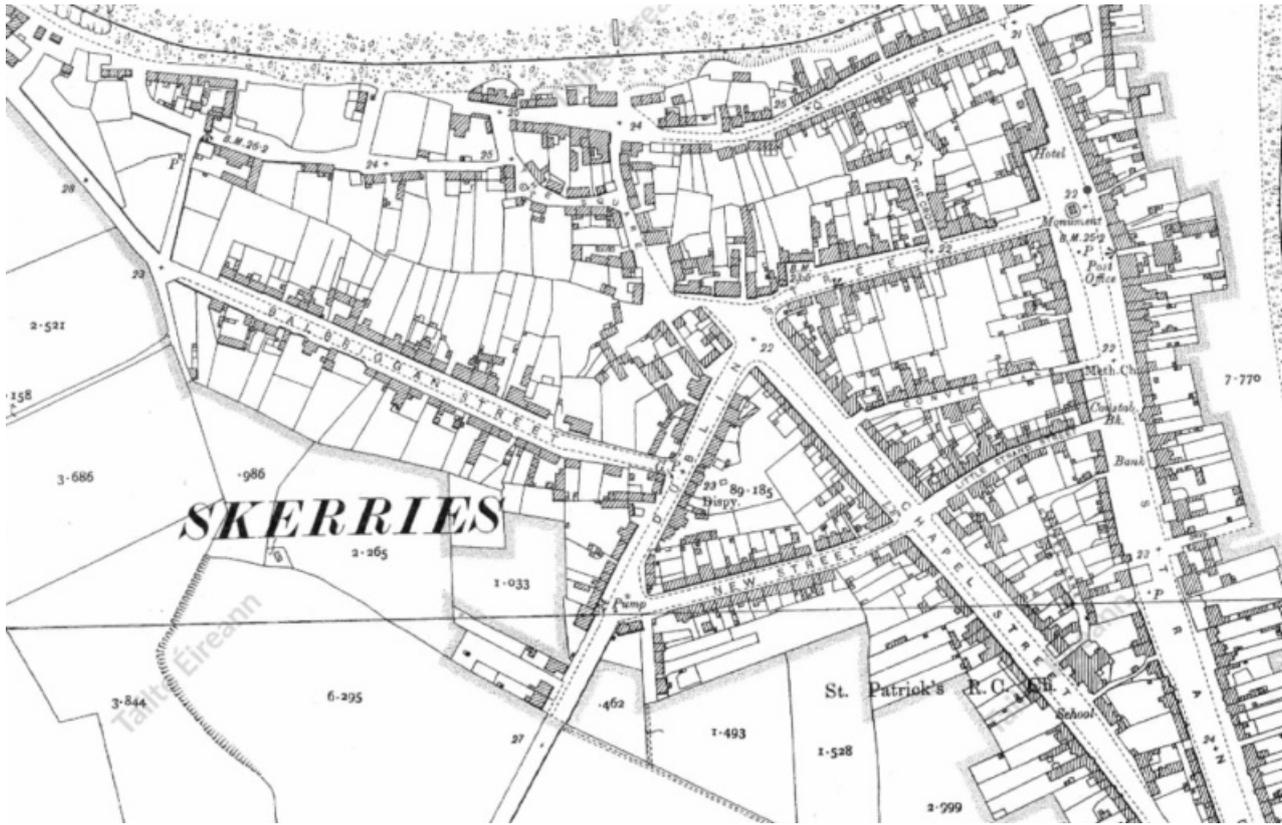
Post box MD10 on the Mall with modern post box behind and the Library in the background

Pair of lamp standards MD11 on James's Terrace



Survey map of street furniture in Malahide





25 inch OS map of Skerries (1888-1913)

## Skerries

The town of Skerries yielded 56 examples of a variety of street furniture types. This included 21 examples of kerbing, nine jostle stones, six post boxes, six pumps and four lamp standards. There were concentrations of historic kerbing along much of Thomas Hand St, church St, Balbriggan St, New St and Quay St.

### **Historic kerbing**

Twenty-one stretches of historic kerbing were found throughout the town of Skerries. Examples of historic limestone kerbing were found on the Dublin Road, Quay Street, Thomas Hand Street, parts of Church Street and Strand Street, the Harbour Road, New Street, and Holmpatrick. Historic cut granite kerbing was found on Church Street and Little Strand Street. Altogether the historic kerbing in Skerries ran to a length of slightly over 2,501 metres.

These historic kerbstones had been documented previously in 2011 (Roycroft 2011, #276). A comparison with areas of limestone kerbing

identified by Roycroft, shows that very little has been lost over the last 15 years, though a short stretch outside Rockville House on Quay Street seems to have been removed (*ibid*).

Most of the historic kerbstones in the town are limestone, with the stone coming from Milverton quarry. This was one of two quarries in the locality, the other being McCourts at Curkeen. Skerries was noted for the limestone that could be found in the area. In the 1870s it was described as a good building stone which dresses well (Smith, 1879, 73). The use of limestone for kerbstones in Skerries is far from unusual. It was the normal material in many parts of Ireland (Paving 2015, 15). Edge restraint of historic footpaths was also provided in the form of wide granite kerbstones (*ibid*), while narrower granite kerbs were commonly used in Victorian residential areas and on side streets (*ibid*).

The NIAH dates the limestone kerbing at the north end of Church Street to the 1850s, though it gives no reasoning behind this (NIAH reg.no. 11311022). Given that the railway bridge was constructed in c.



Salvaged lamp standards SK03 & SK04 outside Rugby Club on Holmpatrick Terrace, Skerries (not in original)

1850 as well, then the kerbstone there might also date from that time (NIAH Reg No: 11311037). New Street was likewise built in the 1850s, so it is likely that the large limestone kerbstones found on that street date from that decade. Historic photographs and Ordnance Survey maps suggest that most of the Milverton stone kerbs in Skerries were in place before 1907.

On the other hand, other examples of limestone kerbing post-date 1907. The footpath past St. Patrick's national school, leading up to the train station, had not been constructed in 1914, when calls were made to the local district council for one to be installed to protect the schoolchildren (Drogheda Independent, January 17, 1914; Page 3). Money was also granted to alter the footpath on Strand Street and complete footpaths on Balbriggan Street in 1915 (Drogheda Independent, January 16, 1915, page 8), so the kerbing there may date from the late 1910s.

Limestone kerbing in Skerries is not consistent in size, with stones being cut to fit specific points on certain streets, and erosion taking a toll in certain places as well. The bulk of the limestone kerbing, however, tends to be between 75cm and 1 metre long, 10 to 20 cm wide, and c. 10-15 cm high. The notable exception to this, is New Street, however, where the limestone kerbing stones are notably larger. This difference may be down to a choice made by the street's developer in the mid-19th century.

There are also two sections of granite kerbing in Skerries. These examples are in Little Strand Street, being the narrow granite kerbing typical of Victorian-era side streets, and broader granite kerbing on the eastern side and southern end of Church Street. This broader kerbing is similar in proportions to some of the historic granite kerbing in Dublin city, which can date to as early as the



Historic kerbing SK01 on Holmpatrick Terrace (above left & right)



18th century, though it continued to be employed into the late 1800s (Paving 2015, 7–12).

We are fortunate, however, to have a photograph of the southern end, and eastern side of Church Street in the Eason Collection in the National Library of Ireland. This image dates from the early 20th century and, significantly, while it does appear to show some of that granite kerbing, it also shows that a significant part of the southern end of the street still lacked a footpath and the associated kerbing. This raises the possibility that the granite kerbing and footpath was only installed in the early-1900s (NLI call no EAS\_1977). The broad granite kerbing used in Church Street, then, may have been employed as it was more appropriate to a broad, important, thoroughfare.

### **Cobbles**

Cobblestones in Skerries can be found in two locations; at the northern end, and eastern side, of Church Street, and also at the Square. In both cases the cobblestones are rounded, multi-coloured, stones, most likely gathered from the nearby beaches (Paving 2015, 16). The NIAH database dates these to the 1850s. Roycroft (2011, #276), however, noted that some of the cobbles in Church Street had originally come from the location of the Arcadia building near the Square, in Skerries, and had recently been relaid there.

In the latter example, the cobbles run parallel with the footpath towards Thomas Hand Street. They have also been partially obscured by tarmacadam. In Church Street, the cobbles, which also run

parallel with the footpath, are clearly visible, however.

### **Benchmarks**

One Ordnance Survey cut benchmark was located in Skerries. It is located at the base, and on the eastern side, of the Hamilton Monument, where the usual arrowhead symbol is carved. It is also indicated on the last edition, six-inch Ordnance Survey map from 1937-8. This benchmark is indicated on this map by the usual arrowhead symbol and the abbreviation 'BM'. Its height in feet (to one decimal place) above sea level is given as '23.1'. This information was provided by local resident Paul Mulligan, who is also the author of *Irish Ordnance Survey Maps: A User's Guide* (Wordwell, Bray 2024).

### **Water pumps**

Prior to the 1870s the population of Skerries was reliant on approximately 14 wells for water. In 1869, however, in response to public health concerns, the installation of water pumps was requested (Flavin 2014, 92). A further seven pumps were ordered in 1872, partly in response to a smallpox outbreak (ibid). By 1877, there were 10 pumps in the town (Freemans Journal, Saturday, June 07, 1877; p. 8). More pumps were ordered again in 1878 (Flavin 2014, 92). By the 1890s Skerries water supply was considered to be healthy (ibid). pumps remained central to the water supply for decades after this, despite piped water supply becoming increasingly common in the 20th century. In 1946, according to the census statistics of that year, there were 603 private

dwellings recorded in Skerries. Some 164 of these were reliant on public water pumps for their water supply, with another 13 using private water pumps (CSO. 1954. 166). This means that slightly less than 30% of Skerries private households relied on pumps or fountains for their water in the mid-20th century.

Six ‘pumps’ survive in Skerries today, all being pillar fountains made by the company Glenfield and Kennedy Limited. These six pumps are located at Pump Lane, Balbriggan Street, Church Street, the Cross, at the corner of Quay Street and Strand Street, and in South Strand near the Mill stream. They were also previously documented by Roycroft (2011, #276). All of these examples have a simple spout and an operating handle on the left-hand side (Rynne 2020, 13). Many of these have been placed in their locations in relatively recent times. The example in Pump Lane, we were informed by one Skerries inhabitant, replaced a working lift pump that had been in that location up until the 1990s. Historic photographs show lift pumps, some with square pillars, and others with round pillars, were once quite common in Skerries. A square-pillared example was positioned in front of the Carnegie Library in the mid-20th century for example, while a photograph of a pump that used to be located beside the Hamilton Monument can be found amongst the Lawrence Collection in the National Library of Ireland.

### **Postboxes**

In Skerries the most prominent example of the pillar style post-box is on Church Street, dating from between 1901–10, the reign of Edward VII. It was made by the Glaswegian firm McDowall Steven & Co., which, along with the Derby-based firm of Andrew Handyside & Company made most of the cylindrical post boxes in Ireland (Spalding 2009, 36). Skerries does have a Handyside Pillar box though, at Wild Cat Lane, near Mourne View.

Wall-mounted boxes can be found on Harbour Road and Dublin Road, near the junction with Station Road. The latter of these, which was made by Allen & Co. and therefore probably predates independence, is still in use, though the royal insignia has been removed. The former on Harbour Road is set into the boundary wall of a private house, ‘Dorn Hall’, and would appear to



Vent pipe SK56 on Dublin Road

Post box SK57 made by Allen & Co on Station Road





Jostle stones SK06 on Holmpatrick Terrace

be in private ownership. It is in poor condition and the maker's mark, though present, is illegible. One would suspect that this predates independence as well, however. The placing of this example in the boundary wall of a historic large house fits with the idea that these wall boxes were positioned to benefit local landlords and residents of large houses (Donard Imaal History: post boxes). The example at Station Road, however, was probably positioned there to benefit commuters using the train station.

#### **Lamp standards**

Two lamps outside the entrance gate to the rugby club are the right height to be gas lamps, and are similar to types identified as being from the 1880s by Derry O'Connell. (1975, 25). He considered an example similar to the lamps at Skerries RC as being the most common type (ibid). These lamps were also manufactured by a company known as MacFarlane & Company. This was a firm based in Glasgow, which was such a large employer that they essentially helped found the Glasgow suburb of Possilpark. By the early 20th century the firm had a worldwide reputation for ironwork, and it remained in existence until 1965, when it was taken over by Allied Foundries (Records of Walter

MacFarlane & Co Ltd., Grace's Guide: Walter MacFarlane and Co.). This means that those two lamps are almost certainly at least 60 years old. There is a possibility that they are even older, however. To this end, it is intriguing to note that a catalogue of goods for Walter MacFarlane & Co., dating from 1890 contains a lamp which is very similar to those at the rugby club (Walter MacFarlane & Co.1890, p.456). All that being said, local sources point to these lamps being relatively recent installations in Skerries. One informant, a participant in the Heritage Week walking tour of the historic street elements in Skerries, stated that they were installed as part of refurbishment works that took place in the Rugby Club in the 1980s. The Rugby Club was contacted for information on this, but no response was received.

If gas lamps were used in Skerries, they would have begun to go out of use quite soon after the beginning of the 20th century, however. As early as 1906 moves were afoot in Balrothery rural District Council to introduce electric lighting into the town (Drogheda Conservative, Saturday, June 30, 1906; Page 5). Initial plans involved introducing 34 street lights into the town, though many ratepayers objected to the possible cost (Drogheda



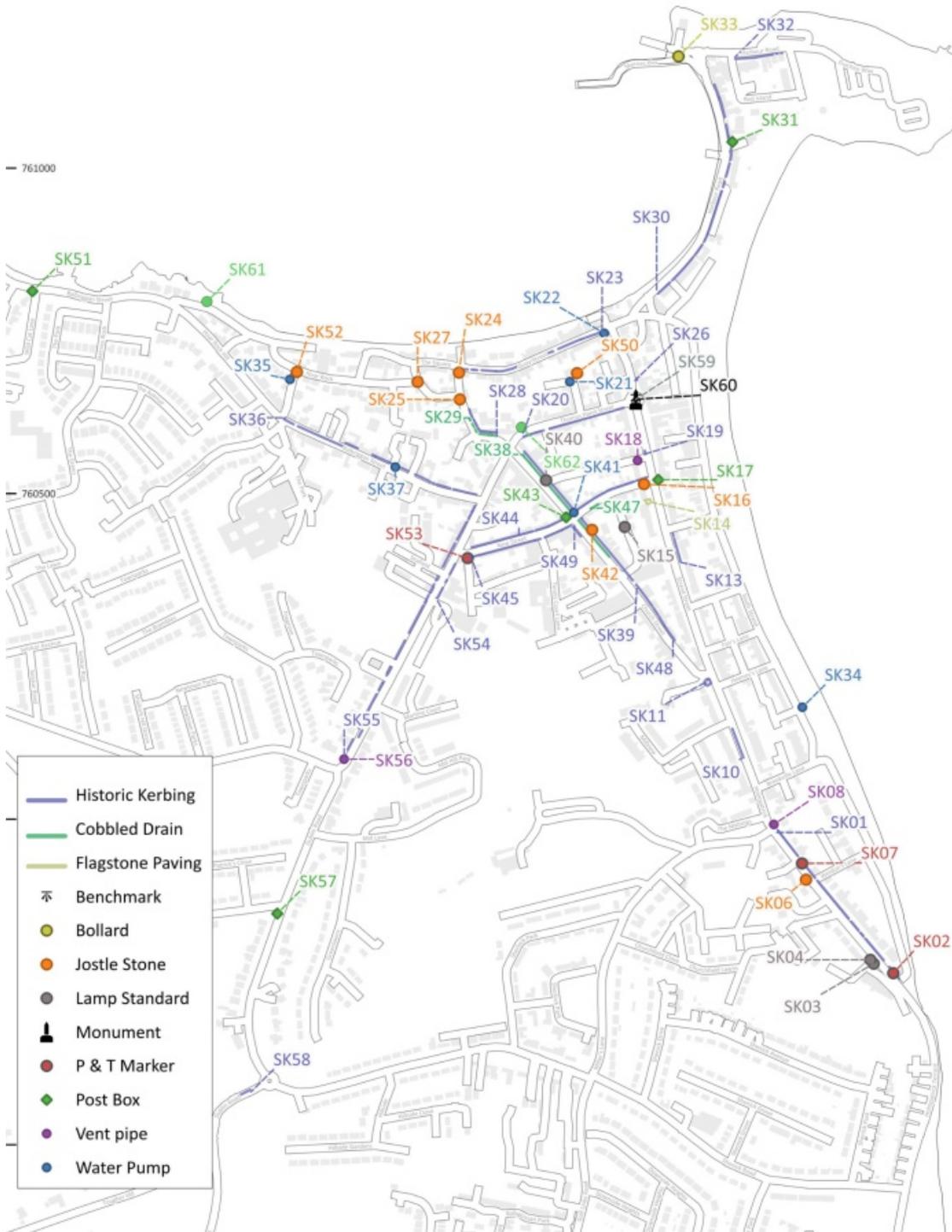
Water pump SK41 Church St



Water pump SK22 on Quay St

The Hamilton Monument, with water pump, which no longer survives, visible in background (NLI)





Independent, Saturday, July 28, 1906; Page 5). Electricity was introduced into the town by February 1915 when William Herbert Flanagan, established a generating station behind the concert hall, which is now the Tides Apartment complex. If you turn off Strand Street and walk down Fairs Lane you can find a plaque on the Tides carpark wall which commemorates this. At least one of the early street lamps survives in Skerries, in a broken form, on Chapel Lane. Here only the lower half survives and there is no obvious maker's mark, so it is a little difficult to trace its history. The only other possible lamp survival is on the corner of Convent Lane and Church Street, where the outline of a lamp base possibly survives.

### ***Jostle stones***

Skerries has a considerable number of these items throughout the town, with examples being found in Holmpatrick and towards Balbriggan street, as well as points in between. In most cases they are single surviving stones, though there is a pair of jostle stones in Holmpatrick. Some, such as an example found in the Square, are beautifully carved, cone-shaped stones. Others are mere rocks and boulders put in position at the corner of a house to provide rough-and-ready protection for the masonry at that location. An example of this can be seen when entering Dillon's Lane from The Cross. Not all examples in Skerries are found at the corners of buildings. The cone-shaped pair of granite jostle stones in Holmpatrick, are located at either side of a gateway, for instance, as is the example on Church Street.

### ***Vent pipes***

There are five vent pipes in Skerries: one at Convent Lane, another at the junction of Dublin Road and the Barnageeragh Road, and one at the junction of Holmpatrick and Miller's Lane. The latter example was made by a Dublin-based company, Hammond Lane. This company was revived in 1902 by a Scottish entrepreneur named David Frame (Barry 2018, 310). The example on Dublin Road is very similar but the manufacturer's mark is not visible, as it is obscured by dense hedging. Very similar examples can be found in other parts of the country. For example, there is an almost identical vent pipe in Lower Church Street, Enniscorthy, county Wexford (NIAH, reg. no. 15603086). The third example is by the Methodist church, and is quite literally nothing more than a pipe, with no visible maker's or identifying mark.

Vent pipes tell us that sewerage was a major public concern in Skerries at the turn of the 20th century. Sewage systems were installed in Barrack Lane (Little Strand Street) in 1902-03, for instance (Drogheda Independent, February 28, 1903. p.5). This was not enough though. In 1906, there were complaints that the main sewer in Church Street smelled very badly in warm weather (Drogheda Independent, Saturday, June 30, 1906; p.7). Despite such protests, inadequate sewers were still a problem in Skerries as late as 1921, when complaints were made that the sewers were blocked and choked, and if they were not cleaned then a contagious disease outbreak was a real possibility (Drogheda Independent, Saturday, December 17, 1921, Page: 4). Eventually in 1931 money was provided for a sewerage scheme for Skerries (Irish Press, Wednesday, October 07, 1931; Page 11) and it was completed by 1934 (Irish Press, Thursday, December 06, 1934; Page 14).

## Section 4 Discussion

Street furniture tends to be utilitarian, and, as a result, when it becomes redundant it is often seen as an impediment and is replaced (Historic England 2017, 1). Yet, historic street furniture is of value both academically and culturally. Firstly, it adds to a community's sense of place. 'Place' being not just a geographical location but the emotional and psychological connections people have with a specific location (Spalding 2009, 8-9). The site of a particular type of street sign, a water pump, or post box, can remind someone of home, their youth, and their community. Street furniture is also a form of historical text, telling us much about things like hygiene practices, methods of

communication and traffic management in the past. Water pumps tell us about how people lived, worked and interacted in the past. These elements were found close to natural springs and were points where people congregated and shared their news. With the introduction of the motorcar, jostle stones began to disappear, these masonry sentinels, who once protected our street corners, gateways and entrances from cartwheels and barrows became obsolete. Their redundancy means the original function of the few that survive is often a mystery and so disregarded without a second thought. The development of post boxes and later, of telephone boxes, mark a major shift in

Victorian post box HW11 Church Street, Howth



Salvaged Hovis Post box BB12 at Kincora House, High Street, Balbriggan



communication methods and technology. In the 19th and 20th century, post boxes in Ireland came to represent significant historical power shifts as the country transitioned from British Empire to Free State. British post boxes were painted red and, like coins bore the monogram of the latest monarch. With Independence the Irish Post Office changed the colour to green and from then on, new post boxes bore distinctive Irish markings.

Though utilitarian in purpose, the elegance and ornate decoration of street furniture in 19th century Ireland stand as reminders of the tastes and fashions of the past, whilst also giving us insights into the resources available and the skills and craftsmanship that were developing as a result of the Industrial Revolution. Trade networks and transportation logistics of the past are another story our historical street furniture tell; if a lamp standard could not be produced locally, or even within the country, then they had to be imported. This was the case with many elements on Irish streets. Many items of street furniture, particularly those erected in quantity – such as lamp standards and bollards – were imported via catalogues from manufacturers overseas. Some items were specifically designed for Ireland. For example, at the end of the 19th century Dublin lamp standards manufactured in Scotland displayed a motif unique to Ireland, the shamrock (O’Connell 2015, 407).

The detailed surveys have provided valuable insight into just how much historical street furniture has survived and its condition. Amongst the elements recorded, both similarities and particularities could be found. The types of street furniture were, for the most part the same, however the quantities and distribution varied. For example, only one historical post box was recorded in Balbriggan; a single surviving privately-owned, wall mounted post box outside Kincora House. While six post boxes were recorded in Howth - all public wall mounted post boxes, four were still in use. Skerries had three cylindrical pillar boxes, all still in use and two wall mounted post boxes that were no longer in use. Malahide had just two historical post boxes. The well-known cylindrical pillar box MD10, located opposite Malahide Library on The Mall is still in use, however it has been turned and the door changed to facilitate a

new, larger modern post box that now stands next to it. According to a previous survey carried out by the NIAH 25 years ago, the original door faced E and had an 'ER VII' monogram. The wall mounted post box close by HW09 is unfortunately now obsolete since it was included in the last survey in 2000.

There are a number of things at play here. Post offices are closing all over the country as Ireland moves further into the digital age and the small wall mounted boxes are not large enough to hold parcels – one of the few pieces of information that cannot be sent electronically. Postcards, letters and greeting cards are clearly circulated less today than even 25 years ago, now they have been replaced by social media posts and text messages. As can be witnessed by many of the post boxes we encountered on our survey, once these boxes are no longer in use and not maintained, they quickly

Obsolete wall mounted post box MD09, The Mall, Malahide





The base of a redundant lamp standard BB15 next to its modern replacement located on the corner of Convent Street and the Drogheda Road in Balbriggan.



Redundant lamp standard BB06 at the end of Church Street, Balbriggan.

begin to rust. Modern development must also play a part as streets are widened or resurfaced and walls demolished.

Historic lamp standards or lamp posts are still in use in Dublin's inner city however we found very few historical lamp standards that were still in use in Fingal. Of all of Balbriggan's surviving lamp standards, it is only the base that survives. Sometimes these can be confused with vent pipes, which utilised the same base. These stumps most likely still remain because they are deeply rooted into the footpath and moving would require some considerable effort. All were infilled with concrete and corroding.

However Balbriggan contained some seemingly

historic lamp standards on Dublin Street. Misleading at first, these were quickly recognised as reproductions, manufactured by a Wexford based family business called HARTE, who also reproduce bollards. Aesthetically pleasing as they are, it is a shame that they did not take reference from the original historical street lamps that had been designed specifically for the Irish market over 125 years ago.

The recording of the historical kerbwork was an important part of the project. Once you begin to notice historical kerbwork, you can never unsee it. It has endured a lot since its instalment in the 18th and 19th centuries. Kerbwork is removed, replaced, reconfigured when roads are widened, before maintenance works, when driveways are



Looking south on Church Road, Malahide, with St Andrew's Church in the distance from (O'Connor), Malahide Snapshot 1901

Historic Kerbing MD15 on Malahide's Church Road



inserted or bus stops updated. Before concrete became the most common material used for kerbing, kerbstones were made from hard wearing stones sourced from local quarries. Except for one stretch outside 19 Clonard Street which was made from cut granite, the historic kerbstones of Balbriggan are made from a locally sourced cut limestone that is dark grey colour and smooth in texture. The first section of kerbing was found at the entrance to the petrol station on the Dublin Road, the closest historical building was the Corn Mill, which is now apartments. If the kerbwork was associated with the Mill then it could date to as far back as c. 1860. In Malahide, the surviving

kerbwork on Church Road was extensive, an archival photograph can be compared with the same stretch of kerbing today. The kerbstones on Church Street, like the rest of the surviving historical kerbing at Malahide, is made from granite.

There are examples throughout the county of created focal features that have repositioned pieces of historic street furniture. During the course of the survey on more than one occasion anomalies were noted. For example, the re-use of an early 19th century salvaged lamp post box next to the entrance of Kincora House, High Street,

Malahide MD16 kerbing affected by tree roots



Balbriggan. This is not a replica, and is located next to a 'Big House' dating to the 19th century. It is the only surviving post box in Balbriggan, however it is not in its original location. A replica pitcher pump imported from China used as a focal feature was observed in Yellow Walls, Malahide. Numerous salvaged street furniture items were also identified at Skerries Rugby Club, the Abbey Tavern in Howth and Remount Farm in Lusk.



Replica pitcher pump imported from China used as a focal feature in Yellow Walls, Malahide (right)

Water pump SK21 which is still in use (below)



# Recommendations

## Recovery and restoration

Street furniture is not just practical. These elements represent something deeper – our shared identity and history. Street elements are used in multiples, when units are removed or are damaged the uniformity they once created is gone. The use of local stone in historic kerbing gives towns, like Balbriggan, Malahide, Skerries and Howth an individual character, a sense of long lasting pride that has survived, because the local authority and townspeople have taken care of it.

The restoration of cast iron street elements has been undertaken in the past. With funding from the Community Heritage Grant Scheme, the Naul Village Conservation Project 2020 invested in the repair and conservation of the village's two historic cast iron pumps. The iconic and elegant square column early 20th century pumps are distinct to towns and villages across Fingal, in the former Balrothery Rural Council District.' The work was carried out by Martin and Angela

Delahan, of Delahan Steel Fabrication. While the pumps no longer function, they are a reminder of the daily necessities of life in rural Naul in the past and are important parts of the rural streetscape. The pumps were the main source of water in Naul until running water came in 1976 and functioned until around 1986 when the local sewer was installed which affected water quality

Training courses in the restoration of cast iron objects, stone conservation works and lime mortar mixing are skills that could be offered to county council workers. The OPW have their own team of specialists who are trained in the maintenance of built heritage, there is clearly also a need for this in our local councils. Learning a skill also gives you a greater appreciation of our heritage. The more people are aware of historical street furniture and its importance, the greater chance there is of it being taken care of and kept. If street furniture reflects our social history then what is it saying about us today?

Historic kerbing MD13 with Lamp Standard MD11 on Malahide's James's Terrace



## Potential for extending survey

The survey of Balbriggan, Howth, Malahide and Skerries has demonstrated that a notable number of elements of historic street furniture survive within these urban areas. Furthermore, in all towns surveyed local community groups and individuals showed a keen interest in the project, greatly facilitating it. These four towns are not atypical of the Fingal area, with other settlement centres in the northern and coastal parts of the county, such as Rush, Lusk, Naul, etc. sharing similar histories, locations and characteristics to these. They also have a similar range of community groups, who are actively engaged in improving their environment. Furthermore, settlement centres in the south of Fingal, such as Finglas, though now part of the greater Dublin suburban area, were comparable to the aforementioned towns and villages up until the mid-20th century, when they became incorporated into the Capital city's suburbs.

Given the above similarities that characterise many of the localities in Fingal, the potential for extending this survey beyond the four towns featured to encompass all of the county is high. Rush proves that such a survey can potentially be carried out with the help and co-operation of community groups. Community groups such as local Tidy Town committees, History and Heritage groups, to name obvious examples, have demonstrated their willingness to do so, both by their own actions and by their co-operation with this Survey. Indeed, some of these organisations have already completed basic surveys in their own areas. The example of Rush Tidy Towns has already been mentioned previously. Skerries Tidy Town, likewise, has carried out a survey of the Historic historic kerbs in that town, which was kindly supplied to us. Furthermore, Local Historical Societies and heritage enthusiasts have done much to make resources that can be used to research street furniture available. For example, Malahide Historical Society maintains a museum and archive, which holds many historic photographs of the town, which can be used to track changes in architecture and infrastructure over time. Many of these images can be seen on their social media channels.

Aside from this a significant range of easily accessible resources are available to assist in such a

Vent Pipe SK56 on Dublin Road, Skerries





Map showing water pumps in Rush. by Rush Tidy Towns

survey. The NIAH database, for instance, provides a base level of information on Street furniture to begin with. Street surveys, meanwhile, would be greatly facilitated by the free availability of digital technology and digital mapping, which can be used to identify, describe, locate and record the different physical elements of a street's heritage. Added to this are historic maps, many of which are available online now, most notably the historic Ordnance Survey maps of Ireland. These often showed the location of key pieces of street furniture, such as milestones, post boxes, and water pumps. This allows people to track changes in position, or even the destruction, of historic street elements. The researcher should not confine themselves to these maps though, as other maps (e.g. Taylor and Skinner Road Maps from the 18th century) can show potential locations for features such as milestones. Similarly, digitised databases, such as the aforementioned Irish Newspaper Archive or the Minutes of the Balbriggan Town Commissioners, also greatly facilitate research.

Existing legislation and planning regulations as set out in Section 2 above means that, once identified,

these historic street furniture elements are offered protection through the Record of Protected Structures, Architectural Conservation Areas, and the policy and objectives articulated in the Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029.

## Additional recommendations

### ***Pleasure garden railings***

The railed enclosed area of the former pleasure gardens that were situated between James Terrace and The Grand Hotel in Malahide demarcate the only historic designed urban park in Fingal. Now the Malahide Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club, founded in 1879. It was elected not to include the railings from the former pleasure gardens in this stocktake due to their being of private ownership. However, it is worth considering these railings and associated features for future surveys/audits in Fingal.

### ***Protection via RPS***

The elements that are not protected and have now been identified and mapped can be added to the RPS on a case by case basis. To avoid their removal



Former location (above) of pitcher pump NIAH Reg. 11313004 (below), Garristown



at a later date.

#### ***NIAH survey updates***

NIAH entries included in the Gazetteer were last surveyed in 2000. As a result some of these entries may no longer be present. A visual review could note if they are still present and their current condition

#### ***Street signs***

In July 2025 several bilingual street signs, with distinctive Gaelic typefaces, went missing from streets around Dún Laoghaire. The signs, often featuring cló Gaelach, a stylised Irish-language typeface historically associated with cultural resistance, date back to around the 1950s and 60s and are now considered rare. Cló Gaelach is not protected, some signs are protected because they are in architectural conservation areas, however there is currently no statutory provision under the Official Languages Act for the preservation of these original designs. A digital humanities initiative from Trinity College called the CLOSCAPE project, are currently documenting

Dublin's remaining examples of the bilingual signage with help from members of the public who are being asked to submit photos of old green street signs to help build a digital archive before more are lost. Perhaps the project could be relocated/extended to Fingal as many of these bilingual signs were noted in the survey but not recorded as they were not part of the brief

**Harbour furniture**

The current audit does not extend into Balbriggan Harbour, Skerries Harbour or Howth Harbour to record mooring posts/rings, capstan, etc. due to the fact that they are not publicly owned but belong to the harbours. Often mooring posts are included in the NIAH surveys. The inclusion of the milestone plate and benchmark on Howth's West pier raises the question as to whether other harbour elements should be recorded e.g. mooring posts. It may be worth considering including the harbour areas in later phases of the audit and to consider their protection.



Cló Gaelach bilingual sign, Chapel Street, Balbriggan

Capstan in Balbriggan Harbour



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From Pillar to Post: Signs & Symbols of the  
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heritage/architecture/historic-architectural-fe/](https://www.askaboutireland.ie/reading-room/history-heritage/architecture/historic-architectural-fe/)

Records of Walter MacFarlane & Co Ltd,

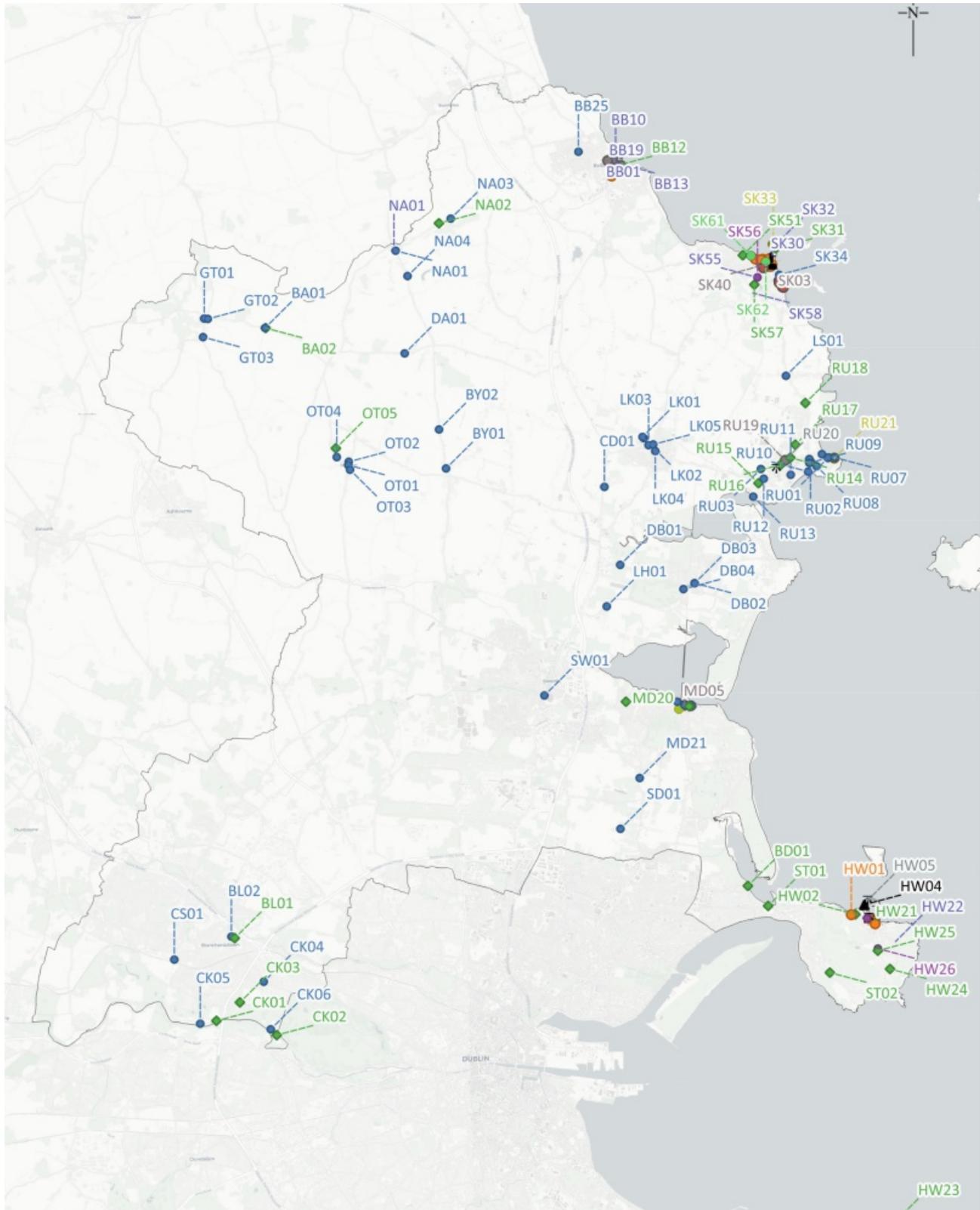
architectural iron founders, Possilpark, Glasgow,  
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Village Pumps, the pump makers: [http://  
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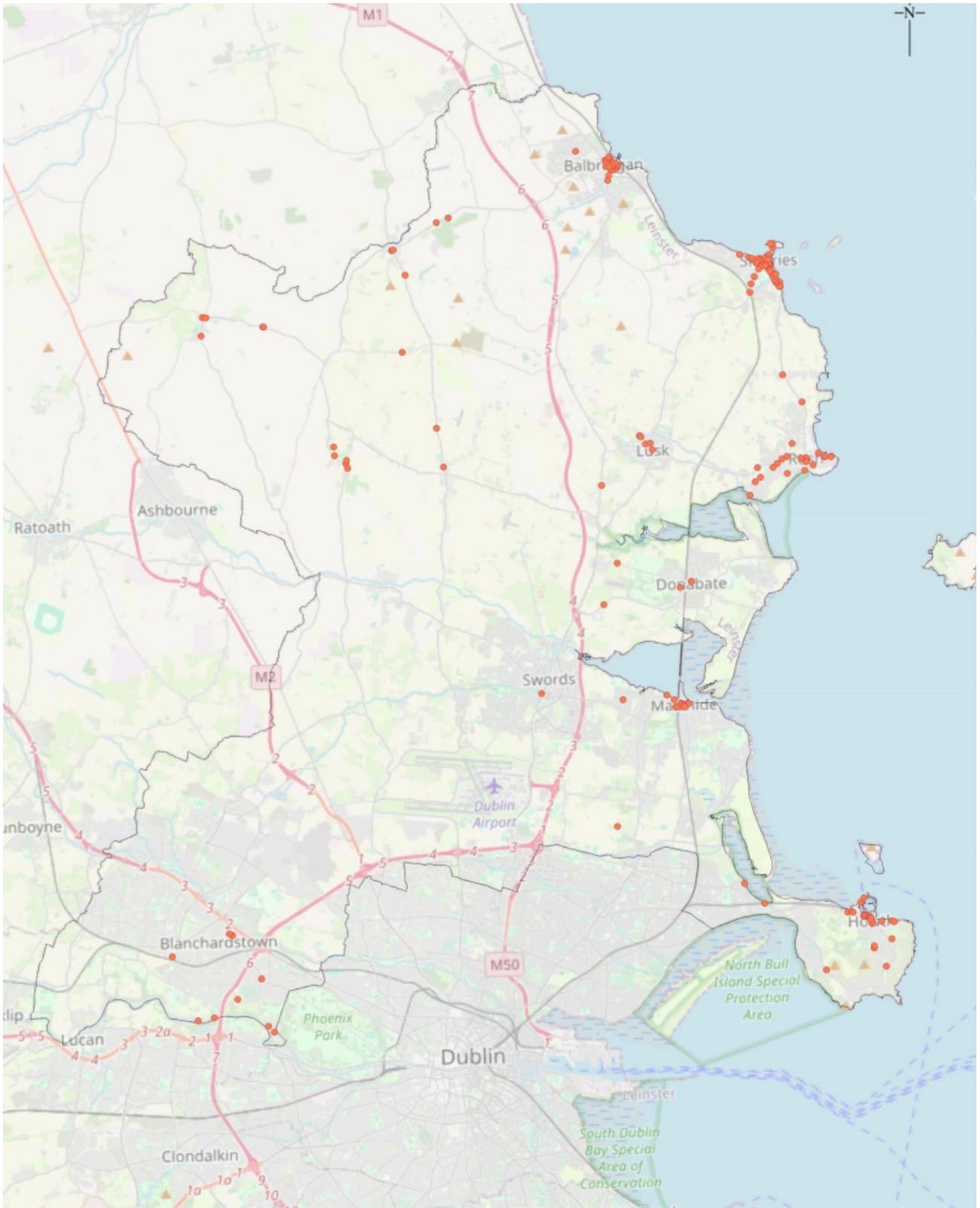
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## Appendix 1: Maps

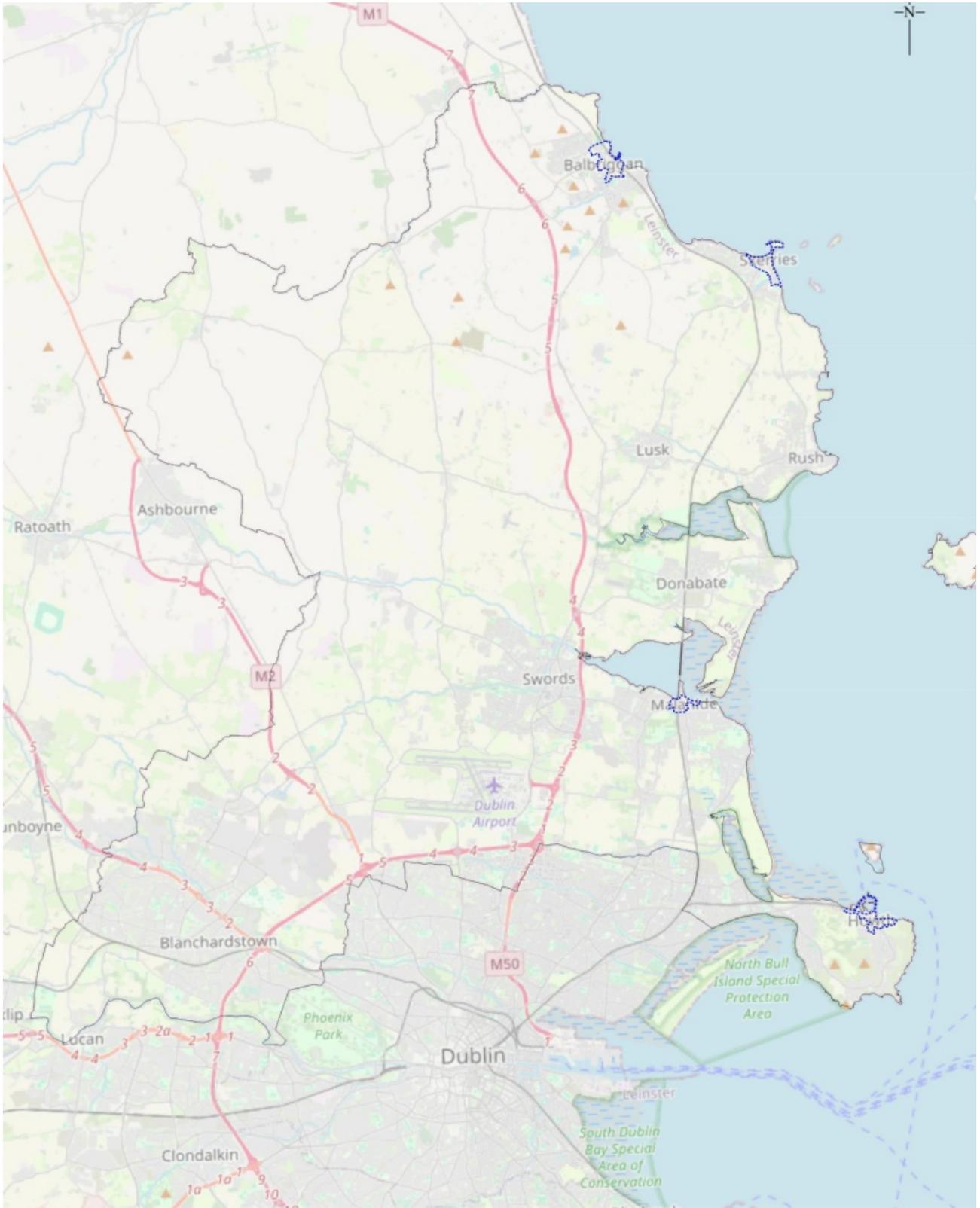
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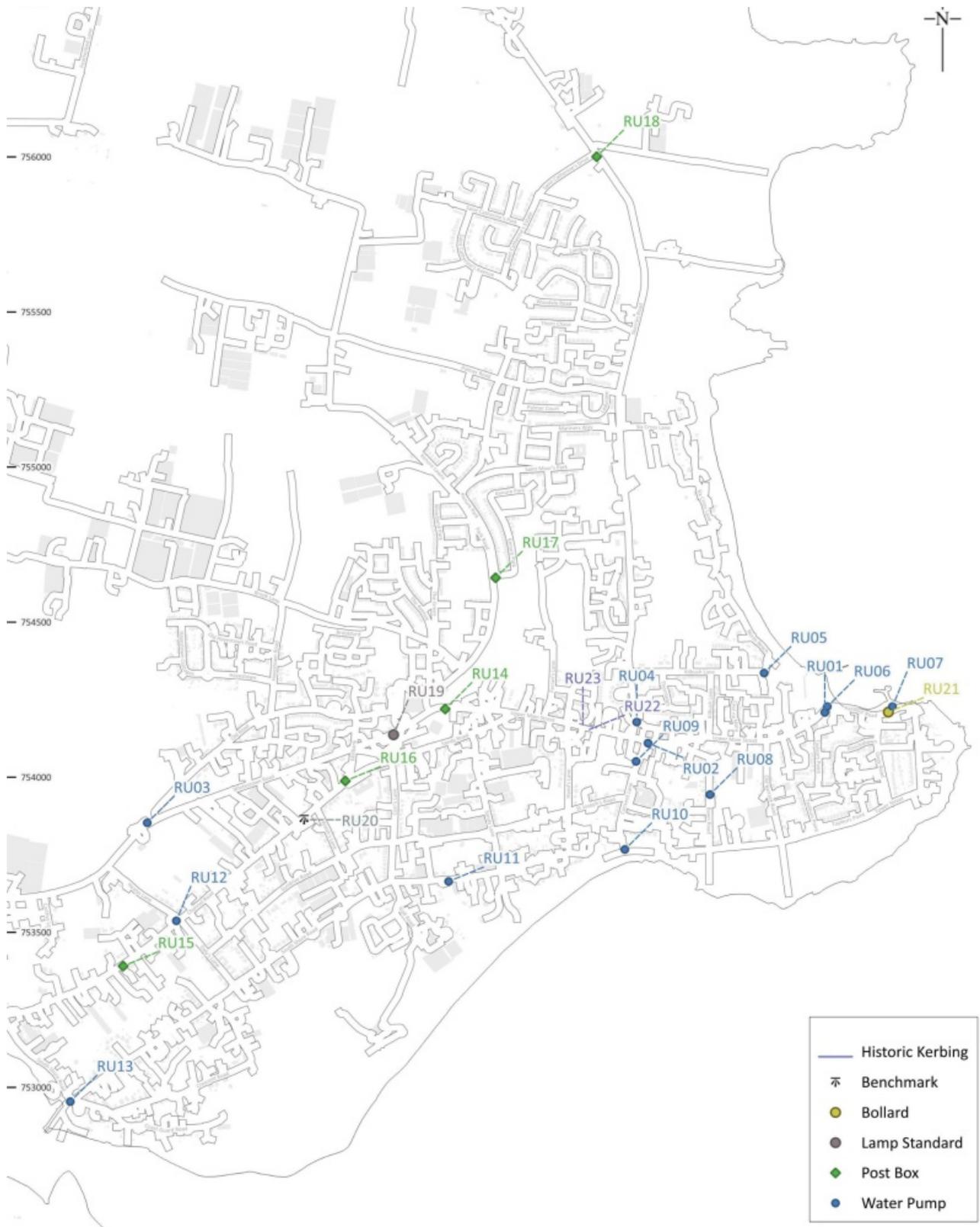
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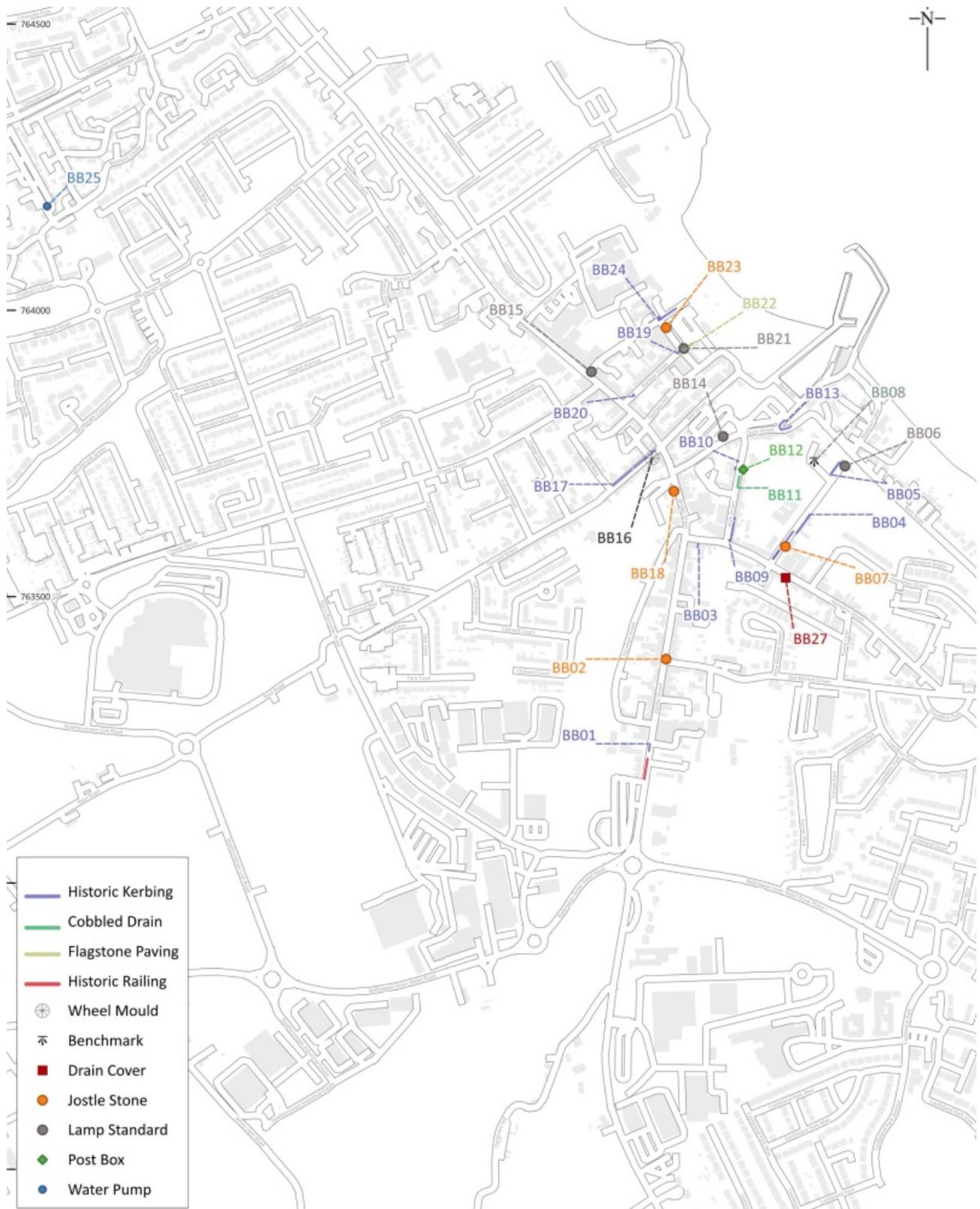
Fingal towns survey - focus areas



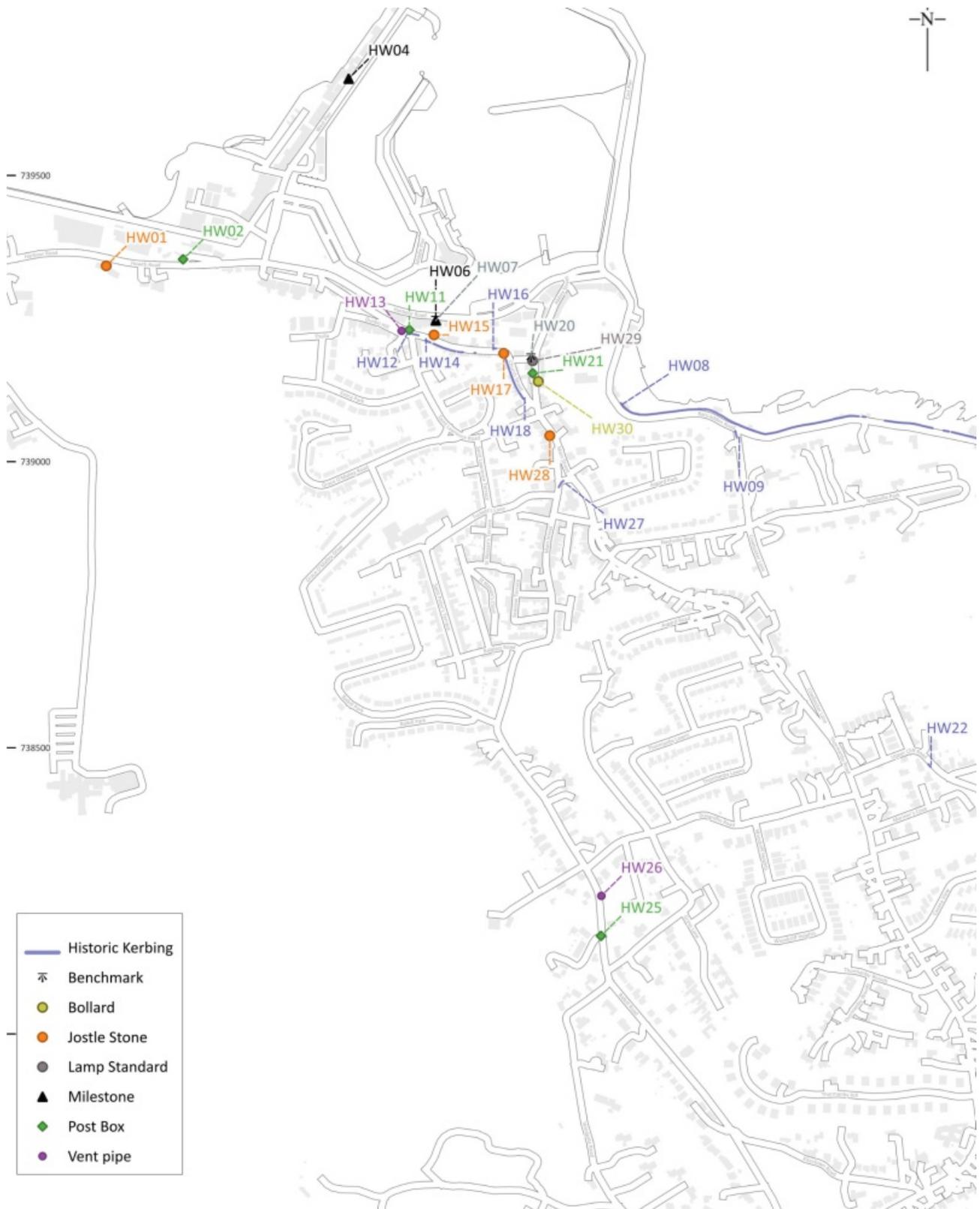
Survey of street furniture in Rush



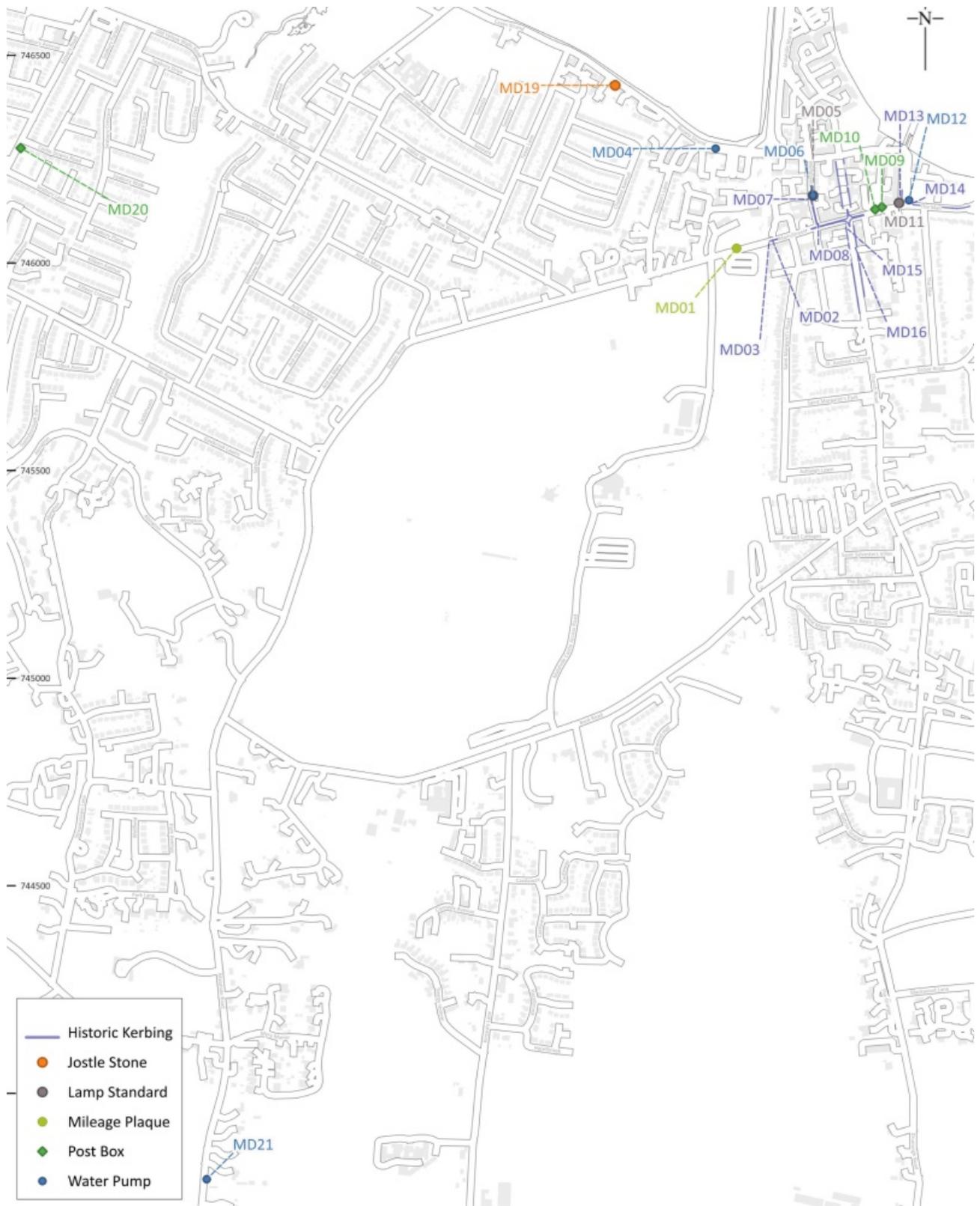
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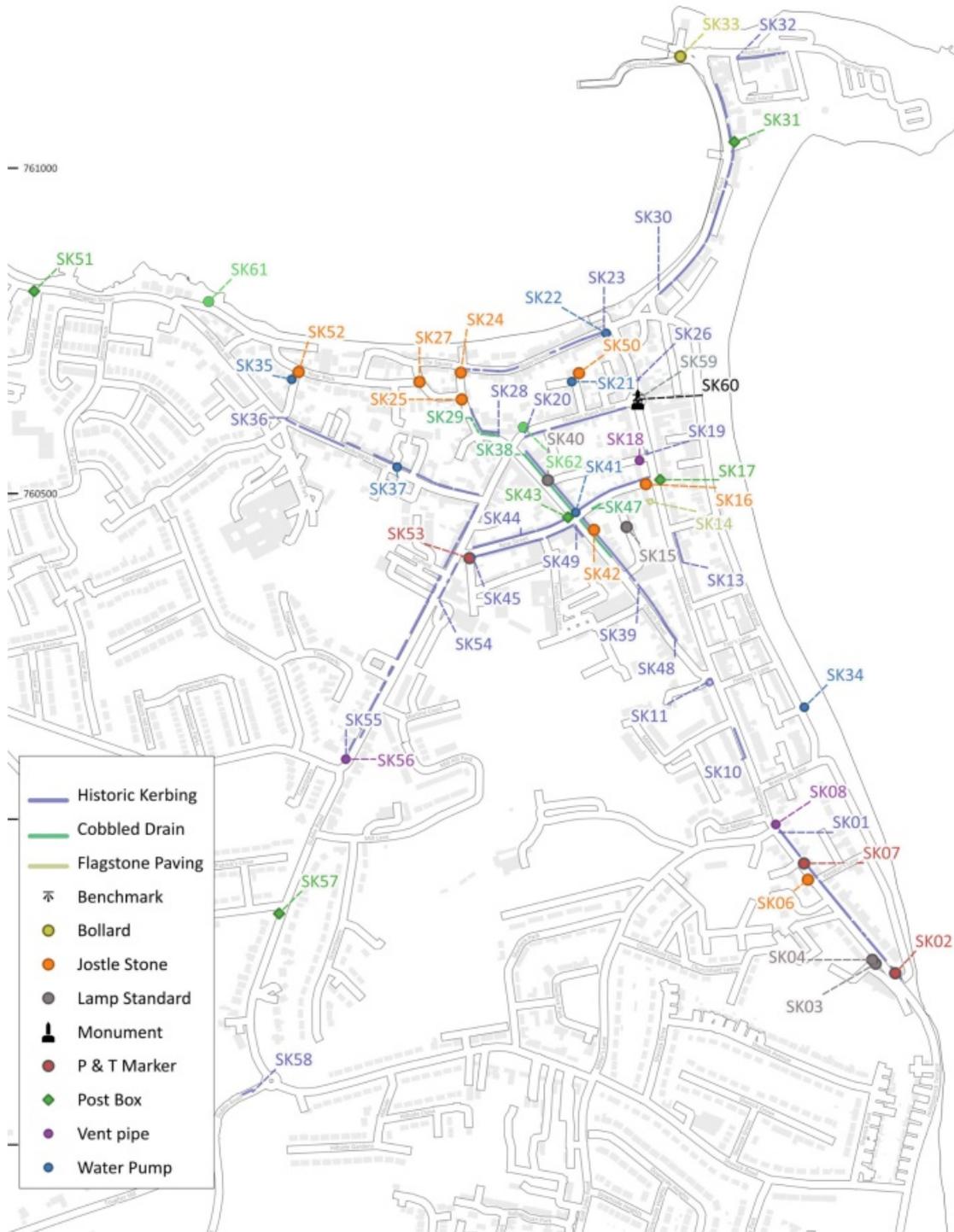
Survey of street furniture in Howth



Survey of street furniture in Malahide



Survey of street furniture in Skerries



Extent of historic paving in Balbriggan



Extent of historic paving in Howth



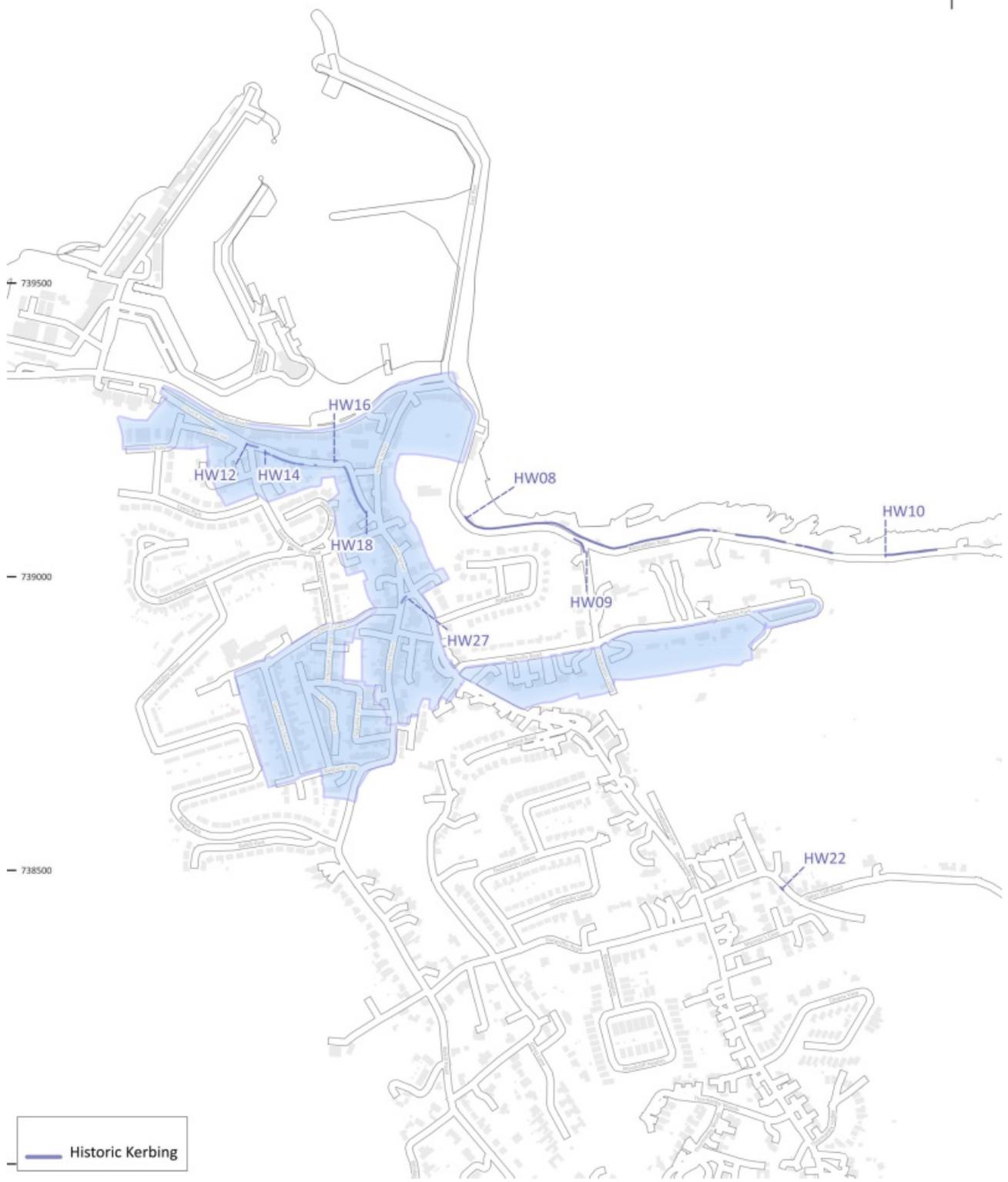
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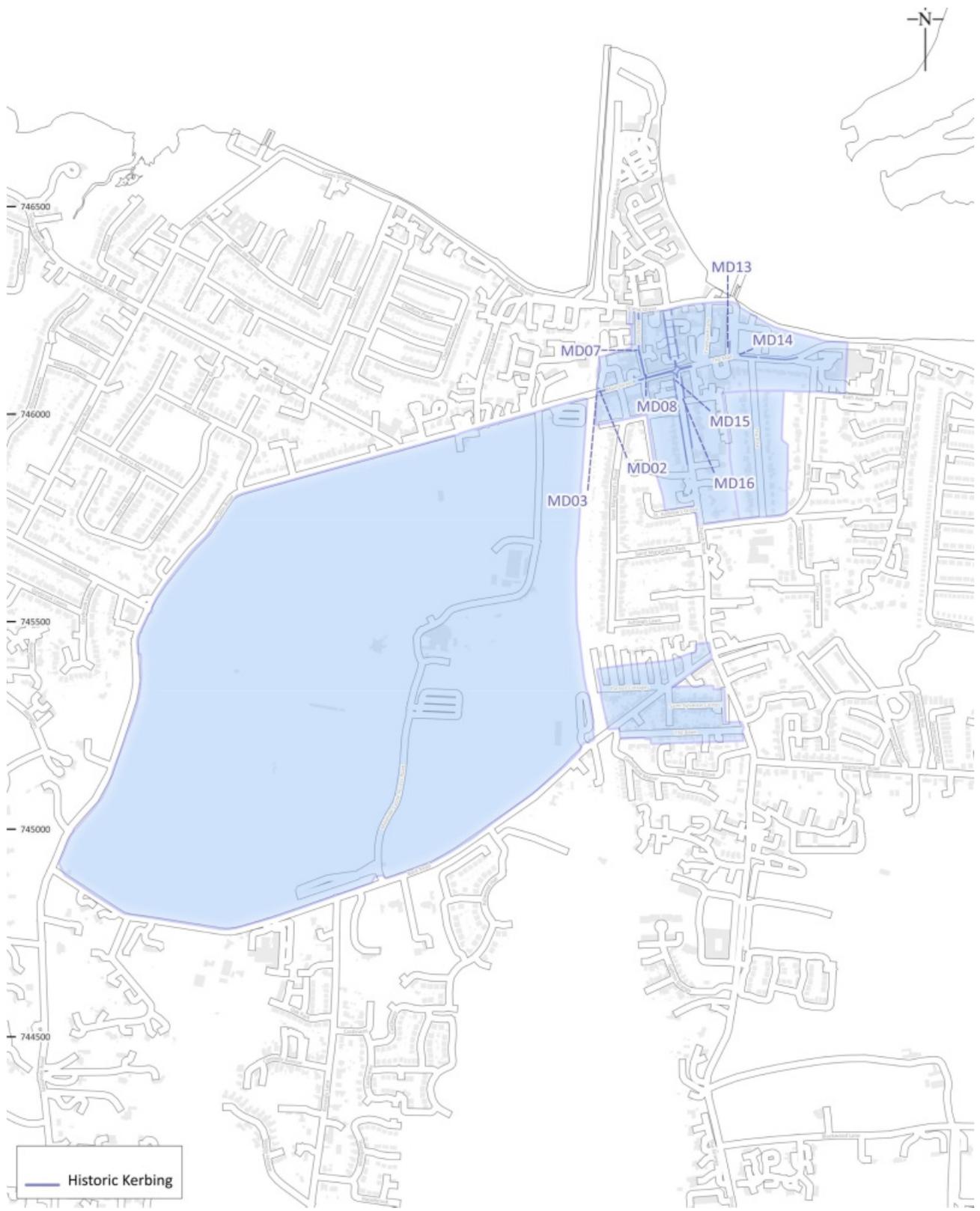
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Historic Kerbing



Extent of historic paving in Malahide



Extent of historic paving in Skerries



## Appendix 2: Gazetteer