

Howth Peninsula Heritage Society
Cumann Oidhreachta Leithinis Bhinn Eadair

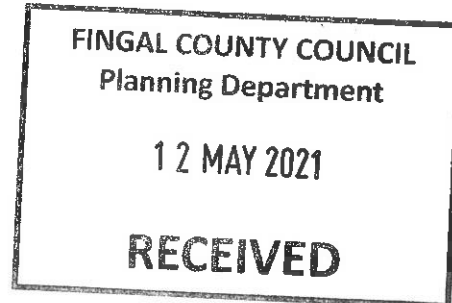
www.howthheritage.com



Phone 

May 12th, 2021

Development Plan Team,
Planning and Strategic Infrastructure Department,
County Hall,
Main Street,
Swords,
Co. Dublin K67X8Y2.



Dear Team,

Our Society respectfully presents herewith our proposals for consideration by you under theme 5.8 Cultural Heritage in the upcoming County Development Plan 2023-2029.

Yours sincerely,

Dermot Quinn
Hon. Secretary

Fingal County Development Plan 2023-2029

Theme 5.8 on Cultural Heritage

The Howth Peninsula Heritage Society propose the following additions to the register of protected structures:

General plan, statement for proposed inclusion:

Fingal County Council recognises the uniquely rich historical legacy of Howth and of the Howth peninsula, and their major amenity value for both Irish citizens and visitors alike. It will strive to protect and enhance their historical, ecological and environmental status by rigorously taking these into account in any developments and by recognising Howth harbour and its environs as one of Fingal's premier heritage towns. It will further uphold Howth Town's status as an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) and seek to preserve, protect and maintain the historic fabric of its buildings, piers, castle and abbey, harbour frontage, central square and other historical features.

- **St. Columbanus Hall:** is a perfectly preserved and functional original Irish national school dating from the 1830s. Its historical importance is enhanced by the fact that it is located on the site of what was Howth's original "Roman Chapel" dating back to medieval times, and marked as such on the de Rocques map of the 1760s. The Hall is currently in the possession of Howth Parish and is earmarked for long-term use as a community amenity. The Hall was the site in November 1917 of the first public meeting of the rejuvenated Sinn Féin movement following the 1916 Easter Rising, addressed by leading figures from the Rising including William T. Cosgrave. Columbanus Hall is already noted on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage as a building of special interest and value. It should now be included on Fingal's List of Protected Structures.

- **Howth EIRE-6 World War II-era aerial recognition sign:** [East Mountain, 200m north of Howth Summit on the Upper Cliff Path]. This sign, currently being restored by local community effort, is an important national and local historical structure. The restoration has proceeded in careful coordination with Fingal Co. Co. and with specialist ecologist supervision to harmonise with the protected status of the surrounding heathland under the Howth SAAO. Throughout the war years 1939-45, a local troop from the Coast Watching Service manned a look-out post at the Summit to monitor marine and aerial traffic, and was involved in the defence of Irish neutrality, and of Dublin during the North Strand bombings of 1941 and the attacks on Belfast the same year. The sign, which is approx. 12 x 40m in size and constructed of stone, is one of the few largely preserved in its original condition and is worthy of protection under Fingal's listed structures.

- **Tramway cottages**: several tramway cottages survive along the disused tramtrack connecting Howth Railway Station and Howth Summit. These unique examples of vernacular architecture, from the rail era, date from ca. 1900, are inhabited and well preserved, and would benefit from additional protection in their future use by being added to the Fingal List of Protected Structures.
- **Howth Public Library**: Howth Library is an outstanding example of 1930s Irish "Art Deco" public architecture. It also has important local historical importance and is remembered in the Inventory of Irish Architectural Heritage as a building of architectural "interest". It was built in 1933 beside the then iconic Howth Technical School (founded 1929, now the local HSE Health Centre). The Library is an anchor structure of the collage of buildings forming Howth's historic core, which is under ACA protection. This building should be protected by being placed on the Fingal List of Protected Structures.
- **Howth Coachhouse**: The Howth Coachhouse is obscured in the assemblage of buildings surrounding the former Baily Court Hotel, now subject to a post-modernist suburban apartment development application. The development foresees the simple demolition of this unobtrusive assemblage of outhouses to make way for a roadway to facilitate construction traffic. This is a sad fate for a building assemblage that originated in the 17th century and still resonates historically. The Coachhouse was the seminal building in the emergence of Howth itself as a town in the early 18th century, the key point at which traffic from Dublin and farther afield converged. A corbelled roof structure from this period and the even more ancient outdoor cask storage vaults testify to the early history of the town. After it fell into disuse as a coach house in the late 19th century, the coach house and yard served for a half-century thereafter as the base of the Howth volunteer fire-brigade, which not only controlled fires in the immediate urban area, but played a role fighting the fires in the Belfast Blitz of 1941. It continued to serve in this role until the 1960s. The Howth Peninsula Heritage Society would argue that the Coachhouse assemblage be preserved within or alongside any futuristic development going forward, and is intrinsic to retaining the historical integrity of the town. It would further argue that any developments on this site incorporate the historic coach house in its plans. For these reasons the Heritage Society would make the case for the inclusion of the coach house assemblage in Fingal's List of Protected Structures.

Mudoak Cottage: Mudoak Cottage sits on the hillside just below Shielmartin, alongside the 18th tee on Howth Golf Club and can be clearly seen from long distances as one travels out from Dublin by car or bus. The cottage pre-dates the Club, having been one of the numerous houses built on the Hill for workers in the Howth Estate. Mudoak was the home of William Harford (a proud Howth Viking surname) the head gardener at Howth Castle. He brought his young wife, Mary White, there in 1882/83 and they raised a family in the small cottage which had no running water or toilet. Water was fetched from a

well some 60 yards away. The nearest houses were down at Barren Hill or over the Hill at Green Hollows. Being so isolated, many walkers over the Hill called at the house for hot water to make tea. So Mrs Harford opened a tea room which entertained many well known visitors, such as Robert Barton (Treaty signatory), Barry Fitzgerald (Hollywood actor) and Michael MacLiammóir. The opening of the golf course in 1916 saw the end of the tearoom, as access was then restricted to a small number of rights of way, which previously visitors had once roamed freely over the whole hillside. William and Mary's daughter, Frances, grew up to be very active in Cumann na mBan, becoming, with her husband Freddy Cooney, both practiced Irish language enthusiasts, as well as active republicans. When William died in 1942 the Castle owners allowed his widow to remain on in the cottage, but she was to follow him to the grave two months later. The cottage has for many years been used for equipment storage by the Golf Club, but it still remains a prominent landmark on the hillside.

HOWTH HOUSE, HARBOUR ROAD, HOWTH.

Appropriately facing the harbour, Howth House is an elegant, historic, iconic two storey granite faced Georgian period house within the Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) of the Howth Historic Core¹. It was built in 1807 under the direction of the Howth Harbour Commissioners, chaired by Lord Howth, for and by the then resident engineer, Captain George Taylor². Following Taylor's resignation in 1809, it became the home of the newly appointed registered engineer, John Aird and also the periodic place of accommodation for John Rennie, the consultant engineer and designer of Howth Harbour.

Built in the first decade of the nineteenth century, over 200 years ago, Howth House is a prominent but deceptive structure sitting proud on the sea front on Harbour Road but stretching back into Abbey Street. Indeed, its matrix of original rooms must have been extensive as reflected in the seven chimneys to be found to the front and the six to the back on Abbey Street. Its design points to the particular interests and needs of both John Aird and John Rennie, in that the arc-dome shaped western wing of Howth House, with its finely placed windows, provided a viewing sweep of the western pier under construction, not to mention the gift of the western setting sun. An ideal setting for any retired admiral to reflect upon golden days gone by.

The harbour itself, constructed at an expense of nearly half a million sterling, consisted originally of two piers of stone. These piers were constructed at the core from large masses of quartzite quarried at the local Kilrock quarry, resting on a foundation of cut blocks of red grit-stone or sandstone from the Runcorn Quarries in Cheshire. Significantly, both piers were then faced up on either side with hewn granite from Dalkey Quarry³. Granite blocks from this same Dalkey Quarry were also used to face up the front of Howth House under construction in 1807. Howth House was, therefore, very much the wheelhouse in the building of Howth Harbour.

John Rennie (1761-1821) was a gifted and renowned civil engineer, born in east Lothian, Scotland and educated at Edinburgh University⁴. Having set up his own engineering consultancy business in 1791 in Blackfriars, London, he consulted on a number of major works in both Scotland and England, including the Aberdeen Canal, the East India Docks and Waterloo Bridge in London, Prince's Dock in Liverpool and Holyhead Harbour.

In 1802 Rennie began a series of works in Ireland. He was appointed consultant to the Dublin Bay and Harbour Scheme, drawing up a series of planned improvements, based on the map works of the noted Captain William Bligh's 1800 survey⁵. In 1807 Rennie began his work on the new harbour in Howth as consultant engineer and continued in that consultancy role until it was officially completed on July 1st 1818. Rennie died on 4th October 1821 at Stamford St., Blackfriars, London. The *Gentleman's Magazine* referred to his death as 'a national calamity', he was buried in St. Paul's cathedral.

John Aird (c1760-1832) a distinguished harbour engineer, was also born in Scotland and began his working life with the John Rennie consultancy company in 1794. He worked as assistant engineer on

¹ FCC Fingal Architectural Conservation Areas, (ACA), Howth Historic Core ACA, Statement of Fact.

² McBrierty, Vincent, *The Howth Peninsula, its history, lore & legend*, North Dublin Roundtable, 1981, p. 45-48.

³ Lewis, Samuel, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*, London, 1837, 'Howth'.

⁴ Rennie, John: *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, RIA, Dawson Street, Dublin 2. WWW.RIA.IE

⁵ Rennie, John: *Dictionary of Irish Architects (1720-1940)*, The Irish Architectural Archive. www.dia.ie

several of John Rennie's projects in Scotland⁶, including the Crinan Canal (1794-1800), the East Dock, Leith (1801-1806), and the Greenock Harbour. When Rennie was appointed chief engineer of Howth Harbour, Aird was appointed resident engineer by Rennie in 1809 and superintendent of the works from 1809 to 1816⁷.

In later years Howth House became the home of the noted Boyd family. Judge Sir Walter Herbert Boyd, 1st baronet, lived there from 1875, and became the 1st Commodore of Howth Yacht Club in 1895. His eldest son, Herbert, was Commodore for over 50 years. See Boyd family photos attached from *Images of Ireland 2006*⁸. In more recent years Howth House became the headquarters of the Olympic Federation of Ireland, renaming the house, Olympic House.

Recommendation:

Given its wheelhouse role in the building of Howth Harbour and its own elegant, historic, iconic features, Howth House fully deserves every recognition not alone in Howth, but in Fingal and nationally and, thus, merits, without question, entry on to the FCC Record of Protected Structures.

Sources:

Aird, John: *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, RIA, Dawson Street, Dublin 2.

Aird, John: *Dictionary of Irish Architects, (1720-1940)*, the Irish Architectural Archive.

FCC Howth Historic Core Architectural Conservation Area, Statement of Fact.

Lewis, Samuel: *A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*, London, 1837.

McBrierty, Vincent J: *The Howth Peninsula, its history, lore and legend*, Dublin North Roundtable, 1981.

Rennie, John: *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, RIA, Dawson Street, Dublin 2.

Rennie, John: *Dictionary of Irish Architects, (1720-1940)*, The Irish Architectural Archive.

Boyd family photographs from the *Images of Ireland* series, *North Dublin: from the Liffey to Balbriggan* issue, by Dr. Derek Stanley (2006).

⁶ Aird, John: *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, RIA, Dawson Street, Dublin 2. WWW.RIA.IE

⁷ Aird, John: *Dictionary of Irish Architects (1720-1940)*, the Irish Architectural Archive. www.dia.ie

⁸ Boyd family photos: *Images of Ireland* series: *North Dublin: from the Liffey to Balbriggan* issue by Dr. Derek Stanley (2006).