

THE CAST-IRON MILESTONES OF THE CORK– SKIBBEREEN COACH ROAD

Clíodbna O'Leary



You come to a milestone on a hill, or some place where deep ways meet under trees; and off goes the knapsack, and down you sit to smoke a pipe in the shade (Robert Louis Stevenson 1876, 688).¹

Introduction

Milestones were the precursors of modern-day road signs. Usually positioned on roads of major importance, they display distances in miles to various locations and assisted travellers on foot, horseback and coaches. Originally the term ‘milestone’ referred exclusively to a mile marker made of stone, while ‘milepost’ referred to those made of wood, metal or concrete. This distinction has largely been lost and nowadays the generic term ‘milestone’ is used for all mile markers, and it is the term applied here. This paper focuses on the milestones of the nineteenth-century coach road stretching from Western Road in Cork City to Skibbereen town, hereafter referred to as the ‘survey area’.

Milestones in the Survey Area

This study has recorded sixteen roadside milestones in the survey area (Fig. 1).² Travelling southwest from Cork City, they occur in the following townlands: Ballinaspig Beg (Fig. 2), Ballinvrinsig (Fig. 3), Killountane (Fig. 4), Curranure (Fig. 5), Gaggan (Fig. 6), Ahalisky (Fig. 7), Scartagh (Fig. 8), Miles (Fig. 9), Ballyduvane (not photographed due to level of overgrowth),³ Knockaphonery (Fig. 10), Burgatia (Fig. 11), English Island (Fig. 12), Derry (Fig. 13), Gortroe (Fig. 14), Aghills (Fig. 15) and Gortnaclohy (Fig. 16). The majority are on the N71 and when westbound, they are situated on the left side of the road.



Fig. 1: Map of extant milestones in the survey area (Map: author).

The milestones are of identical form, shape and width (55cm) but vary in height from 44cm to 93cm (above ground). These triangular (or V-sectioned) cast-iron milestones, each bearing a chamfered triangular top with lettering in relief on the uppermost face and sides, supply distances in statute miles

to Cork and Skibbereen, the datum points, as well as distances to one or two other locations closer by. For example, in Clonakilty, on Wolfe Tone Street, a milestone attached to the façade of the Imperial Hotel reads ‘ROSSCARBY 8’ (left side), ‘BANDON 13’ (right side) and ‘SKIBB^N 21 / CORK 32’ (top; see Fig. 8). The well-executed embossed lettering enhances their design, making them instantly recognisable and legible to passers-by. Between Cork City and Ahalisky, small metal squares carrying numbers were welded to the milestones’ uppermost faces (Figs 2-7); such additions were not a feature of the milestones west of this, and so the numbers presumably formed part of the moulds (Figs 8-16). The milestones exhibit fine craftsmanship and their makers’ marks appear on their side faces. Between Cork City and Ahalisky they read ‘BARNES &^{CO} / CORK’, while west of this they simply read ‘BARNES / CORK’.⁴ Therefore, although all the milestones on the Cork–Skibbereen road are of the same type and derive from the same foundry, there are two distinct sub-groups probably manufactured in two batches: six between Cork City and Ahalisky form one sub-group, hereafter Group A, and ten between Scartagh and Skibbereen constitute the other, hereafter Group B.



Fig. 2 (L.): Wilton Road, Ballinaspig Beg, Cork City (Photo: author).⁵



Fig. 3 (R.): Ballinvrinsig, N71 westbound dual carriageway south of the Viaduct (Photo: author).⁶

Historic Maps

A detailed history of the changing course of the Cork–Skibbereen route is outside the remit of this paper but some developments deserve mention. Early maps depicting roads are scarce; however, the Taylor and Skinner maps surveyed in 1777 give a good impression of this route, named Rd. P170, which then passed through Waterfall and Crossbarry while Clonakilty was seemingly accessed from the north via Shannonvale (1778, 170-71). The map refers to a new road in Barleyhill northwest of Rosscarbery. In the 1790s, the Grand Jury of Cork surveyed the county and published their detailed map in 1811; on it the Cork–Skibbereen mail coach road is clearly marked. The road was then in a state of evolution: it no longer passed through Waterfall, and south of Ballinascarty it took on an odd looping course, veering west through the townland of Carriganookery. Further on, however, Clonakilty was entered similarly to today, through Grillagh and Gallanes. Further west, the road bypassed Rosscarbery village; skirting the bay on its eastern side, it headed north through Ardagh and maintained this northerly course for Connonagh. Between 1822 and 1836, the Board of Works, led by Richard Griffith (of Griffith's Valuation), was responsible for extensive road building and improvements between Cork and Skibbereen, with much of it completed by 1829 (Rynne 2006, 317-20 and fig. 12.3; Spalding 2009, 33). Therefore, by the time of the first edition Ordnance Survey (OS) 6 inch map of 1840-42, the main Cork–Skibbereen road traced much of the same route now followed by the N71 except that the Gogganshill area and the villages of Halfway, Oldchapel and Gaggan are now all bypassed, the eastern accesses to Bandon and Ballinascarty have been diverted, and sections of the N71 now overlie the abandoned railway line, while many bends have been sidestepped in an effort to create a straighter path and thus achieve a faster journey. A significant improvement to the principal route as it appeared on the 1840s map was the causeway over Rosscarbery Bay and the road to the west of this, running through New Town and thereby bypassing Rosscarbery village; notably this stretch was called 'Coach Road' on the early twentieth-century Cassini map. No major changes to the route took place between the creation of the first edition OS map of c. 1840 and the 25 inch OS map of 1898-1901.

Milestones were not marked on the first edition OS map though this is not surprising given that it is not as detailed as later editions. An examination of

the 25 inch map indicates that the sixteen extant milestones are remnants of a once extensive distribution of markers set up at one-mile intervals on the Cork–Skibbereen road. It reveals forty-seven milestones along this 53 mile route,⁷ with two additional milestones marked on the Cassini 6 inch map, which was commissioned for this area between 1900 and 1937.⁸ On the 25 inch map, the location of each milestone is indicated using the abbreviation 'M.P.' (for milepost) except for those in Chetwynd, Ballinvrinsig and Kilmacabea which are instead marked 'M.S.' (for milestone) with no obvious reason for the use of two different labels. Generally with regards to the milestones northeast of Innishannon, the distances to Cork and Innishannon are stated on the map while west of this, distances to Cork and Skibbereen are provided.⁹ The abbreviations 'M.P.' and 'M.S.' appear with roughly equal frequency on the Cassini series.

Absent from the maps is a milestone recorded in the late 1990s on Western Road in Cork City, which is identical in form to the other surviving examples but is now missing (Rynne 1999, fig. 89c; see also Scannlain 2013).¹² Curious also is the 2 mile gap on the Cassini map between the missing milestone in



Fig. 4 (L.): Killountane, N71 northeast of Innishannon (Photo: author).¹⁰



Fig. 5 (R.): Curranure, N71 lay-by west of Innishannon (Photo: author).¹¹

Kilruane and the nearest milestone to the west in Burgatia (Fig. 11); however, a milestone previously recorded by the Milestone Society (db. no. COR_CKSB38), and now seemingly missing, was located midway between the two and would have filled this void. The extant milestone in Miles townland (Fig. 9), just west of Clonakilty, is notable because it too does not appear on any of the maps consulted. Thus the total number of milestones recorded along this route using all the available data is fifty-two. The staggering loss of thirty-six of these is symbolic of the destruction of the historical character of Irish roadways.

Date

Cast-iron milestones were first erected in Ireland in the first decade of the nineteenth century (Rynne 2006, 322). The most readily identifiable type is the triangular V-sectioned form so prolific in Cork. The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) currently dates this type to the late nineteenth century, c. 1880–1900.¹³ However, by comparison to English examples and when taking into account the lettering, especially the application of serifs and superscript abbreviations of placenames as well as other factors (discussed below), it is probable that the milestones in the survey area were manufactured at an earlier date. While an attempt at dating milestones in Leinster based on lettering analysis was made by Joan and Kieron Murphy who, probably erroneously, viewed the Cork cast-iron milestones as a product of the late nineteenth century (1982, 25), there appears to have been no efforts at creating a detailed, regionally sensitive typology for the survey area.

Sometimes structures associated with milestones can provide clues regarding their date. For example, the long causeway over Rosscarbery Bay was built c. 1820 and its associated milestone obviously post-dates this (Fig. 12).¹⁴ A piece in the *Southern Star* in the 1930s claims that the markers in the Skibbereen area were laid down around 1822 (6 Feb. 1937); however, their use of statute miles makes it unlikely that they were manufactured this early. Their quoting of distances in statute miles offers a *terminus post quem* (earliest possible date). In 1824, the Weights and Measures Act was passed whereby the Imperial system of the statute mile measuring 1,760 yards replaced the Irish mile equating to 2,240 yards; the Irish mile was officially abolished in 1826 (McCabe 2006, 29; Rynne 2006, 322). The milestones in the survey area were thus manufactured after this date.



Fig. 6 (L.): Gaggan, at what was formerly Clonakilty Junction (Photo: author).¹⁵



Fig. 7 (R.): Ahalisky, Ballinascarty Bridge (Photo: author).¹⁶

The 25 inch map gives us a *terminus ante quem* (latest possible date) of c. 1900 for forty-seven of the milestones in the survey area. Given that the remaining five, which were not marked on the map (see above), are of the same form, it is probable that the OS surveyors overlooked these markers, some perhaps then hidden in the hedgerows. This is further suggested by the appearance of the Burgatia and Derry milestones on the later Cassini map.

Narrowing down the date range of 1826–1900 has proved difficult but the milestones themselves offer a further clue. They are fine examples of early mass-produced cast ironwork and their ‘Barnes’ founder’s stamps are illuminating. At Queen’s Place, Hanover Street, Cork City, a foundry was established by Thomas Addison Barnes c. 1800 (Rynne 1999, 127; Bielenberg 2009, 120; see also West 1809–10, 5). In 1813, the business was advertised for let or sale under the name ‘Hive Cast Iron Foundry [*sic*]’ (*Manchester Mercury*, 22 June 1813). However, Barnes stayed on in an expanded business with new partners, including Richard Perrott who married Barnes’ fifteen-year-old daughter, Hannah Mary (*Cork Advertiser*, 28 Dec. 1815).¹⁷ Barnes died in 1816 (Rynne 1999, 263, n. 43).¹⁸ After this, the business continued to operate under his surname (*Pigot’s Directory* 1824, 251); it is believed that during this time, his widow, Anne, ran the ironworks, and in 1829 Barnes and Co. built a warehouse on Great George’s Street (now Washington Street; Rynne 1999, 127, 263, n. 43; *Cork Constitution*, 13 Feb. 1830). On Hanover Street, Perrott built his own foundry adjoining Barnes. By 1834, Anne was winding up her business (*Cork*

Constitution, 27 Mar. 1834), putting the foundry up for sale in 1837 and, by the following year, it was under Perrott's control and had been amalgamated with his own business (Rynne 1999, 127). It was then the largest engineering works in Ireland outside Belfast (*ibid.*, 127; Bielenberg 1991, 96; 2009, 120). From this period, it was generally listed under Richard Perrott's name and traded as 'Hive Iron Works' or 'Perrot Hive Foundry Cork' (Jackson 1842–43, 70; *Kerry Evening Post*, 28 Apr. 1847).

There are strong indications that the milestones in the survey area were manufactured in the second half of the 1820s or the 1830s prior to Perrott becoming the principal proprietor of Hive Iron Works. Indeed, Colin Rynne believes that the missing milestone on Western Road in Cork City dates to 1829 (1999, fig. 89c), when the coach road to Skibbereen was largely completed (Spalding 2009, 33). Group B milestones bearing the name 'BARNES CORK' may be slightly earlier in date than the Group A milestones displaying the longer company title 'BARNES &^{CO} CORK'. The name on the latter group perhaps signals that they are a product of the time during which the Barnes family were expanding the business by creating new partnerships or by which time Perrott had assumed significant influence within the business. This theory remains tentative.

Context and Function

A milestone is a physical reminder of the importance of the route on which it stands at the time it was erected. In eighteenth-century Ireland, grand juries and turnpike trusts were responsible for improvements in the road transport network in response to increases in population, trade and traffic (Turk and Carey 2013, 15; Horner 2007). Turnpike roads saw tolls extracted from travellers and then used for road maintenance. In Cork, early turnpike roads facilitated the butter trade centred on Shandon, with the first 'butter road' commissioned c. 1747; by the late 1770s, the majority of inter- and intra-county roads had been turnpiked (Rynne 2005, 195–6; 2006, 316). The constant wearing of the recently improved Cork–Skibbereen road led to its inclusion in the turnpike system in 1822 and was in operation from 1830 (Broderick 2002, 162–4, 173). Following the main road on the 25 inch map, a number of points along the route feature the word 'pike' in their placenames:

'The Pike' is marked at the southern entrance to Innishannon Bridge and 'Pike Cross Roads' appears at Lisavaire,¹⁹ as well as west of Leap between Brade and Kilfadeen townlands. Such placenames are also attached to junctions on minor roads, symptomatic of the changing status of roadways as they were redirected or replaced by new ones.²⁰ A rare survival of part of a tollgate barrier wall can be seen on Station Road, Ballincollig, Co. Cork, which is marked 'Turnpike' on the OS map of 1841 (MacConaill 2007). No such physical remnants now identify the Cork–Skibbereen route as a turnpike road but tolls were extracted here until 1843 (Broderick 2002, 266). By 1857, tolls were largely abolished in Ireland (Rynne 2006, 316), and with this came the destruction of much of the associated infrastructure.



Fig. 8 (L.): Wolfe Tone St, Scartagh, Clonakilty (Photo: author).²¹



Fig. 9 (R): Western Rd, Miles, Clonakilty (Photo: author).²²

The Turnpike Act of 1766 required turnpike trusts to erect milestones along toll roads, helping stagecoach drivers to accurately price and time their journeys (Benford 2002, 12). It also gave power to magistrates to punish anyone damaging turnpike property, such as defacing milestones. As a response to this act, some of Ireland's earliest milestones were erected. But earlier milestones existed; writing in 1748, William Rufus Chetwood made the following observance just outside Cork City on the road to Dublin: 'the

Roads are charming, and the measured Miles, with their red Figures cut in Marble, give us a Satisfaction in our journey, by being in Expectation of passing the next Mile Stone' (1748, 127). Early milestones generally took the form of carved stones with distances measured in Irish miles displayed on one or two faces. Some rare early examples were set up on bridges, these structures being among the most essential elements of the early road network. For example, three milestones, dating to 1734, were instated on the causeway at Rostellan, north of Whitegate, Co. Cork, supplying distances to Cork and towns such as Castlemartyr and Fermoy as well as important places further afield, including Lismore, Clonmel, Kilkenny and Dublin.²³ While no early milestones associated with bridges have survived in the survey area, an entry in the minutes of the Council Book for the borough of Clonakilty, dated 5 February 1700, demonstrates the importance of the bridge network here:

We find and present that three pounds sterl. to be levy'd on the town and liberties of Cloughnakilty for the repair of the great bridge leading from Cloughnakilty to Ross westwards, is sufficient to repair the said bridge, and that Mr. Thomas Warner, Mr. John Field, Mr. James Spiller, or the major part of the above, to be fitt persons to applott the same, and that the sd. applotment be made within one week after the date hereof, and that Mr. John Field and Mr. James Spiller are fitt persons to be overseers of the same (Townshend 1895, 514).

It seems that the milestones surveyed for this study were not the first mile markers erected in this region. Written in 1819, *The Traveller's New Guide* provides the following directions from Cork to Innishannon:

On the road leading from Cork to Innishonan, at the four mile-stone, a cross road runs to the right; at the five mile-stone, are the ruins of an old abbey to the right. A little beyond the eight mile-stone, the road forks into two branches (Anon. 1819, 237).

The older milestones mentioned here would have been separated by distances measured in Irish miles and the geographical locations specified

equate with features depicted on the Taylor and Skinner maps (1778, 170). On these maps are sequences of numbers that increase incrementally moving outwards from Cork City in all directions. These illustrate distances in Irish miles measured from the city and probably depict the location of early milestones. In the passage cited above, the likely allusion to Ballymacadane Abbey, in Oldabbey south of Waterfall, corresponds with the annotation 'The Abbey' located just before, and to the right of, the number '5' on the Taylor and Skinner maps. While the guide also mentions milestones when providing directions to Kinsale, none are cited when discussing places southwest of Innishannon and so it remains uncertain whether milestones were instated between Innishannon and Skibbereen prior to the present cast-iron specimens.²⁴



Fig. 10 (L.): Knockaphonery, just west of the Pike Crossroads, Lisavaird (Photo: author).²⁵



Fig. 11 (R.): Burgatia, just west of Owenahincha Cross and east of Rosscarbery (Photo: author).²⁶

In the period of the earliest milestones, it is possible that the placement of these monuments in carefully chosen locations enhanced the significance of those places. This can be seen in North Tipperary where a village named 'Milestone' developed after a limestone milestone was erected c. 1780.²⁷ As

Treasure Island author Robert Louis Stevenson saw it (see opening quote above), these were important stopping points that no doubt nurtured social interactions. Evidently milestones influenced the naming of places, such as the village of Fivemilebridge, east of Ballinhassig and 5 miles from Cork City. Sometimes they record placenames no longer in use or older spellings. For example, 'INNOSH^N', as on the surveyed milestones, denotes the earlier spelling 'Innishonan'. Some stand as testimony to places that were once inhabited but have since been abandoned or mark bypassed routes, such as the milestone near Kinlough on what was the principal route linking north Leitrim with Sligo.²⁸

It has been demonstrated that local gentry in Leinster considered association with these prestigious objects desirable (Murphy and Murphy 1982, 24; Andrews 1964, 21-2). It is therefore interesting that a number of the surviving milestones in the survey area are located beside substantial eighteenth- and nineteenth-century buildings and landed estates: on Wilton Road, Cork City, a milestone is located close to a gate lodge for the Leslie estate (Fig. 2);²⁹ west of Rosscarbery, a milestone is attached to the boundary wall surrounding Derry Demesne, a seat of the Townsends (Fig. 13);³⁰ in Aghills, west of Leap, a milestone stands near a gate lodge, in front of the entrance pillar of Shepperton House (Fig. 15);³¹ and on North Street, Skibbereen, a milestone is located outside the grounds of the fine townhouse Norton House (Fig. 16).³² The locations of these milestones recall the gateway built c. 1840 at Knappogue Castle, Co. Clare, where limestone entrance piers were transformed into a pair of milestones.³³ Indeed, milestones were symbolic of political power and the sheer number erected in Ireland is expressive of imperial wealth. In order to effectively control Ireland, the British government sought more fluid communication, as expressed in the detailed level of mapping undertaken by the OS. In addition, the social benefits inherent in improving the transport network – of which milestones formed an integral part – were central to governmental efforts to appease the Irish and reduce tension.

Nineteenth-century expansion in the road network and significant developments in transport were symptomatic of increased industrial activity focused on the processing of agricultural products. For example, the linen and brewing industries in Clonakilty prospered at this time (Tuipéar 1988, 18-19, 25-6). Many Irish milestones were produced during this dramatic industrial

expansion of the early 1800s when roads were essential for the transportation of raw materials and finished goods. The nineteenth century also saw the introduction of public transport in Ireland. Charles Bianconi's scheduled coaches commenced in 1815, with services extending across much of southern Ireland (Turk and Carey 2013, 19).³⁴ Among the foremost carriage builders in Cork was 'Nelson Place Carriage Works', established in 1810 in Cork City between Bowling Green Street and what is now Opera Lane (Bielenberg 1991, 98); in 1867, business owner James Johnson took out a full-page advertisement in *Henry and Cogblan's Directory* illustrating his fashionable Brougham carriage, a model produced 'of the lightest possible construction, of the newest and most approved Designs, equal to the best London Build' and with a two-year guarantee (1867, 5a). Notably, among the patrons of this business were West Cork Lords Carbery and Bandon (*ibid.*).³⁵ Milestones in the survey area maintained a roadside location, being set slightly back from the road, and their triangular form was designed with practicality in mind as their shape enabled two-way traffic to view the face that pertained to them, especially useful with people travelling on increasingly high-speed carriages like those produced at Nelson Place.

Road and transport improvements had knock-on effects for the hospitality industry (Horner 2007, 24-5), and in the nineteenth century more hotels and inns cropped up along the principal roadways. The prime location of the Imperial Hotel on Strand Road (now Wolfe Tone Street), Clonakilty, with its adjacent milestone (Fig. 8), had been seized upon by 1881 when the O'Briens first began advertising the establishment (*Slater's Directory* 1881, 37), no doubt in response to increased numbers of travellers passing through Clonakilty on business and pleasure. The 25 inch map of 1900 shows a 'smithy' located at the top and bottom of Strand Road, and presumably they were called upon to tend to the shoeing of the travellers' horses while specialist wheelwrights were also based in the town (*Slater's Directory* 1870, 32).

Milestones played an important role in a variety of essential civic services. From the late eighteenth century, the Irish Post Office operated a coach-based system of postal distribution (McCarthy 2015) and from the nineteenth century, the Post Office was responsible for some of the improvements to Irish roadways. An Act of 1805 required the survey and mapping of roads used by mail coaches, and subsequently some roads were widened while on others the

gradient was reduced (Killen 1997, 208-09; Rynne 2006, 314). The importance of the postal service is demonstrated by a series of milestones erected in the early to mid-nineteenth century on Dublin Road and Malahide Road, in Fingal, and on Ballyboden Road, in South Dublin, on which the distances to the GPO are recorded (Murphy and Murphy 1982, 24).³⁶ This was useful for postal workers who needed to know the distance travelled for charging purposes before the uniform postal rate was introduced in 1840 (McCarthy 2015, 3-4).



Fig. 12 (L.): Causeway over Rosscarbery Bay linking the townlands of Burgatia and English Island (Photo: author).³⁷



Fig. 13 (R.): Derry, just west of Rosscarbery (Photo: author).³⁸

Bandon, Clonakilty and Skibbereen had been established as ‘post towns’ by 1786 when it then took twelve hours to travel from Cork to Skibbereen (Wilson 1786, 491-4). At that time, each mail-coach driver in Ireland was apparently accompanied by a guard ‘armed with a large blunderbuss and pistols in his belt’ (*Belfast Newsletter*, 28 Oct. 1786; 31 Oct. 1936). Innishannon and Rosscarbery had been designated post towns by the early nineteenth century (Anon. 1819, 566-8). *Pigot's Directory* in 1824 states that mail coaches stopped in Clonakilty daily and carried passengers between Skibbereen and Cork (1824, 224, 235-6). Given the regular mail-coach network along the Cork–Skibbereen route, it is possible that the milestones are a consequence of Post Office investment.³⁹ Interestingly John O’Brien, owner of the Imperial Hotel, provided for letters to be posted at the hotel in 1886 at which time

Clonakilty’s post office was located on Main Street (now Rossa Street) but private post-boxes were commonplace in busy towns (McCarthy 2015, 3, 7). The volume of nineteenth-century milestones in Ireland and the concurrent expansion of postal services are signs of the growth of literacy following the introduction of national school education in the 1830s. At a time when maps were not easily accessible to the public, milestones reassured travellers that they were on the correct path and getting closer to their destination.



Fig. 14 (L.): Gortroe, just west of Connonagh (Photo: author).⁴⁰



Fig. 15 (R.): Aghills, entrance to Shepperton Estate located between Leap and Skibbereen (Photo: author).⁴¹

Ireland’s first railway was constructed in 1834 and with this gradually came the demise of long-distance coaching (Horner 2007, 27).⁴² The earliest section of the Cork, Bandon and South Coast Railway opened in 1849 with extensions south and west as the century progressed (Rynne 2005, 198). The Clonakilty extension came in 1886 (*ibid.*). Plans to extend the light railway line to Rosscarbery in 1891 never materialised (*Skibbereen Eagle*, 17 & 31 Jan. 1891), and the rail journey to Skibbereen continued to bypass Rosscarbery and Leap, instead passing through Dunmanway. Despite the railway revolution, milestones in the survey area, especially those in places bypassed by the rail service, continued to operate as essential road signage. During the first decade of the twentieth century, the *Skibbereen Eagle* referred to specific milestones in

order to indicate locations of roadworks in West Cork (20 Aug. 1904; 19 Jan. 1907), but by the following decade an interesting report in the same paper laments the declined status of milestones in modern life:

When mankind was compelled to rely on his pedestrian abilities, or the slow moving carrier's cart, milestones raised by the roadside served to acquaint him of his progress. He had time to see them, and if he were weary they served as a resting place. But nowadays man moves at a quicker pace. There is no time to slow down in order to examine the modest milestone that is hiding in the hedge. Something more easily detected must be set up, and thus the milestone is falling into obscurity. It is being supplanted by the warning finger-posts, which can be discerned at a distance, and which indicate the mileages to the nearest towns. Some there be who will appreciate the change, while others are all for the modest milestone, which is often half-hidden by honeysuckle and convolvulus. There are still a sufficient number of milestones left to charm and cheer the leisurely walker, and as for their future one can only say "solvitur ambul ando [*sic*]" (*Skibbereen Eagle*, 9 Dec. 1911).

Recording and Protection

The Heritage Council identifies milestones as part of our industrial and transport heritage (Hamond and McMahon 2002, 9) but despite their archaeological and historic value, none in the survey area are included in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) – a statutory list of archaeological monuments protected by the National Monuments Acts – nor are they included in the county's Record of Protected Structures (RPS). The NIAH recorded ninety-six milestones in the Republic of Ireland including ten in Cork, with four in the survey area.⁴³ Thirty-two have been recorded by the DOENI in Northern Ireland.⁴⁴ A database being compiled for the entire island of Ireland by the UK-based voluntary Milestone Society currently has 421 entries, with forty-four in Cork, including thirteen in the survey area, three of which were not located during this survey.⁴⁵

The NIAH acknowledges that milestones 'are becoming increasingly rare with only a small number avoiding damage or removal'. In a report on the protected structures of Clonakilty, it was stated that:

Street furniture is a particularly vulnerable group within the Record of Protected Structures. Street furniture is often not recognised for the significant contribution that it makes to the unique character of a town. Many street features are badly maintained and poorly presented. It is important to afford protection to these structures and ensure survival (2009, 6).

Nevertheless, there is no mention of the town's two milestones. Unfortunately, no specific policies have been developed by Cork County Council aimed at protecting the county's milestones but this could be addressed through their inclusion in the RPS, which hopefully will happen in the near future. Given their current lack of legal recognition and applicable guidelines, they remain potentially vulnerable to mismanagement by public authorities, community organisations and the wider public. The many



Fig. 16: North Street, Gortnaclohy, Skibbereen (Photo: author).⁴⁷

milestones that were marked on the historic maps but are now missing may have been stolen, vandalised, damaged during vehicle collisions or by hedge-cutters, or removed during road-widening schemes.⁴⁶

While most of the extant milestones in the survey area are either *in situ* or positioned very close to their original locations, those in the townlands of Curranure (Fig. 5) and Gaggan (Fig. 6) have been moved. In Curranure, west of Innishannon, the milestone was moved 700m west to the layby for 'The Clare O'Leary Walk' probably because it was originally located on a dangerous bend caused by the meandering River Bandon. The repositioning of the Gaggan milestone is less justifiable. It was removed from the old Gaggan–Ballinascarty road and re-erected on the N71. The milestone, had it been retained in its original setting, would have served as a reminder of the previous importance of this now minor road. As a general rule, removal of milestones from their original contexts should be avoided. In Clonakilty, wrought-iron railings line the eastern part of the front elevation of the Imperial Hotel and the location of the milestone behind these railings should prevent its removal. In recent times, short, purpose-built walls form backdrops to some of the milestones in the survey area; this should help to protect them and bring attention to the monuments.

Unfortunately, some of the milestones in the survey area have suffered damage; they often display chips on the top corners and the welded sections on the uppermost faces of Group A are frequently broken or missing (Figs 2-7). All milestones in the survey area have been painted yellow, and it is hoped that their vibrancy will prevent further damage by machinery and vehicles or their loss beneath overgrowth. Nonetheless, they remain vulnerable to weathering and environmental damage that can reduce their legibility, and so must be regularly monitored. Conservation work and intervention of any kind should only be undertaken by a conservation expert guided by local authorities.

Conclusion

Milestones were not merely pretty ornaments that enhanced the Irish roads and streetscapes but impressive utilitarian objects serving a necessary purpose. As has been shown, Ireland experienced a series of communication and transport developments from the eighteenth century onwards, offering

new opportunities for travel, and milestones were an intrinsic product of this revolution. Nowadays these monuments stand as tangible reminders of the historical and social significance of the road network of our recent colonial past, that continue to bear significance in the modern age.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to all who provided me with information, and especially to Dr Elena Turk, Lisa Levis Carey, Dr Bernadette McCarthy, Tim Crowley (Michael Collins Centre, Castlevue), Michael O'Mahony, Traolach Ó Donnabháin, Joanne Hughes (Acting Archaeologist, Cork City Council), Niamh Twomey (Heritage Officer, Cork City Council) and Mona Hallinan (Architectural Conservation Officer, Cork County Council) for their advice, as well as to Mike Faherty for his guidance and for kindly giving me access to the Milestone Society database. Thanks to Fin Pankhurst and my mother, Marian, for accompanying me on my milestone hunts!

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(Endnotes)

- 1 Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-94) was a Scottish novelist and travel author, best known for writing *Treasure Island* and *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.

- 2 This survey was undertaken during the summer when roadside vegetation was thick and so it is possible that some milestones were overlooked. If any more have survived, please contact this author on clonjournal@gmail.com.
- 3 The level of overgrowth was so dense surrounding the milestone at Ballyduvane that it could not be surveyed nor photographed. For this reason, it was not possible to read its text but an examination of the 25 inch OS map indicates that it would have provided distances of 34 miles to Cork and 19 miles to Skibbereen. My thanks to Traolach Ó Donnabháin for kindly locating this marker for me.
- 4 There are three exceptions whereon the maker's marks are not visible: Gaggan (Fig. 6), Ballyduvane and Aghills (Fig. 15). The Gaggan milestone is particularly weathered which probably explains their absence while the Aghills milestone is the shortest in the survey area and so space may have been an issue or the marks may now be belowground. As noted above, the Ballyduvane milestone is too overgrown to survey properly. Nonetheless, their semblance to the other surveyed milestones indicates that all sixteen were produced in the same foundry. Similar milestones occur elsewhere in Cork (e.g. Carhoo North, near Kinsale, see NIAH, no. 20909735) but these are outside the remit of this paper.
- 5 Reads 'INNOSH^N 13' (left side), 'CORK 2' (right side), 'SKIBB^N [-] / CORK [-]' (top); coordinates: 51.883495, -8.50718145; see Scannlain 2013. All coordinates quoted in this paper relate to the WGS84 system and support GPS and Google Maps.
- 6 Reads 'INNOSH^N 10' (left side), 'CORK 5' (right side), 'SKIBB^N [-] / CORK [-]' (top); coordinates: 51.8475309, -8.527665.
- 7 Milestones were marked in the following townlands on the 25 inch map: Ballinaspig Beg (extant, Fig. 2), Ballinaspig More, Chetwynd, Ballinrvinsig (extant, Fig. 3), Ballynagrúmoolia, Liskillea, two in Gogganshill, two in Rigsdale, Coolcullitha, Killountane (extant, Fig. 4), Farnahoe, Laherfineen, two in Curranure (more easterly marker extant, Fig. 5), Ballylangley, Cloghmacsimon, Clancool More, Knocknagarrane, Mayfield Demesne, Gaggan (extant, Fig. 6), Cashelbeg, Cashelmore, Lissnacunna, Knocknanuss, Ahalisky (extant, Fig. 7), Carrig, Ballymacowen, Gallanes, Scartagh (extant, Fig. 8), Ballyduvane (extant), Curragh, Knockaphonery (extant, Fig. 10), Kilruane, English Island (extant, Fig. 12), two in Barleyhill East, Gortroe (extant, Fig. 14), Cullane West, Kilmacabea, Brade, two in Aghills (more easterly marker extant, Fig. 15), two in Smorane and Gortnaclohy (extant, Fig. 16).
- 8 On the Cassini map, milestones were marked in all of the townlands listed in the previous endnote as well as in Burgatia near Owenahincha Cross or 'Burgatia Cross' as on early maps (extant, Fig. 11) and in Derry (extant, Fig. 13).
- 9 However, on the 25 inch map the milestones marked in Chetwynd and Ballinrvinsig state only the distance to Cork, the milestone in Gortnaclohy states only the distance to Rosscarbery and the milestone in Gallanes states the distance to Cork and Clonakilty instead of Skibbereen. Given that the milestones in Ballinrvinsig (Fig. 3) and Gortnaclohy (Fig. 16) have survived, that they are identical in form to the other extant milestones and that they display distances to three locations, it is extremely likely that the other milestones listed here did not differ from this type regardless of their atypical annotations on the map.
- 10 Reads 'INNOSH^N 2' (left side), 'CORK 13' (right side), 'SKIBB^N 40 / CORK 13' (top); coordinates 51.7816208, -8.63692279.
- 11 Reads 'BANDON 3' (left side), 'INNOSH^N 1' (right side), 'SKIBB^N 37 / CORK 16' (top); coordinates 51.768714, -8.6893848. It is not in its original location.
- 12 This milestone was attached to the Western Star pub but when the building was demolished in recent years, the milestone was not subsequently reinstated. Cork City Council was unable to provide any information on the current whereabouts of this milestone. Cork City Council in conjunction with Cork Public Museum have embarked on a project to create a database of all street furniture retained by the council. It is hoped that this project will shed light on the missing milestone. It was painted black with gold lettering and read 'INNOSH^N 14' (left side), 'CORK 1' (right side), 'SKIBB^N 52 / CORK 1' (top); on the uppermost face two small metal squares carried the numbers (Rynne 1999, fig. 89c), as is also the case on the Group A milestones.
- 13 However, the NIAH allocates a date of c. 1830 to the milestone on Wilton Road (Fig. 2), although it does not differ from the other milestones in the survey area and so the reasoning behind two considerably different date ranges is unclear.
- 14 For more on Rosscarbery causeway, see NIAH, no. 20855049. Also of interest is the milestone attached to the Imperial Hotel in Clonakilty. The NIAH (no. 20846034) states that the hotel comprises a three-storey building built c. 1820 'with later five-bay, two-storey block to side (east)'; it is this eastern block to which the milestone is attached (Fig. 8). This eastern block appears on the 6 inch map of 1841 and was probably built soon after the hotel but its chronological relationship with the milestone remains uncertain.
- 15 Reads 'CLONAK^Y 9' (left side), 'BANDON 4' (right side), 'SKIBB^N 3[-] / CORK 23' (top); coordinates: 51.730642, -8.810657. The distance to Skibbereen should read '30' but the upper half of the '3' has broken away and the '0' is missing; the distance to Cork is also missing and has been applied in paint only, while all other lettering is in relief. It is not in its original location.
- 16 Reads 'CLONAK^Y 4' (left side), 'BANDON 9' (right side), 'SKIBB^N 27 / CORK -' (top); coordinates: 51.670547, -8.857207. Strangely, the distance of 27 miles to Skibbereen displayed on this milestone is at odds with the distance of 25 miles quoted for the milestone marked in this location on the 25 inch map. The distance logged on the map is correct but all other distances quoted on the milestone are correct so it must be in its original location.

- 17 This is according to information on the webpage, 'Hannah Mary Barnes', <http://www.mueller-humphreys.de/Humphreys/HumphreysFrancis/HumphreysRobert3/PerrottSarah/BarnesHannahMary/BarnesHannahMaryE.html> [accessed 7 Dec. 2017].
- 18 There were two men named Thomas Addison Barnes involved in the family business: a father who died in 1816 and his eldest son who was dead by 1876 (*Freeman's Journal*, 20 Apr. and 20 Nov. 1874, 29 Apr. 1875; *Cork Examiner*, 23 June 1876); brothers of Thomas Addison Barnes Snr were also involved in the family business.
- 19 The OS map of 1842 names this place 'Mahony's Cross Roads' but by 1900 the OS record it as 'Pike Cross Roads' and 'Lissavard Pike'.
- 20 For example, north of the main Bandon–Ballinascarty road and to the west of Gaggan, 'Pike Cross Roads' appears on the OS maps of 1841 and 1901 in the townland of Maulbrack East; if this placename is an indication that a road was turnpiked, then this set of now minor roads converging at Maulbrack East is redolent of a once important routeway. Also noteworthy is the tradition of a coaching stop aptly known as 'Change Hill' in Tullymurryh townland, northeast of Ballinascarty, which was later bypassed.
- 21 Reads 'ROSSCARB^Y 8' (left side), 'BANDON 13' (right side), 'SKIBB^N 21 / CORK 32' (top); coordinates: 51.6234603,-8.883709. In 1899, T. J. White, 'a well-known pedestrian, started from the milestone at the Imperial Hotel, Clonakilty, at 10.30, a.m., to walk to Cork' and made this journey within eight hours (*Southern Star*, 18 Nov. 1899).
- 22 Reads 'ROSSCARB^Y 7' (left side), 'CLONAK^Y 1' (right side), 'SKIBB^N 20 / CORK 33' (top); coordinates: 51.620335, -8.907274.
- 23 RMP: CO088-063----. See also the eighteenth-century milestone on Mountbellew Bridge, Co. Galway (O'Dowd 2001, 109; NIAH, no. 30404610).
- 24 The Grand Jury Collection may shed light on this. It is interesting to note that a piece in the *Southern Star* in 1937 claims that there were no milestones in the Skibbereen area prior to the period around 1822 (6 Feb. 1937). It has already been argued that the more westerly Group B milestones could be older than Group A. Given that at least some milestones were already in place southwest of Cork prior to the present markers and given their potential absence further west, a decision may have been taken to first install the cast-iron milestones in Skibbereen working eastwards thereby gradually replacing the older specimens displaying Irish miles closer to the city but this theory is purely speculative.
- 25 Reads 'ROSSCARB^Y 4' (left side), 'CLONAK^Y 4' (right side), 'SKIBB^N 17 / CORK 36' (top); coordinates: 51.600577, -8.959466.
- 26 Reads 'ROSSCARB^Y 1' (left side), 'CLONAK^Y 7' (right side), 'SKIBB^N 14 / CORK 39' (top); coordinates: 51.571975, -9.006656.
- 27 NIAH, no. 22403906. There are six townlands in Ireland called 'Milestown' but these probably refer to the family name Miles/Moyle (logainm.ie). Between Dublin and Drogheda there are also a number of fields named 'Milestone' (meitheal, logainm.ie).
- 28 NIAH, no. 30901001.
- 29 For more on the Leslie estate, see LED.
- 30 For more on Derry House, see LED.
- 31 For more on Shepperton House, see NIAH, no. 20914209; LED.
- 32 For more on Norton House, see NIAH, no. 20841051.
- 33 NIAH, no. 20404219.
- 34 There were some scheduled coaches in certain parts of Ireland before this (Horner 2007).
- 35 For a detailed description and illustration of Johnson's carriage factory at Nelson Place see 'Historical and descriptive sketch of the city of Cork' after almanac and before business directory in *Henry and Coghlan's Directory* (1867, no page numbers provided). This company ultimately became Johnson & Perrott Motor Group.
- 36 NIAH, nos 11350029, 11344038, 11344043, 11358047 and 11216002. Milestones in Dublin erected prior to the completion in 1818 of the GPO on O'Connell Street (formerly Sackville Street) quoted distances to Dublin Castle, but thereafter the GPO became the datum point (McCabe 2006, 29).
- 37 Reads 'SKIBB^N 13' (left side), 'CLONAK^Y 8' (right side), 'SKIBB^N 13 / CORK 40' (top); coordinates: 51.575599, -9.023611.
- 38 Reads 'SKIBB^N 12' (left side), 'ROSSCARB^Y 1' (right side), 'SKIBB^N 12 / CORK 41' (top); coordinates: 51.581336, -9.041890.
- 39 Mail coach routes had been discontinued by 1861 (Rynne 2006, 316).
- 40 Reads 'SKIBB^N 9' (left side), 'ROSSCARB^Y 4' (right side), 'SKIBB^N 9 / CORK 44' (top); coordinates: 51.594353, -9.098346.
- 41 Reads 'SKIBB^N 5' (left side), 'ROSSCARB^Y 8' (right side), 'SKIBB^N 5 / CORK 48' (top); coordinates: 51.569378, -9.178802.
- 42 Specific types of milestones were also associated with railways and canals but these are outside the remit of this paper.
- 43 Figures are as of March 2017. The ten recorded in Cork includes three in Cork City and seven in the rest of the county with the four in the survey area being Ballinaspig Beg (NIAH, no. 20869005), Gaggan (NIAH, no. 20911007), Knockaphonery (NIAH, no. 20913502) and Gortroe (NIAH, no. 20913403). The milestone in Scartagh (Fig. 8) does not have its own record number but is mentioned as part of the entry relating to the Imperial Hotel (NIAH, no. 20846034).
- 44 Fifty-seven milestones in the North feature on Geograph.ie.
- 45 These three were located in Kilruane (Milestone Society db. no. COR_CKSB37), one mile west of this (Milestone Society db. no. COR_CKSB38) and in Kilmaca-

bea townland, Leap village (Milestone Society db. no. COR_CKSB46), and were all surveyed in 2003–04. These milestones may now simply be hiding in the overgrowth.

- 46 Cork County Council does not normally remove milestones but in the case of road widening they are usually picked up during the assessment phase and kept or reinstated. Some milestones in Ireland may have been removed or defaced during World War II (Benford 2002, 36–7), as was certainly the case in the North (*Fermanagh Herald*, 24 Aug. 1974). If any 'lost' milestones reappear *ex situ*, because they display locations and distances, and given their inclusion on historic maps, proof of provenance should be a straightforward matter.
- 47 Reads 'SKIBB^N 1' (left side), 'ROSSCARB^Y 12' (right side), 'SKIBB^N 1 / CORK 52' (top); coordinates: 51.5537799,-9.2625996. The *Southern Star* in 1937 refers to local contention surrounding the distance of one mile to the centre of Skibbereen stated on this milestone (6 Feb. 1937).

REVIVING THE REEL

Traditional Irish Music in pre- and post-Famine West Cork

Tomás Tuipéar



Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Background

Traditional Irish music was central to the lives of all social classes in pre-Famine Ireland. It is clear from contemporary chronicles and from the writings of published collectors of music such as Edward Bunting (1773–1843), George Petrie (1790–1866) and Corkman William Forde (c. 1795–1851) that there was an active music-making culture among the Irish people.¹ While most rural communities had their own resident musicians, a feature of Irish life was the travelling dancing master accompanied by his musician, who would have spent about six weeks in a particular parish before moving on to the next parish.² From at least the early medieval period, the harp had enjoyed a special status among Irish musicians.³ However, in the late eighteenth century, Bunting observed the decline of harp playing and was among those responsible for organising the Belfast Harp Festival which sought to collect traditional harpers' music. Harpers were being replaced by *uilleann* pipers who were enjoying a new status among traditional musicians and dancers. 'As the harp declined, the vogue of the Irish or union bagpipe increased'.⁴