

Did you notice?

A column for the curious stroller

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8. The Gaslights of Monkstown

You might have noticed the number of old iron lamp standards in the area. There are different types – those on Montpelier Parade are of wrought iron, and were oil lights, which were notoriously inefficient. They are possibly the earliest example of public lighting in the area. What remains of these is the standard and the bracket which held the lamp.



Oil lamp Montpelier Parade 1.



Gas lamp standard Longford Tce.

The gas lamps, on the other hand, identifiable by their cast-iron standards and the visible conduit for gas, were cleaner and more efficient.

Several gas lamps standards are still standing on Longford Terrace and there are some fine examples outside Hartley's Restaurant in Dun Laoghaire. There is another above a postbox at the junction of Temple Crescent and Temple Hill (well, it's almost Monkstown!). These would have been lit by the lamplighter, the 'glimmerman'. You will notice the cross bars near the top which were used to rest the gaslighter's ladder.

In 1834 Kingstown Town Commissioners was formed, to supervise 'paving, watching, lighting, regulating and otherwise improving the town of Kingstown'. The Commissioners were empowered to erect lamp posts to carry gaslights. The town was laid with gas pipes which had to be located four feet from any water pipe to avoid contamination. At first, only the houses of the well-to-do were 'enlightened by gas' as one person put it.

In 1864 the Kingstown Gas Company was formed to supply Kingstown, Monkstown, Dalkey, Killiney and Ballybrack with gas of 'high illuminating power'. Gas lighting remained in general use until the 1920s. The gas in use was extracted from coal and the Kingstown (Dun Laoghaire) Gas works was located behind the West Pier. Dun Laoghaire was of course a significant coal importer.

Kingstown, which included part of Monkstown was slow to adopt electric street lighting. Bray was lit by electricity in 1904, powered by a generator located on the Dargle but the Gas Company and the coal merchants had resisted the adoption in Kingstown. It was 1935 before all the street lighting in Dun Laoghaire was converted to electricity.

Wouldn't it be nice to have the original lamps restored?