

18.015

Dear Boundary Committee members,

The Dublin City Council electoral Wards that impact on the Phibsborough LAP area are: (1) North Inner City; (2) Cabra/Finglas and (3) Ballymun. Ballymun Ward is relevant because it contains the Botanic C District Electoral Division (DED).

The North Inner City is represented in the LAP area by two three DEDs: Arran Quay A; Inns Quay A and Inns Quay B.

The Cabra-Finglas ward is represented by the large Cabra East A DED, the shape and extent of which gives a clue to the rolling pastureland it comprehended when it was delineated, almost 200 years ago.

Dublin North West and Dublin Central are the relevant Dáil constituencies. Think of them as large molecules, relevant for national election (Dail) purposes.

(Unhelpfully, Dublin City Council has a, purely administrative, sub-area called 'Dublin North West' which overlaps with, but is larger than the Dublin North West Dáil constituency.)

But Phibsborough's electoral representation issue isn't about Dáil constituency boundaries. And only in passing is it about the configuration of local government Wards. The origins of the problem lie at the next level down, the DEDs. Ward and constituencies are each made up of District Electoral Divisions (DEDs). Think of DEDs as atoms. (You could in turn think of these DED atoms as having lots of electrons, which have in common their relationship to one nucleus rather than another)

Wards and constituencies change from time to time. The three wards that reach into the Phibsborough LAP area were all used for the first time in the 2014 local elections. Previously, the DEDs of which they are comprised were organised differently. And prior to that, they were organised differently again.

However (and this is a critically important 'however') the boundaries of DEDs which is to say, the boundaries of the atomic structure of electoral politics in Ireland, are as determined in the early 1830s, in the reign of Queen Victoria's uncle, King George IV. The government of his Britannic majesty was, at the time, concerned with the election of Poor law Guardians and their work passed into contemporary representative politics via the Local Government Acts of 1898, 1924 &ff.

When ward boundaries change, or Dail constituency boundaries, the change is effected by moving DEDs from one grouping to another. This is done by Ministerial Order and latterly on foot of an independent review which will have regard to the work of the Central Statistics Office (CSO). There is no other way to change Ward or Dáil constituency boundaries, other than by moving DEDs.

So, to matter, you've got to be recognised as a DED and Phibsborough is not. For illustrative purposes, witness the instance of Kurdistan, which has no independent political existence, but is governed from without by Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Russia. Phibsborough's case is merely infuriating and inefficient: unbecoming of our status as a mature democracy. Kurdistan's is a tragedy, writ large.

Yet another foray in the long, long history of re-arranging the Wards and Dáil constituency boundaries won't really help Phibsborough (except maybe, in passing, in the space between any two elections). But that's just a topical relief applied to what Phibsborough needs. In order to get recognition within the architecture of representative politics, is a change at 'atomic' level, that is, for part of the above-named DEDs to be carved out and a new DED created, called "Phibsborough".

Once that's done, it matters little to which City Council Ward or Dáil Constituency the DED is assigned from time to time; that's inevitably going to change anyway, as successive constituency commissions work to keep up with demographic trends.

I hold the conventional view that the purpose of electoral boundaries, while they are subject to periodic revision, is fundamentally to ensure that constituencies have adequate representation. In this analysis, I suggest, Phibsborough is an anomaly which has both too much representation – the form of twenty two elected members of Dublin City Council, and also none, since none of those twenty two represent Phibsborough as such. The background to this anomaly is set out in the attached.

You will, of course, be aware that Section 23 of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended by the Local Government Reform Act 2014, provides for the division of each county, city or city and county into local electoral areas and that the most recent review of local electoral areas was carried out from November 2012 to May 2013 by a Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee.

The recommendations of that committee for Dublin City were given legal effect in the City of Dublin Local Electoral Areas Order 2014.

Accordingly, any changes to be made to Dublin City local electoral areas before the 2019 local elections would be a matter for a new Boundary Committee in the first instance.

I write to ask that the case of Phibsborough be specified in the terms of reference and functions of the next Boundary Committee, in accordance with the provisions of Part V of the Local Government Act 1991.

I note the commitment in the Programme for a Partnership Government to consider reviewing the size of the local electoral areas. If this takes place, it will be the first review since the 1830s, that is, since the reign of Queen Victoria's uncle, King William IV, of the boundaries that currently sub-divide this suburb.

I suggest that, as an initial approach to the matter, the boundaries defined for the purpose of the Phibsborough Local Area Plan (2009) and Proposed LAP 9 2015) be considered as a possible Phibsborough DED/LEA for electoral purposes, both municipally and nationally

DISTRICT ELECTORAL DIVISIONS

The 1898 DEDs were adopted, without review or amendment, from the boundaries devised for the election of Poor Law Guardians in the 1830s.

- Arran Quay A
- Botanic C
- Cabra East A
- Inns Quay A

Further reading: <https://blog.findmypast.ie/the-quagmire-of-administrative-districts-part-2-1406391236.html>

Yours sincerely,

Des Gunning

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

CABRA EAST A

RA EAST B

EAST C

BOTANIC B

BOTANIC C

DRUMCONDRA

BALLYBOUGH

INNS QUAY A





ARRAN QUAY A

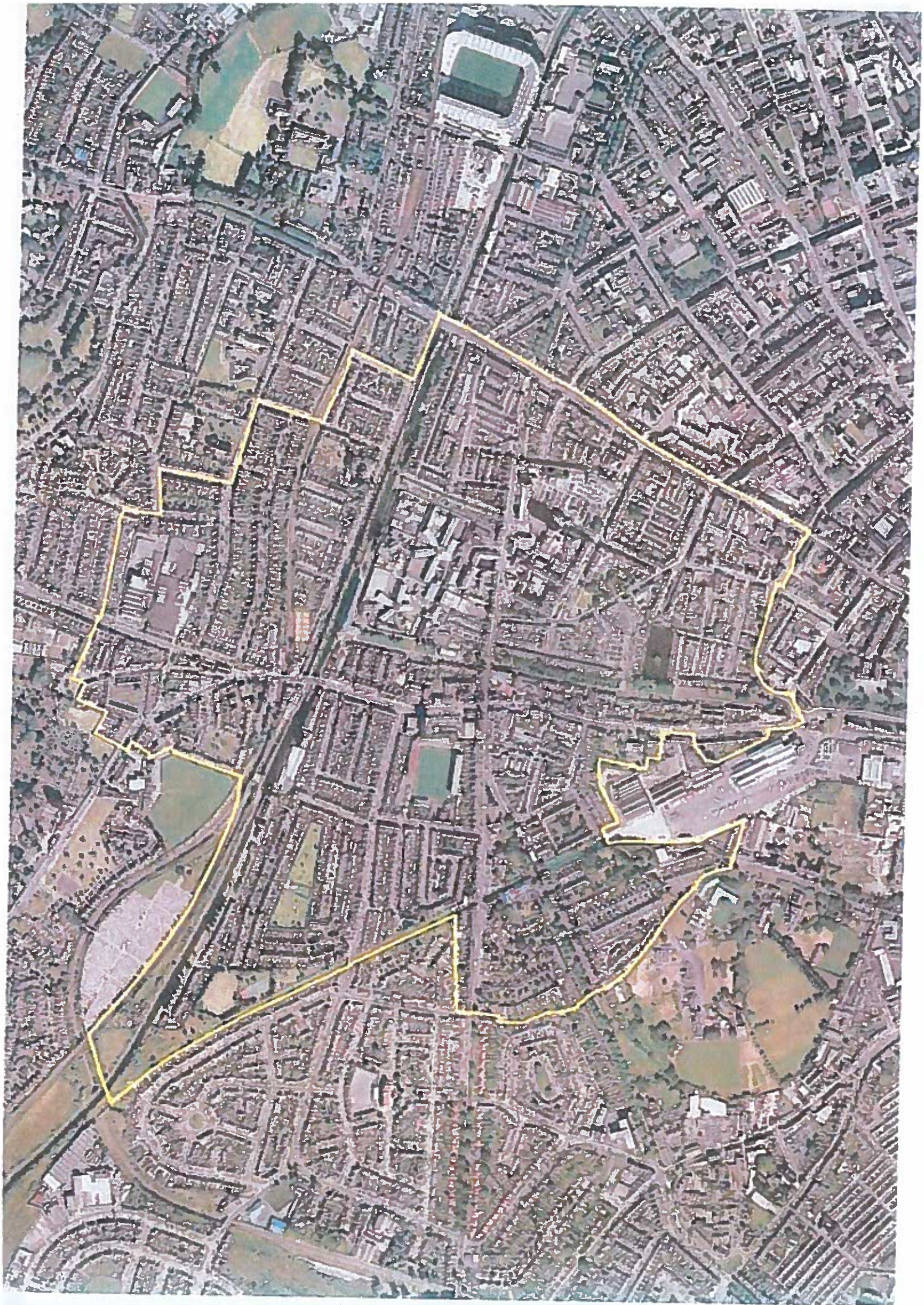
INNS QUAY B

MOUNTJOY E

ROTUNDA A

Map A - Dublin City

-  Local Electoral Area Boundary
 Electoral Division Boundary
 Canals
 Primary Roads
 Regional Roads
 Streets



Boundary Committee 2018

Notes

Dublin Bay from Phibsborough, showing Howth Head. John Henry Campbell 1809. The landscape would have been familiar to those who drew up the electoral boundaries that are still in use today.



Phibsborough in 1818



The above map was made shortly before the boundaries were determined for the election of Poor Law Guardians. These became in 1898, the ward boundaries for electing members of the Borough Corporation of Dublin and , since 2001, the District Electoral Divisions (DEDs) of Local Electoral Areas (LEAs) to Dublin City Council. The boundaries remain the same. Phibsborough has changed.



In 1838, a Bill established a system of poor relief to the destitute of Ireland. It created a series of workhouses to which society's most unfortunate could retreat when they could no longer provide themselves with basic necessities. Rather than follow the civil parish system or other traditional Irish land divisions, Poor Law Unions were created and centred on market towns, where the workhouses were also built.

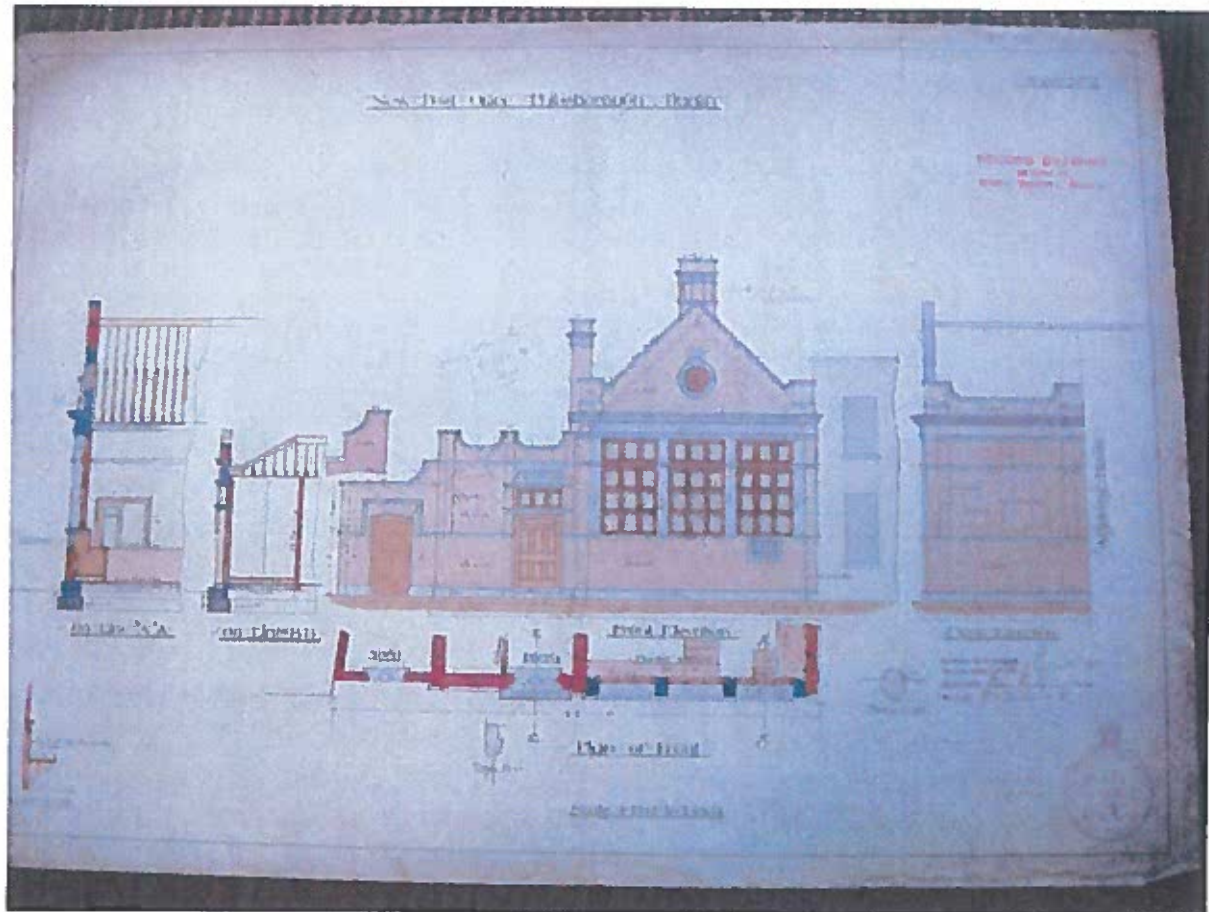
In total, 137 unions were created. They were of varying geographical size with the largest in the west (where the population was sparser) and the smallest in the east of Ulster (where the population was dense).

Poor Law Unions were subsequently subdivided into district electoral divisions (DEDs) for the taking of censuses. They are also important Irish land divisions for studying valuation records.

District Electoral Districts (DEDs) are subdivisions of Poor Law Unions and consist of a number of townlands. Some land records e.g. the cancelled land books, are arranged by DED.

Even in this SAP and Eircode era, Census returns are also arranged with reference to King William IV's DEDs .

The extent of contemporary Phibsborough was effectively defined by the definition of the delivery area to be served by Phibsborough Post Office, which opened in 1883, in a rather beautiful building that was pulled down in 1974 to make way for a rather less beautiful, but more efficient, building.



Kurdistan's enduring tragedy is that it simultaneously exists and does not exist.



Des Gunning

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

21 January 2018