

STREET FURNITURE

Susan Chapman

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STREET FURNITURE

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SUSAN CHAPMAN

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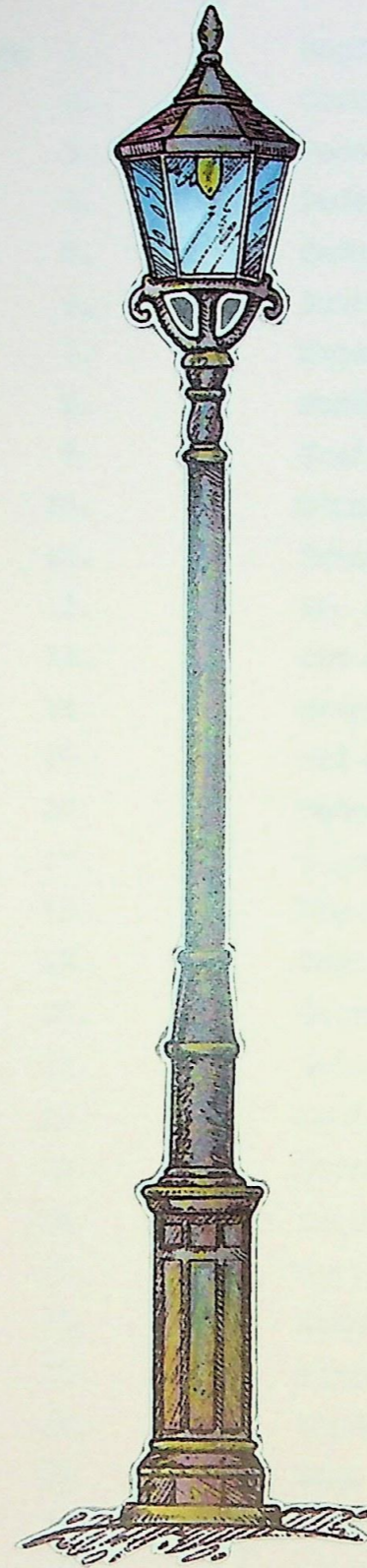
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Introduction

The quality of the street environment can have almost as much effect on people's lives as the quality of their own homes. A residential road with little traffic and lots of trees obviously creates the kind of peaceful atmosphere in which most people would prefer to live. Shopping can be agreeable in a well planned precinct, which is well served by transport and has thoughtfully placed seats and other amenities; or it can be a nightmare of dragging children through overcrowded pavements or dodging cars and buses. Public parks and gardens can be properly maintained and attractive, or near derelict targets for vandals. Playgrounds can provide safe entertainment for children or they can be so badly designed and maintained as to be positively dangerous.

Signposting can be well designed, well sited and therefore helpful, or it can be battered, ugly and confusing. Poster hoardings can mask unsightly buildings or spoil a pleasant view.

Streets, parks and shopping precincts are essential parts of people's living space. As such, they must function well and be pleasant, and this demands awareness, flexibility and care. It also demands stringent control over the design, selection and siting of the items that go to make up the street scene.

In this thesis, I intend to examine the fundamental developments that are changing the street scene quite dramatically in many part of the world to-day - changes that range from the reversal of traditional vehicle/pedestrian priorities to dealing with problems like vandalism and crime.

The design of the individual components that go to make up the street scene is also examined and their development over the years to the present day. The quality of the street environment relies as much on the design, selection and siting of such items as on the overall town design policies and grand improvement schemes.

Priorities

"There is never a better way of taking in life than walking in the street" maintained Henry James.¹

Giving people the freedom to do this in comfort is an important aspect in the design of our urban environments and has seen the reversal of traditional vehicle - pedestrian priorities in almost every city in the world to-day. In a pedestrian precinct, man as driver of a machine is excluded, while pedestrians walk as men, women and children - or run perhaps, or play.

Whenever such a precinct has been opened, it has been greeted as a liberation, and even those traders who first feared for their livelihood, have in the event, joined the celebration. But while celebrating, in an age when it is fashionable to make town planners the whipping boys for all the ills of urban life, it is both fair and fruitful to give credit to the planners, who formulated and followed the process through.

One of the early pioneers for improvements in the street scene was Misha Black. He worked on a community development project in 1959 known as the Magdalen Street Project, the initiative which came from the Civic Trust in Norwich. He was employed as co-ordinating architect, and wrote about it -

"The Magdalen Street Project has been well described as a face lift, and cosmetics are no cure for radical disease. But many of our streets are basically sound and agreeable; their character has been spoiled by a few shoddy buildings prominently sited, by the insensitive conversion of houses into shops, by ill treated streets, by poorly designed street furniture which has unnecessarily multiplied, by over-head wires criss-crossing the street. This was the state of Magdalen street"². - Fig. 1.

Working with the enthusiastic co-operation of Norwich City Council, and the city engineer, they redesigned the street lighting and street furniture of Magdalen St., and helped the individual owners of the properties with colour schemes and lettering. The result was lively, visually interesting, a good advertisement for the business people and a hope for towns of the future. People came from all over the country to see Magdalen Street and it sparked off comparable schemes in Burslem, Windsor and Croydon, and the interest of many other towns. Corby Old Village was another area 'face lifted' in this scheme - Fig. 2.

In many town and cities throughout Europe and America, there is now some central part that has been won back from the motor car. Two such areas exist in Dublin - Henry St., Mary St., and the fashionable Grafton Street. It may be just a street or a single historic square from which traffic is excluded, or with much greater reward, a whole section of a town; streets leading into each other and into open spaces, the whole acting as a forum through which people can stroll without danger, converse and be heard, and sit and enjoy the passing scene. These results are the rewards of years of careful preparation by planning authorities.

The first to urge the segregation of man and beast on America's streets was P. Gerard, the author of 'How to Build a City', a do-it-yourself book published a century ago. Packing wisdom into twenty pages, it is a masterpiece of brevity and still makes good reading today. To clarify the American Street - which more often than not must have resembled the landing stage of Noah's Ark - Gerard proposed avenues reserved for the passage of livestock, and streets for pedestrians, generously planted with shade trees. A "boulevard" he pointed out "is very much needed in most of the great cities in the United States". Although, just then, would be boulevards were springing up all over the country. Gerard had something quite different in mind - a 'public promenade' on which no cars should run, and no trade be allowed.

In the summer of 1967, every evening after nine Milan closed it's Corso Vittorio Emanuele, the towns busiest artery to vehicles, and turned

it over to the people as a 'salotto, a little parlor'. The traffic commissioner explained that Milan was only following the example of other Italian towns. Indeed, at that time, almost every town with aspirations to civic liberties was making efforts at "pedonalizzazione", the restitution of certain streets to the pedestrian. Fed up with watching the street silting up with vehicles, city dwellers clamored for unobstructed pedestrian oases, a privilege sanctioned by historical precedent but somehow lost in the wreckage of progress. They asked their city government to provide a communal living room, so to speak, - not a decorative empty lot or a barren civic centre, but a lively, popular, historical setting. And not for parades or rallies, but for the daily assertion of solidarity in their ritual stroll. These developments saw the beginning of pedestrianisation schemes being introduced all over Europe.

At Siena, in Italy, people need no sidewalks, since they have the permanent right of way. The Siensese, pioneers in pedestrianization, have banned all motor traffic from the streets in the town centre - Fig. 3.

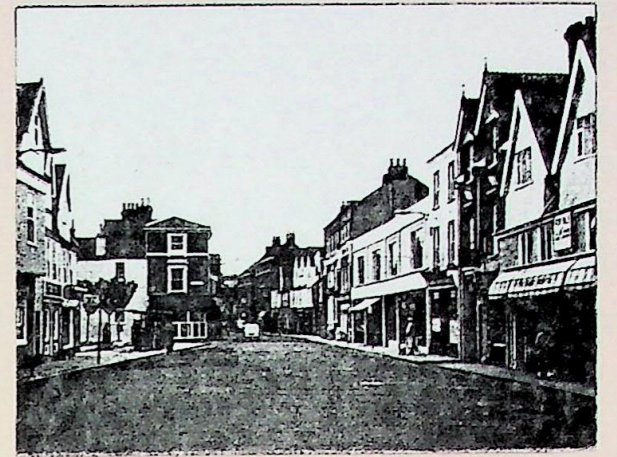
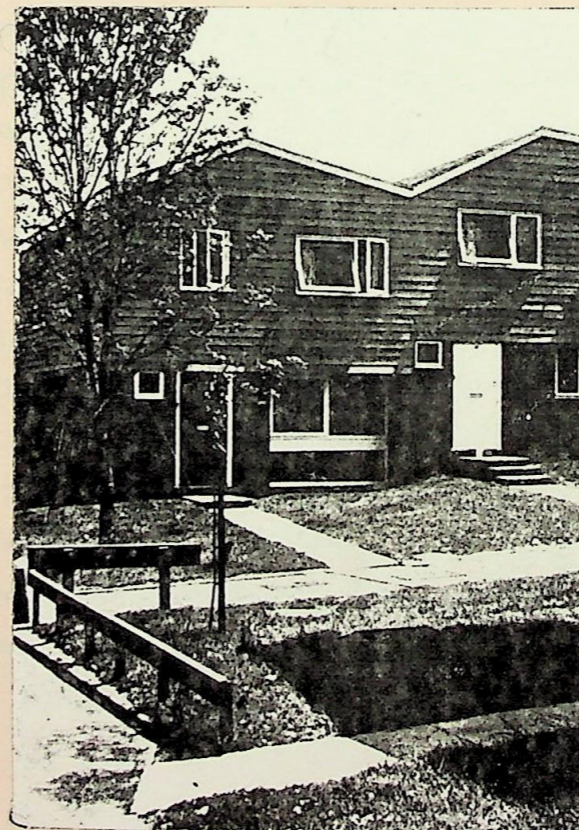


Fig. 1 Magdalen St., Norwich.

Fig. 2
Corby Village Development
project.



In the conversion from traffic street to pedestrian mall, the most important change is brought about by the removal of the kerbs and the consequent extension of the pavement as a single surface stretching from building face to building face. By that change of detail alone, the street will be transformed; more spacious in feeling, more multidirectional and therefore more relaxed. And as the street designer extends his working surface in this way, so he can more wholeheartedly engage in the subtle art of placemaking.

The Dalmatian town of Dubrovnik is a pedestrian's paradise, untouched by anything on wheels. In centuries past, people whose status did not permit them to walk were transported by sedan chair - Fig. 4.

To the Italians, the street is parlour and exchange. Perpetuating a thousand year old tradition, they meet, debate and bargain out of doors. Fresh air and plenty of elbow room contribute to keeping freedom of speech and quick wit alive - Fig. 5 - shows the scene at Vicenza.

Nearer to home, Henry Street in Dublin has in recent months been converted from a traffic street to a pedestrian mall. A new pavement has been laid with emphasis on colour, pattern and texture. This paving can be seen almost as a new art form, as a liberation from the motor car; the space between the buildings has been freed from the tyranny of the kerb. The realisation that these new wide stretches of paved surfaces could well be dull and bleak led to demands for textural contrast and pattern, and stimulated the production for new materials as well as the revival of interest in traditional paving bricks, cobbles and granite setts - Fig. 6. It seems like an irony that we should resort to putting cobblestones back into the street scene when we deliberately destroyed and are still destroying this type of paving with our fundamental new technologies and materials like tarmac and concrete. Just outside the college here, in John's Street, which is cobbled, the gas company, having carried out some excavation, did not replace the cobbles, but filled in the patch with tarmac.



Fig 3. At Siena, people need no sidewalks since they have the permanent right of way.



Fig. 4 The Dalmatian town of Dubrovnik is a pedestrians paradise, untouched by anything on wheels.



Fig. 5 The Italians meet, debate and bargain out of doors. This is a street in Vicenza.

Vehicles cannot always be totally excluded. Service vehicles have to be allowed in during restricted hours and sometimes (particularly on the continent e.g. Basle in Switzerland) bus or trams are routed through the precincts creating a need for common ground to be expressed in the pavings. But the routes for such vehicles must never be allowed to defy the precedence that has been given to the pedestrian. The smallest details must be put to work to reinforce this main idea. Terence Bendixon of the Design Council, London recommends that -

"Every element of the design must announce to the drivers that they are trespassing in an outdoor room - that they should not really be there with their steaming machinery. Meanwhile the pedestrian must receive signals that say linger, do business, enjoy yourself, sit down and watch the passers-by".³

These signals could be transmitted in the form of seating, planting, fountains and decorative lighting. The inclusion of a fountain or water as in Trafalgar Square in London has always stimulated emotional response from man and will stimulate people in the urban public space - they will play in it, eat in it, make music in it and use it as their urban source of refreshment - Fig. 7.

When we review the past decade, we turn with admiration to the pedestrianisation schemes and to a few private developments, and with disappointment and reluctance to the rest of the street scene, and it is perhaps worth considering why success has been so little improvements elsewhere. Indeed the squalor and visual confusion of our mixed purpose streets seem to be compounded year by year as new demands impede on our towns with random - planted forests of lighting columns, signs, parking meters, kiosks and barrier rails, as well as those curious boxes, vents and traffic surveillance devices to which it is impossible to have any human response at all.

Comparing a pedestrian street (Grafton Street) - Fig. 9 - to an unpedestrianized street (O'Connell Street) - Fig. 10 - one will see that Grafton Street is largely free of this multiplicity of objects, and this is the first and most obvious factor in the comparison : remove the hazards of the motor car and spaces can be simplified and freed from clutter.

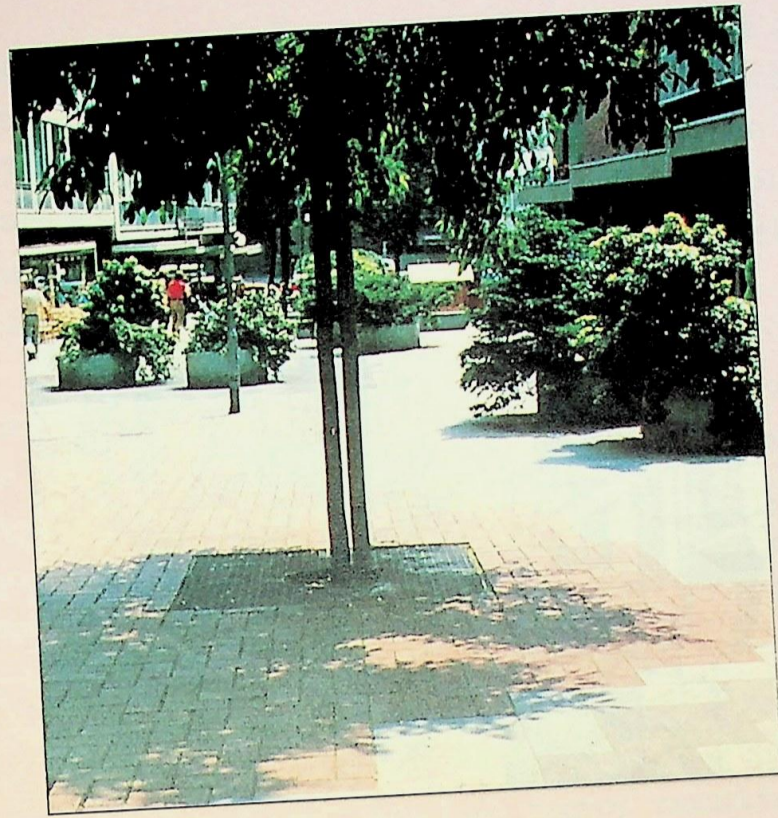


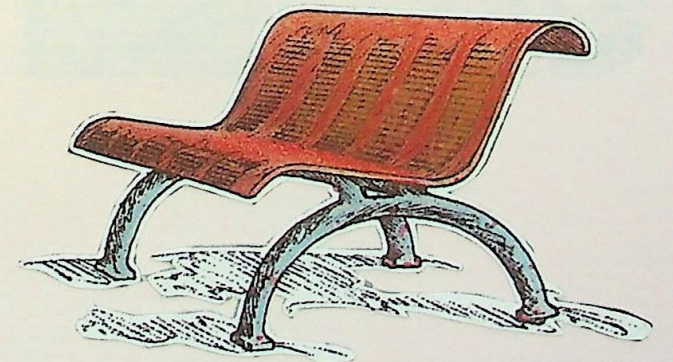
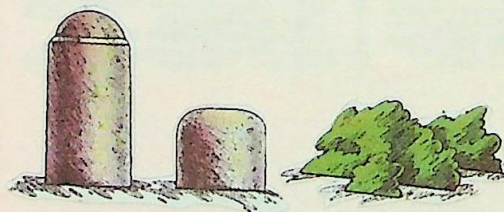
Fig. 6 The conversion of the pedestrian street, is usually best achieved by designing the surfaces to stretch unbroken from building face to building face. There are occasions however, when it is appropriate to define a natural route for emergency vehicles or even public transport vehicles.



The second factor is that street furniture in a pedestrian area is all directly related to human use and can be related therefore to human scale; having cleared the background, the space can be furnished in the more pleasurable sense. Seating, litter bins and plants now become the most important items of street furniture, whereas before, those items related to traffic were high on the priority list.

The mood created in Grafton Street is relaxing and inviting and urges one to browse and to stroll slowly. On the otherhand, O'Connell Street is very fastmoving and if you slow down for any reason, you would be swept along with the crowd, all rushing and going about their business almost as fast as the traffic itself. In fact, one would look quite out of place sitting down taking in the view in the middle of O'Connell Street, but would look quite at home in Grafton Street.

But the third and most important factor resulting in the success of the new precincts is that almost always they have been consciously designed - a fact that is worth noting because it teaches the lesson that can be passed back to the custodian of the high street and the streets where we live. It is not just that the furniture within the precincts has been well designed, it is the space itself, be it a corridor street or a town square, had to be designed as part of the process of converting it into a traffic free zone.



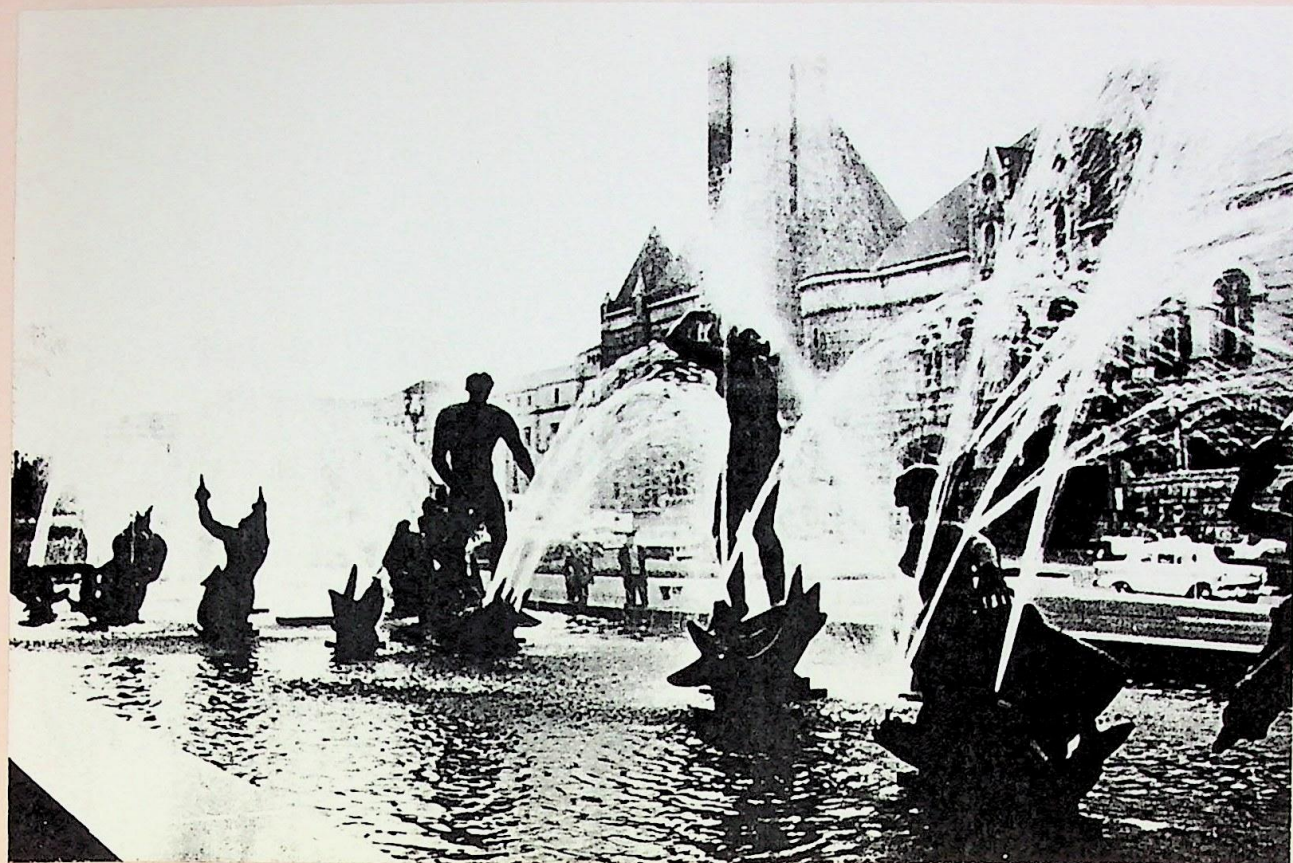


Fig. 7 Water will stimulate human response in the urban scene, it can be used as a form of refreshment

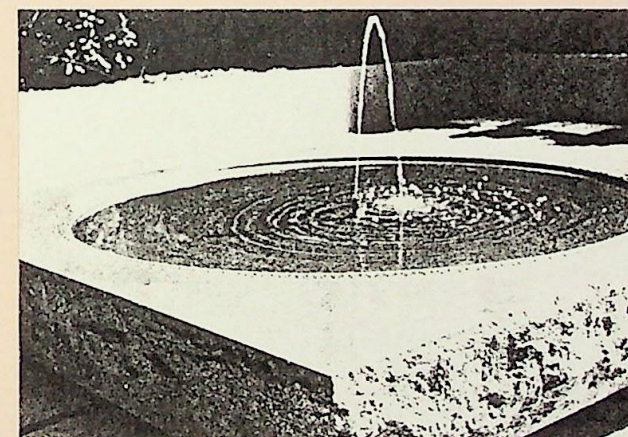
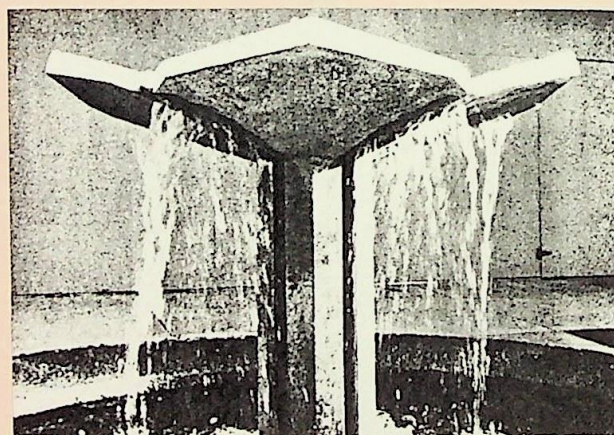




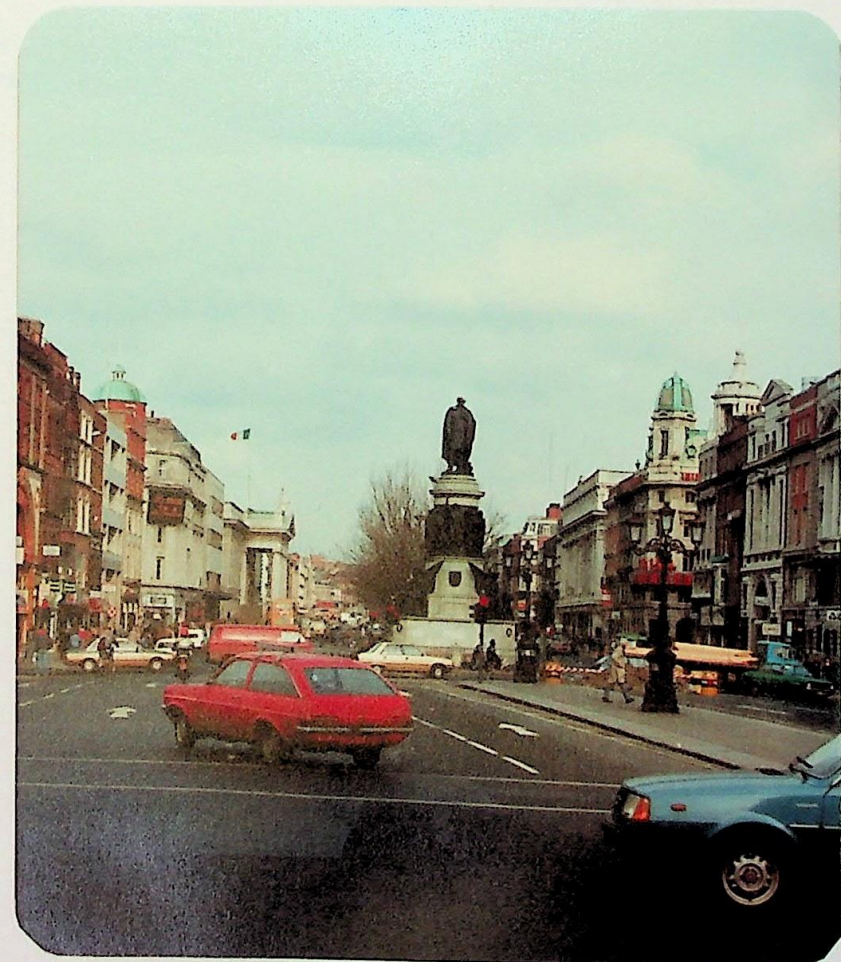
Fig. 8 Spaces won back from the motor car. Each responds to the set character : one classical and grand, the other (below) more informal and welcoming.





Fig. 9 Grafton Street (above) is largely free of the multiplicity of objects, compared to O'Connell Street (below) which compares to a random planted forest of lighting columns, signs, parking meters and barrier rails.

Fig. 10



Chapter 1.

Footnotes

1. Henry James, Streets for People
Kudofsky, Bernard.

2. Magdalen Street, a project undertaken by Misha Black in
1959, Norwich.

Misha Black

Blake Avril London 1984
The Design Council.

3. Terence Bendixon on street furniture design
Street Furniture 1983
The Design Council London 1983.

Pride and Responsibility

"A street whose 'wallpaper' of building facades may be architecturally excellent can find its character gained or lost in the design of service furniture such as lamp standards, bollards, seats and kerbs"!

In street design there is a need for a sense of ownership and responsibility. Good examples of urban environment supported by good examples of urban furniture, tend to be found where the sense of ownership is strongest - in university precincts, in the best private developments and in those parts of a town or city that cultivate a special civic pride.

The places in Dublin that are boasted as being the pride of our city include Trinity College, St. Stephen's Green, the Phoenix Park and the Georgian Terraces.

Once inside the main archway of Trinity, one is immediately transformed into another world, a different time - Fig. 11. The strong sense of ownership is reflected in everything from the railings and direction signs to the well kept lawns. The siting of benches and lamp posts has been carefully considered. There are many fine examples of well selected and sited benches which allow the occupants to indulge in one of the favourite human activities - watching the passing scene - homo sapiens like to regard his own kind and finds it particularly agreeable if his seating is slightly above the general level of the surrounding area.

In St. Stephen's Green - Fig. 12 - the truth of this is borne to fruition. The well sited seats allow the maximum view of the scene and the beauty the park has to offer. The lighting posts that surround the Park show a marked degree of individuality compared to the massed produced lighting standards that abound along the main roads outside.



Fig. 11 Once inside the main archway of Trinity College, a strong sense of ownership is reflected in everything from the railings to the direction signs.





Gas burning street lamps still operate to-day but are now sadly rare. Most lamps have been converted to electricity so that we can still enjoy their presence. The lamps in the Phoenix Park are examples of these. In these days of mass produced lighting standards, it is refreshing to see the older designs being preserved as in the Phoenix Park or being reproduced and placed in new redeveloped areas of our city, as in Henry Street.

Old street lamps are a ubiquitous feature in the street furniture system - Fig. 13. Most lamp standards that typically line Georgian streets actually date from the period 1825 to 1925 but they have been naturally integrated into the Georgian environment. Although a great many were forged in Britain, they were designed specifically for the Irish with the familiar shamrock emblem generally in evidence somewhere. Their lean and curvaceous design lends grace to the unbroken terraces. The old lamp posts have now all been converted to modern lighting systems but they still seem a natural extension of the railings, gates, balconies and other ironwork moulded to most Georgian fronts.


One of the greatest losses in lamps has been the bracket variety. They used to hang outside most public houses, shops, hotels and restaurants. A fine example of this can be seen outside Neary's pub in Chatham Street, Dublin - Fig. 14. Here two outstretched arms, holding engraved glass panels stand proudly and add to the grandeur of the building. There are few left to compare than the splendid confident vulgar cheerfulness of the originals, with their engraved or painted globes or glass panels.

Dublin fortuitously possesses a remarkable assortment of street furniture in it's Georgian neighbourhoods: in fact one for the most unique collections in all of Europe. For the most part, this bountiful heritage has been inadvertantly preserved. While most other European cities were replacing old city street fixtures with modern ones, Dublin was forced by economic necessity to retain the originals, converting some to new uses. But owing to Carnivorous urban redevelopment, street widening, obsolescence, theft, vandalism and neglect over the past two decades, the wealth of Dublin's street furniture has been alarmingly whittled away.



Fig. 12 The well sited seats allow maximum view of St. Stephen's Green. The lighting posts around the park show a marked degree of individuality.





Fortunately there are still excellent examples of eighteenth and nineteenth century street furniture to be found throughout most part of the Georgian city, and the Merrion and Fitzwilliam squares district serves as a kind of open museum for such study. Here, street furniture is found in a sensible arrangement, and individual items are well balanced in terms of design, configuration, height and size, each element seems to complement others around it. This is also true of Nth. Great Georges Street and a few other intact northside terraces. Especially impressive is the dazzling array of surviving ironwork in the form of railings, balconies, balconettes and gates.

Superb examples of wrought iron, some well over two hundred years old can be found along the older Georgian streets. This wrought or hand worked iron was created by Irish craftsmen with great artistic skill. In the second half of the eighteenth century cast or moulded ironwork became very popular since it could be produced more cheaply and in greater quantities at iron foundries.

The present day Georgian scene reflects a healthy mix of wrought and cast iron work. Much of it is still in remarkably good condition owing chiefly to the purity of the metal and the early smelting process. Commonly, the old iron railings are smothered with layers of paint which obscure their original delicacy.

It would be a shame if Dublin's bounty of street furniture was allowed gradually to perish from the Georgian scene, because it provides a delicate frill along the greater architectural fabric.

Yet this is precisely what is happening - mostly through innocent indifference. At a time when western architects are forced to recreate antique street pieces for their historic quarters at great cost, Dublin needs only to retain those that have survived naturally.

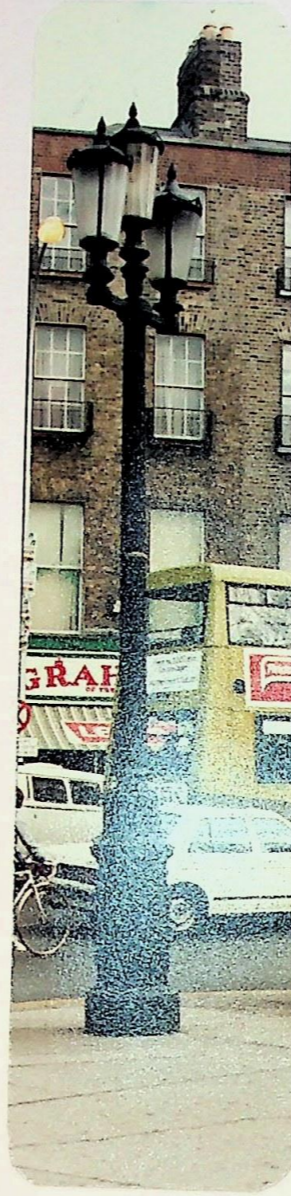


Fig 13

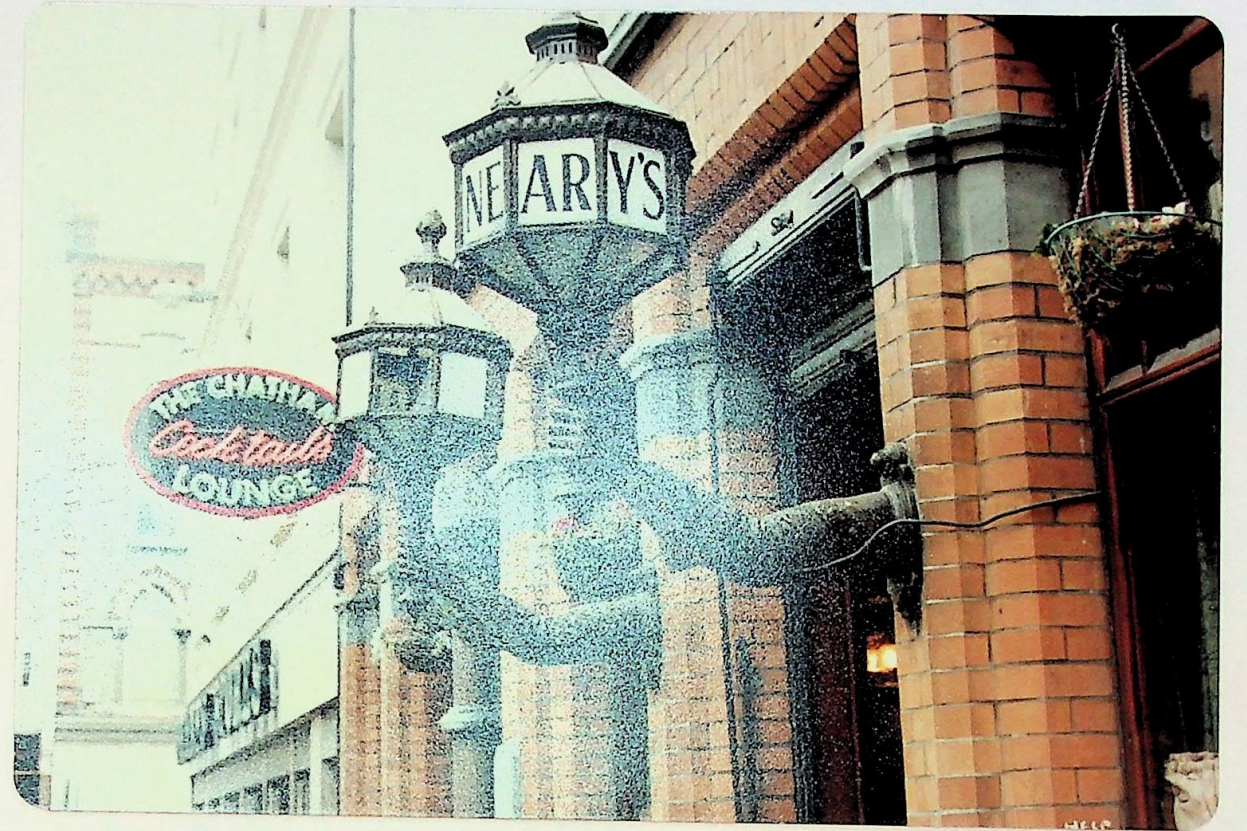


Fig 14



Fig. 15



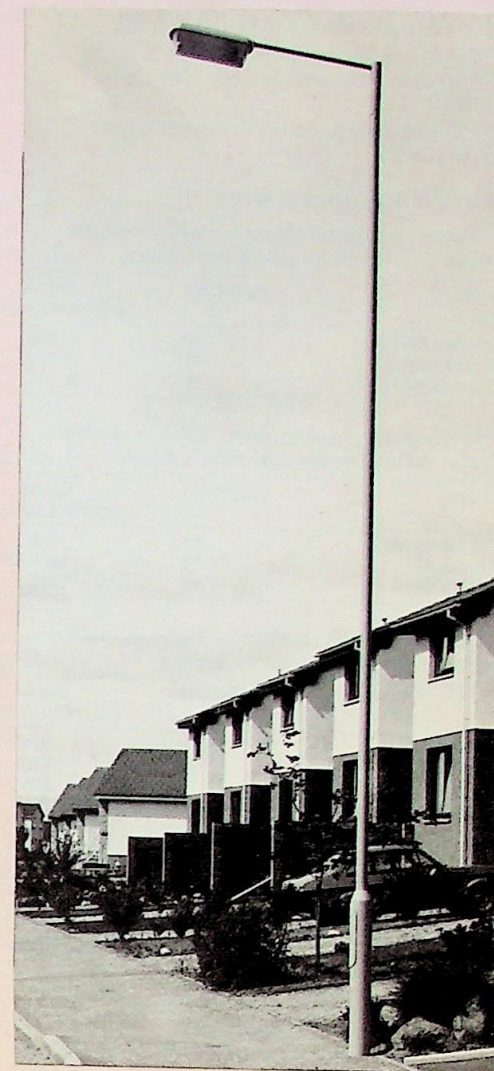
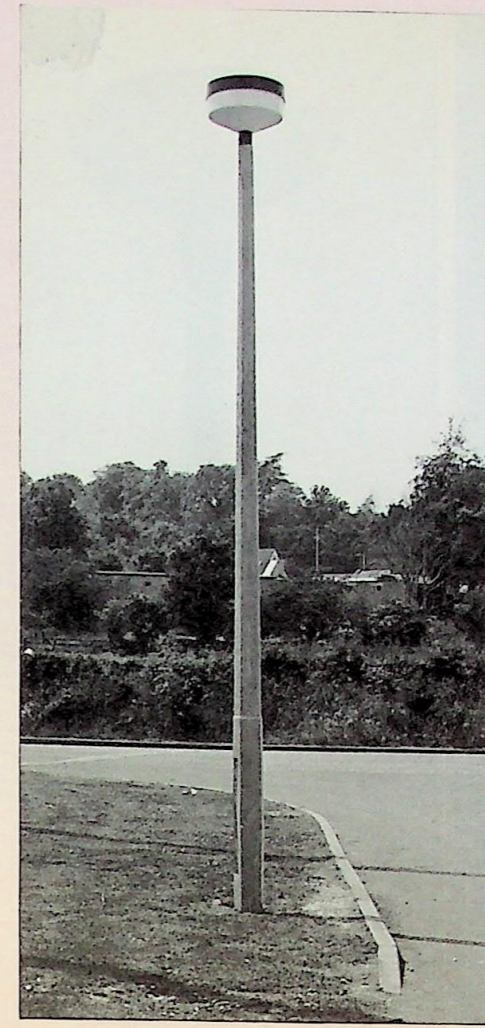
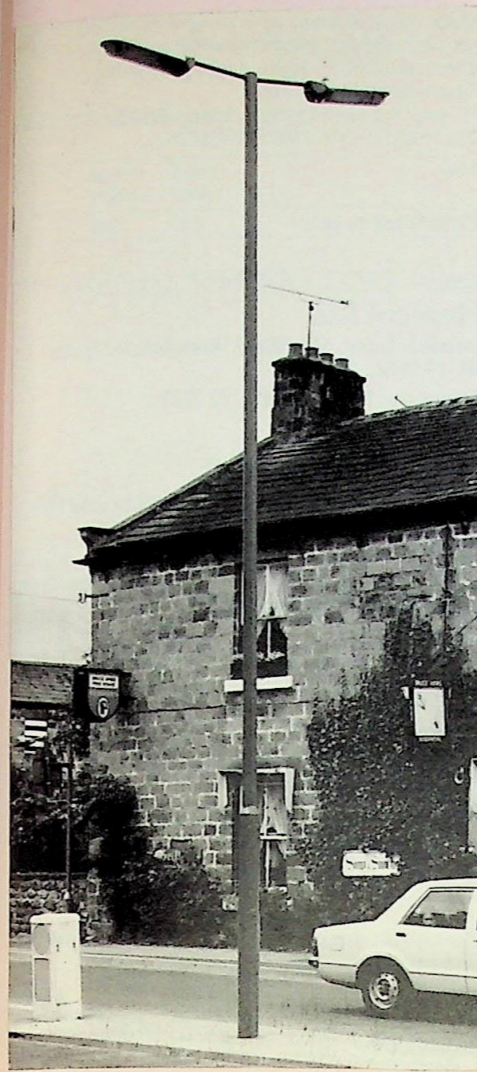
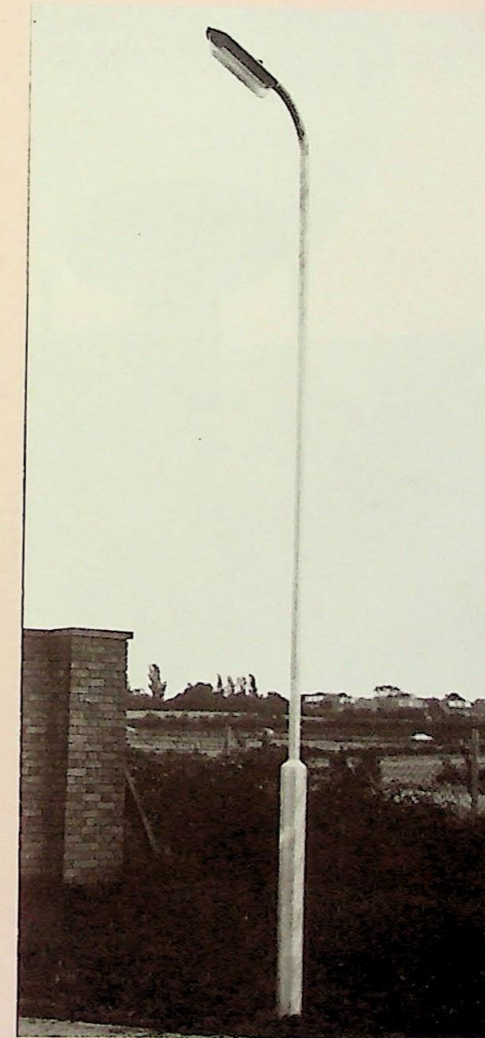
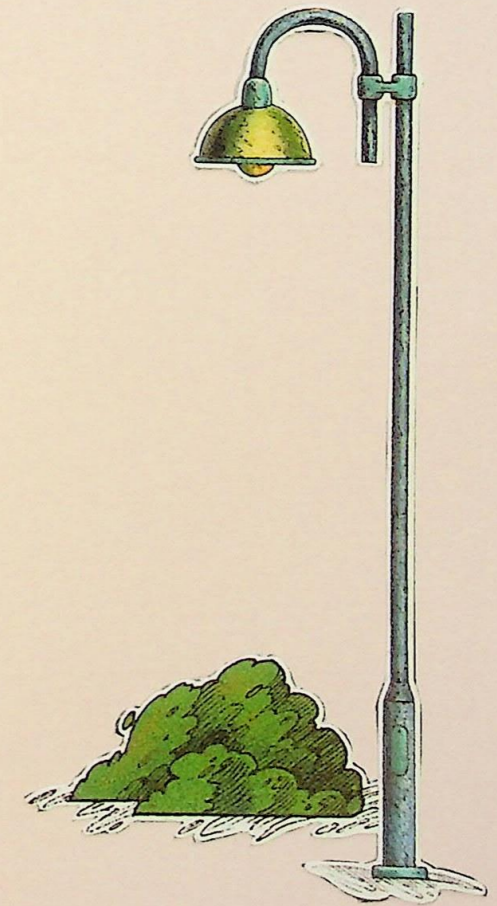


Fig. 16
Examples of street lighting, without any sense of individuality.



Lastly, it should be noted that the preservation of the furnished street - scape involved more than just holding on to surviving components - it also means protecting the ambience. Planning controls should protect the integrity of the setting by prohibiting the introduction of any foreign elements that damage or distract from the existing street furniture collage. This especially applies to parking meters and large signs. The vile intrusion of the parking meter has wreaked havoc with Georgian Dublin's indigenous mood. Like uniformed columns of mechanized soldiers from some distant galaxy, they have invaded every Georgian row, colliding perceptively with the eighteenth century idiom. So dense now is vehicular traffic and parking, that one can only really examine and appreciate the Georgian vistas on weekends.



Chapter 2.

Footnotes

1. Kevin Corrigan Kearns speaking about Georgian Dublin in
"Georgian Dublin"
David and Charles
London 1985.


The Human Dimension

There has been a development of two different categories of street furniture due to two reasons. On the one hand, there has been the move towards the formation of pedestrian precincts and on the other the proliferation of impersonal equipment, generally related to traffic on ordinary streets. As examples, in one category, a telephone kiosk, in scale with and used by, human beings, it's colour and strong individual design serving for identification in the street; while in the other category, a lighting column, a post among a myriad of posts. We need the light, but the less we see of it's source, the better.

Ninty per cent of the bulk of street furniture falls into this second category. Items we do not need, nor wish to be aware of. In this case, neutrality of design is a important factor. This means simplicity of shape and neutrality of colour. A bad example of this is a grit bin, painted a bright yellow. Such bins have no claim on the attention of the passer-by and those who have need to use them, will know where they are.

Items in this category must be designed by eschewing the fashions of the moment, in order to achieve a timeless quality that does not look dated a few years after installation. An example of this can clearly be seen in any poster advertising display unit. These items seem to be so outdated and vulgar no matter where they are placed. Attention is being drawn to the posters, not the unit, so it must be as neutral and timeless as possible. Different types of equipment have different cycles of change, so that equipment from one decade has to sit happily alongside that of the next e.g. a telephone kiosk designed in the 1950's standing beside a precast concrete bench of the 1980's.

In the first category, the telephone kiosk has already been mentioned. This is a prime example of the category of street furniture that can legitimately stand out from it's background. Take the British Red Telephone box - Fig. 17. It has a traditional livery: it's colour



and shape make it instantly recognisable for it's purpose and make it an affectionately regarded emblem of the British scene. (Film directors have transporable copies to establish the instant recognition of a British location).

That emblem for most people, still identified as the Gilbert Scott design must be expected to change over the years, and since the 1950's, moves have been made to decide upon a new kiosk that is easier to clean and maintain and more in keeping with the modern equipment it houses - Fig. 18. After a new design was agreed upon and used for new installations, a parallel programme was begun to emasculate those traditional designs that remained on the streets : the removal of the glazing bars from the Scott design made the result totally unacceptable. It is curious that this particular type of vandalism should have escaped so far, the censure of the conservation societies.


There are several different types of new kiosks, including a triangular version, a pedestal kiosk and an enclosed box with a broad yellow stripe on the door. All are made mainly from dark brown anodised aluminium, stainless steel and toughened plate glass. The concrete base, which helped the old boxes to weigh three quarters of a ton has been discarded.

All new kiosks are open at the bottom, so that, we are told, they cannot accumulate litter or retain unpleasant smells. The elimination of the base also allows wheelchair users to enter the both, a benefit which, it must be admitted more than balances the disadvantages of cold draughts round the ankles.

Vandals are to be deterred in a number of ways - the absence of paint will stop scratching and the nubbly surface of the interior panels will, with a bit of luck keep felt tips and biro's at bay. It is also believed that vandals are less likely to attack open installations, where they would be exposed to public gaze. The main motive for violence against telephone boxes is money, so the cash box in the new kiosks have been strengthened and separated from the actual telephone equipment. This type of vandalism will also be reduced by the introduction of cashless installations.



Fig. 17
The original British Red Telephone kiosk which are now being replaced by more "modern" telephone kiosk.



The new booths may offer certain practical benefits, but aesthetically they are poor successors to the K2 and K6 versions of the Scott design - the familiar red kiosks.

Traditionally, the telephone kiosk has always provided a prime example of colour acting as a key to usage and meaning - certain types of direction signs are blue, others are green, and yellow has been used to denote a warning. The more the pity therefore that the red has been changed to an indistinguishable tinted brown glazing with a small splash of yellow. The telephone box becomes lost amidst the grey and browns of the city scene.

All Europe countries at the moment seem to be having similar difficulties finding an identity for their telephone kiosks.

Dublin and in fact the whole of Ireland is in the process of painting all existing Scott designed boxes blue and white from the traditional green and yellow that they had been under the Post and Telegraph arrangement. They are now under the auspices of Telecom Eireann who are trying to establish a corporate identity. Many of these old style boxes have been replaced by aluminium framed kiosks similar to the British versions - Fig. 20. These kiosks are very cold in appearance and offer no form of friendliness to the user, and contrary to company literature they do accumulate litter and smells and seemed to have attracted more vandalism than the older boxes.

From an aesthetic point of view, the arrangement of the boxes in relation to each other is an important factor. Four boxes together in a tube-like fashion, tend to look better than three placed in a triangular form. In this latter form, you hear the conversation of other users and no privacy is allowed.

In Copenhagen, the Danish Design Council ran a competition to find a replacement for the cities existing boxes. Its result was a telephone stand with a distinctive profile that is easy to spot but its reflective surface helps it to blend well into the environment - Fig. 19. Design considerations included its accessibility to

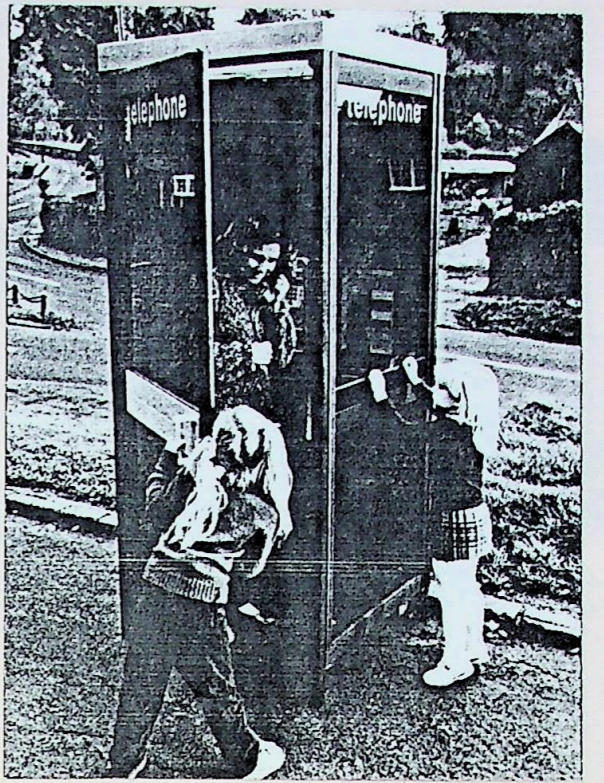


Fig. 18



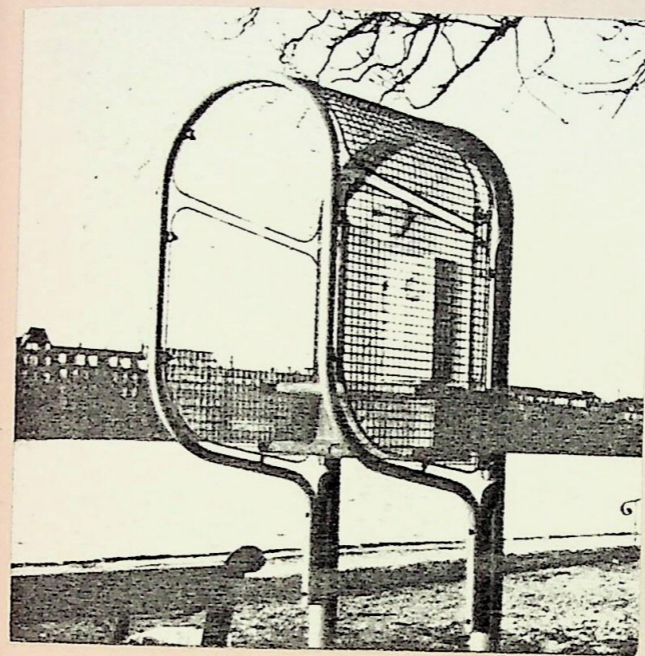
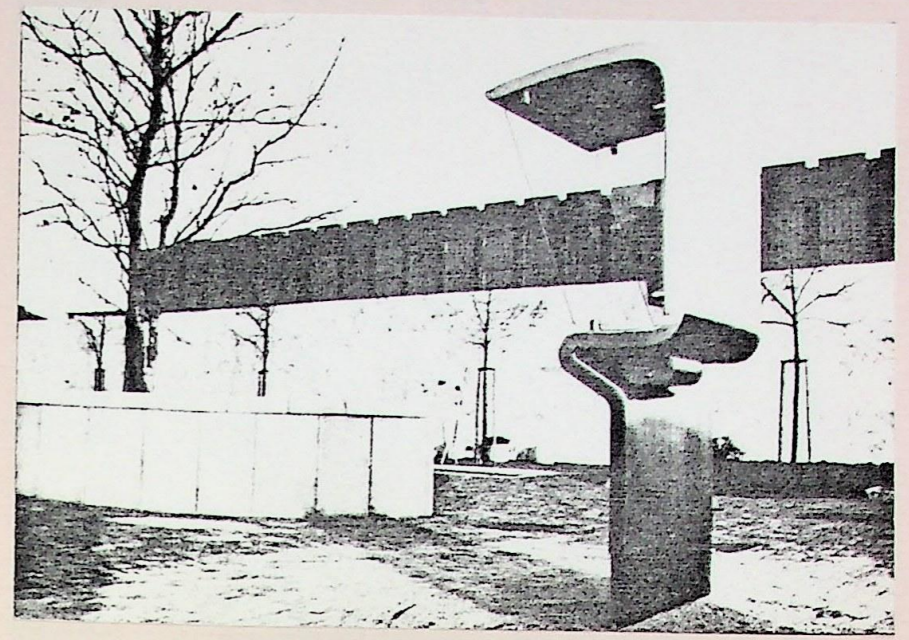


Fig. 19
Three winning finalists
of the Danish Design
Councils competition to
design a new telephone
kiosk.

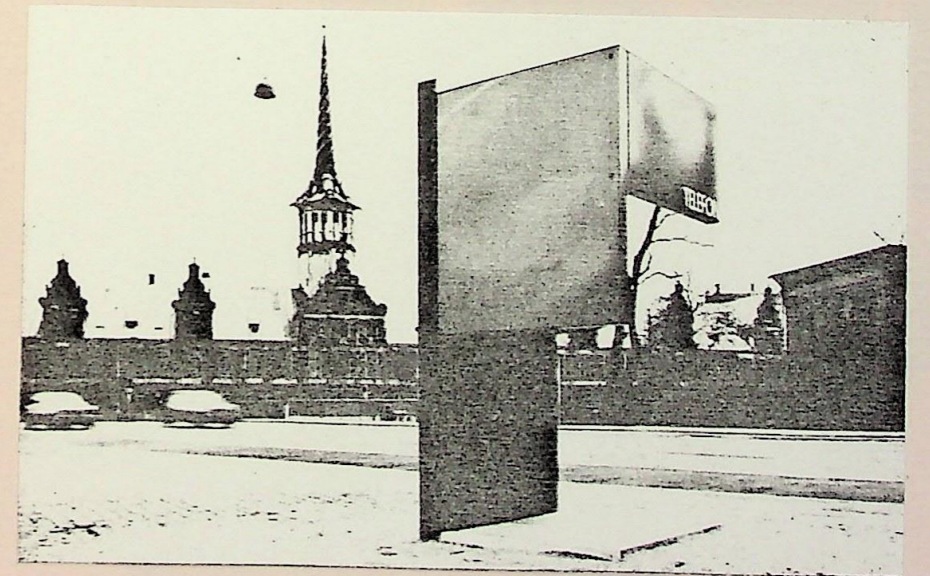
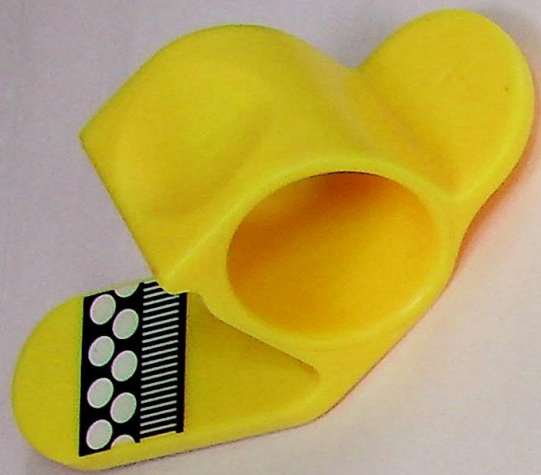




Fig. 20
The new Irish
telephone kiosks
that "do not
retain smells or
litter"





handicapped, children, the elderly and vandals. It's success can be seen a year after it was first installed in terms of it's acceptance by the community and the fact that it has stood up to the test of use. Maybe Telecom Eireann and British Telecom could learn a thing or two from the Danish; that to achieve a very functional object does not mean discarding it's visual qualities as well.

Sinage also falls into this category and it is obvious that we need signs and their signals to stand out.

The more at home a man is, the less need he has for consciously designed information sources in his physical surroundings. In the pre-industrial village, there were no traffic control signs, no identification signs, no street lights, no information centres. People knew each other, the rules of life were clear and the form of the environment was a direct physical expression of those rules. Only the stranger could be misled. Today we are the strangers in our own homes. We do not know and cannot see how things work. Our support system - the vast networks of government, production, commerce, transport, communications, education, health services, power, water, waste disposal, law and enforcement - are remote. The information supplied in the environment is largely irrelevant both to our immediate purposes or to an understanding of the world in which we live. The street of any large city relay thousands of conflicting visual messages. Red lights blink to regulate traffic and to attract us to the local bar. Arrows point out routes; they also flash for the nearest hot dog stand. Private messages are stamped on the face of the city with little concern for anything more than competitive advantage. Each street lights add to the confusion by their unshielded glare - Fig. 22.

As one crosses O'Connell Bridge, Dublin from the South side, many signs vie for attention - Fig. 23. There is a massive sign advertising Bailey's Original Irish Cream, many different sets of traffic lights, hundreds of neon lit signs and shops advertising their location, and to add to this confusion a mass of sign posts, arrows and road numbers.

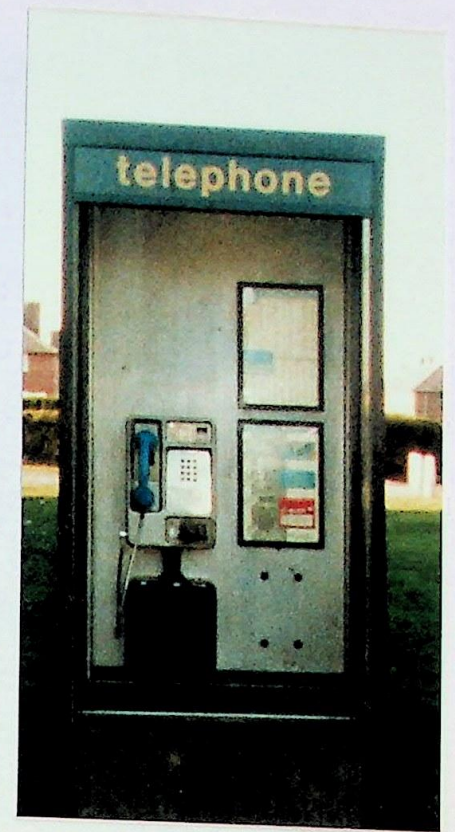


Fig. 21
Swiss telephone kiosks can be seen to be of similar construction as the Irish unit (below). A functional object does not mean discarding it's visual qualities.





Fig. 22
The streets of any city relay
thousands of conflicting visual
messages - red lights blink,
arrows point out routes, private
messages blink on huge advertising
screens.





Fig. 23 O'Connell St., Dublin.



Whether these visual messages are valuable or trivial, and indeed whether they can be perceived at all, are questions for public policy. A lot has changed from the days when milestones dotted the countryside and were the only indication of the location of the traveller - Fig. 24. These milestones were soon to be replaced by sign posts giving direction, distance and destination.

Many early signs were very ornate, made from cast iron, while others were made from brick and wood. These were first used around 1670 but there are many fine examples of these left to-day - Fig. 25. In the early days of motoring, the erection of road side signs was to some extent brought about by local and national organisations formed to help the amateur driver. These signs could be of an informatory or a warning nature. As road users increased, so the need for more signs - information signs, warning signs, traffic signals.

The problem with our system of signage at present is the lack of uniformity or standardisation.

When primitive human beings first drew crude pictures on cave walls as a means of self expression or representation, they initiated a practice that would prove vital to their continued evolution. At the same time they had unwittingly taken their first decisive step on the path of civilization. Not only had they stumbled upon a means of expanding communication beyond grunts and gestures, they had also initiated a form of communication wherein every significant milestone of their inexorable progress to the present era would be reflected.

The pace of natural evolution is exceedingly slow, and although human beings eventually managed to develop crafts and commerce, and to build towns, cities, empires and nations, their mode of communication during this period had undergone little real improvement. Recognising this condition as a threat to further progress, the ancient Egyptians refined existing picture writing into a fundamental syllabic system of hieroglyphs and ideographs. Foreseeing the tedium inherent in the Egyptian system, the Phoenicians, and in turn the Greeks, and Romans went a step further by developing their system of characters to represent the separate sounds of their spoken language.

Although character forms in many alphabets used to-day differ from those of the English-Roman, the underlying principle of graphic representation of oral sound is common to most. And the modern English alphabet, despite its imperfections is recognized as one of the greatest achievements of the human mind, having played a significant role in the growth of modern civilization as we know it.

All over the world the machine age dawned suddenly and with great impact Communication modes that human beings had acquired over their half-million years of trial and error needed to be examined and re-evaluated. Old concepts of communication that could not be revised to support the industrial revolution were replaced with new communication concepts.

As a consequence, new fields of science, engineering and technology were opened and research and development accelerated until each distinct discipline developed its own vocabulary and attracted its own coterie of professional specialists.

Human beings have now come full circle from their earliest cave days. The natural shelter of their beginnings have been replaced with built environments of such vastness, variety and complexity that the formation of a new discipline has become necessary to provide ready identification of and accessibility to every defined activity and space between, around and within each modern manufactured residential or commercial dwelling.

Beyond dictionary definition, "communication" is the art, act or fact of conveying information from one entity to another. This process can be either active or passive, conscious or subliminal, but in all cases it requires transmission and reception, and of course comprehension. Of the many modes now available to us, the most prevalent means of communicating are auditory or visual or a combination of both. Our concern here is with the visual mode specifically, environmental graphic communications.

Prior to the 1950's, graphic communication had traditionally included everything that was drawn, painted or written and distributed to the masses.

More than anything else, outdoor advertising with its visual dominance along streets and roads, triggered the realization that such two-dimensional sign had reached, and possibly exceeded the limit of their usefulness and that a new, second generation of signs and sign concepts was urgently needed.

Although attempts have been made by both transportation and industrial planners to develop standards for the application for graphic communications to their needs, it was not until the late 1950's and early 1960's that these early efforts began to coalesce and emerge as new forms of communication technology specifically directed to the built environment all over the civilized world.

During the past 20 years many new technologies, materials, applications and processes have been developed throughout the industry and these activities have given rise to some entirely new concepts and disciplines. For example, a completely new system of signage and graphic communications was developed for British Underground Rail and London's Heathrow airport. These systems were just modifications of existing alphabet typefaces and the standardisation of symbols of the many elements that combine to produce a successful sign system, none is more essential than design continuity. It is important for ease of identification and understanding that the typeface should be simple in style and form so that proportions and shapes can be seen and easily recognised. The choice of weight is important because, in contrast to print, they had less time to absorb message content from a greater distance and must register and discern messages quickly in often distracting surroundings. This is one of the major problems with current signage design. Signs are of different sizes, shapes, colour and typeface and they become lost among other forms of signage in the community. Stronger regulations need to be introduced to see the use of standardisation of sizes, shapes, colour and typeface.

It is important that street revitalization include the development of a comprehensive graphics system - one that takes into account both the design and placement of signs. Traffic, commercial and informational signage should be redesigned to present relevant information in a clear concise manner and placed only where necessary, thereby avoiding much of the clutter.

The overall effect of this would be to facilitate a smooth flow of pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

Definition is perhaps the most important factor in the design of a system of signage. This is necessary for the public to be able to instantly recognise a sign. A system of colour coding, could be a very effective system. At present, there is a system of colours used for signs - Fig. 26 - red for stop, or warning, blue for directional arrows, yellow for warnings, but with so many other colours intruding on the street scene, this definition is not enough. The siting and location of signs is also very important. Badly placed signs are often the result of unintelligent regulations laid down by the Department of the Environment. A badly placed sign clutters the street and blocks the view, yet the same sign (if possible), sited against a house silhouette would be preferable - Fig. 27. These careful details of planning and installation, although small, make a great difference as can be seen in London's docks under the London Docklands Development Corporation - Fig. 28.

One particular campaigner for better road signs and the pioneer of the 'Save the Countryside' campaign in the early years of this century was Harry Peach.¹ As a socialist, Harry Peach was concerned with bringing beauty into the lives of the working class. He belonged to the Leicester Kyrle society which was established in 1880, "to bring the refining and cheering influence of natural and artistic beauty into the homes and resort of Leicester". This society was already campaigning on the issue of public gardens and unsightly spaces in Leicester when W.R. Lethaby,² suggested to Peach in 1915 that he start a 'town betterment' society in Leicester. Peach paid tribute to the work of Benjamin Fletcher³ who had developed a scheme for gardens to be laid out on a derelict site adjacent

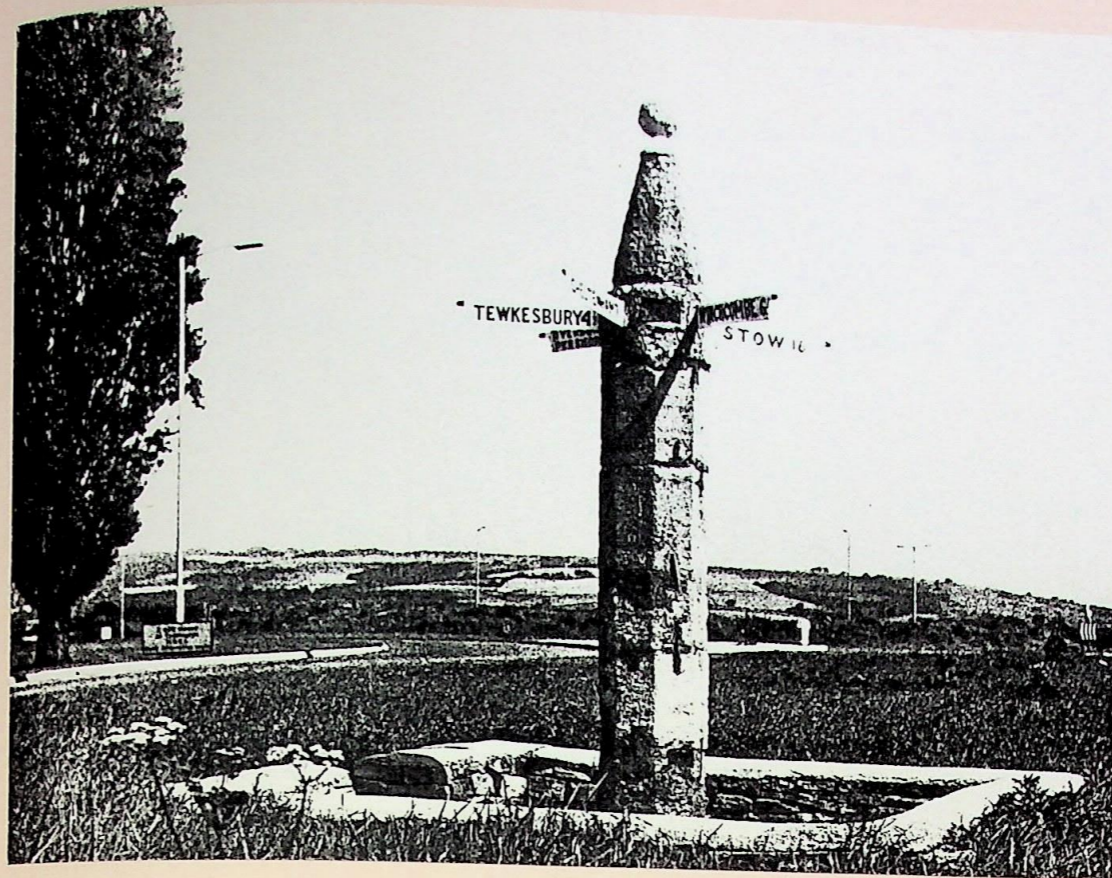


Fig. 24 Teddington, Gloucestershire. This six-fingered octagonal pillar of local stone is reputedly seventeenth century.

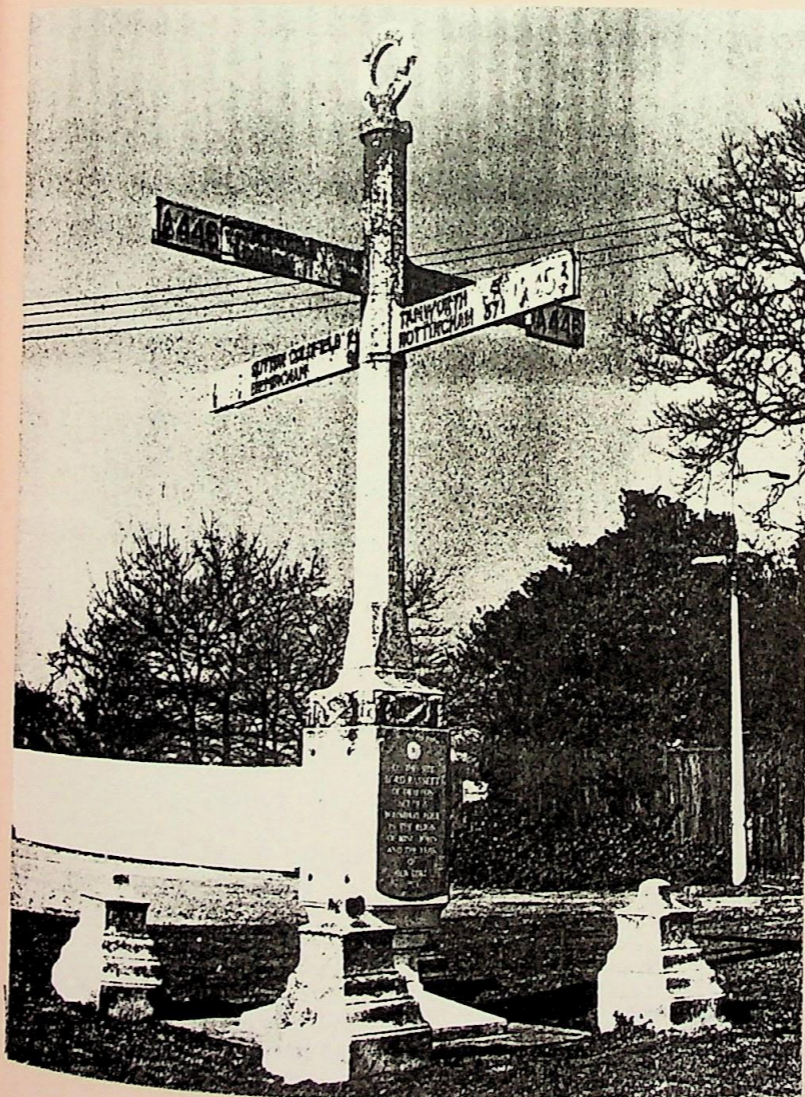


Fig. 25 This reinforced concrete signpost standing at Bassett's Pole, Staffordshire. As recorded on a tablet at the base of the post, Lord Basset of Drayton set up a boundary pole "here in the reign of King John and the year of our Lord 1201".

to the old castle and church of St. Mary de Castro. Through Fletcher, the Kyrle Society had successfully campaigned for other town improvements such as the adoption for electric trolley-wire posts which had been designed at the School of Art. The enthusiasm of Peach probably encouraged Lethaby to address the Arts and Crafts Society on "Town Tidying" in 1916.

Peach was successful in bringing about the formation of the Leicester Civic society in 1929. It's aim was to stimulate civic pride and a love of beauty in the domestic and public life of the City of Leicester and it's brief covered architecture, and town planning as well as designs for parks, bridges, fountains, lamp standardised and other street furniture - Fig. 30.

"By thinking of art as a special matter dealt with by special people called architects and painters and musicians, we have gone far to banish beauty from our towns and our lives. What I mean by art then, is not the affair of a few but of everybody. It is order tidiness, the right way of making things, the right way of doing things, especially the public things of our towns and cities. It is a question of pleasant railway stations, of street cleaning, of controlling advertising, of furnishing our streets".

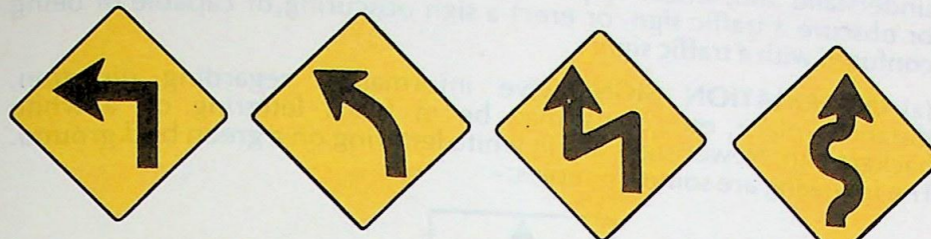
In 1916 Peach argues that the problem was not posters as such but their orderly use and explained that such reforms were a small but necessary step in making towns better places in which to live. He went on to suggest that the Corporation should allow the School of Art to 'censor' advertising with regards to both style and lettering. The extension of unsightly advertising into the countryside triggered off Peach's involvement with tidying the countryside as well as the towns - Fig. 29.

In this chapter on the human dimension of street furniture, telephone kiosks and signage has been discussed with reference to their development to present day design. One item with a very clear development that also has human relations is the letter box. Road side

pillar boxes were first introduced in Jersey in 1852 and to England in 1853. Since that date, letter boxes in many different styles have appeared all over the streets of England and Ireland - Fig. 31.

In style, most of the early boxes display such Regency restraint and Classicism as the elegant doric column or pillar (possibly a reason for it being called a 'pillar' box) only seven are recorded dating between 1856 and 1857. Simple hexagonal ones were in use at the same time and examples of these can be seen in Bray and Galway. In 1856 a special fluted box with a dome and a crown on top was made for Birmingham. Only once have British pillar boxes been decorated with the lavishness one expects of Victorian Design. This was more popular on the continent. Indeed, some French, German and Belgian boxes are very exotic. The English 'fancy' was made for London and the larger cities in 1857 - 59. An economy version without any frills was made for country towns, but there is only one remaining example of this style left. and can be seen in Cork city.

Last year the British Post office decided it was time for a change. The main reason being that the older boxes (the current design is over one hundred years old) had started to show signs of wear. The greatest problem was the doors. A lifetime of slamming had inevitably begun to cause stress and metal fatigue.



Dangerous Corner Ahead Dangerous Bend Ahead Series of Dangerous Corners Ahead Series of Dangerous Bends Ahead

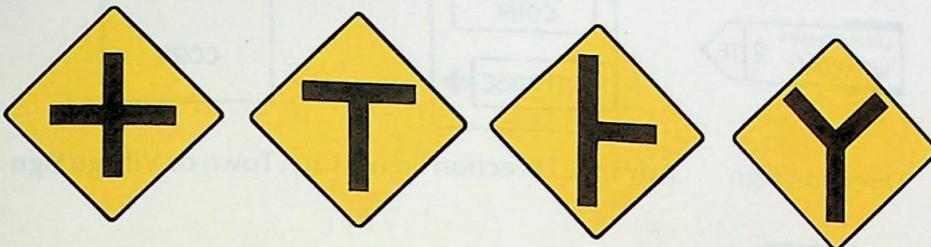


Fig. 26



Keep to Left Carriageway (on dual carriageway)



Speed Limit (30 m.p.h.)



End of Speed Limit (See section 10.4, p.28)



Stop Sign

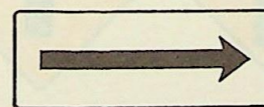
Stop before entering the major road ahead and give way to traffic on it



Major Road Ahead—give way to traffic on it



School Warden's Sign
Approaching traffic must stop as long as this sign is exhibited by a school warden assisting school children across the road.



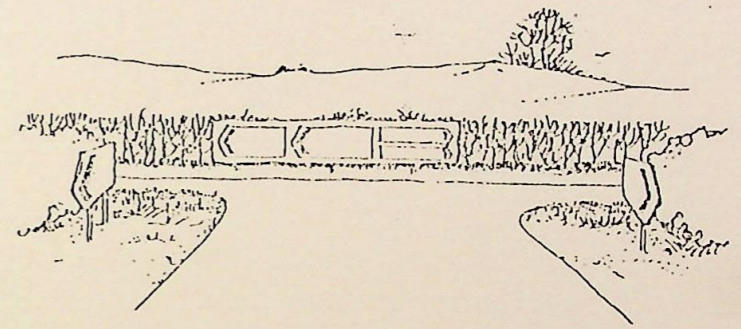
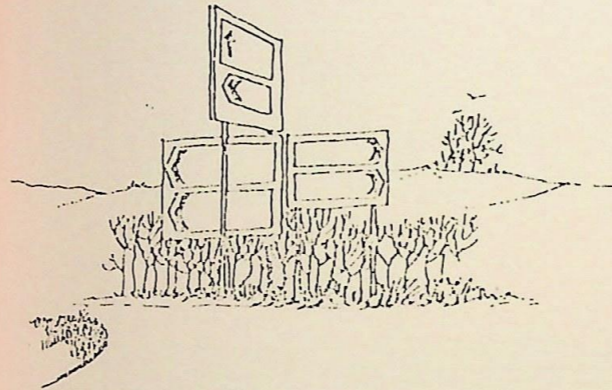
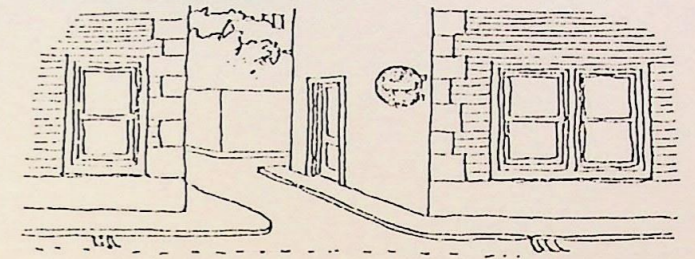
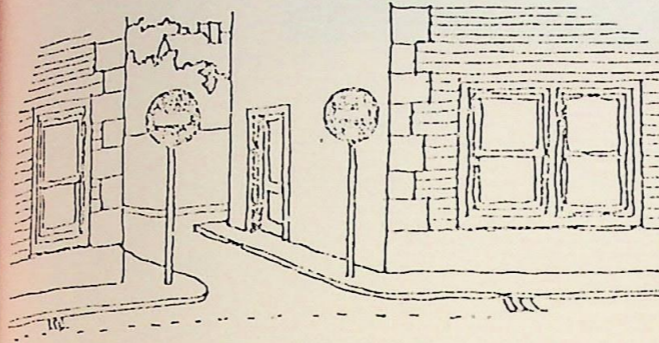
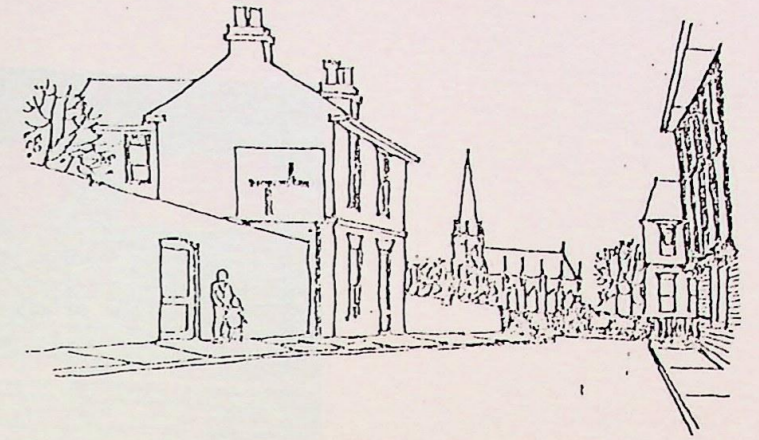
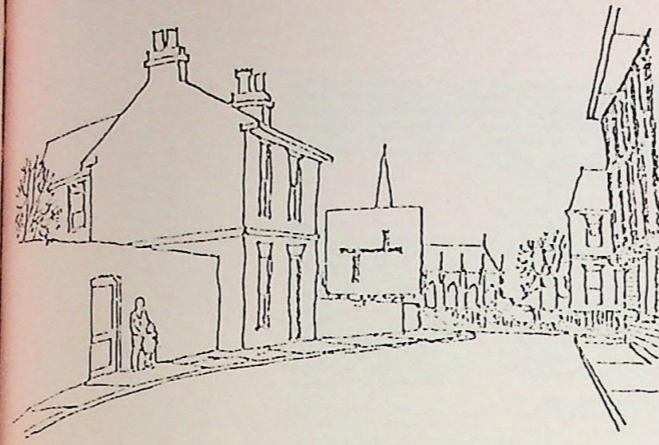
Direction Arrow (to indicate line of road)



Direction Sign



Advance Direction Sign



Badly placed signs are often the result of unintelligent interpretation of regulations. (Top left and right) a badly placed sign clutters the street and blocks the view, and a sign sited against a house silhouette may be preferable.

(Centre left and right) one wall mounted no entry sign is preferable to two signs that block the pavement.

(Bottom left and right) a horizontal arrangement of road signs is preferred to the complicated and obtrusive one.

Fig. 27



Fig. 28



Fig. 29 Shop fronts with clear uniform lettering,
London Rd., Leicester.



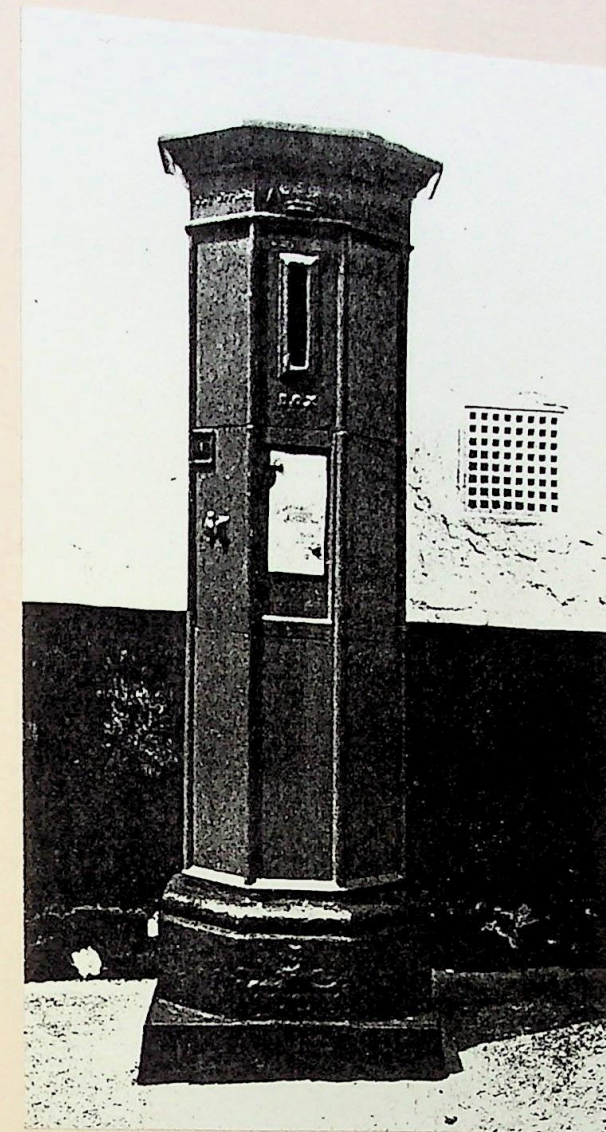
Fig. 30
Signs being removed from
shop front in Leicester
c 1928



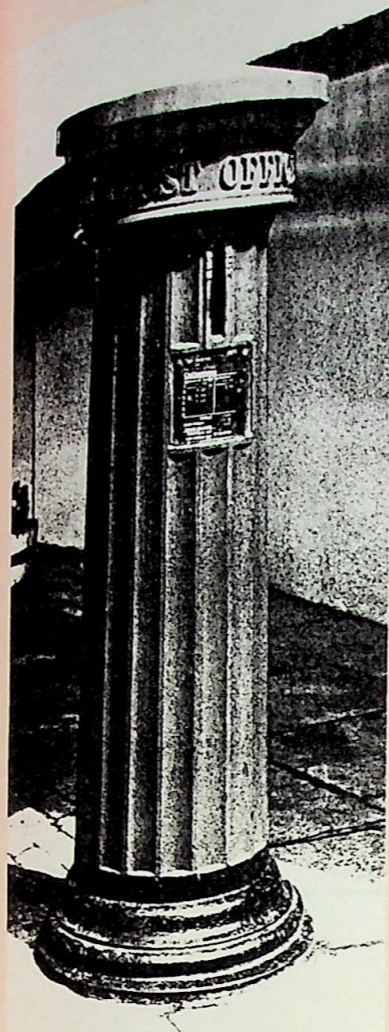
Fig. 31 Early Pillar Box



This box, manufactured by Cochrane and Co. of Dudley in 1863, survives to-day in Liverpool and is one of a few surviving models



This box dates from 1856 and is located in Framlingham in Suffolk. It is octagonal in shape but successive coats of paint has blurred any detail.



This box in Edon, Buckshire, dates from 1856.

Among the most attractively designed letter boxes introduced during Queen Victoria's reign were these hexagonal ones named after their designer J.W. Penfold in 1860/70.

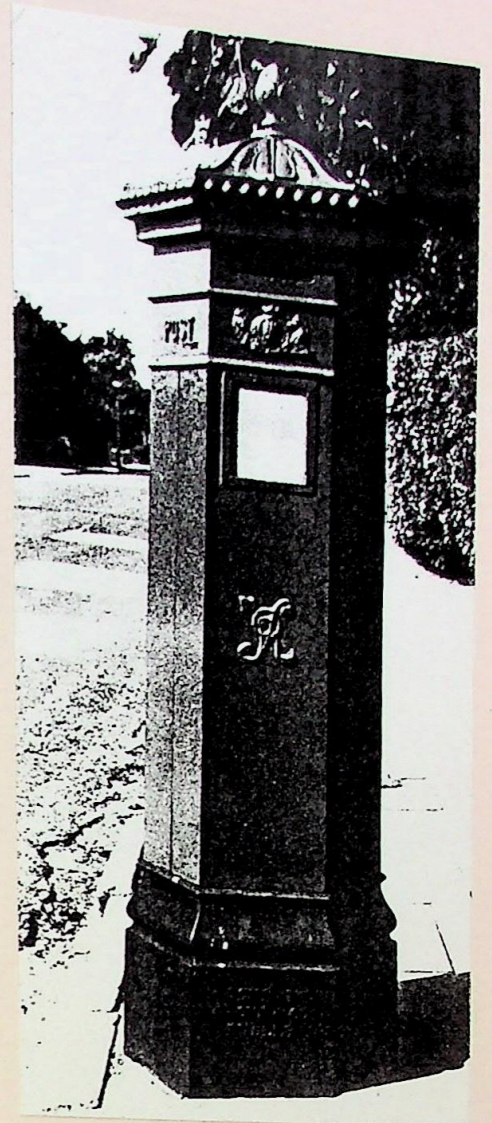
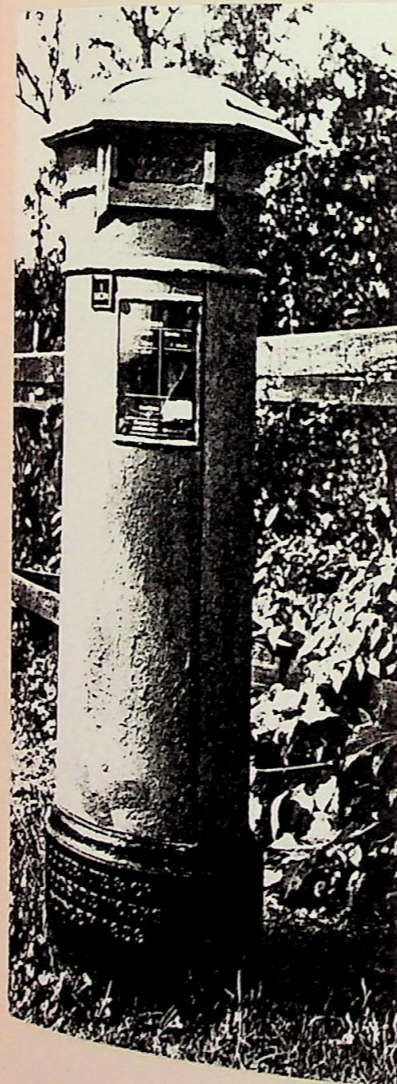
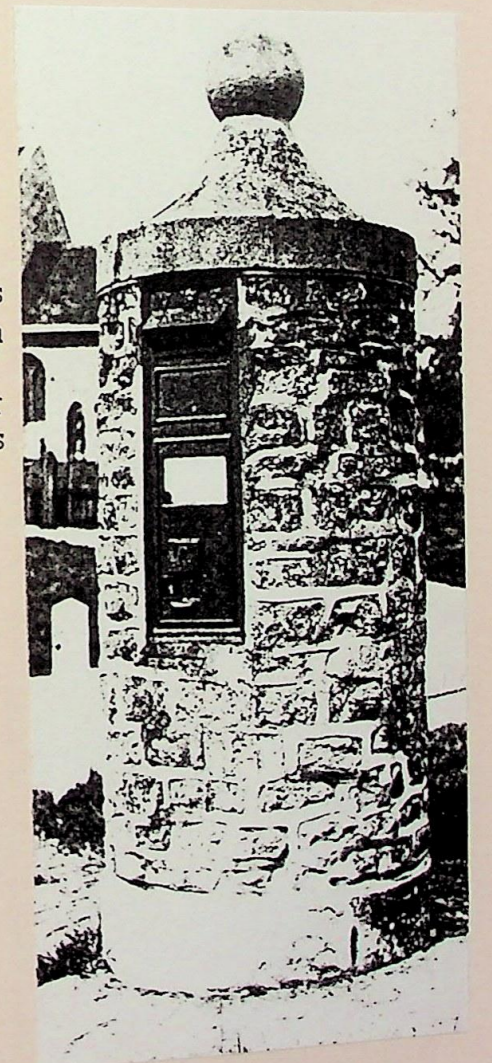


Fig. 32



This box, in World's End, Hampshire dates from 1859 was manufactured by Cochrane and Co. of Dudley

This box, has been set in a distinguished stone and mortar pillar and dates from 1850.



Post Office officials had also become concerned about the design of the plate on which the collection times are written. Because the plate is vertical and shiny, the characters and figures tended to be camouflaged by reflections. It also attracts vandals, probably because the plate itself looks deceptively thin and vulnerable. Also, the Post Office was obliged to eliminate some of the old detailing. This was attractive only when finished with a craftsman's care : anything less and the neatly ordered castellations became ragged and toothless.

The new box is straight instead of tapered because it is an easier shape to cast. It is also a little shorter than the old sign although that diameter remains the same - Fig. 33.

The new box is a far cry from the elegantly crafted shapes of previous designs. An item like a Post box is a necessity on our streets and a piece of furniture that cannot be camouflaged. The Post Box, like the telephone kiosk, falls into the first category of street furniture, It should stand out and welcome us. Therefore it is important that it should remain an elegant functional addition to our street, integrated within the surrounding and chosen with a view to the area in which it is to be used. It, like the telephone kiosk can be legitimately fashioned with much greater freedom, and with a pre-emptive importance placed upon comfort and ease of use.

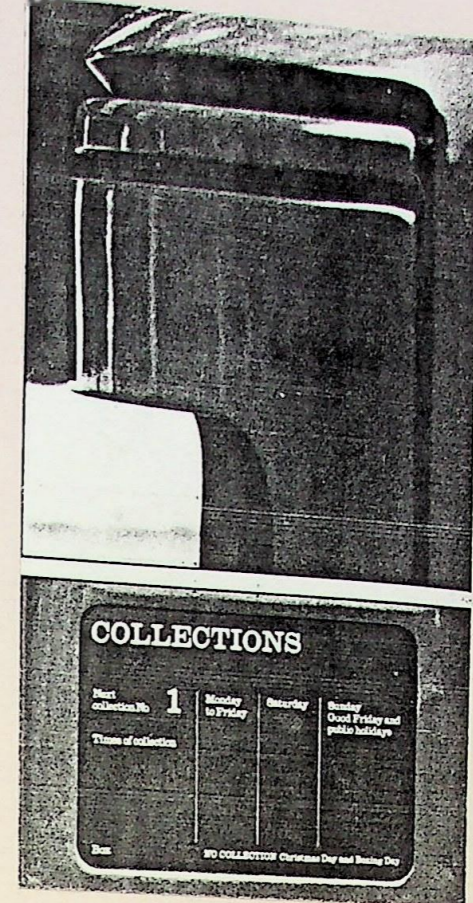
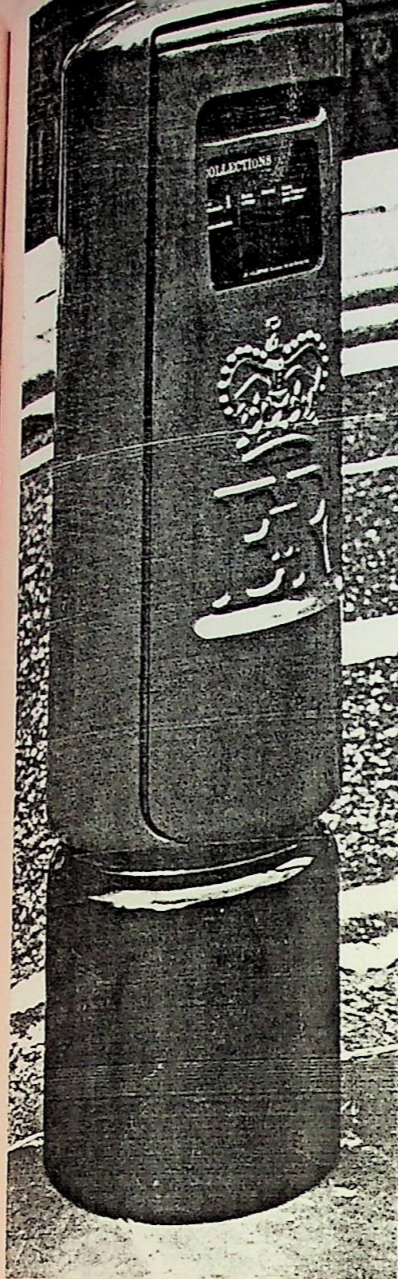


Fig. 33
The new post box commissioned by the British Post Office last year, which is set to replace old style boxes like those shown below.



Fig. 34
A 'modern' Irish post box.

Chapter 3.

Footnotes

1. Harry Peach (1871 - 1936). For one who was neither designer nor craft worker, nor theoretician, Harry Peach had an extraordinary influence on the world of design, craft and conservation in the years between the wars.

2. William Richard Lethaby - influential figure of the English Arts and Crafts movement who extended William Morris' interest in everyday commonplace objects into a persuasive philosophy of rational design and fitness for use.

3. Benjamin J. Fletcher - Headmaster of Leicester School of Art. 1901 - 1914. Peach always acknowledged that it was through Fletcher that he learned to care about design.

Making the City Green

"A little Neglect may breed great mischief
For want of a nail, the shoe was lost,
For want of a shoe, the horse was lost,
For want of a horse, the rider was lost."

Ben Franklin¹

Because we speak of 'furnishing' outdoor spaces, there is a tendency to extend this analogy of the furnished room and to see street planting in the role of a vase of flowers - a last minute token of affection and a highlight to the decorative scheme. This is an inappropriate approach. Trees are not only the largest of plants, they are potentially the largest insertions of any sort placed in the street, and ideally they should be considered from the inception of the scheme. Even shrubs and flowers should be considered and used as part of the basic design rather than to justify space left or forgotten in the planning process.

Alas, flowers and plants are used for just these reasons and although their presence works to enhance a scene in some locations as in St. Stephen's Green, it is obvious in other areas that they were just afterthoughts - the flower pots along the centre of O'Connell Street - Fig. 35.

Flowers are pretty, the argument goes, so put flowers in the town square, and the square will be pretty, This is beauty of the most shallow sort. Mass producer of clothes tend to use this line of thought when promoting unattractive badly made clothes on a beautiful model. The flowers become a substitute for the ill considered design of the square itself and indeed a license for ugliness - Fig. 36.

Flower gardening should only be incorporated if an adequate maintenance budget is assured as badly maintained flower beds in urban areas inevitably become eyesores, the reverse of their original purpose. Scraps of paper and tin cans collect among the flowers and once weeding and regular watering are neglected the plants are likely to become stunted and die. There are few sights more depressing than tree positions sporting vandalised or dead trees, or shrubs missing from newly planted beds. Large trees that require little maintenance and protection are more appealing as they act as intermediaries between buildings and people, responding to the weather and to the light and casting shadows on the pavements: the dapple light of summer or the bare graphics of winter branches. They bring organic life to the city and instil a sense of the seasons - Fig. 37.

The problems with planters (for holding plants) - Fig. 38 - is that they inevitably become impromptu seats and litter bins. Worse, many models accumulate litter round their bases and are difficult to clean. It is important that these factors be considered in the design of such units to avoid such distasteful scenes.



Fig. 35 The trees here in O'Connell Street are successful, but the plants and flowers around them become litter collectors.



Fig. 36 This planter takes away from rather than adding to the scene. The planter gets dirty and the plant becomes a litter receptacle.



Fig. 38

A colourful pedestrian precinct in Elsinore, Denmark.



Fig. 37



Shrubs and flowers must not be used to justify a space left or forgotten in the planning process.

Chapter 4.

Footnotes

1. Ben Franklin in Poor Richards Almanac,
1758 from George Herberts
"Jacula Prudentum" 1640.

Keeping the Rain off

Bus passenger shelters are designed for utility rather than beauty yet there is a need for them to be visually pleasing.

The first bus shelters appeared around 1937 and were either of white painted timber and slate, or brick and thatch. Other existing examples in pre-cast concrete can hardly be described as beautiful - Fig. 39. These type of shelters were soon to be replaced by less permanent structures that were manufactured off site and then easily assembled on-site.

These new shelters were constructed from anodised extruded aluminium and glass. The use of glass allowed the passenger to see the bus approaching and also acted as a form of security. A fully enclosed shelter gave a psychological effect of claustrophobia and insecurity - the passenger prefers to be able to see around them. Bus shelters also serve another purpose - as a medium for advertising - official and unofficial - the latter being the display of graffiti. (Anto, Decko and Danno seemed to have visited every bus shelter in Dublin).

Colour and Visual identity is important. Advertising on bus shelters can provide an acceptable base for transitory colour and it can enliven by contrast and by providing a cycle of change. It seems good sense to combine the functions of posterbase and shelter and thus add emphasis to a natural gathering place. We like to be entertained while waiting for a bus, so the advertisements can occupy us for a fraction of that time.

One designer involved in bus shelter design is David Mellor who in 1957 designed a bus shelter of galvanised steel with vitreous - enamelled panels for Abacus Municipals Ltd (Fig. 40). Not much has changed in the design of these shelters since this date in term of form or visual expression. The simple cantilevered construction with glass panels expressed a feeling of lightness and openness but was, and is not functionally successful. These shelters offer little protection from rain or wind. Enclosed bus shelters are of more benefit in this regard but have the disadvantage of being dark and unwelcoming. The only real change in bus shelter design since the 1950's has been in the materials used.

Construction now consists of mild steel or aluminium frame with toughened glass panels. The glass is presently being replaced by acrylic plastics.

Around the time David Mellor was designing this shelter, the Design Council movement was beginning in Britain, and this saw the awareness for improved street furniture design on the street scene in Britain. Because of this, many companies have improved their standards of products to be able to compete with other manufacturers and designers.

As the result of a report - the Worboys report by the ministry of Transport which was encouraged by the Design Council, David Mellor was also involved in the design of a Traffic Signal System (Fig. 41), of which were are all very familiar with to-day. This report resulted in the traffic signal system being overhauled and rationalised - the optical system was intensified and plastics or plastic coated materials were introduced to minimise maintenance costs. Black was and is the colour adopted for traffic signals for the reasons of visibility and glare, although a new style of light has been introduced into Dublin. These lights are white in colour and spherical in shape. These can be seen on the Old Airport Rd. The idea of using white has not been very successful as it is difficult to see the light colour. Visually they are much more interesting and they blend in with the street scene. It may be necessary for improvement in the optical arrangement before these lights are introduced throughout the country.

The growing practice of funding street equipment from advertising revenue should be noted (parking meters have just recently been introduced to this system of funding - Fig. 42).

Britain's 50,000 parking metres have never been much of an ornament. At best they are little noticed impositions on the street scene: at worst, standing in serried ranks in Edinburg's Georgian squares or London's more dignified streets, they are an ill-mannered and insistent intrusion. They can exert a greater impact on the scene that their humble function deserves.

To make matters much worse, parking meters are now beginning to sprout advertising. Local authorities up and down the country have been

fast talked into allowing advertising on their meters by a couple of enterprising businessmen from the midlands. The first ads were, carried in weatherproof plastics and fixed to the head of the meter, below the parking regulations.

In their natural concern to collect a little extra revenue, the local authorities seem to have overlooked the effort the decisions will have on the environment. From being a necessary veil, but at least one that is painted in inconspicuous colours, parking meters have suddenly become yet another brash, glaring and badly considered blot on the street scene.

The next step could easily be pressure to expand the size of the meters so that they can take more advertising. The move comes just as the Design Council's street furniture advisory committee seems to be making good progress into its campaign to upgrade the quality of street furniture and remove much of the 'permanent litter' that clutters our streets. The committee would like to persuade local authorities to stop the rush of advertisement spreading any further over the country's meter. If it doesn't succeed, we can expect posters hanging from every lamp post and traffic light.

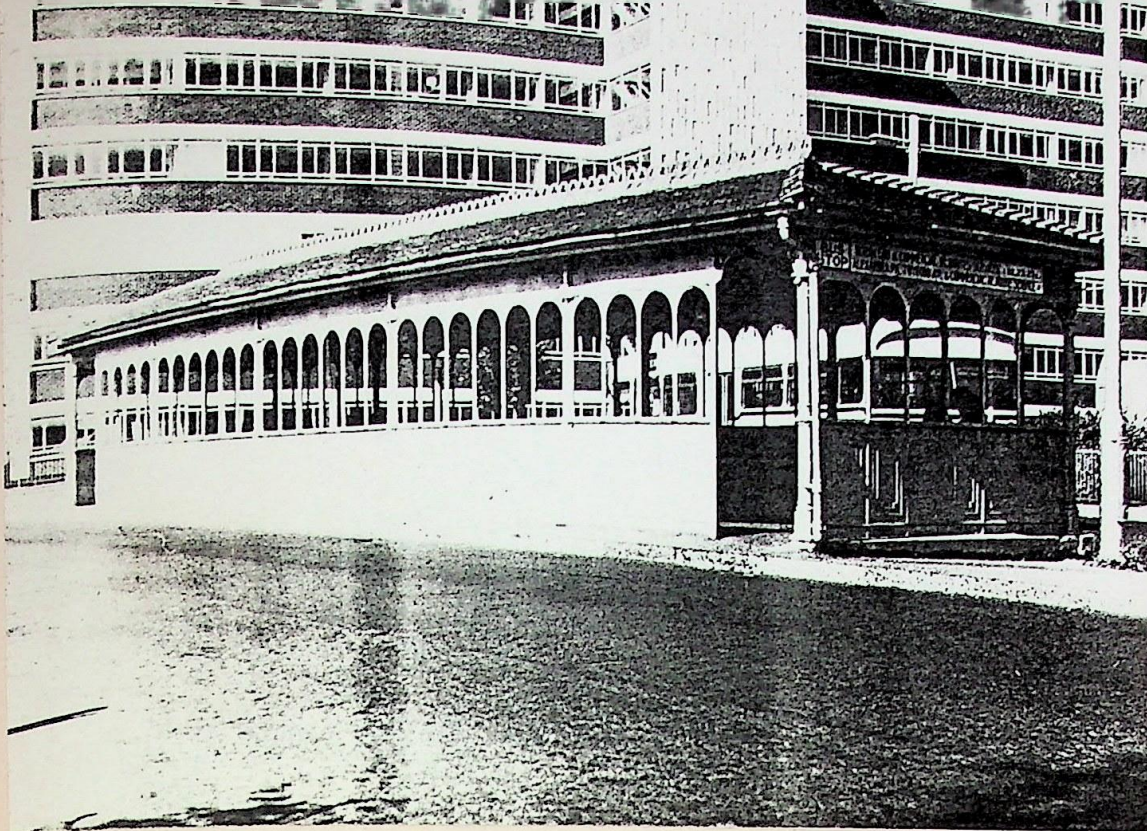
Most of the bill-posting companies that offer bus shelter and poster display units to local councils have set themselves high standards of design, but the temptation inherent in this form of funding should be constantly scrutinised. The saving of rate payers money can be a comfortable but false justification for the inappropriate placing of advertisement so that they work against the principles of good street design and distort the functional placement of the relevant equipment.

In the siting and location of bus-shelters to-day, although primarily governed by the bus route, it is important that it does not intrude on the visual impact of the street scape. It must avoid any obstruction to drivers sightlines towards signs and other traffic and keep the best possible clearance for pedestrians on the pavements.

A very bad example of the siting of bus shelters is in Middle Abbey Street in Dublin. To begin with, the pavement is very narrow thus

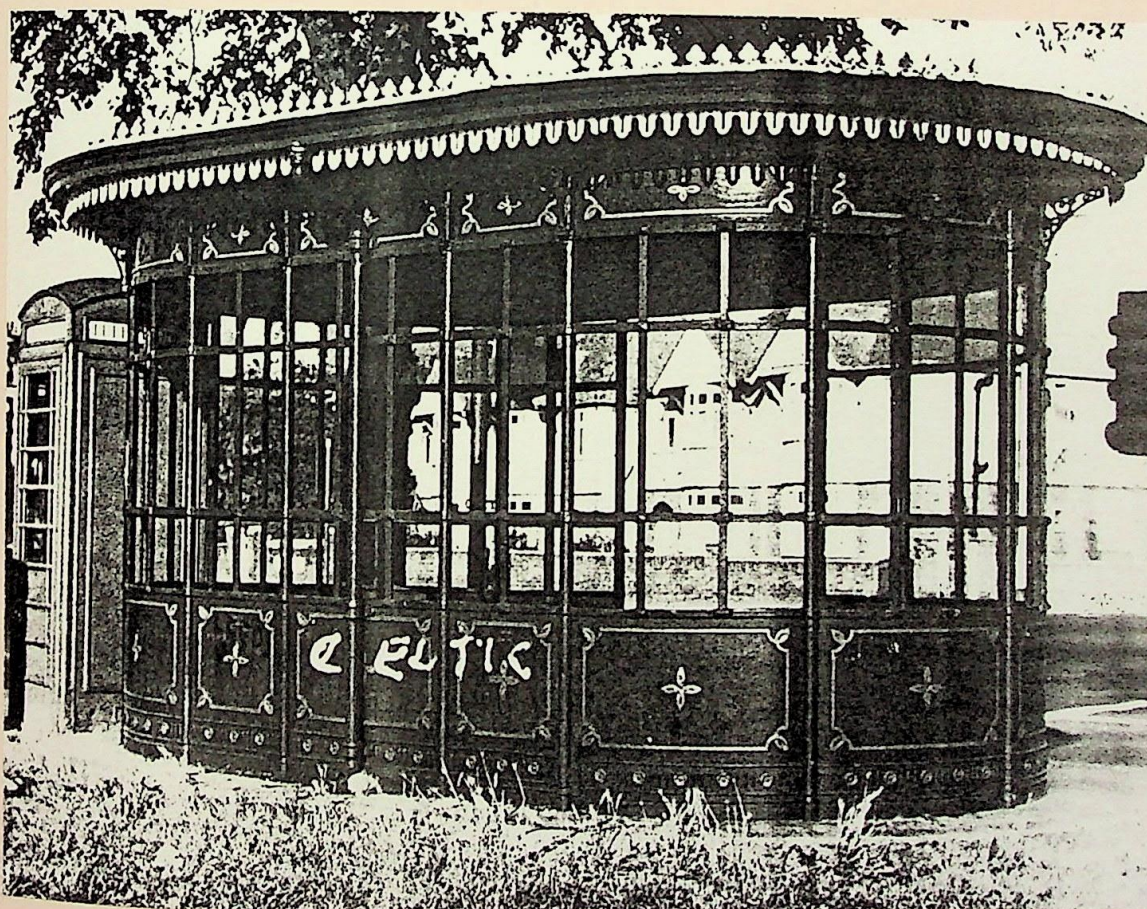
inhibiting the movement of pedestrians. To add to this, bus shelters, designed by Adshell Ltd., have been placed along the length of the street. These shelters, of the cantilevered type have no glass panels to allow light onto the street, offer minimal protection to the bus passenger and just create a very dark sombre street scape - Fig. 44.

Bus shelters are popular items of pleasure for the vandal. It can act as a canvas for a new type of art form that has become so developed that no amount of money is spared on materials such as spray paint and permanent markers. A bus shelter fitted with unbreakable glass, bolted seats and steel fittings all coated with a special material to repel spray paint, is not an uncommon sight to-day. It is important, though that the aesthetic qualities of bus shelters are not forgotten in our efforts to form an effective shield against vandalism. Acrylic plastics are now being used to replace the glass in shelters. This and other developments (special coatings) must be used in both visual and technological terms to produce benefits of reduced vandalism, costs, increased strength and ease of maintenance.



One of the earliest iron shelter made by D. Rowell & Co., London and dates from 1920. It still survives to-day in Portsmouth.

Fig. 39



This shelter, in Northampton dates from 1920's. Most of the glass panels have now been smashed.

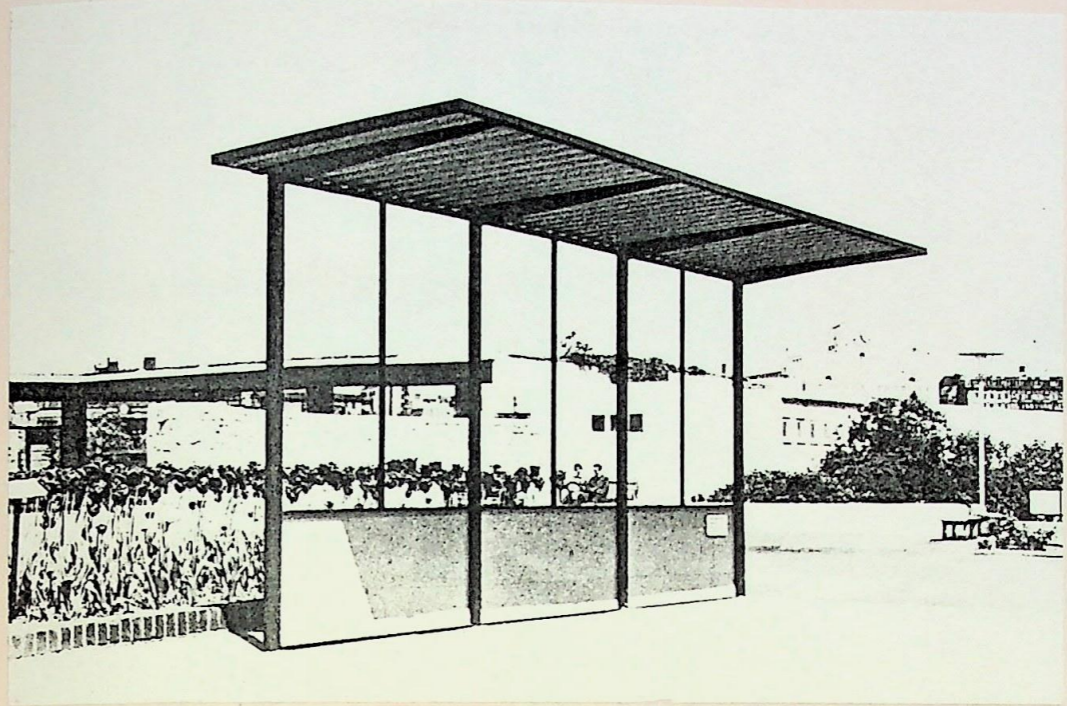


Fig. 40 Bus shelter designed by David Mellor.

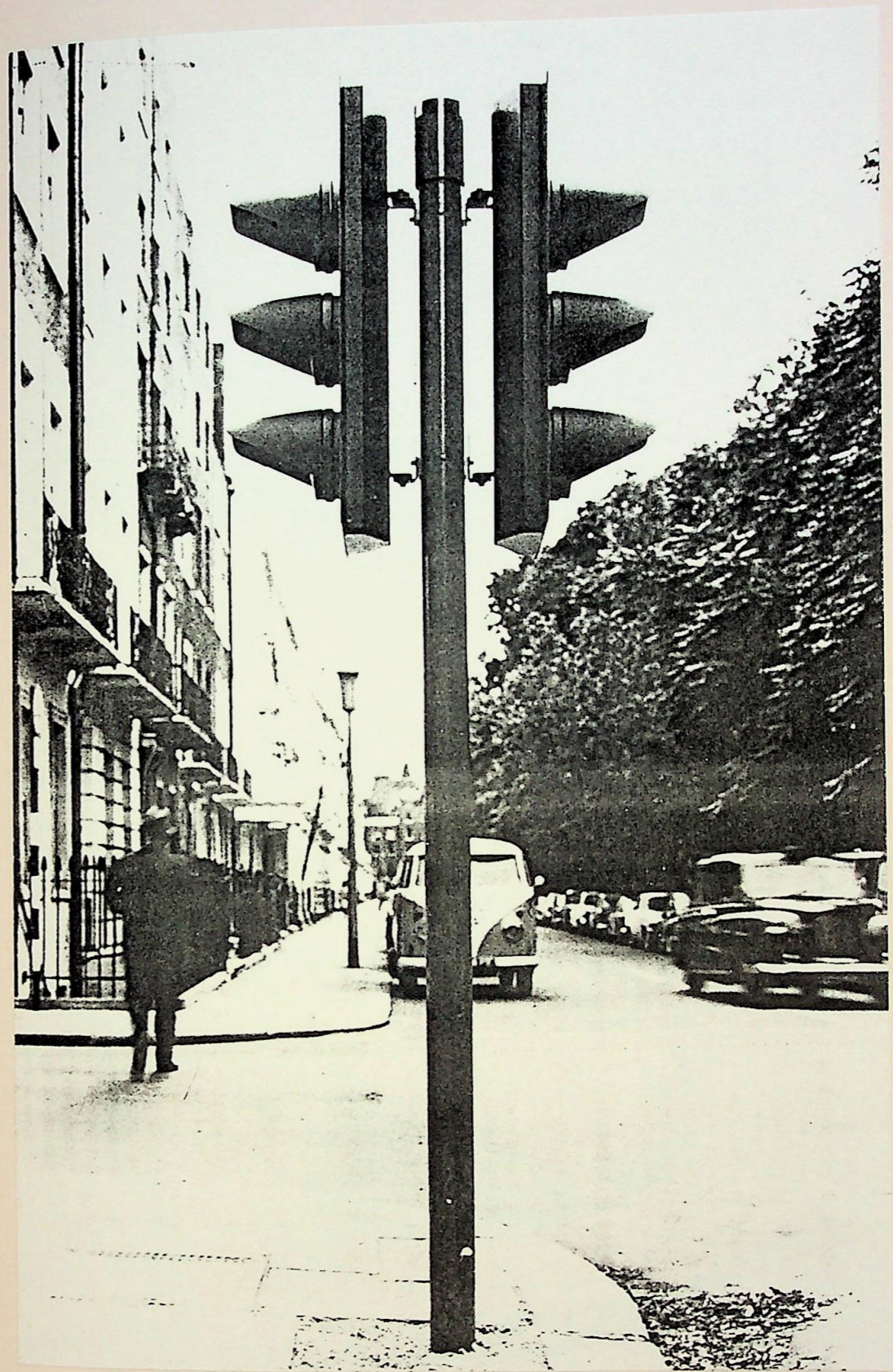


Fig. 41 Traffic signal system designed by David Mellor.

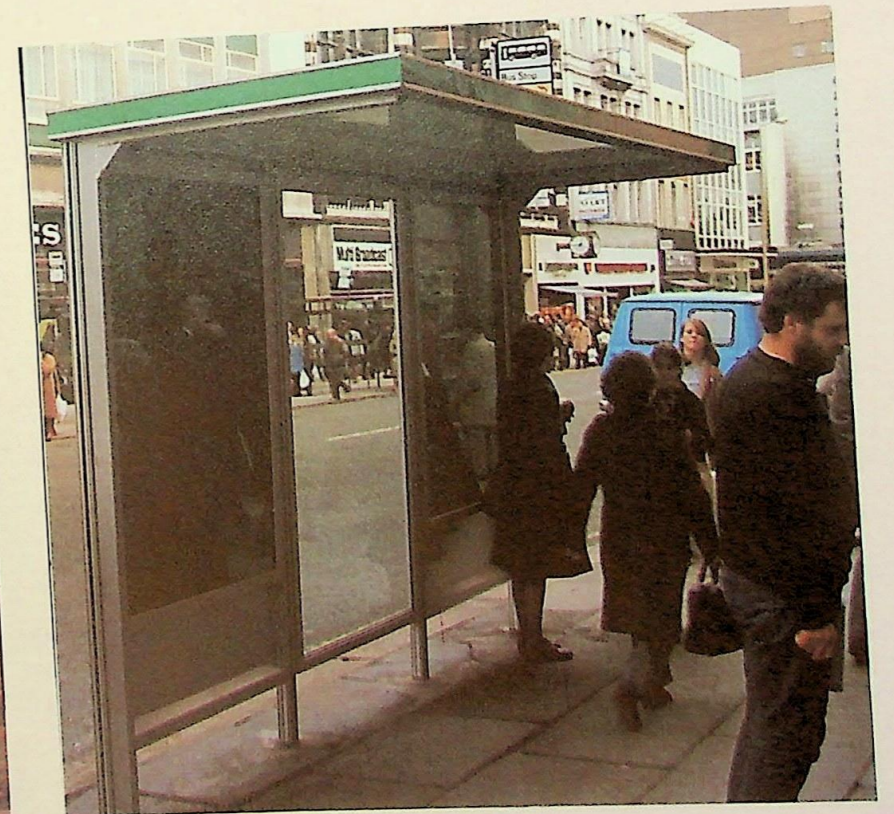
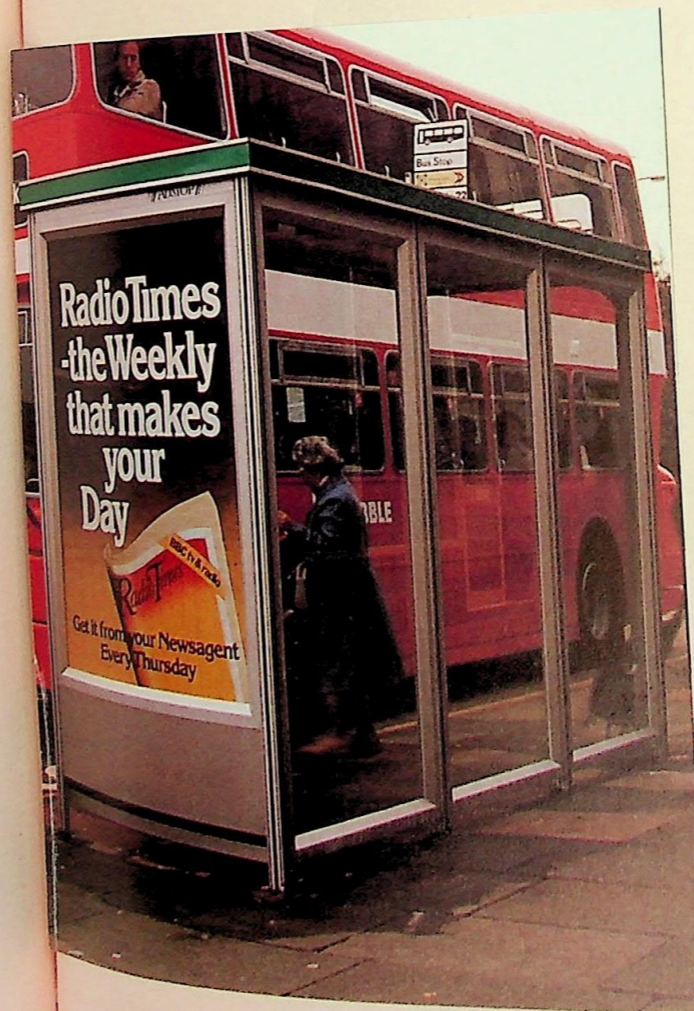


Fig. 42

Advertising on parking meters is an ill-mannered and insistent intrusion.



Fig. 43
These modular bus stop shelters are manufactured by Southern Metal Fabrications Ltd., for Adstop Ltd.



Modern bus shelters are designed with vandals in mind, but are also used as advertising bases.

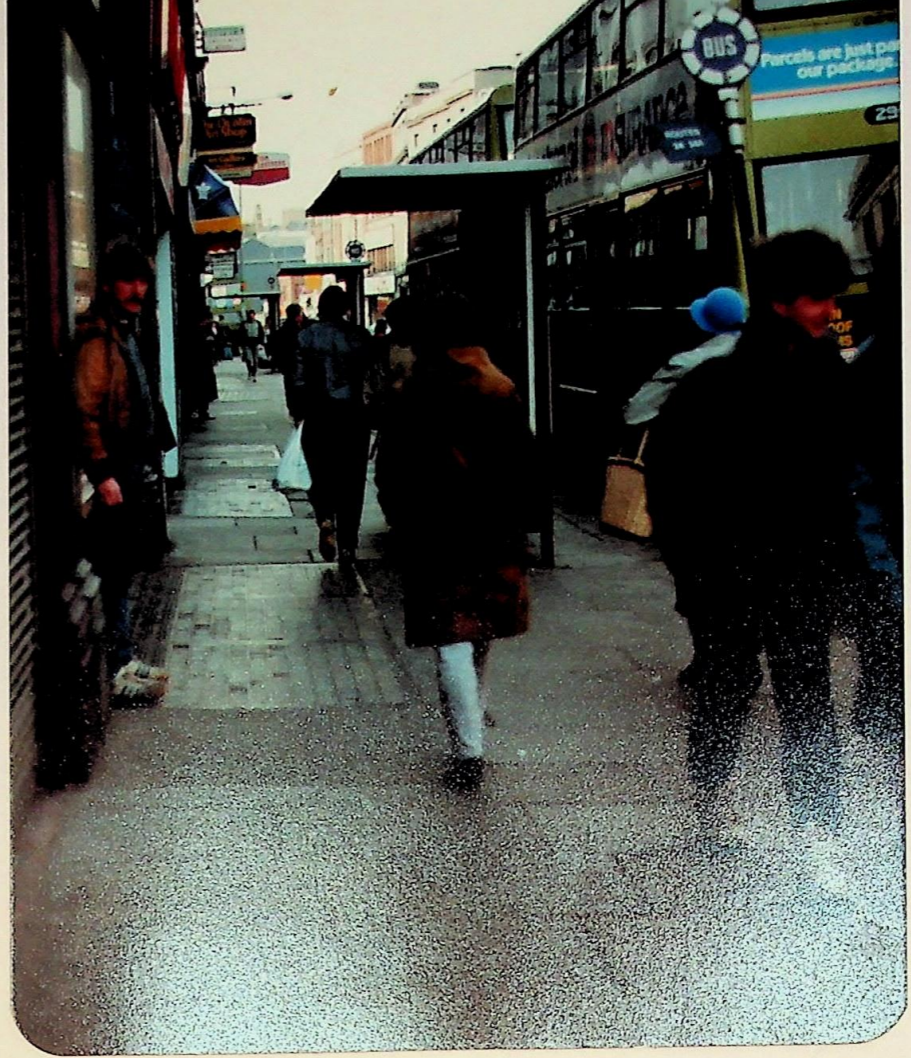


Fig. 44 Abbey St., Dublin



Putting it all together

'No single element in a city is the kingpin or the key, The mixture itself is the kingpin, and it's mutual support is the order'.

You may think to yourself that all problems of confusion on the streets would be solved if co-ordinated sets of street furniture were designed and marketed together. It seems like a great idea at the outset, but there are however very real difficulties and some disadvantages in initiating and carrying through such schemes in which a family relationship between components is based on a rigid style of design.

Except in a new town, no authority is likely to begin afresh and even if this were possible, the cycle of change for different items and the later introduction of new materials and manufacturing techniques could lead to difficulties in the comfortable assimilation of new components into the range e.g. take a bus shelter, a seat and a litter bin marketed in a co-ordinated range. Chances are, the litter bin will have to be replaced many times during the life time of either the seat or the shelter, and that the seat will be replaced sometime during the life of the shelter. Each item would date the other.

On reflection, therefore, it is probably more fruitful in the long term for authorities to aspire to a lesser degree of co-ordination without discarding all the thinking of a co-ordinated system.

The idea of the family should be retained and just because total stylistic co-ordination of street furniture is seldom possible or practical, the theme of matching parts should not be abandoned altogether. There remains a very strong argument in favour of co-ordinated sets of components on a smaller scale, covering aspects of a single need.

This argument can easily be applied to seating design. When we view the streets as places for people to meet, to converse and to watch the day go by, we see how important it is to satisfy this demand and provide seating so that these activities can be enjoyed. Public seating traditionally lined our sea-side promenades and town parks but with the introduction of pedestrian precincts, many more opportunities have been created for their use.

As with lamp posts, many original examples still exist reflecting the Victorian period of ornamental cast iron. Most of these seats date from the nineteenth century. Very few seats in use to-day reflect any type of elegance once associated with public seating. Simple shapes to ease construction and cost and reduce or deter vandalism are used everywhere. Although serviceable, these simple forms are of no great visual interest; more in need are the diminishing number of fanciful cast iron framed ones that proliferated in the Victorian and Edwardian era's. Thankfully, a large number of these survive in Dublin, in St. Stephen's Green and its periphery - Fig. 45. With these, as with so much else, designers really let themselves go with every conceivable style. A particular feature of such frames is the use of animal and plant forms, examples of the naturalistic school of design which, beginning in the 1840's flowed into the Art Nouveau style of the last years of the 19th Century and the early years of this. Indeed, some of the designs border on the Surrealistic school of the 1920's. The most famous of this type is the series of extraordinary benches lining the Victorian Embankment in London. When the so called Cleopatra's Needle obelisk was put up in 1874, it inspired the firm - Albion Ironworks of Westminster to make the benches which are supported either by sphinxes or crouching camels - Fig. 46.

Seating in public areas now is much more prone to wear and tear, and the designs currently being used reflect this. Manufacturers of public seating have become very conscious of this and also for the need for co-ordination - designing and marketing seats in different length and with corner and back to back versions which allow flexibility within a well ordered scheme. It is important for seating to be arranged, not with municipal order in mind, so much as with an appreciation of how people will enjoy the location.

One range of seating based on the modular systems is a range of perch seating from Amstrad Systems Ltd., of London which was recognised as fulfilling a need previously not satisfied by conventional seating, that is public seating in areas which have to cater for a high volume of people, intermittently, where economic use of space is important and pedestrian traffic must not be impeded - Fig. 47.

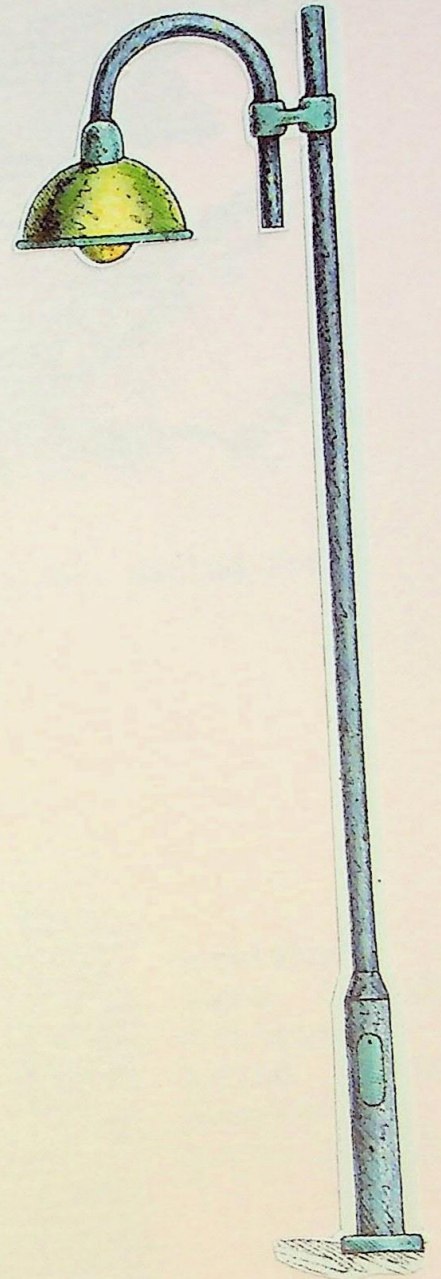
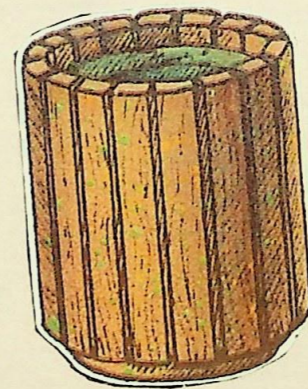
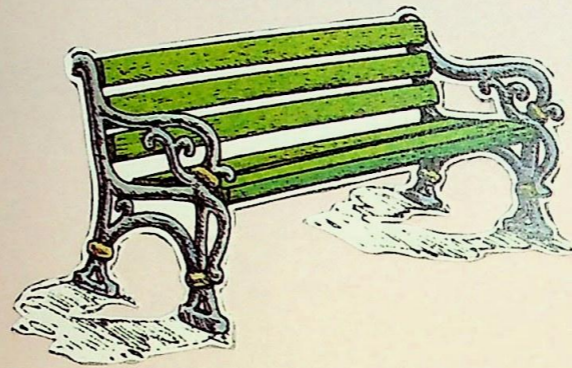
The seat pivots under its own weight, without complicated weights and springs. The foamed polypropylene is available in a full range of colours, including strong primaries. Units can be free standing, designed to fasten directly onto walls or bus shelters and are easily cleaned underneath by street sweepers.

Although specifically designed to fulfil occasional seating requirements, the perch seating is in fact very comfortable and the position of the seat enables elderly people to lower and raise themselves more easily than say the range of seating designed by Macemain Engineering - Fig. 48 - which would prove very difficult for elderly people. Though comfortable to sit on, the units are impossible to lie on - an advantage for local authorities which have a problem with vagrants.

Marketed along with this range of seating is a litter bin designed by Goodwin Wheeler - Fig. 49. This clean lined wall mounted bin has the same form and detailing as the seats and both together make a very good co-ordinated range.

Another very successful co-ordinated range of furniture is the Boulevard range designed by David Hodge Associates and manufactured by Mono Concrete Ltd. - Fig. 50. The range which includes planters, seating, bollard, litter bins and grit bins is manufactured in coloured concrete with deep exposed aggregate available in three colour options. The furniture consists of modular nesting sections which combine to form different heights and functions. These components are put to various uses to simplify manufacture and stocking. The modular concept allows flexibility of layout and height, ease of transportation and positioning

and the design also provides consistency of colour, texture and dimensional detail throughout to ensure the items form a harmonious range.



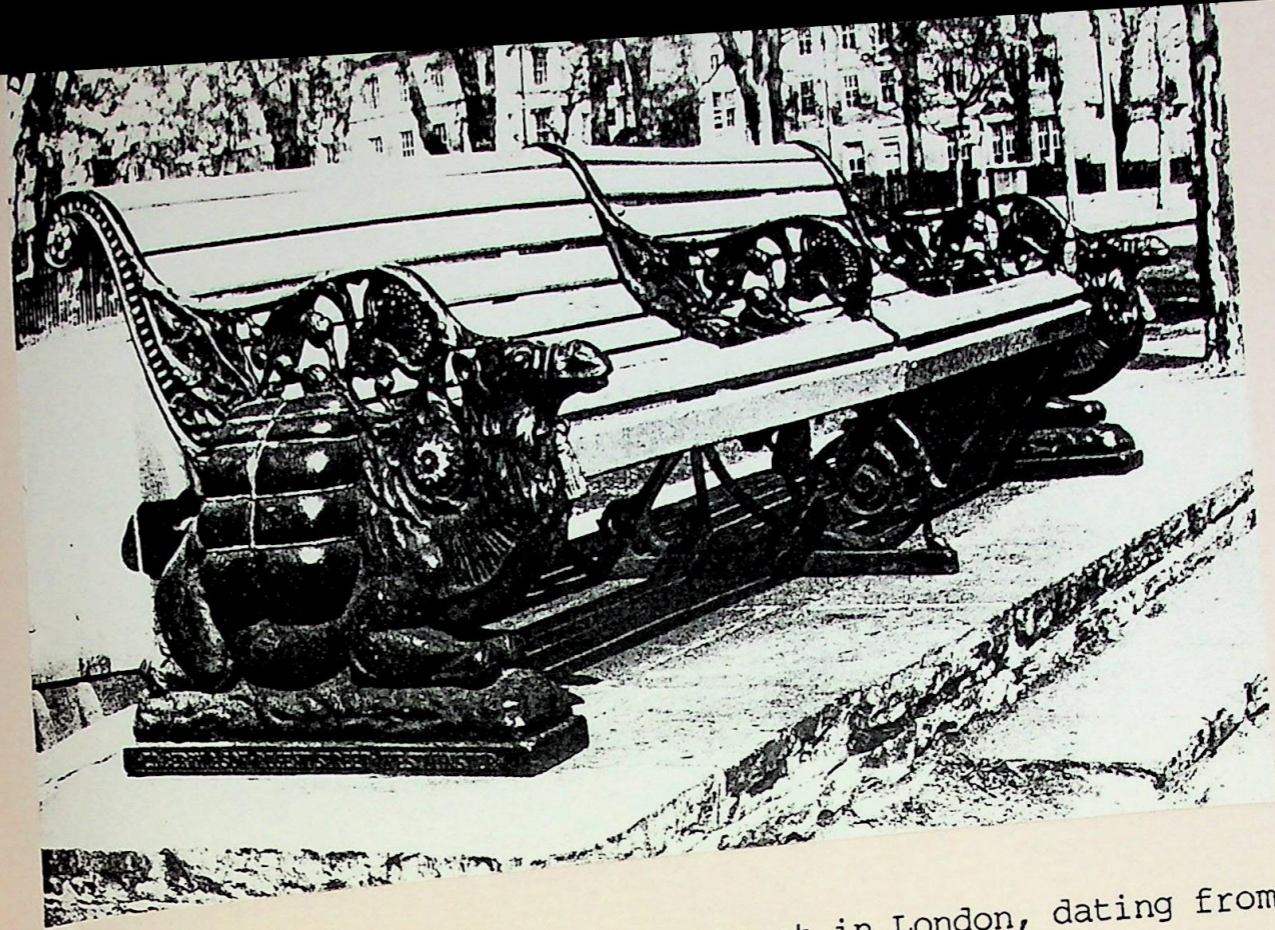


Fig. 46 Seat lining the Victorian Embankment in London, dating from 1874.

Fig. 45



Surviving seats of the Victorian Period in St. Stephen's Green, Dublin.

Co-ordination between seats and litter bins seems to be in the minds of street furniture designers and manufacturers.

The main problem associated with litter bins is their siting. They are objects that we don't like to acknowledge, yet it is our own fault that their need exists. Street pavements are the giant recipients of the city's offal, from the sheer and indestructible shards of the packaging industry to the more supple kind of litter that mingles with the warm organic deposits left behind by uncounted thousands of man's best friends. A study of public disposal habits confirms that people will throw away on the public streets, umbrella's, newspapers, beer cans and almost anything else you can name.

During an academic year, ten thousand students on a campus will throw away a million chewing gum wrappers, sweet papers and cigarette packs. The United States discards 440,000 tons of rubbish everyday - an amount which has increased 60% since 1950.

There is a real need to understand human behaviour when siting litter bins. These are a constant source of argument: one school of thought has it that litter bins, especially when full (they always seem to be full) cause unsightly litter rather than curing the problems created by our society. If litter bins are merely placed in arbitrary positions on pedestrian routes, they tend to encourage an ill aimed throw which deposits the litter on the pavement. The obvious rule therefore is to site bins close to the point of litter production in positions where they can be integrated with other elements of street furniture, like seating, and where they can be easily emptied.

It only seems to have been in recent years that we have heard so much about anti-litter campaigns, but this idea was first introduced into Britain by Harry Peach who has an extraordinary influence on the street scene in Britain in the late 20's and early 30's.

One of his main concerns was litter and he recognised that "some Baden Powell was needed to institute Associations of men scouts, to go

about picking up waster paper". As it was, the Women's institute, the girl guides and boy scouts played a major role in making England more litter conscious.

In 1931, Roger Peach, son of Harry, who shared his fathers interests, produced a leaflet "Litter can be prevented" which advertised the products of Dryad metal works for which he worked. He brought together business and design interests by arguing against litter and illustrating a variety of models of strong galvanised metal litter bins which were as each to fit as they were difficult to remove - Fig. 51.

The actual design of the bins themselves is critical. Not much has changed in the design of litter bins from this time when it was a new concept. Materials have changed, from galvanised metal, plastics have taken over but metal is still used for liners. The use of plastics allows colour to be introduced with more economy, but recent years have seen a move away from plastics to other materials like concrete - to give weight and stability, - back to metal for strength.

The litter bin designed by Gerard Tyler of Kilkenny Design Workshops and in abundant supply on the streets of Dublin fails in a number of senses - Fig. 52. Firstly, the openings in which the litter is deposited is too small, thus requiring of the user to put their hand right into the unit - not the most hygienic thing to do and discouraging litter being deposited. In comparision to a litter bin designed by Landscapes Ltd. - Fig. 53 - which has a wide mouth, it is to be favoured, as it hides the litter within it.

Litter bins invariably take a pounding in busy areas, even in normal use.

Vandalism is also a problem, particularly where it is encouraged by poor cleaning and maintenance. How many times have you drank a can of coke, and walked endlessly with an empty can in your hand looking for a litter bin or one that is not overflowing? It is no wonder that people

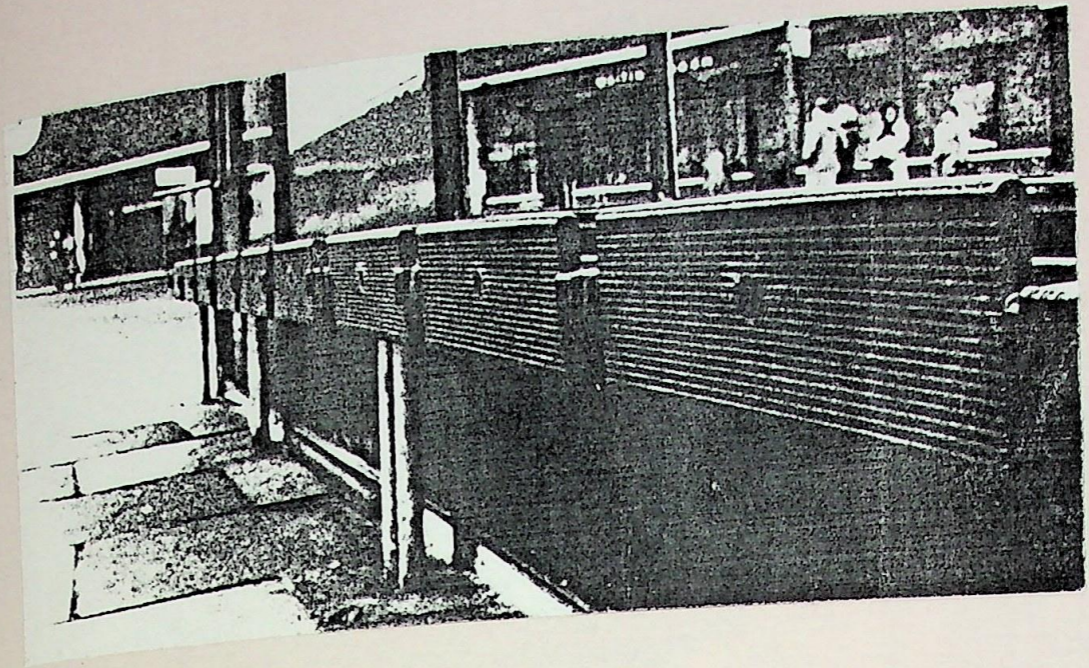
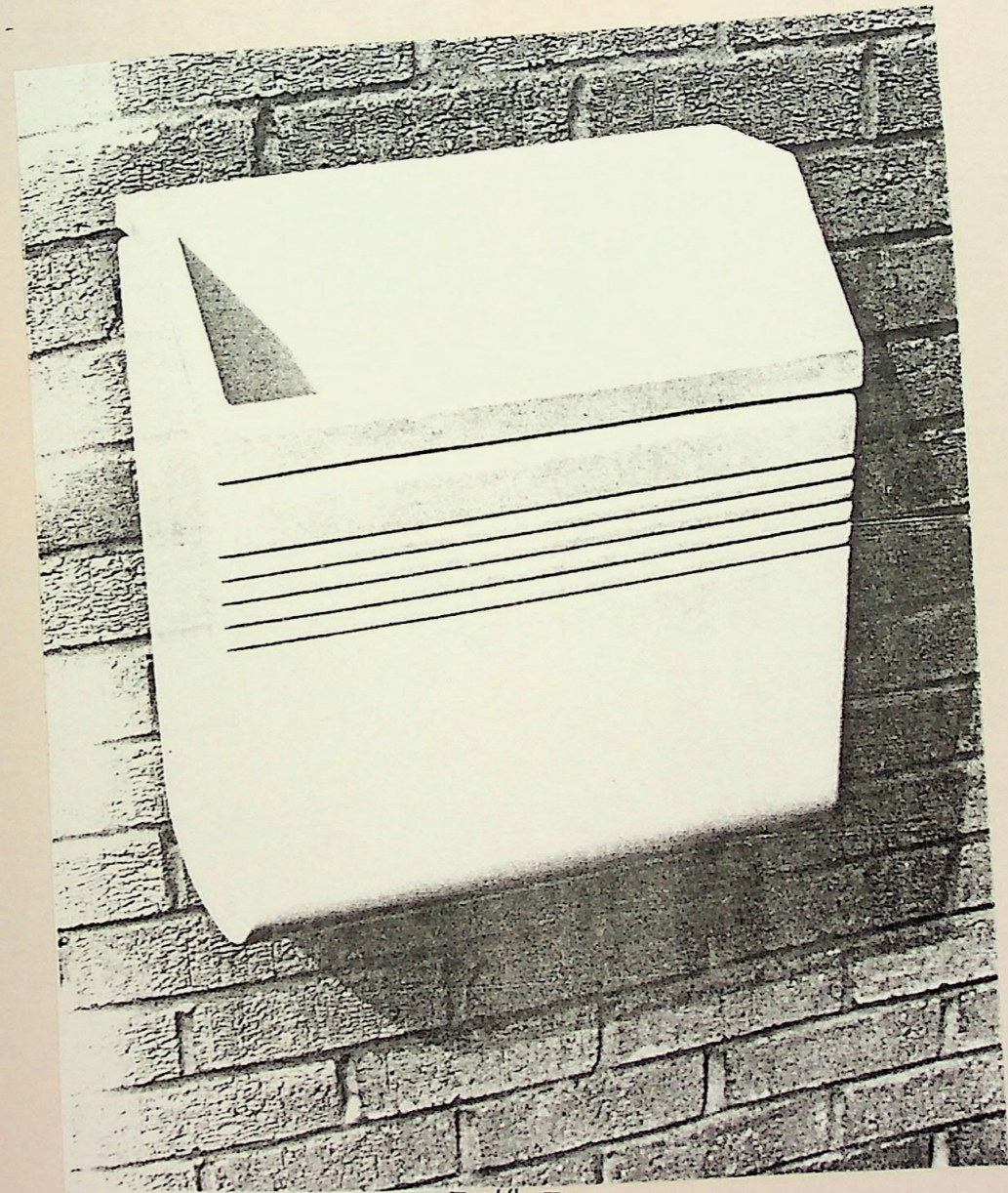


Fig. 47 Amstrad Systems Ltd. seating

Fig. 49 Litter bin designed by Goodwin-Wheeler



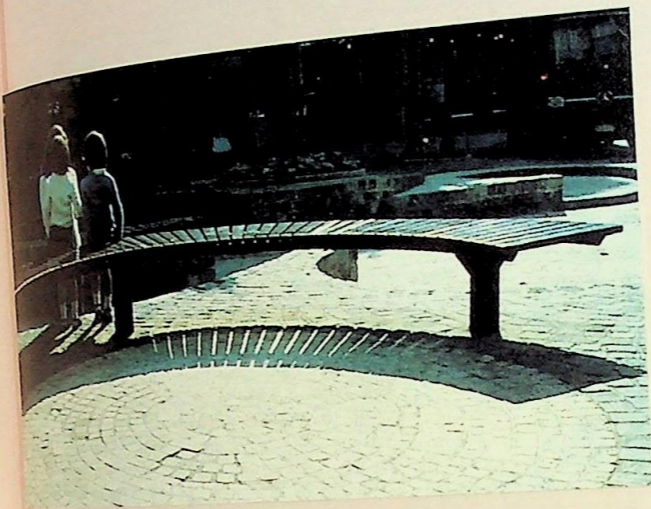
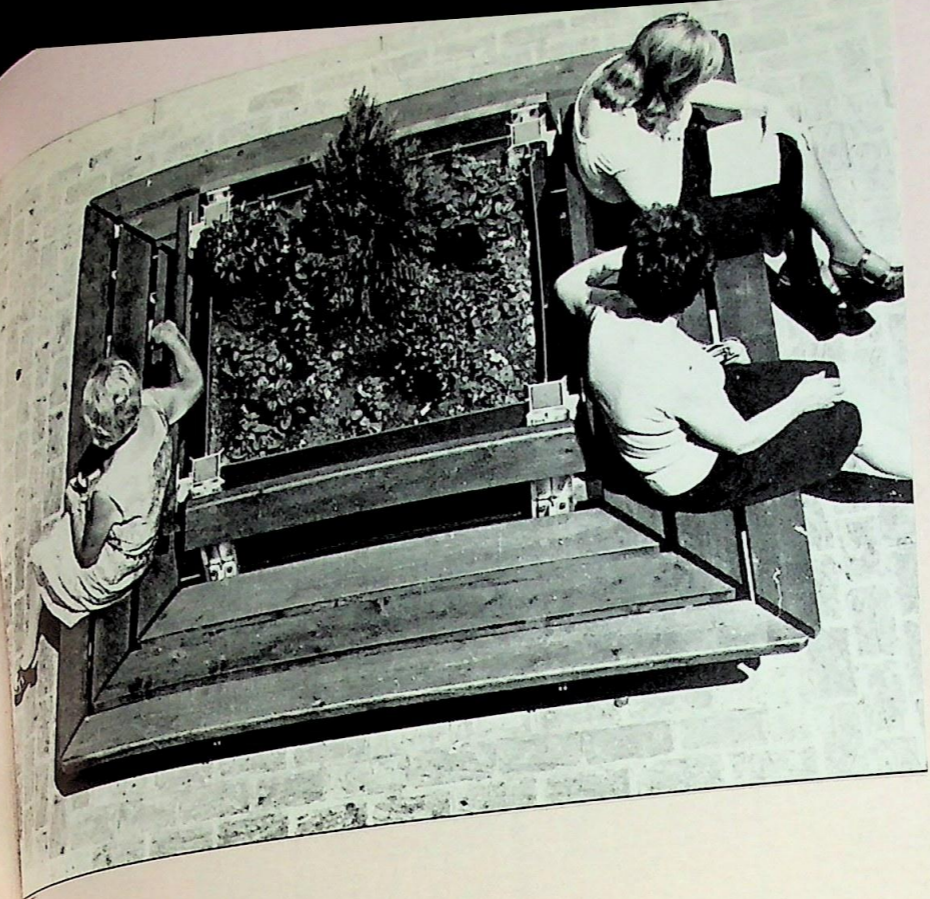


Fig. 48
Public seating, currently being designed reflects the need for measures to combat wear and tear in simplicity of shape and materials used.

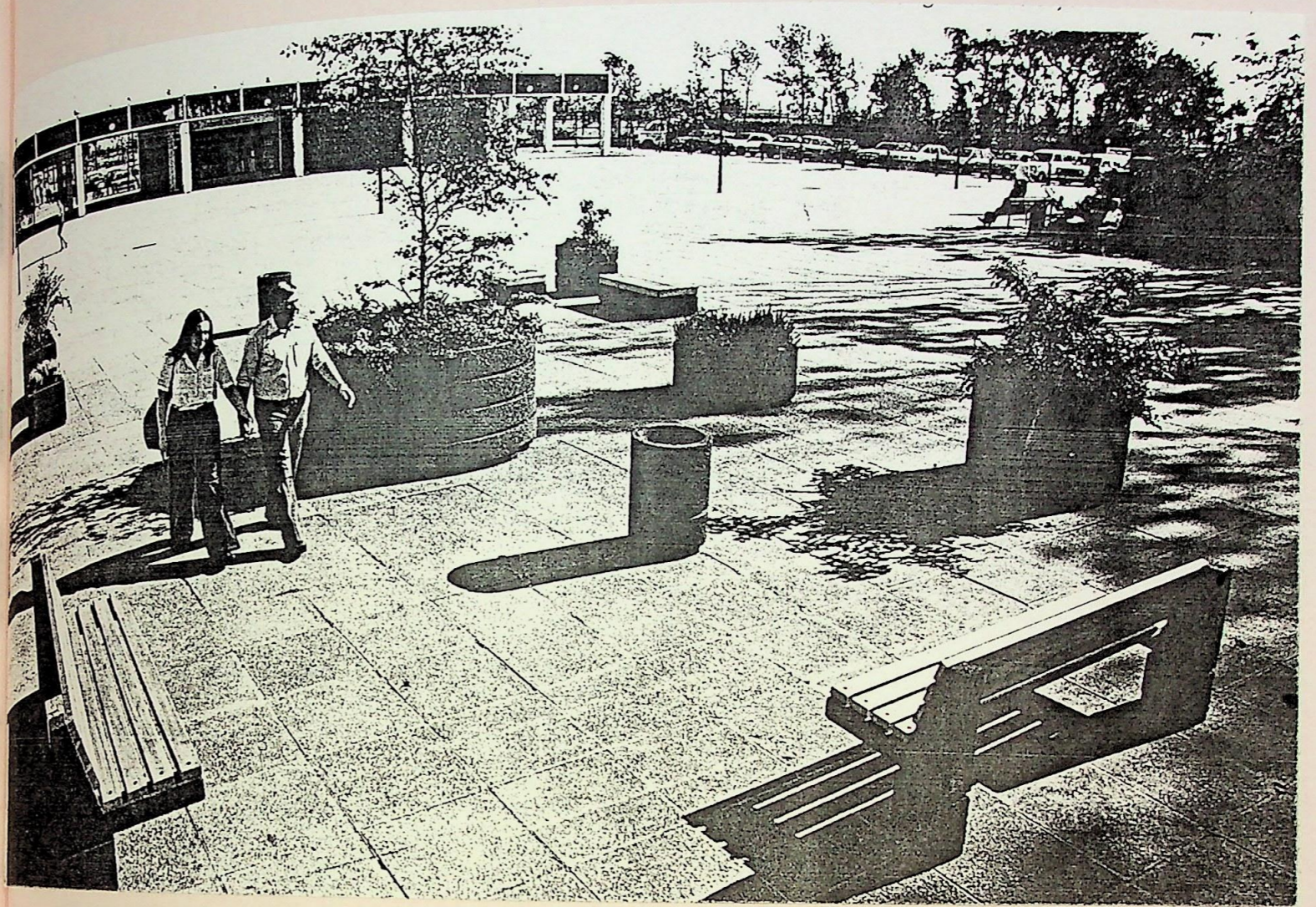


Fig. 50 Boulevard Range of co-ordinated street furniture

are encouraged to deposit such items on the street. Lids seem to be of doubtful benefit and plastic liners, while simplifying emptying and reducing staining, rarely fit bins which were not designed for them - Fig. 54.

One successfully litter bin design in recent years has been the Topsy litter bin by Glasdon Ltd. - Fig. 55.

This bin which is easy to install, easy to empty, is an attractive piece of street furniture. It's designers have managed to avoid many of the practical problems so often associated with litter bins in public places - expensive siting, awkward locking and emptying and poor resistance to fire and vandalism. Topsy consists of a galvanised steel liner with a lockable plastic outer casing. To empty it, the refuse collector unlocks the bin with a simple plastic key, removes the lightweight outer cover, and the steel liner full of rubbish has only to be lifted seven inches to clear the shallow base. It is considerably easier than the usual job of lifting a heavy liner right up and out of it's casing.

The outer casing is made from tough polyethylene which is easy to clean. The unit comes with a Firexpire option - this incorporates an extinguishing plate which in the event of a fire drops down from the lid of the bin, sealing off the steel liner. It is activated by a heat sensitive thermoplastic trigger which softens with the initial impact of the heat and releases the plate. This feature has contributed to it's wide acceptance by fire officers, and it's popularity for use in enclosed areas.

If 'all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely player', the street furniture installation process is complicated by the fact that the individual players have different scripts and it is sometimes by no means certain they they are in the same play. Co-ordination is on the face of it relatively easy, but in fact it is a very difficult and complex business involving many agencies in central and local government. The owner of the street must be more clearly identified and must accept more fully the responsibility for design.

Then, ownership can lead to a definition of intent and to design control
- and even perhaps, to rationalisation of the organisation whereby all
these different bits of equipment are put into our roads and open spaces.

Bin designed by
Landscape designs
Ltd.

Bins are marketed with
other items of street
furniture in a
co-ordinated range.

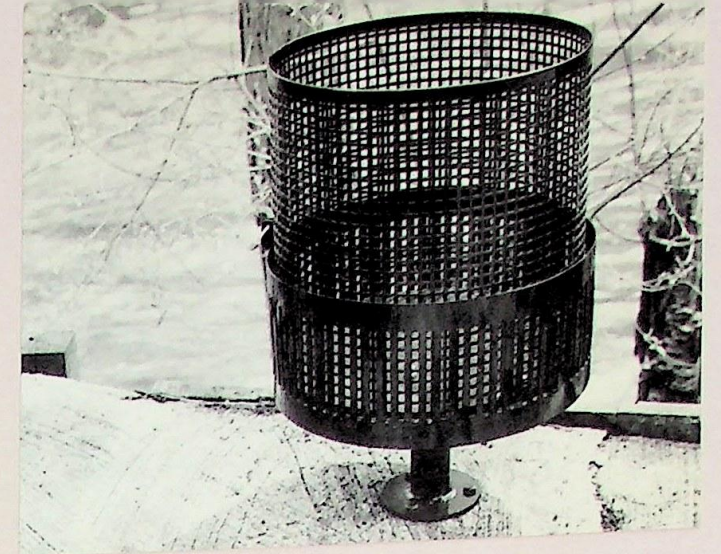
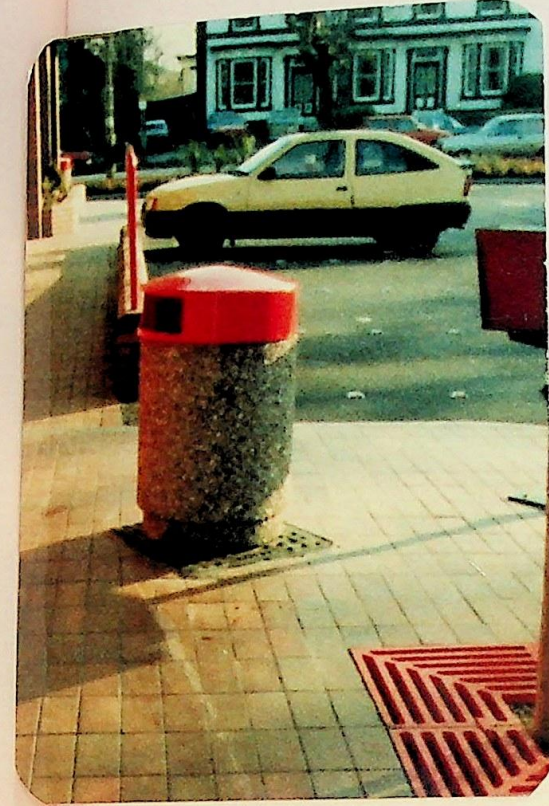


Fig. 53

The bin designed by
G. Tyler of
Kilkenny Design
Workshops



Certain bins can
be integrated into
the areas they
are placed

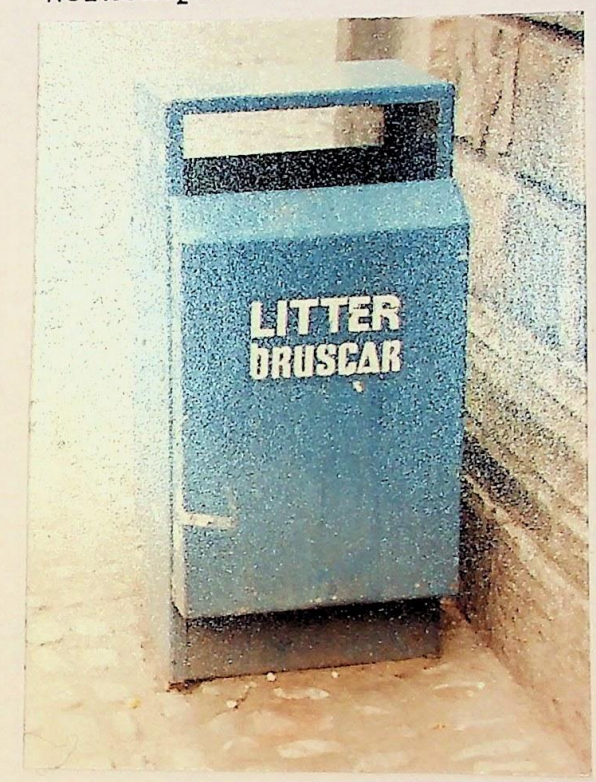


Fig. 52



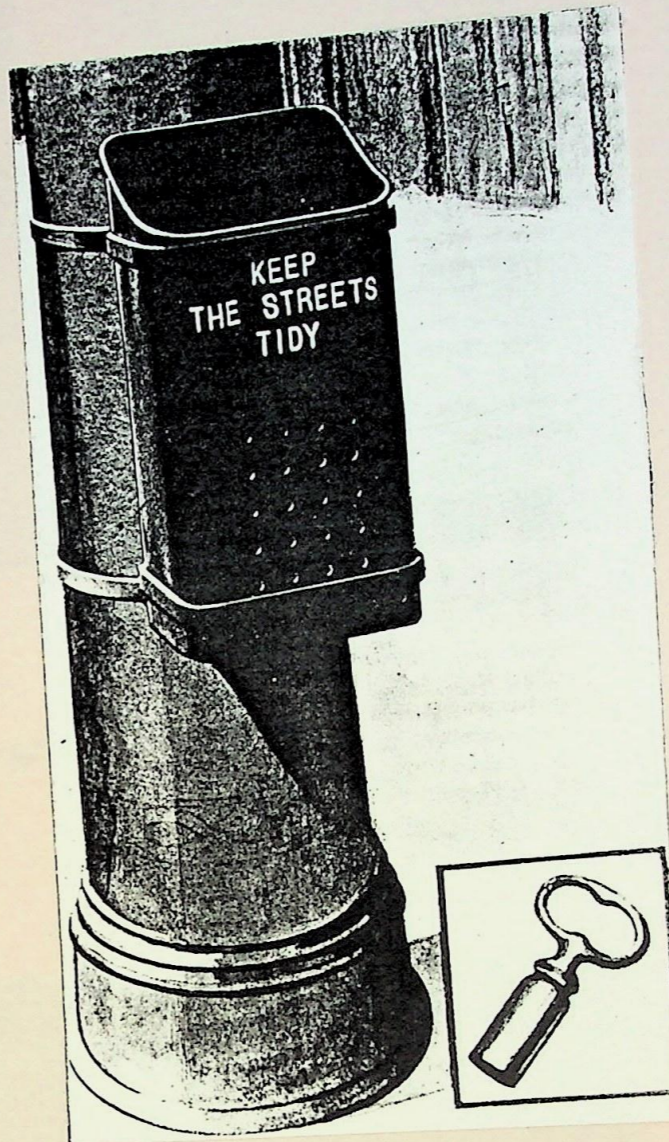


Fig. 51 Litter bin designed
by Roger Peach and made by
by Dryad Megal Words
c 1930.

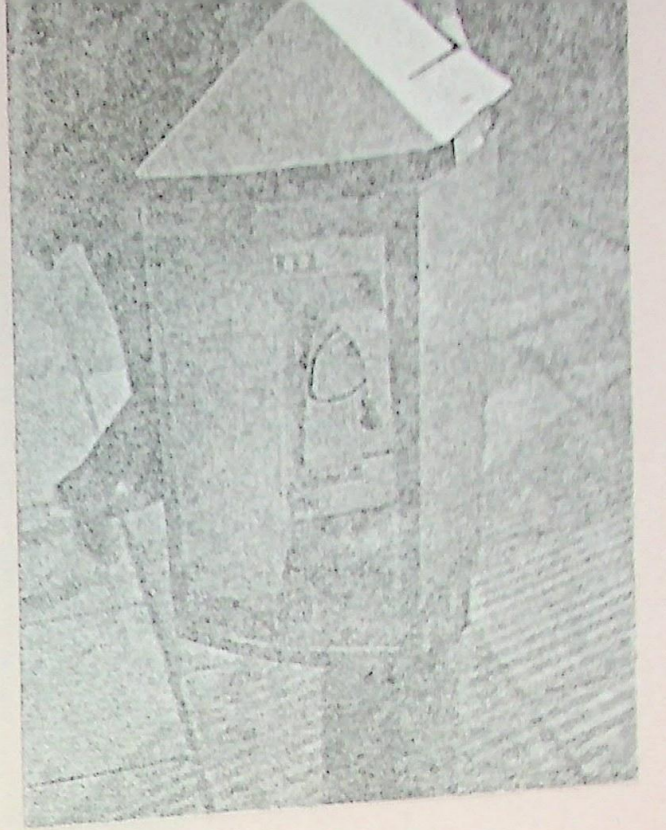
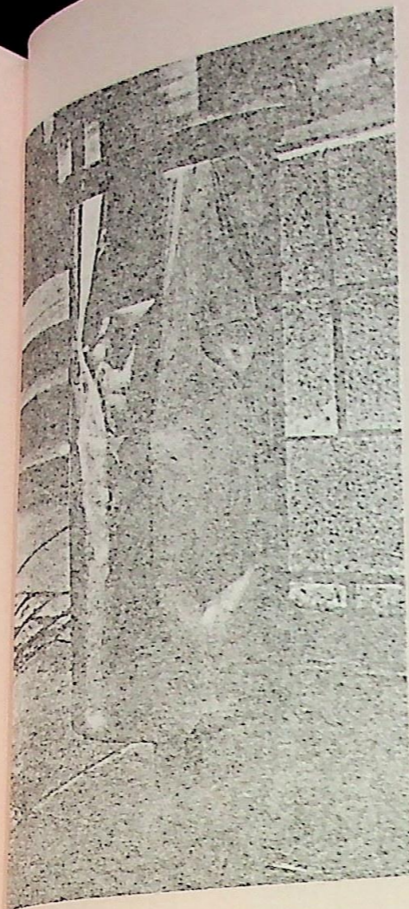


Fig. 54

What happens to
litter bins in practice.

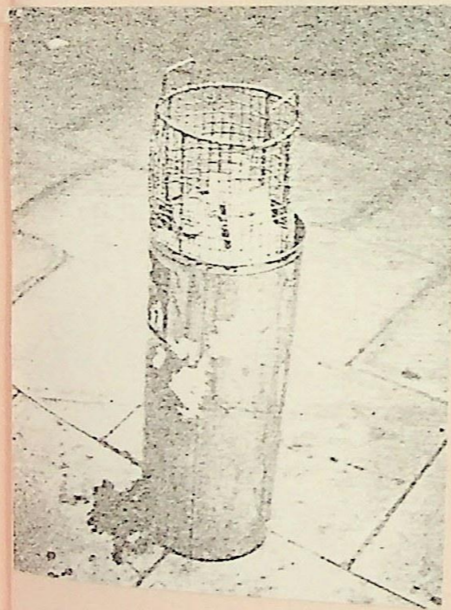




Fig. 55 Topsy litter bin manufactured by Glasdon Ltd.

Conclusion

"It's not what you do, it's the way that you do it" is probably the cardinal rule in furnishing our urban open spaces. As necessary as household furniture, street furniture is almost always an after thought in urban surroundings.

The development of street furniture from milepost, railings, torch holders or street lamps, to the many elements we see to-day provides a fascinating history of the use of materials and their effect of the urban scene. The exuberance of Victorian cast iron work or the fun and frolic of wrought iron lamp-brackets, were and are pleasurable incidents in our everyday lives.

Technical co-ordination is the hardest task in the world, but the inherent difficulties of this is no reason for accepting visual mess in our towns, cities and countryside, and it is vital that local authorities exercises more vigilance in co-ordinating the activities of other furniture-erecting agencies and considerably more sensitivity in carrying out their own operations. There is now little excuse for local authorities and the statutory undertakers to make a mess of our surroundings by ill-considered applications of street furniture.

It must also be remembered that the selection and siting of street furniture can never be a once-and-for-all affair. The simplest schemes evolve and expand with time and the products used in them wear or break and have to be replaced. Maintenance is of key importance.

As for the design of the furniture, the past decade has seen the appearance of some excellent pieces, but alas not all the furniture that appears on our street can be talked of in the same fashion. It seems a pity that in times of financial stringency, standards of strength and surface finish have dropped too often to unacceptable levels. The furniture must be designed with vandalism in mind, but this does not

mean eschewing all the aesthetic qualities with this. In conclusion, it is perhaps worth drawing attention to what can be said to be the biggest single improvement to the street scene has been the reversal of pedestrian/vehicle priorities and because of this, designers and planners are given more room and freedom to create an urban environment that we can enjoy.

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