



**Police Memorabilia
Collectors Club**
Uncovering our past
to preserve it for the future



Police Pillars, Posts and Boxes



P. M. C. C. Monograph No. 5

Plymouth City Police

September 2025

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PC Bill May uses a Plymouth Pillar c.1950 – Location unknown

Part of the [Bill Mallett Plymouth City Collection](#)

Photo: Kind permission of **South West Heritage Trust, Devon Heritage Centre**

Welcome to the fifth Monograph produced by the [Police Memorabilia Collectors Club – the PMCC](#).

Club members are researching the locations of the many hundreds, perhaps thousands of police boxes, police pillars and cabinets which were once common in almost every city, borough, burgh and large town in the UK .

Glasgow is said to have had more than 300 boxes in 1939.

Almost everyone would recognise a Dr. Who Box, but there were many other designs.

Police Pillars came in just three designs, two triangular types and one rectangular.

Using every available resource, we have tried to locate where these items of street furniture are now or were once located.



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Plymouth Police History

Plymouth is a city you go *“to”*, not *“through”*!

With its natural harbour, it has been a place of mercantile and marine importance for centuries.

The establishing of the Royal Dockyards cemented the relationship between the town and the Royal Navy which remains to this day.

This link caused the extensive bombing of the area in World War II, known as the Plymouth Blitz.

The Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 required “Boroughs” to establish a ‘Watch Committee’ which would in turn form a police force.

Although some “New Police” were appointed in March 1836, it was not until 31st October 1836 that an organised Plymouth police force paraded for the first time, under Superintendent John Sweett.



This Monograph is about the history of the Plymouth City Police boxes and pillars, which were once a common piece of street furniture around the city.

It is **NOT** a history of the Plymouth City Police, nor is it a comprehensive history of the boxes and pillars.

This is because in the 50+ years since they became obsolete, records have been lost and memories have faded.

A retired officer, Ernest A Dickary wrote a history of the Plymouth Police in 1977 called *"From Rattles to Radios: a History of the Plymouth City Police"*. A copy is deposited with the Plymouth Local Studies Library.

Devonport had a separate Borough Police until the force Amalgamated with Plymouth on 9th November 1914.

On the same day the Stonehouse District of the Devon Constabulary, 'H' Division, also merged with the

Plymouth Police. The Metropolitan Police had a detachment of officers at the Royal Naval Dockyards and there were Railway and Great Western Dock Police constables in the town as well.

Over time the force has been known as the Plymouth Borough Police, the Plymouth Constabulary and from 1928 when city status was conferred on the borough, the Plymouth City Police.

The force amalgamated with the Devon and Exeter Constabulary and the Cornwall Constabulary on the 1st June 1967, to become part of the Devon & Cornwall Constabulary.

The PMCC have a web page which covers a great deal of the force's history. The web address is:

<http://www.pmcc-club.co.uk/plymouth/>

Say the words "Police Box" and most people will immediately think of the

TARDIS used by the BBC character Dr. Who, to move through time and space. A structure which is much larger on the inside than it is on the outside.

However those boxes were designed by Gilbert Mackenzie Trench (1885-1979), an architect and Surveyor to the Metropolitan Police who in 1928 was tasked with designing a new Police Box for the Metropolitan Police.

More than 1,000 were installed across London and his design was also used by the police in Glasgow.

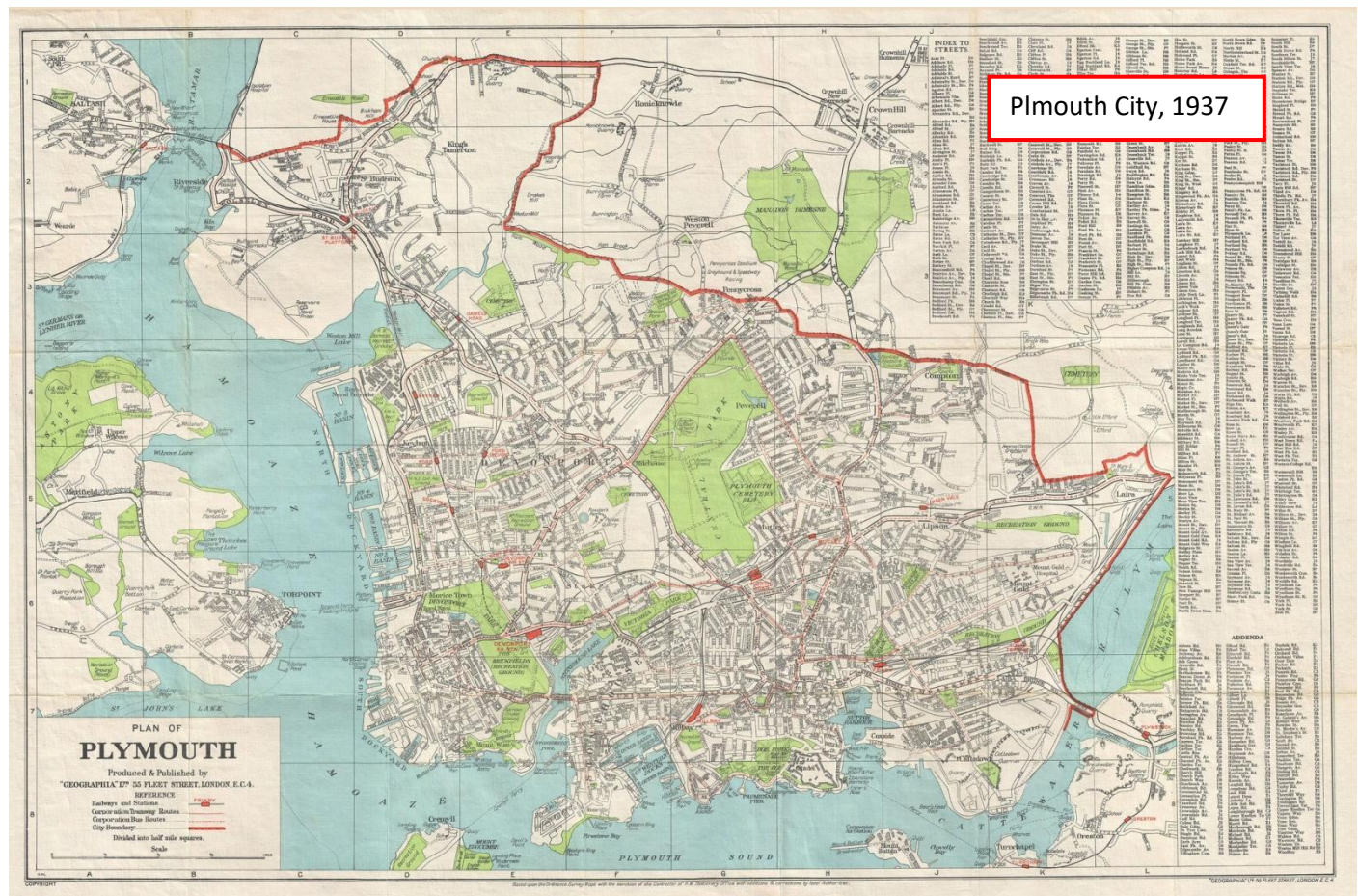
However most police boxes which could be found across City and Borough forces, the length and breadth of the UK, were designed and made locally.

From 1887 until 1941, the Plymouth Police were a joint Police Fire Brigade with the Chief Constable as the head of the service.

Although Exeter was using street fire alarms from the 1890's, the first reference I can find for Plymouth is from July 1909, when the Chief Constable J. D. Sowerby was instructed by the Watch Committee to submit a plan with costings, for a street fire alarm system.

The Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer Joseph Sowerby retired on 31st March 1917. He was succeeded by [Herbert Hards Sanders](#), who had been a detective at New Scotland Yard.

In Sunderland, on the north east coast of Durham, Chief Constable Frederick J Crawley had been wanting to reduce the costs of aging and unsuitable small stations and to



redistribute the men of the force, to better serve the public in the borough.

In 1922 he had persuaded the Watch Committee to back an idea to locate Police Boxes at strategic locations around the borough, each connected

by a telephone to HQ and each with a flashing roof lamp, to attract patrolling constables when they were required.

This was long, long before the days of "personal radios" or any other kind of police radio.

On the 13th July 1923 the scheme went live. Very quickly it proved to be a success. The new way of working included officers reporting on and off duty at boxes, rather than the main stations and then taking time to get to their beats.

The savings made by closing old and worn out police buildings, more than covered the costs of implementing the "Police Box System."

His Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary were impressed and began promoting the idea to police forces around the UK.

Soon Chief Constables from many forces were visiting Sunderland to see the project working for themselves.

After the end of WWI, it was a time of austerity. The human cost of WWI was felt heavily by the country and police officers were being asked to do more with less.

The original way of working, begun in the 1850's, had been overtaken by the motor car. Bicycles were no match for criminals in cars and the size of towns and cities was expanding.

In the spring of 1924, Plymouth Chief Constable Herbert Sanders made the long trip to Sunderland to see the system for himself.

At the time Plymouth had the same problems as Sunderland. There were many small stations, often old and decrepit. The size of the Borough was expanding and with it came an increased workload.

The public were expecting more from the police and for the police to respond faster, so CC Sanders immediately saw the advantages of installing police boxes at strategic locations around Plymouth.

He reported to the Watch Committee who agreed and asked for a plan. The Chief Constable sought tenders for police boxes of a design like those used in Sunderland. In due course Messers. Pearn Brothers made four wooden boxes at a cost of £20 each. Pearn Brothers were builders in Plymouth.

Very quickly the first four police boxes were installed, because on 18th December 1924 the Western Morning News reported that the *"review of the first four police boxes installed in Plymouth was very favourable"*.

An original Sunderland box



They were at Lyndhurst Road,
Peverell, St. Levan Road (Entrance

to the RN Dockyard) Ford, St.
Budeaux Square and Mount Gold
Road.

Seven additional boxes were to be
placed at Compton Village, Laira,
South Devon Place, Tavistock Road,
Stoke, Swilly Hospital, Millbridge
and Pennycomequick. No
photographs of these wooden police
boxes have been found.

However not everyone was happy.
Barely two months later the same
newspaper reported on 14th
February 1925 that the Devonport
Guardians objected to an
application to put a police box close
to their eastern entrance in
Wolesley Road. They would like it
to be a little further away from their
entrance. The box would obstruct
the view of their notice board!

Agreement was reached to site the
box a little further away.

Plymouth was granted "City" status
on 18th October 1928 and at the
end of September 1929, Chief
Constable H H Sanders retired after
33 years of police service. His
replacement was Mr Archibald K
Wilson, the Chief Constable of
Carlisle.

Chief Constable Wilson would not
stay long, because on 28th January
1932, he was appointed Chief
Constable of Liverpool City Police.
His replacement was William C
Johnson (Later Sir William) who also
would not stay long. In 1936 he
moved to Birmingham as the ACC.

From 1941-45 he was the Chief
Constable of Birmingham, appointed

an HMI in 1945-1962 and the first Chief HMI in 1962-63.

In January 1933 the local Watch Committee decided to enter into an agreement with the Sutton Harbour Improvement Company to lease the White House Pier as a policing sub-station to replace the recently demolished facility that had stood at the landward end of West Pier.

An annual rental of £6.0.0d was agreed. Previously the building had operated as the registered office of the Plymouth Fish Selling Company, but although its new role was quite different it proved successful and the '*White House*' became the Barbican bobby's regular home for the next 30 years or so.

Manned by three regular policemen on three shifts, early, late and

nights, here the bobby had his water jug and stove for his tea and fresh fish, while among the other items of equipment in the distinctively tiled building were fearsome great grappling irons used for retrieving bodies from the harbour.

On the 18th January 1934, the Western Morning News reported that the Plymouth Watch Committee had approved the erection for trial purposes, of a new concrete police box at Home park. The concrete boxes were to replace the current wooden structures. If successful sixteen others would be erected in different parts of the city. So in 1934 there were 17 police boxes around the city.

In due course, precast concrete boxes were supplied to replace all the wooden first generation

Plymouth boxes, supplied by F J Moore Ltd of Pomphlett.

The company claimed their boxes were made using concrete sections which interlocked and could therefore easily be erected by any local builder.

The police boxes are mentioned in the history of F J Moore, which is online at <https://www.hooelake.org/2013/04/a-little-stonecrete-history-and-the-f-j-moore-quarry/>.

Apparently they were supplied to police across Devon and Cornwall.

Sir William was responsible for the creation of a new police and fire brigade HQ at Greenbank, on the site of the old Borough Prison.

A central communications Room, which connected every station, police box, pillar and street fire alarm to one place was a feature reported on, at the building's opening on 28th February 1935, in the Western Morning News.

The 23rd March 1936 saw the arrival of Chief Constable George S Lowe. Between 1930-32 he had been Chief Constable of Congleton, and from 1932-1936, the Chief Constable of Newcastle under Lyme.

Plymouth was growing as were the demands on the police. On the 21st January 1937, the Western Morning News reported that the Watch Committee had approved an extension to the Plymouth police box system. The newspaper reported that there were currently

fifteen boxes and eight pillars. This is the first mention of police pillars.

The system would be extended by 20 pillars. Sadly the location of the additional pillars was not given.

The General Post Office had seen an opportunity in 1932 to supply UK police with cast iron pillars, as an alternative to police boxes, but with the same telecommunications features.

The PA1 was the first iteration of a pillar to be mass produced. These extremely heavy, cast iron pieces of street furniture stood two metres tall.

There was a public door which had a speaker inside, enabling a member of the public to communicate with the local police station.

A private door, opened with a "Box key", gave officers access to a telephone. A 'First Aid' kit was held in a recess in the pillar behind a third door.

On the top was a lamp behind an amber glass lens, which could be made to flash by the station to indicate to a patrolling Constable that he was needed.

The Plymouth police pillars, of the type known as PA1, were painted red.

Several other forces also used red rather than blue for their pillars, however red seems to have been a colour used mainly by police forces in the South West.

Just a single photograph of a red painted pillar exists, at Muttley.

The churn of Chief Constables continued because in 1941 Mr Lowe moved to Sheffield as Chief Constable. On the 1st December 1941 Mr W T Hutchings was appointed as the Chief Constable.

After the end of WWII the Western Morning News reported on 4th July 1949, that the General Post Office had announced that all street police telephone pillars throughout the country, will be painted azure blue.

A little over a year later, on the 6th October 1950 the Western Evening Herald told readers that "Some 36 police telephone call boxes [pillars] in various parts of Plymouth formerly in red have been painted Azure blue, conforming with the red to blue switch throughout police areas across the country."

That is the last time that police pillars and boxes were mentioned in local newspapers.

Throughout the 1950's and 1960's, the police were introducing more technology. Radio cars and lightweight motorcycles enabled policemen and occasionally policewomen, to patrol larger areas.

As more people had telephones installed in their homes, reliance on telephone kiosks, police pillars and boxes as a means of the public contacting the police decreased. Meanwhile the costs of maintaining a large private wire network was also increasing.

As British society was changing, so methods of policing were being forced to try and catch up. One of these was the Home Secretary using

his powers to compulsorily amalgamate small police forces together into larger units.

On the 1st April 1966, the Devon County Constabulary and the Exeter City Police were one of the first amalgamations, to become the Devon and Exeter Constabulary.

A little over a year later the City of Plymouth and the County of Cornwall joined them.

The Home Office Research and Planning Branch was working with a number of forces and in Lancashire, on the 1st June 1966, Unit Beat Policing began as a trial of a new way of police working in Accrington, Lancashire.

For the police this was a mobile system of policing, supplemented by a resident beat officer on every

beat. There were dedicated detectives for each area and a new local intelligence officer, called a 'Collator'. The system, focussed on manpower requirements, operational strategy and police equipment.

The aims of unit beat police were:

- a) to cultivate a better understanding with members of the public by having a closer contact with men on the beat*
- b) to provide a better immediate service to the public by swifter response to calls for assistance and complaints*
- c) to raise detection rates by increasing and improving information flow*

Unit Beat Policing introduced "personal Radios" for police officers and "Panda Cars", painted blue and white, to the public.

On the 4th July 1968, the Herald Express reported that the newly introduced "Panda cars" had been used in an emergency for the first time. The paper reported that blue and white Morris 1000 cars were in use.

Once Unit Beat Policing was introduced, there was no longer any need for Police Pillars and Boxes and they were decommissioned and removed.

None of the Plymouth newspapers seems to have reported on the end of their 40+ years of service!

The last remaining box was on Outland Road, at the junction with

Seagrave Road, close to the football ground in Milehouse.

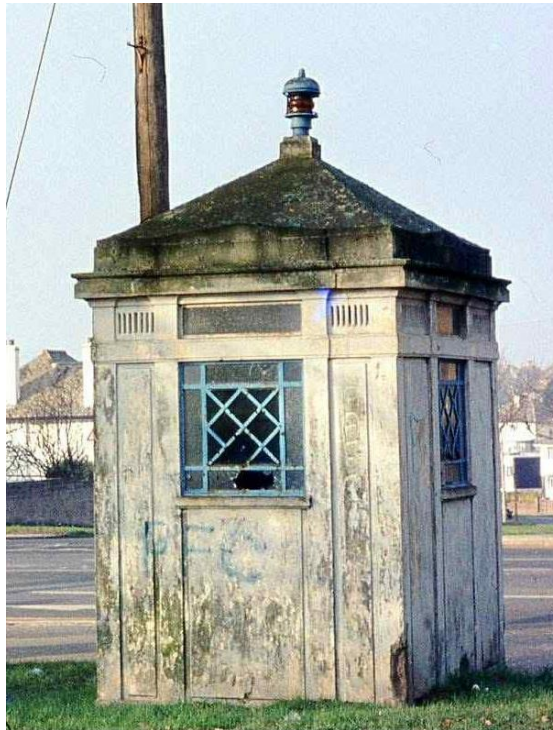
It was used as a store to hold the traffic signs and No Parking cones which were used by the police when Plymouth Argyle were playing at home.

Retired officer Peter Hinchliffe remembers, *"...it was retained until the early 80s as a useful store etc at the Plymouth Argyle Football ground, only used on match days.*

A road works scheme required it's removal and the plan was that it should be relocated to Divisional HQ at Crownhill and preserved.

It was made of pre-fabricated concrete and as soon as they started to dismantle it, the whole building disintegrated with "concrete cancer."

The “Home Park” box on Outland Road



Photos: Peter Hinchliffe

Researching the Pillars and Boxes of Plymouth

This project started when a colleague asked on the Police Pillars and Boxes Facebook Group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/policepillarsandboxes>) if anyone had any information on the Plymouth City Police box system. No one answered.

Several primary on-line research tools have been used. The British Newspaper Archive (<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>) holds millions of pages of local, regional and national newspapers from the UK. This is where the newspaper cuttings about Plymouth have come from.

Beginning in the late 1920's, the Ordnance Survey began to mark the location of police boxes on the large scale 25 inch to a mile maps, with the legend P.C.B. or PC Box with a

dot or square to indicate the location.

The National Library of Scotland has the only on-line collection of these very large scale maps (<https://maps.nls.uk/geo/find/#zoom=14.0&lat=50.40147&lon=-4.17867&layers=101&b=1&z=1&point=50.40197,-4.18618&i=106006400>).

In the 1940's, the Ordnance Survey began to photo enlarge the 25" maps to create what was known as the 50 inch series, at a scale of 1:1,250.

These were published from 1944 onwards. Once again, the National Library of Scotland has a very large number of the 1:1,250 series available on line at <https://maps.nls.uk/geo/find/#zoom=12.0&lat=50.38848&lon=-4.11257&layers=170&b=1&z=0&point=0,0>.

[m=12.0&lat=50.38848&lon=-4.11257&layers=170&b=1&z=0&point=0,0](https://maps.nls.uk/geo/find/#zoom=12.0&lat=50.38848&lon=-4.11257&layers=170&b=1&z=0&point=0,0). There are twelve 1:1.250 scale maps to every 25" map.

The National Library of Scotland collection is not complete. For example the 25" map series covering Devonport only goes up to 1912, whereas for eastern Plymouth, the series goes to 1933.

This makes researching difficult where the later maps in the series are not available. Maps printed after 1974 are still in copyright.

The map key for these maps now included **FAP** = Fire Alarm Point, **PTP** = Police Telephone Pillar, and the now familiar **PCB** = Police Call Box, amongst all the street furniture symbology which can be found on these maps.

It takes time and a keen eye (and a large screen) to search maps for these symbols, so using information from the period newspapers to help identify where pillars and boxes were located helps speed up the process.

The City of Plymouth was somewhat unusual for cities of that size because of the number of police stations which were in use.

A valuable historic document is the Police and Constabulary Almanac. This book was published annually from 1857 until 2015 and over time provides, in the case of Plymouth, lists of all the police stations.

Because every station, box and pillar was connected to the Greenbank police HQ, the names of these stations have also been included.

Two sets of documents are unavailable/missing though. These are Watch Committee Minutes, and Police Beat Books.

The Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 required Boroughs and County Boroughs to establish a "Watch Committee", to appoint Constables for their areas to maintain the "Queen's Peace". "Peace" was defined as the normal state of civil society, and any disruption to that normal state of peace and tranquillity was determined to be a "Breach of the Peace". The offence is still charged today.

Watch committees were required to keep records of their meetings, to receive reports of the local Chief Constable and were responsible for the pay and accoutrements of their Constables.

The minutes of the Plymouth Watch Committee being public records, are held at the Plymouth Archives.

However the Watch Committee Minutes from 1914 to 1940 are not listed as being available.
(<https://web.plymouth.gov.uk/archivescatalogue/?start=80&page=20&criteria=Watch%20Committee>)

Having read a newspaper report following a Watch Committee meeting, I would usually go to the actual committee minutes for the meeting to get full details of the Chief Constable's report.

So for example, the January 1937 meeting minutes, where the committee approved the extension of the pillars by 22, should have provided me with the list of where

these pillars were to be placed.
That information is not available.

The second source document I usually use is what are known as police "Beat Books".

Within the city boundary, Plymouth was variously divided up into two or three divisions. Within each division, the police stations would have their own boundaries and these would be divided again down to the individual beats where constables worked.

In Urban areas, the more dense the buildings, the smaller the beats.

Usually each beat would have a police box or pillar, generally at a prominent landmark or junction. Further away from the city centre, pillars and boxes were often on the boundary of adjoining beats, so one

box or pillar could be used by two or more officers on adjoining beats.

Detailed instructions would exist about how a beat should be worked, on a particular shift or day of the month.

Also where Constables should report on and off duty and the times they could take a rest break. It would include the exact times that Constables should be present at a police box or pillar to make a "Point", to be available, if/when needed.

Points would usually be made every hour at night and perhaps every two hours during day light. Being off your beat or missing a point without reasonable excuse was a disciplinary offence.

The instructions could include which side of the road was to be walked upon, and whether on a particular day the beat would be worked in a clockwise or counter clockwise direction.

Many examples of "Beat Books" from other towns and cities exist, but none can be found for Plymouth. I expect that there were beat books and some may still be with retired officers! The Devon and Cornwall Police Museum doesn't have any.

A beat book would list all the boxes and pillars. So because of missing information, although the exact number of police boxes (15 in 1937) and Pillars (28 in 1937) is known, some locations are missing from the following list.

Alphabetical list of known Plymouth Police Stations

Beacon Park

Osborne Place

Catherine Street

Plympton (Devon County
Constabulary)

Crownhill

Prince Rock

Greenbank

Ridegway, Plympton

Harbour Avenue

Stonehouse

Laira Police Fire Station

Sutton Harbour

Mutley

Whipton

Octagon Street



Timeline of operational Police Stations

1863	1901	1925	1933	1937	1941	1951	1967
		<i>A Division – Central B Division – Devonport</i>	<i>A Division – Eastern B Division – Western</i>	<i>Northern Division Southern Division</i>	<i>Eastern Division Western Division</i>	<i>A, B & C Division</i>	<i>A, B & C Divisions</i>
Central Catherine St	Central	Central	Central	Greenbank	Greenbank	<u>A</u> Crown Hill	<u>A</u> City Centre
Hoe Osborne Place	Hoe	Hoe	Hoe	Hoe	Hoe	Camel's Head	Greenbank
Octagon Octagon Street	Octagon	Octagon	Octagon	Octagon	Octagon	<u>B</u> Greenbank	<u>B</u> West Park
Harbour Avenue Exeter Street	Harbour Avenue	Harbour Avenue	-	-	-	City Centre	Crown Hill
Barbican Barbican Watch House	Barbican	Barbican	Barbican	Barbican White House Pier	Barbican	<u>C</u> Kerr Street	<u>C</u> Exmouth Rd
Mutley Marina Terrace Ford Park lane	Mutley Morley View	Mutley	Mutley			Octagon	Octagon
Providence Street Vinegar Hill	Providence Street						
Laira Morley View	-	Laira					
-	Elliot Road Prince Rock	Prince Rock	-	-	Prince Rock		

1863	1901	1925	1933	1937	1941
Compton Lower Compton Road	Compton	-	-	-	-
Station Road Union Street	Station Road	-	-	-	-
Oxford Oxford Place	Oxford	-	-	-	-
-	-	St Budeaux	-	-	-
-	-	-	Stonehouse Emma Place (8/11/14)	Stonehouse	
-	-	-	-	-	Crown Hill
-	-			St Andrew's Cross	
-	-	Kerr St Devonport	Kerr Street	-	-
		Morice Town Devonport	Morice Town	Morice Town	Morice Town
		Oak Villa Camel's Head	-	-	-
		Devonport Stonehouse	-	-	-

In 1925, the number of police stations in Plymouth is surprising

In 1925 Plymouth had a population of 210,036 and covered an area of 5,711 acres. The total force strength was 280 men. It had 13 police stations. By comparison, Kingston upon Hull, also a port city, had a population of 287,150 and covered 9,583 acres with a force strength of 472. It also ran the police Fire Brigade and had just 5 police stations.

Although Police Boxes were installed from the Autumn of 1924, by 1933 only seven stations seem to have been closed leaving eight which were operational.

In Kingston upon Hull, where a police box system had also been implemented, in 1933 there were now only 3 police stations.

Alphabetical list of Plymouth Police Boxes

The first four wooden police boxes were installed in the autumn of 1924 at Lyndhurst Road, Peverall; St. Levan Road, Ford; St Budeaux Square; and Mount Gold Road.

The number of boxes was gradually increased until by January 1937 there were fifteen.

Wooden boxes were replaced with concrete from 1934.

Some boxes were replaced with pillars. The dates are when boxes are known to have been in place.

Alexander Place
[No location traced](#)

Beaumont Road (1965)
[Page 86](#)

Catedown Road (1950)
[Page 51](#)

Compton Village
[No location traced](#)

Devonport Guardians East entrance (14/02/1925)
[Page 36](#)

Embankment Road, Prince Rock (1959)
[Page 64](#)

Exeter Street (photo) (1949)
[Page 74](#)

Hayes Cottages, Goosewell Hill,

Eggbuckland (photo)
[Pages 107-108](#)

Home Park (1st concrete box - 18/01/1934)
[Pages 99-100](#)

Laira
[No location traced](#)

Lipson Rd, Sea View Av (1933)
[Page 85](#)

Lyndhurst Road, Peverell
[Page 00](#)

Millbridge (in use 28/02/1935)
[Page 67](#)

Moor Lane (1950)
[Page 110](#)

Montpellier Road, Pennycross
Page 31

Mount Gold Road / Lipson Road
(1933)
Page 85

Old Laira Road (1948)
Page 91

Outland Road / Home Park
(photo) (1971)
Pages 99-100

Pennycomequick (at
18/12/1924)
Pages 80-81

Portland Road / Garfield Terr.
Page 78

Princess Square
Page 62

St. Levan Road, Ford
Page 93

St Budeaux Square
Page 109

South Devon Place
Page P64

Swilly Hospital, Beacon Park
Road (1933)
Page 35

Tavistock Road / Segrave Road
(1958)
Pages 99-100

Tavistock Road, Stoke
Page 53

Tavistock Road / Whiteford
Road (1933)
Page 32

Trafalgar Road (1965)
Page 77

Washington Place (1950)
Page 56

Wolsley Road Ford workhouse
Devonport 1933
Page 36

Wolsley Road (1949)
Page 98

Alphabetical list of known Plymouth Police Pillars

Street fire alarm boxes were erected in August 1909, but there is no known list. Fire alarm boxes were replaced with pillars in 1937.

There were already 8 pillars, but an additional 30 would be added.

Blandford Road

[Page 97](#)

Cattedown Road

[Page 52](#)

Clovelly Road

[Page 50](#)

Durnford Street

[Page 55](#)

Edgcumbe Street, Stonehouse

[Page 54](#)

Effords Road, Ford Hill

[Page 102](#)

Haddington Road / Victoria Place

[Page 87](#)

New George Street

[Page 71](#)

North Road / Patna Place

[Page 82 - 83](#)

Pennycomequick

[Page 80 - 81](#)

Portland Place East

[Page 72 - 73](#)

Portland Road

[Page 78](#)

Salisbury Road / Greenbank Av

[Page 75](#)

Seymour Road Mannamead

[Page 96](#)

Swilly Road North Prospect

[Page 104](#)

Tavistock Place / Gibbon Lane

[Page 72 - 73](#)

Tavistock Road / Chestnut Road

[Page 105](#)

Tavistock Road / Hyde Park Hotel

[Page 88 - 89](#)

Tavistock Road, Eggbuckland

[Page 101](#)

Tavistock Road / Wolsley Road

[Page 98](#)

Tor Lane, Hartley

[Page 106](#)

Townsend Avenue / Station Road, Devonport

[Page 92](#)

West Hoe Road

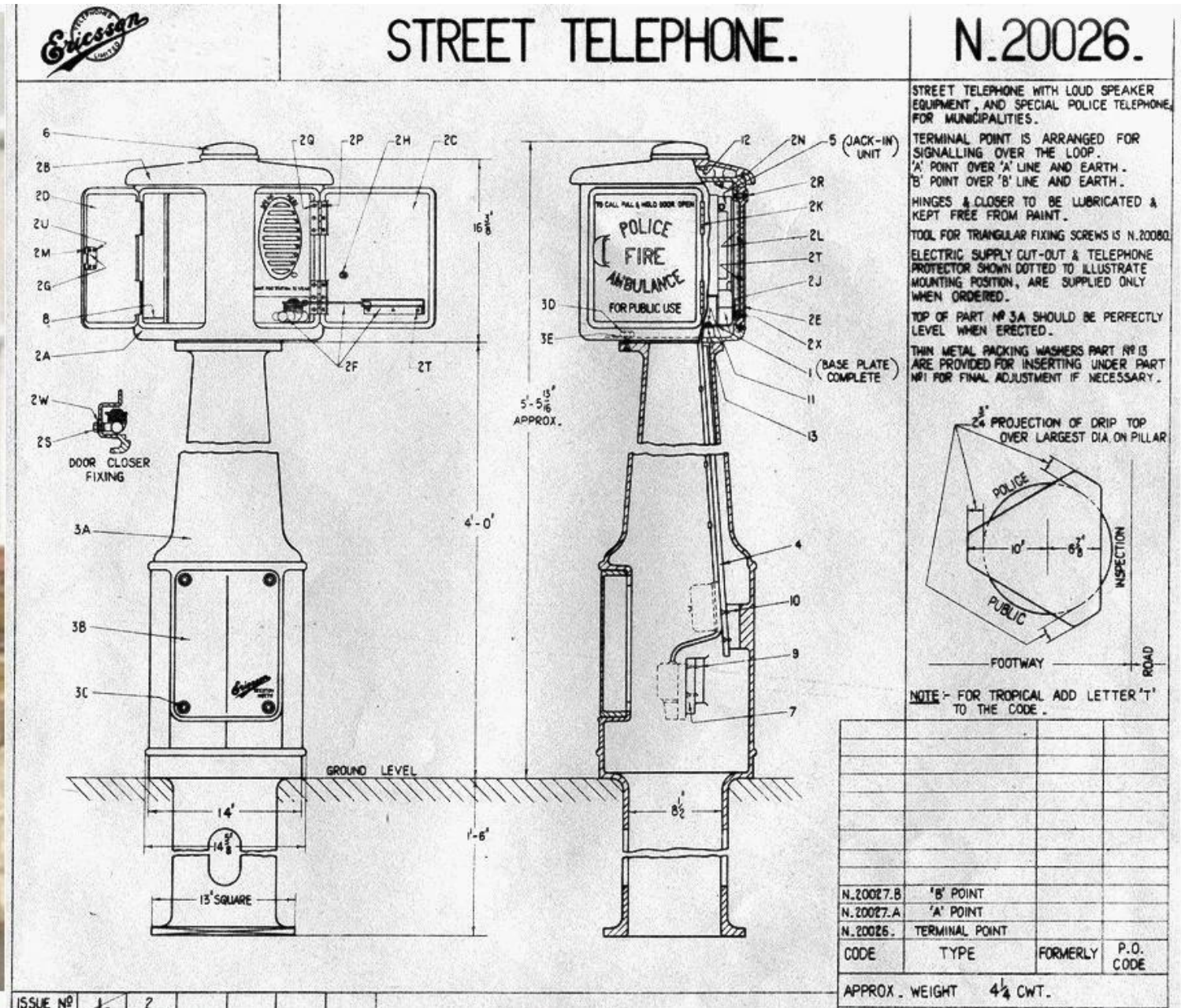
[Page 49](#)

York Street / Oxford Place

[Page 69 - 70](#)

The locations of some 14 pillars is unknown. Some maps are unavailable and some pillars are not shown on the maps which are.

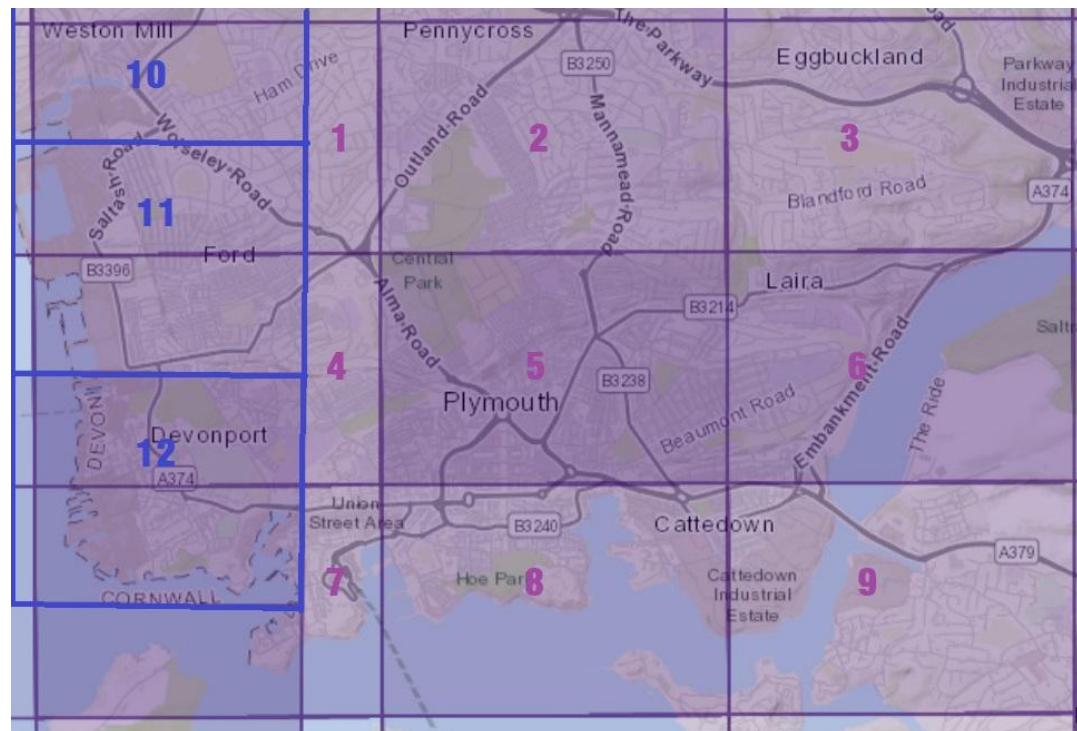
Police Pillar Operating Equipment



Clickable list of available 25" Ordnance Survey maps

If you wish to view the 25" source maps we have used, they are listed below. Should you want to see the list of abbreviations that are used on the old Ordnance Survey Maps, this is the link: <https://maps.nls.uk/os/abbrev/p.html>

Map	Date	Link
1	1935	https://maps.nls.uk/view/106006823
2	1935	https://maps.nls.uk/view/106006832
3	1935	https://maps.nls.uk/view/106006889
4	1935	https://maps.nls.uk/view/106006844
5	1935	https://maps.nls.uk/view/106006853
6	1935	https://maps.nls.uk/view/106006919
7	1935	https://maps.nls.uk/view/106006865
8	1935	https://maps.nls.uk/view/106006871
9	1935	https://maps.nls.uk/view/106006952
10	1914	https://maps.nls.uk/view/106006391
11	1914	https://maps.nls.uk/view/105994525
12	1914	https://maps.nls.uk/view/106006865



List of stations and boxes shown on available 25" maps

Based on the 12 maps shown on the previous page, this is a list of police stations and police boxes, with a link to their location on the appropriate map.

The 25" maps are large and you need a laptop or desktop computer to really see the map detail. They do not work as well on hand-held devices.

As well as the 25" map, there is also a link to the 1:1,250 scale maps, however although easier to see, most stations have gone by 1950.

PS = Police Stn **PCB** = Police Call Box

Map	Premises
-----	----------

2: Montpelier Road Pennycross PCB	
25" 1935 https://maps.nls.uk/view/106006832	
1:1,250 https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817532	

2: Tavistock Rd Whiteford Rd, Eggbuckland PCB	
25" 1914 https://maps.nls.uk/view/106006832	
1:1,250 https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817751	

2: Devon Constabulary PS Crownhill	
25" 1934 https://maps.nls.uk/view/106006409	
1:1,250 https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817841	

4: Swilly Hospital Beacon Park Road PCB	
25" 1935 https://maps.nls.uk/view/106006823	
1:1,250 https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817163	

5: Ford Park Lane, Mutley Police & Fire Brigade station	
25" 1914 https://maps.nls.uk/view/106006850	
1:1,250 https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817724	

5: Lipson Road / Mount Gold Road PCB	
25" 1935 https://maps.nls.uk/view/106006853	
1:1,250 https://maps.nls.uk/view/144818066	

7: George Place East Stonehouse PS	
25" 1914 https://maps.nls.uk/view/106006865	
1:1,250 https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817088	

8: Catherine Street (Central) PS	
25" 1914 https://maps.nls.uk/view/106006871	
1:1,250 https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817394	

8: Harbour Avenue Exeter Street PS	
25" 1914 https://maps.nls.uk/view/106006853	
1:1,250 https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817676	

8: Osborne Place / Citadel Road PS	
25" 1912 https://maps.nls.uk/view/106006871	
1:1,250 https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817394	

8: Sutton Harbour Watch House PS	
25" 1914 https://maps.nls.uk/view/106006871	
1:1,250 https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817658	

8: Barbican Fish Market PS	
25" 1914 https://maps.nls.uk/view/106006871	
1:1,250 https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817703	

9: Elliott Road Prince Rock PS	
25" 1914 https://maps.nls.uk/view/106006949	
1:1,250 https://maps.nls.uk/view/144818027	

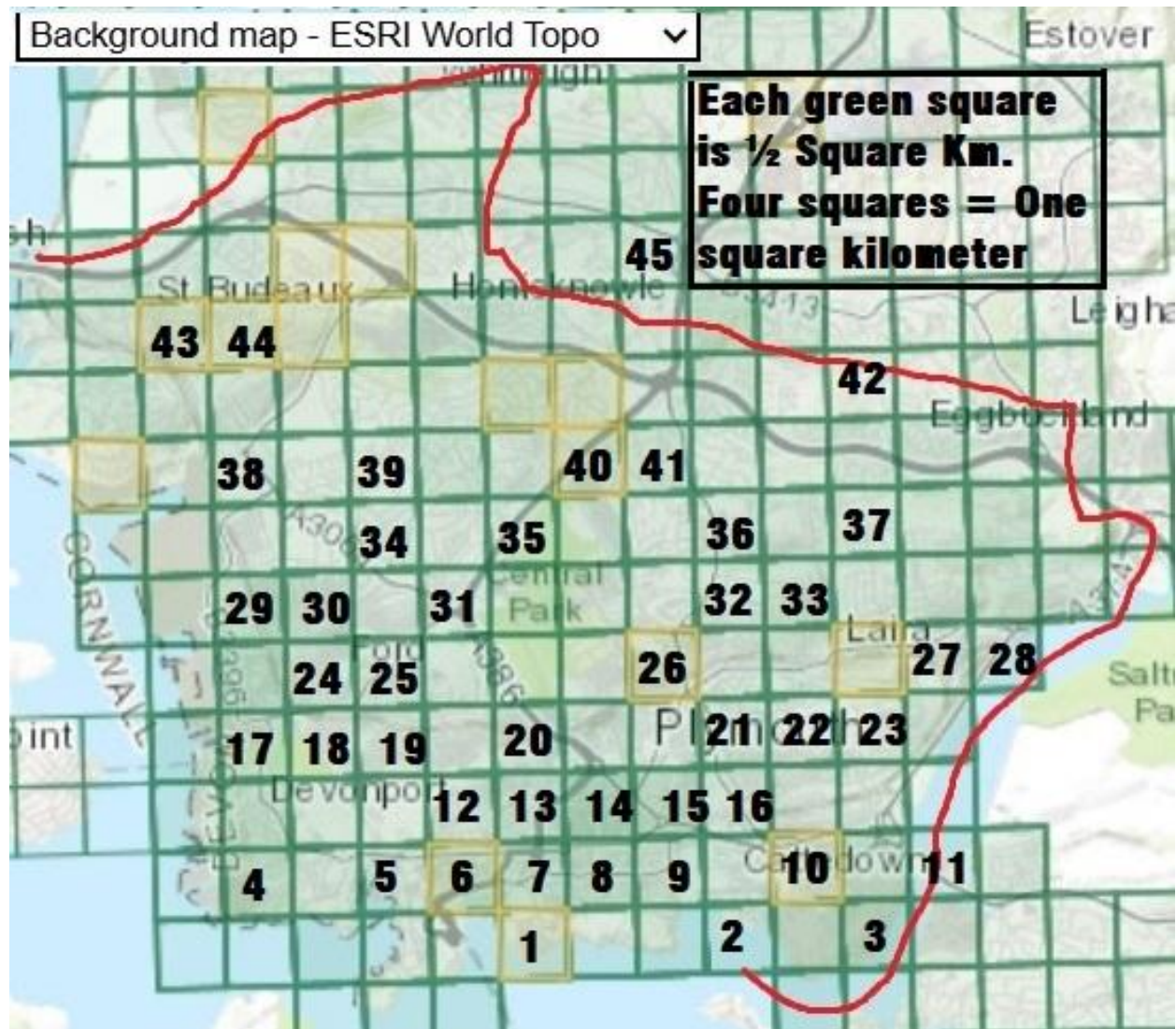
List of stations, police boxes and pillars shown on available 1:1,250 scale maps

Based on the 143 map squares shown on the map on this page, this is a list of police stations, police boxes and police pillars, with a link to their location on the appropriate map. There are between two and five maps attached to the 143 squares, so some 450 individual maps.

The 1:1,250 scale maps each cover a $\frac{1}{2}$ square kilometre. Maps are large and you need a laptop or desktop computer to really see the map in detail. They do not work as well on hand-held devices.

There is also a link to a 1:1,250 scale map, showing police street furniture. Almost all have gone by 1968.

PS = Police Stn **PCB** = Police Call Box
PTP = Police Telephone Point (pillar)



List of stations, police boxes and pillars shown on available 1:1,250 scale maps

PS = Police Station PCB = Police Call Box PTP = Police Telephone Point

1: Millbay dock PS

1950 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817343>

1: West Hoe Rd PTP

1957 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817343>

2: Clovelly Rd PTP

1957 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817655>

3: Cattedown Rd PCB

1950 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817955>

3: Cattedown Rd PTP

1952 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817958>

Between 1950 and 1952 the police box was removed and a pillar was installed as a replacement.

4: Devonport PS

1952 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144816839>

5: Edgcumbe St, Stonehouse PTP

1959 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817106>

5: Durnford St PTP

1959 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817106>

6: Washington Place PCB

1951 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817091>

6: George Place PTP

1956 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817094>

7: Adelaide Rd PS

1952 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817409>

08: Armada Way PS

1952 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817394>

08: Westwell St PS

1958 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817400>

08: Princess St PS

1958 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817400>

08: Princess Square PCB

1958 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817400>

A **PCB** is referenced in a fire report on 14/09/1937, however there is a gap in the maps from 1914 to 1952 so no **PCB** has been found.

9: Whitehouse Pier PS

1960 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817709>

10: Embankment Road PCB

1960 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144818030>

11: Old Laira Bridge PTP

1952 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144818267>

12: Mill Bridge PCB

1951 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817070>

13: Octagon Street PS

1952 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817376>

14: York St / Oxford Place PTP

1953 & 1965

<https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817355>

14: New George Street PTP

1965 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817355>

15: Tavistock Road / Portland Place PTP

1954 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817679>

This was known as the North Hill pillar

16: Exeter Street PCB

1950 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817667>

16: Salisbury Road Greenbank Av PTP

1960 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817670>

We have a photo – but the PTP is not shown on any map.

17: Ferry Road Devonport PS

1964 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144816890>

18: Trafalgar Road Devonport PCB

1950 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144816878>

19: Portland Rd / Garfield terrace **PCB**
 1958 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817148>

19: Tavistock Rd, (now St Hillary Place) / Ford Hill **PTP**
 1954 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817130>

20: Pennycomequick **PTP**
 1960 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817454>

20: North Rd / Patna Place **PTP**
 1960 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817454>

21: Greenbank, **Plymouth City Police HQ**
 1950 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817733>

22: Mount Gold Road Gwyn Road **PCB**
 1958 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144818069>

23: Beaumont Road Heathfield Road **PCB**
 1949 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144818057>

24: Haddington Road **PTP**
 1961 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144816854>

25: Hyde Park Hotel, Mutley Plain **PTP**
 1962 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817727>

26: Old Laira Road **PCB**
 1949 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144818282>

27: Old Laira Road **PCB**
 1949 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144818276>

28: Station Road, Devonport **PTP**
 1954 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144816929>

29: St Levan Road, Ford **PCB**
 1950 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144816911>

29: St Levan Road, Ford **PTP**
 1964 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144816911>
 Between 1950 and 1964 the police box became a PTP.

30: Tavistock Road (became Wolsley Road), Milhouse **PTP**
 1956 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817175>

31: Seymour Road, Mannamead **PTP**
 1961 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817772>

32: Blandford Road, Compton **PTP**
 1952 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144818108>

33: Wolsley Road, North Prospect **PCB**
 1950 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817163>

34 Home Park, Tavistock Toad / Outland Road **PCB**
 1949 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817469>

35: Tavistock Road, Eggbuckland **PTP**
 1961 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817757>

36: Effords Rd, Eggbuckland **PTP**
 1957 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144818078>

37: Camels Head **PS**
 1951 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144816962>

38: Swilly Road, North Prospect **PTP**
 1954 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817223>

39: Tavistock Rd / Chestnut Rd **PTP**
 1954 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817523>

40: Torr Lane, Hartley **PTP**
 1953 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144817823>

41: Hayes Place, Eggbuckland **PCB**
 1972 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144818117>
 No earlier large scale maps of this location.

42: St Budeaux Square **PCB**
 1950 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144816719>

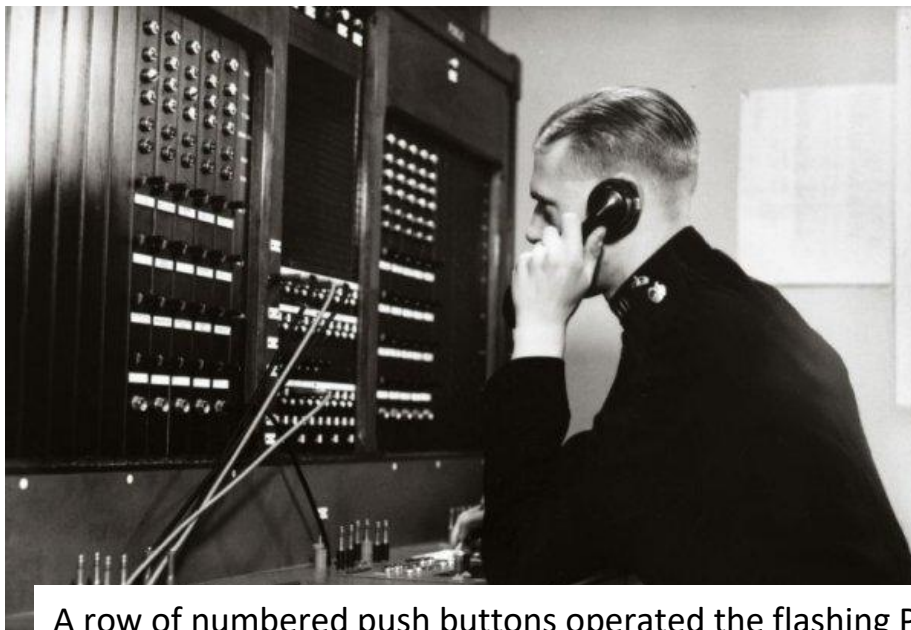
43: Moor Lane, St Budeaux **PCB**
 1951 <https://maps.nls.uk/view/144816995>

The Greenbank Police Station police/public answering point

All the police telephones in Plymouth were answered at the “new” Greenbank Police HQ, in 1935.

Newspapers reported that Plymouth was the first force in the country to have the new GPO PA150TD switchboard. In a Watch Committee report the Chief Constable relates that the new equipment is cheaper because instead of an individual pair of wires for each location, pillars and boxes are in groups into threes, using party line principles, reducing private wire charges by two thirds.

At the end of February 1935, the Western Morning News published a photograph of the control panel for some of the pillars and boxes.



A row of numbered push buttons operated the flashing PA1 amber lamps on the top of the boxes and pillars.

Western Morning News, 28th February 1935.



Locations of the pre war police stations and police boxes shown on the 25" OS maps

Map 2 - Montpelier Road, Pennycross PCB



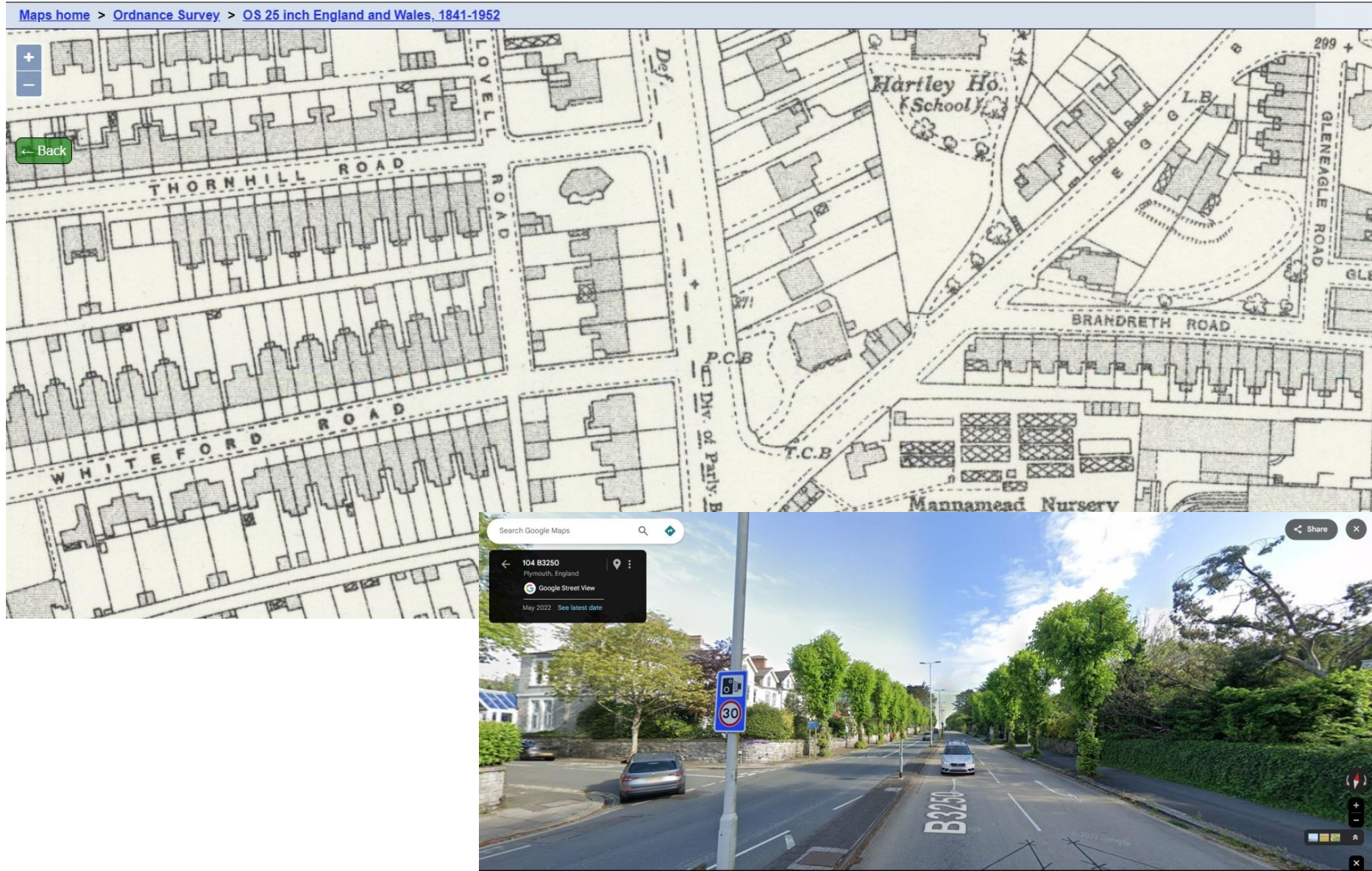
This was one of the first four wooden boxes installed in the summer of 1924, although the location was called Lyndhurst Road, which runs due south from the box.



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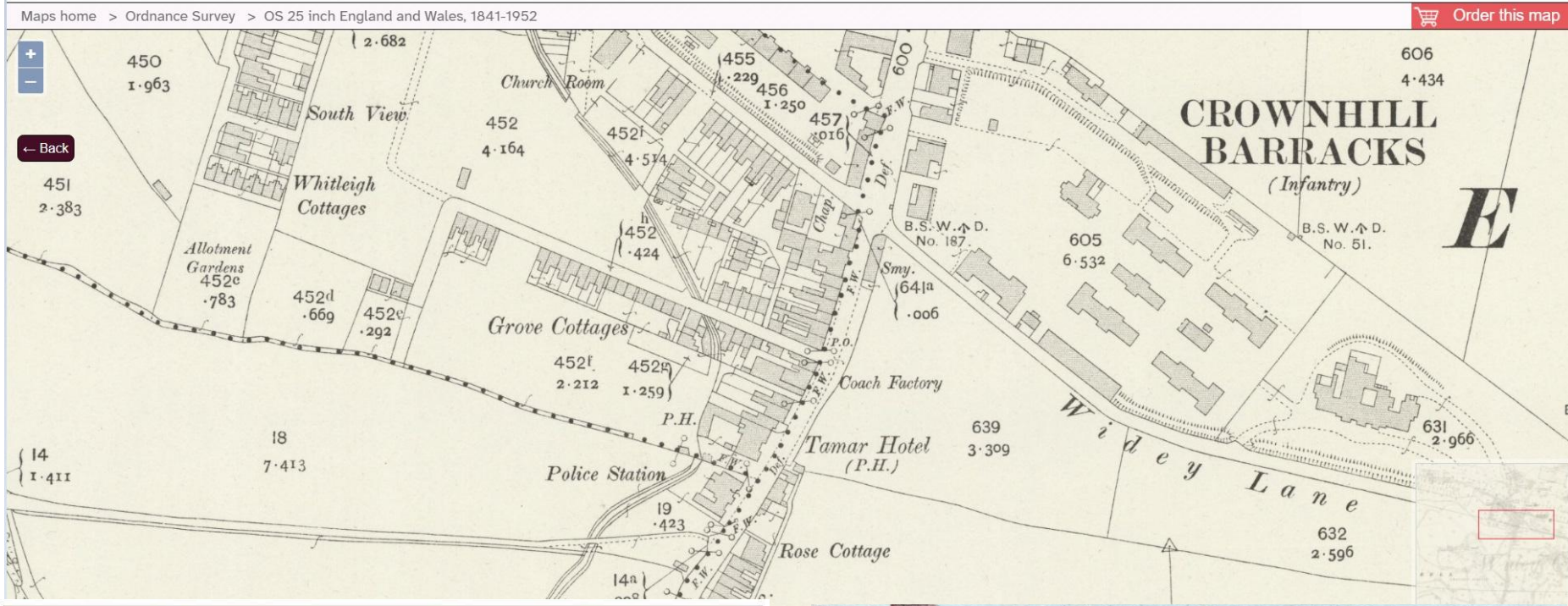
Devon CXXIII.4
Revised: 1933, Published: 1935
Size: map 64.4 cm x 96.6 cm (25.344 x 38.016 inches), on sheet ca. 76 x 104 cm (ca. 30 x 41 inches)





What was called Tavistock Road on the 1930's maps, is now the B3250 Mannamead Road.

Map 2 - Crownhill Police Station



The station was the last outpost of the Devon County Constabulary until 1914 when it became part of Plymouth. It was then the last outpost of the Plymouth Constabulary!

Map 2 - Crownhill Police Station



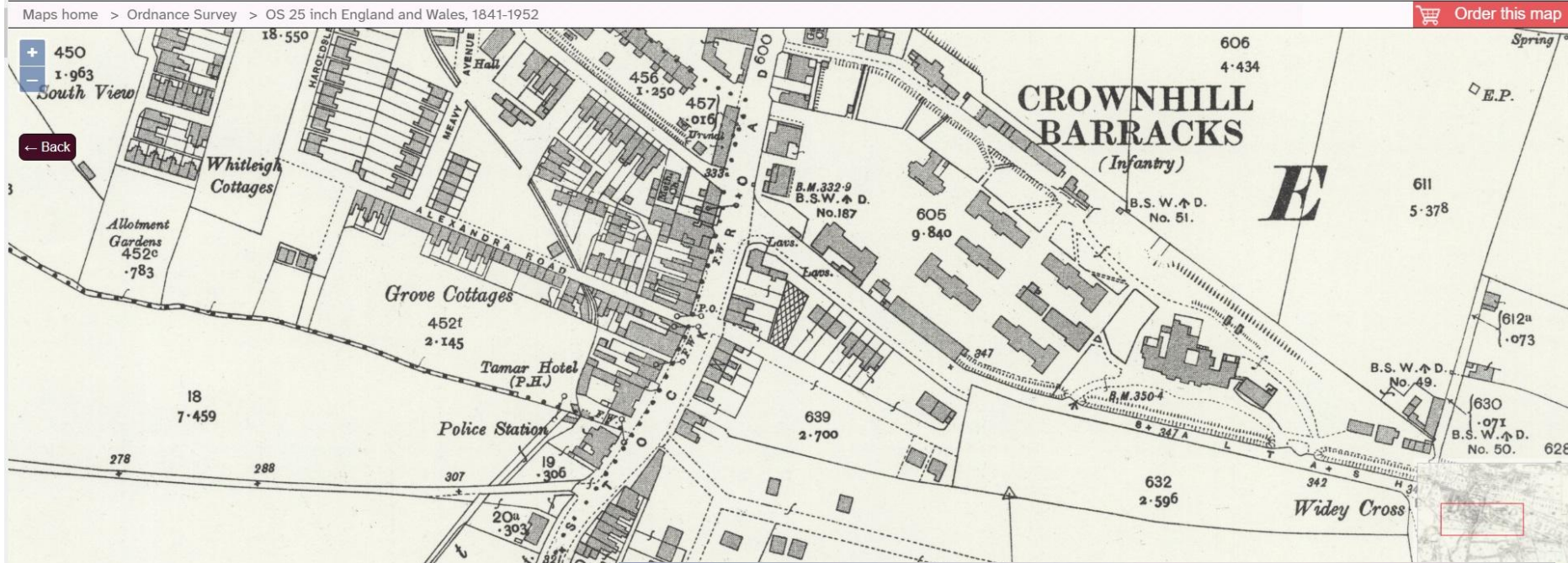
Devon CXVII.16

Revised: 1933, Published: 1934

Size: map 64.4 cm x 96.6 cm (25.344 x 38.016 inches), on sheet ca. 76 x 104 cm (ca. 30 x 41 inches)

Search:

Re-use: [CC-BY](#) (NLS).



The station was next to the Tamar Hotel on what was called Tavistock Road on the 1930's maps, and is now Morshead Road, Crownhill.

Police station photo from Cyberheritage and the same angle in Google Streetview

Map 4 - Swilly Hospital, Beacon Park Road

[←](#)
[→](#)
[↺](#)

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Devon CXXIII.3
Revised: 1933, Published: 1935
Size: map 64.4 cm x 96.6 cm (25.344 x 38.016 inches), on sheet ca. 76 x 104 cm (ca. 30 x 41 inches)

Re-use: [CC-BY](#) (NLS).

[Maps home](#) > [Ordnance Survey](#) > [OS 25 inch England and Wales, 1841-1952](#)

[Order this map](#)

[←](#)

85 Beacon Park Rd
Plymouth, England

Google Street View

Jun 2022 [See latest date](#)

The Wooden police box on the corner outside the Swilly Hospital was another of the first four installed in 1924. No photographs have been found.

Map 4 - Wolesley Road, outside the Devonport Guardians



Devon CXIII.3

Revised: 1933, Published: 1935

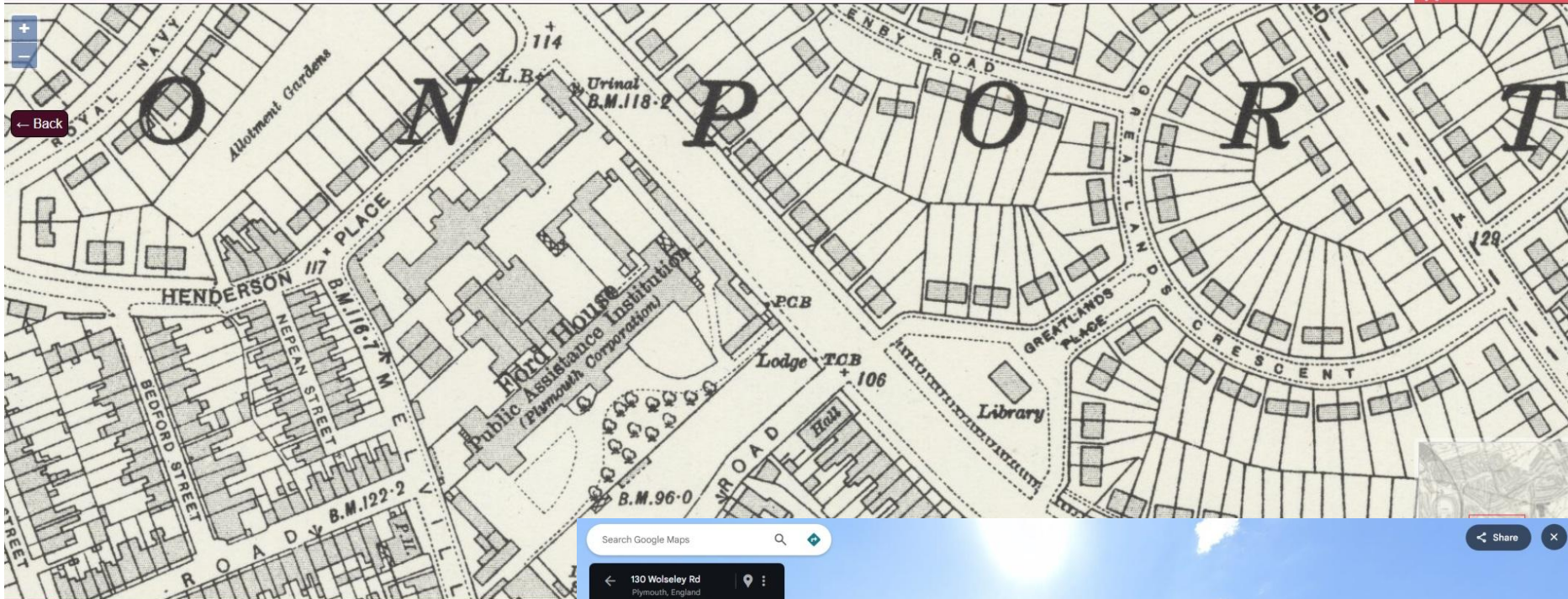
Size: map 64.4 cm x 96.6 cm (25.344 x 38.016 inches), on sheet ca. 76 x 104 cm (ca. 30 x 41 inches)

Search:

Re-use: [CC-BY](#) (NLS)

Maps home > Ordnance Survey > OS 25 inch England and Wales, 1841-1952

Order this map



This was the police box location that the Devonport Guardians objected to in February 1925.



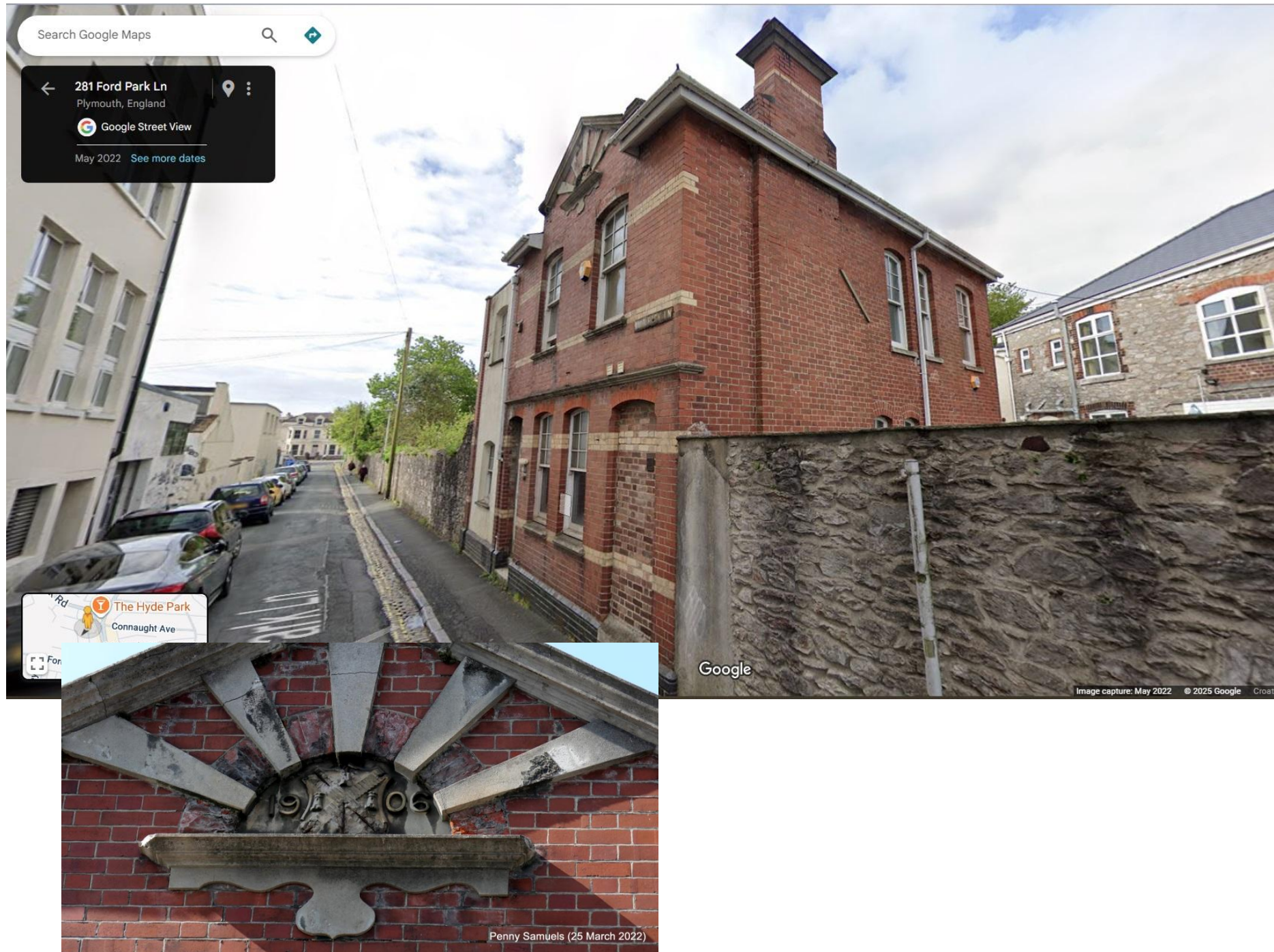
Maps home > Ordnance Survey > OS 25 inch England and Wales, 1841-1952



In 1887 the Plymouth Borough Police also became responsible for the fire brigade. This was not unusual. Almost all large boroughs and cities had completely joint services, responsible for policing, fire and rescue and the ambulance service. This only ended in 1941 when the National Fire Service was formed.

This building was the police fire brigade station in Mutley, built in 1906 and still exists today, as a part of Plymouth College.

Map 5 - Ford Park Lane Mutley PFS



Map 5 - Lipson Road / Mount Gold Road PCB



Devon CXXIII.8

Revised: 1933, Published: 1935

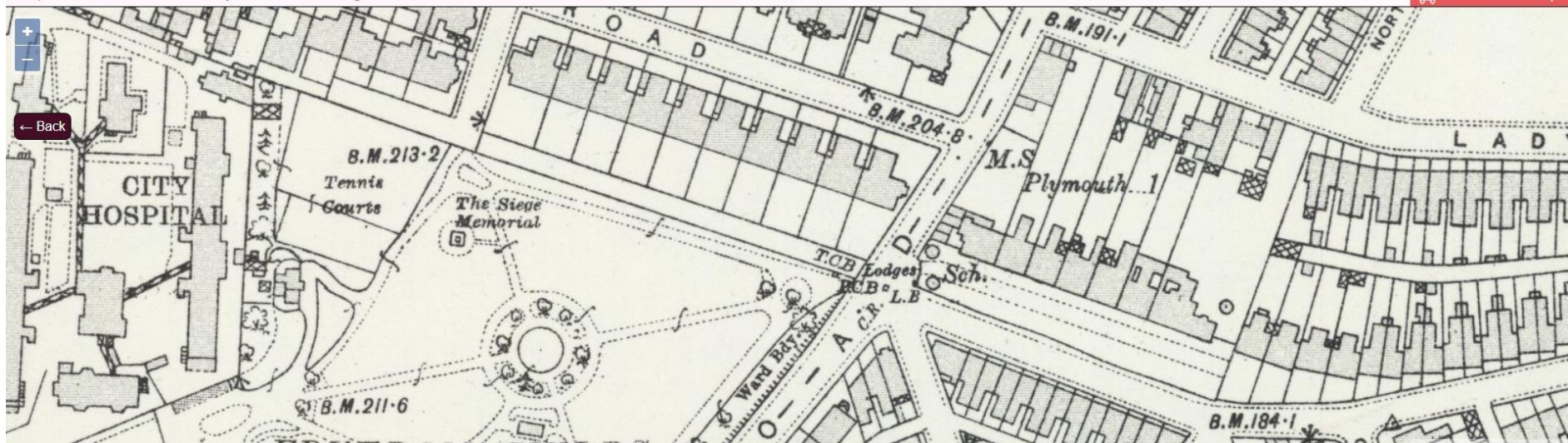
Size: map 64.4 cm x 96.6 cm (25.344 x 38.016 inches), on sheet ca. 76 x 104 cm (ca. 30 x 41 inches)

Search:

Re-use: [CC-BY](#) (NLS).

[Maps home](#) > [Ordnance Survey](#) > [OS 25 inch England and Wales, 1841-1952](#)

[Order this map](#)



Mount Gold Road was another of the first four police boxes placed in the summer on 1924. It was also placed in the centre of the road junction.

Maps home > Ordnance Survey > OS 25 inch England and Wales, 1841-1952

[Order this map](#)



Map 7 - George Place, East Stonehouse PS



The East Stonehouse police fire brigade station was a magnificent building, seen here decorated for the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria, in 1897.

In the second picture is the octagonal entrance to the police station.

In 2025, it is a vacant plot.



Map 8 - Catherine Street, Police Headquarters



Devon CXXIII.12

Revised: 1912, Published: 1914

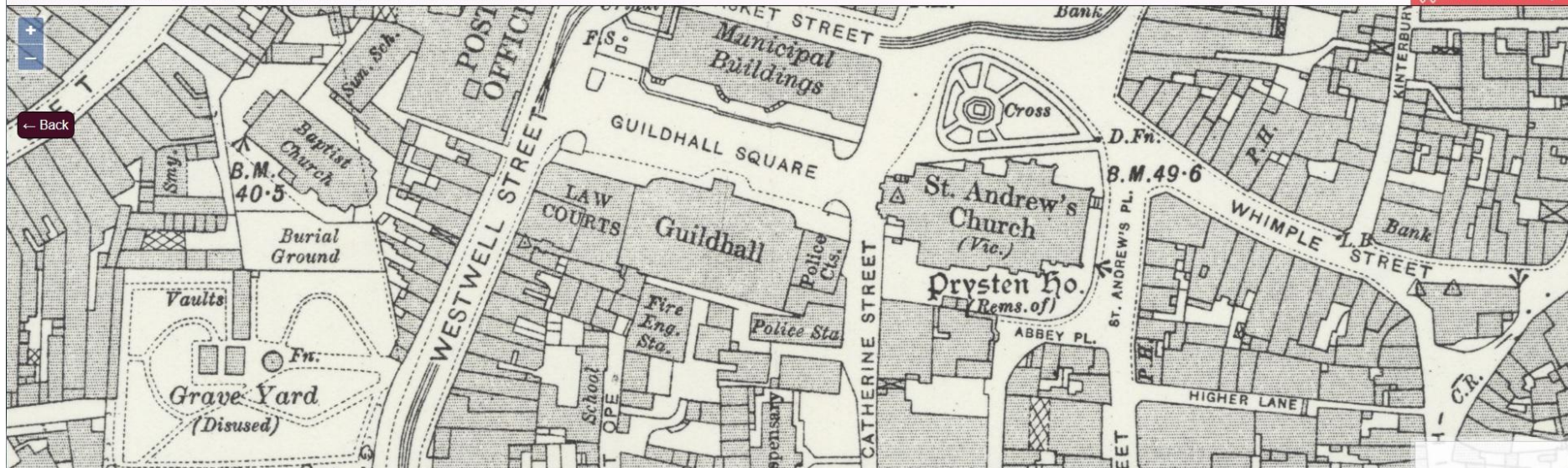
Size: map 64.4 cm x 96.6 cm (25.344 x 38.016 inches), on sheet ca. 76 x 104 cm (ca. 30 x 41 inches)

Search:

Re-use: [CC-BY](#) (NLS).

[Maps home](#) > [Ordnance Survey](#) > [OS 25 inch England and Wales, 1841-1952](#)

[Order this map](#)

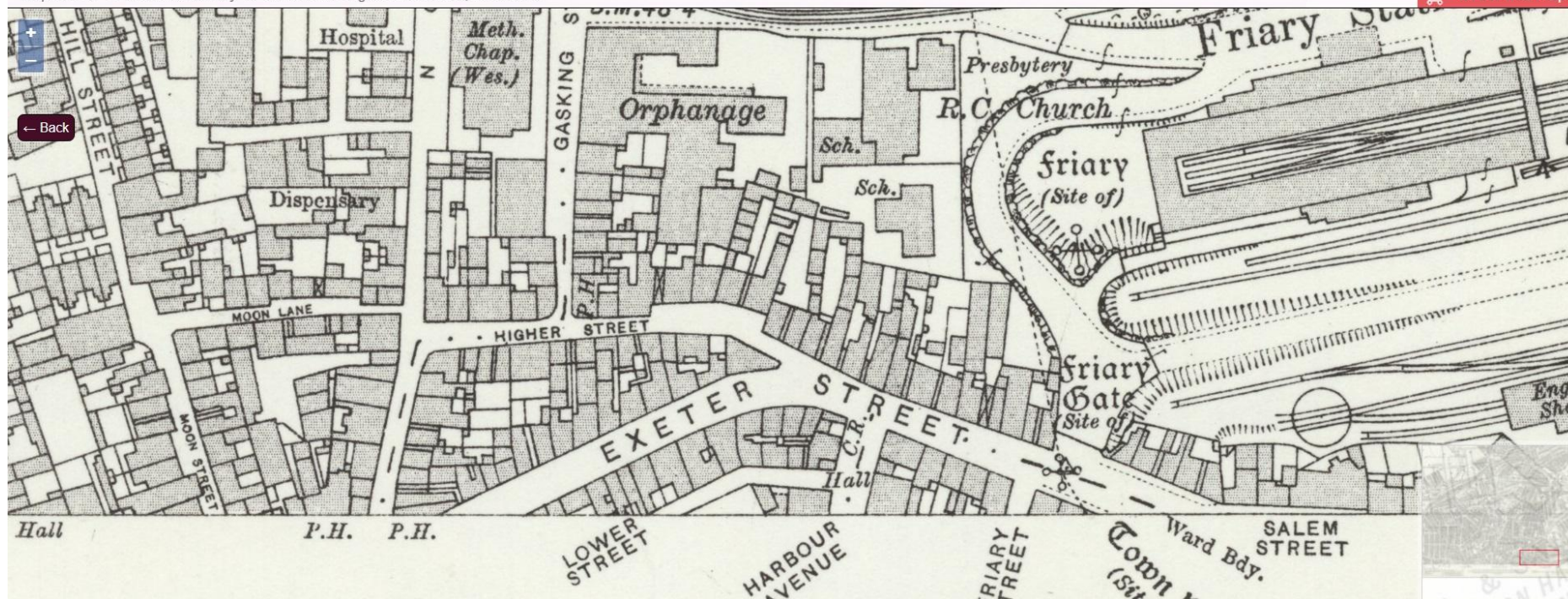


Tucked in behind the Guildhall, on Catherine Street, is the first headquarters of the Plymouth police.

Another imposing building which still exists, it would not look out of place if it was still a police station in 2025...

Maps home > Ordnance Survey > OS 25 inch England and Wales, 1841-1952

[Order this map](#)



Harbour Avenue was one of the first stations mentioned in 1863. It was also still operational as a station in 1925.

Presumably it was closed when the police boxes were introduced. The whole idea of the police box system was to free up expensive old stations, which were by then, in the wrong place in the borough.

Map 8 - Osborne Place / Citadel Road PS



Devon CXXIII.12

Revised: 1912, Published: 1914

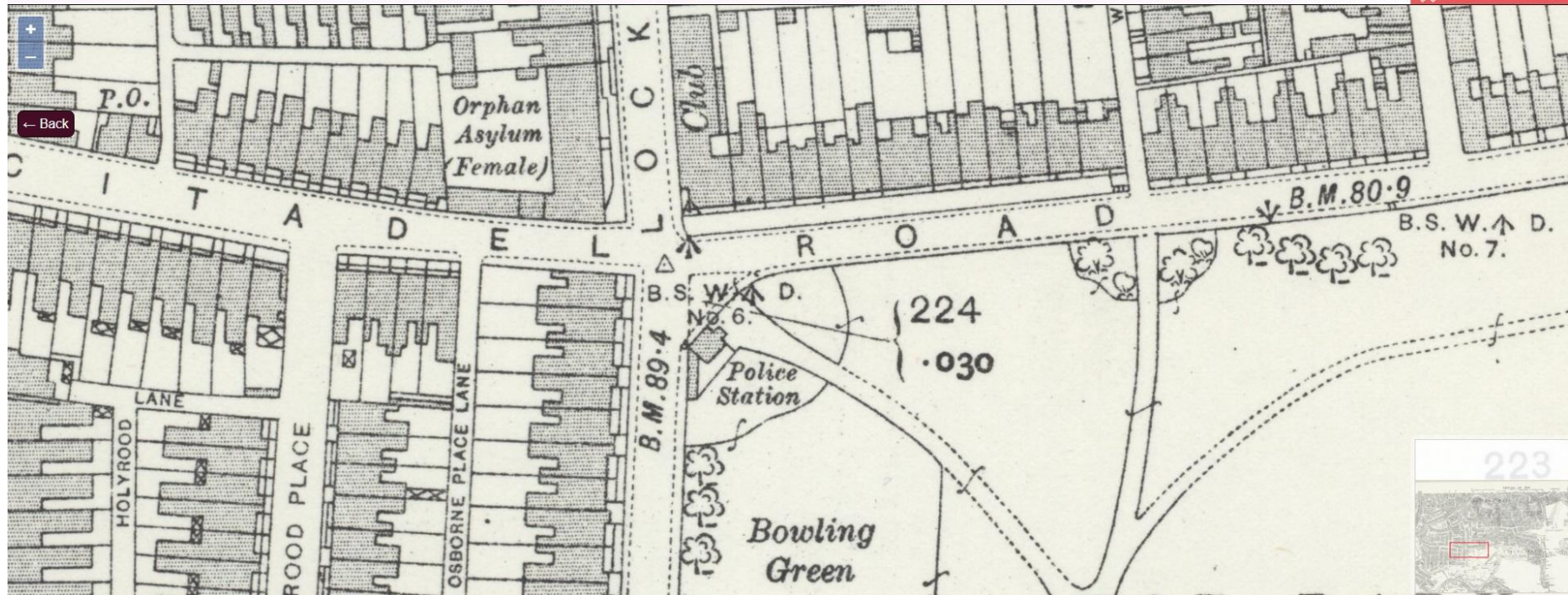
Size: map 64.4 cm x 96.6 cm (25.344 x 38.016 inches), on sheet ca. 76 x 104 cm (ca. 30 x 41 inches)

Search:

Re-use: [CC-BY](#) (NLS).

Maps home > Ordnance Survey > OS 25 inch England and Wales, 1841-1952

[Order this map](#)

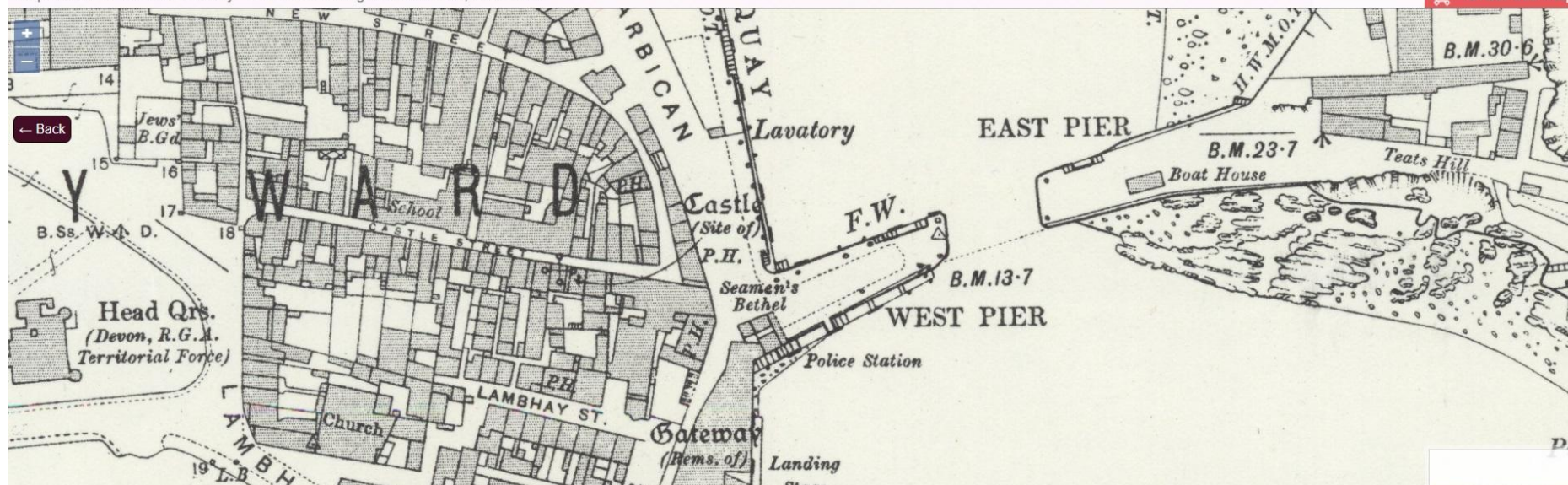


Nothing remains of the police station on Osborne Place, at the entrance to Hoe Park.

No photographs of the station have been found.

Maps home > Ordnance Survey > OS 25 inch England and Wales, 1841-1952

Order this map



The Sutton Harbour watch house and police station are long gone.

Looking at the plaques in the wall, you can see where it once stood.



Maps home > Ordnance Survey > OS 25 inch England and Wales, 1841-1952

Order this map



The white tiled building shown on the pier on the 1914 25" OS map is known to have been built as a business. It came into police use when the Watch House was demolished and the pier was rented by the Watch Committee.

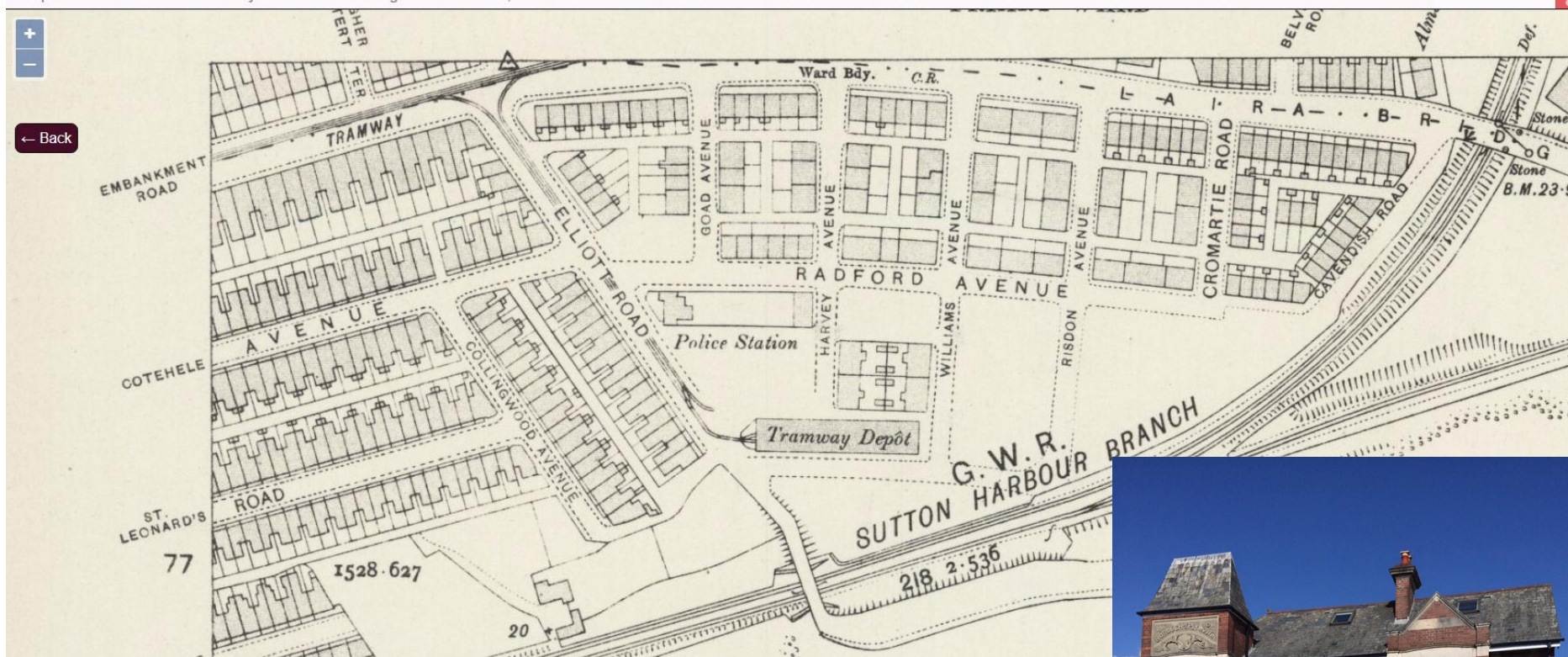
It is now a café.

Photo: Cyberheritage



Map 9 - Elliott Road Prince Rock PS

Maps home > Ordnance Survey > OS 25 inch England and Wales, 1841-1952



This magnificent building still exists.

Once the eastern divisional headquarters of the Plymouth Police, it still exudes an air of authority.



Location of the post war police stations, police boxes and police pillars shown on the 1:1,250 scale maps



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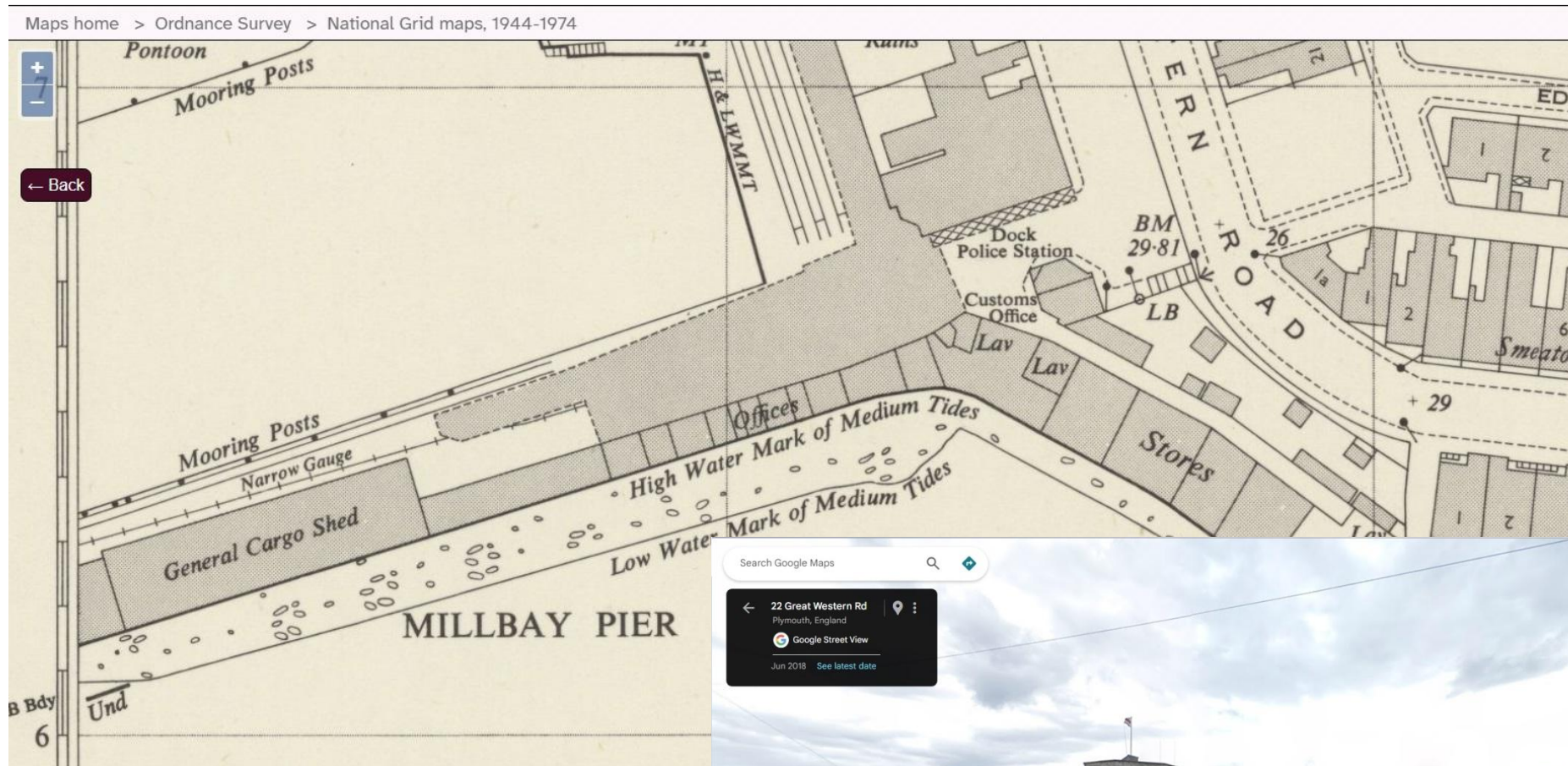
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na h-Alba

SX4753NW - A

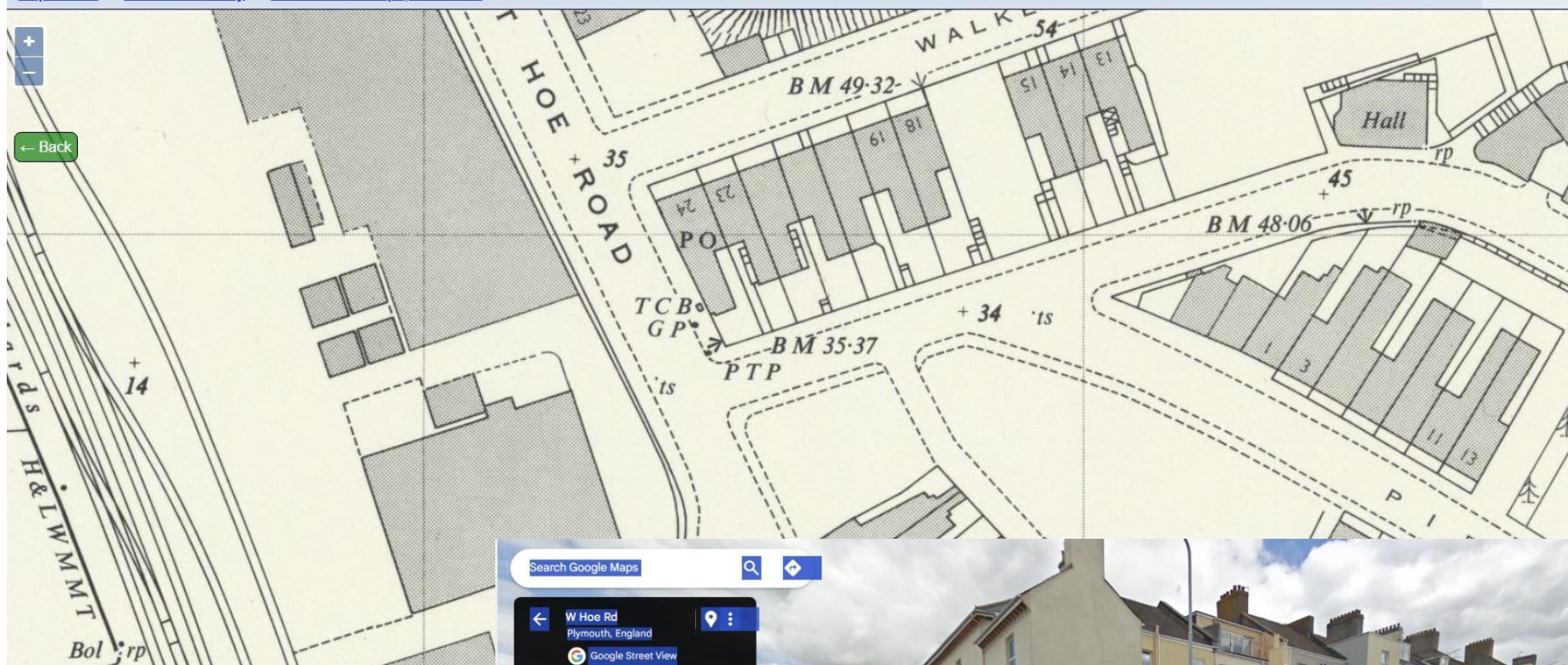
Surveyed: 1949, Published: ca.1950

Size: map 40 x 40 cm (16 x 16 inches), on sheet ca. 56 x 49 cm (ca. 22 x 20 inches)

Map 1 - Millbay Dock



[Maps home](#) > [Ordnance Survey](#) > [National Grid maps, 1944-1974](#)





Maps home > Ordnance Survey > National Grid maps, 1944-1974





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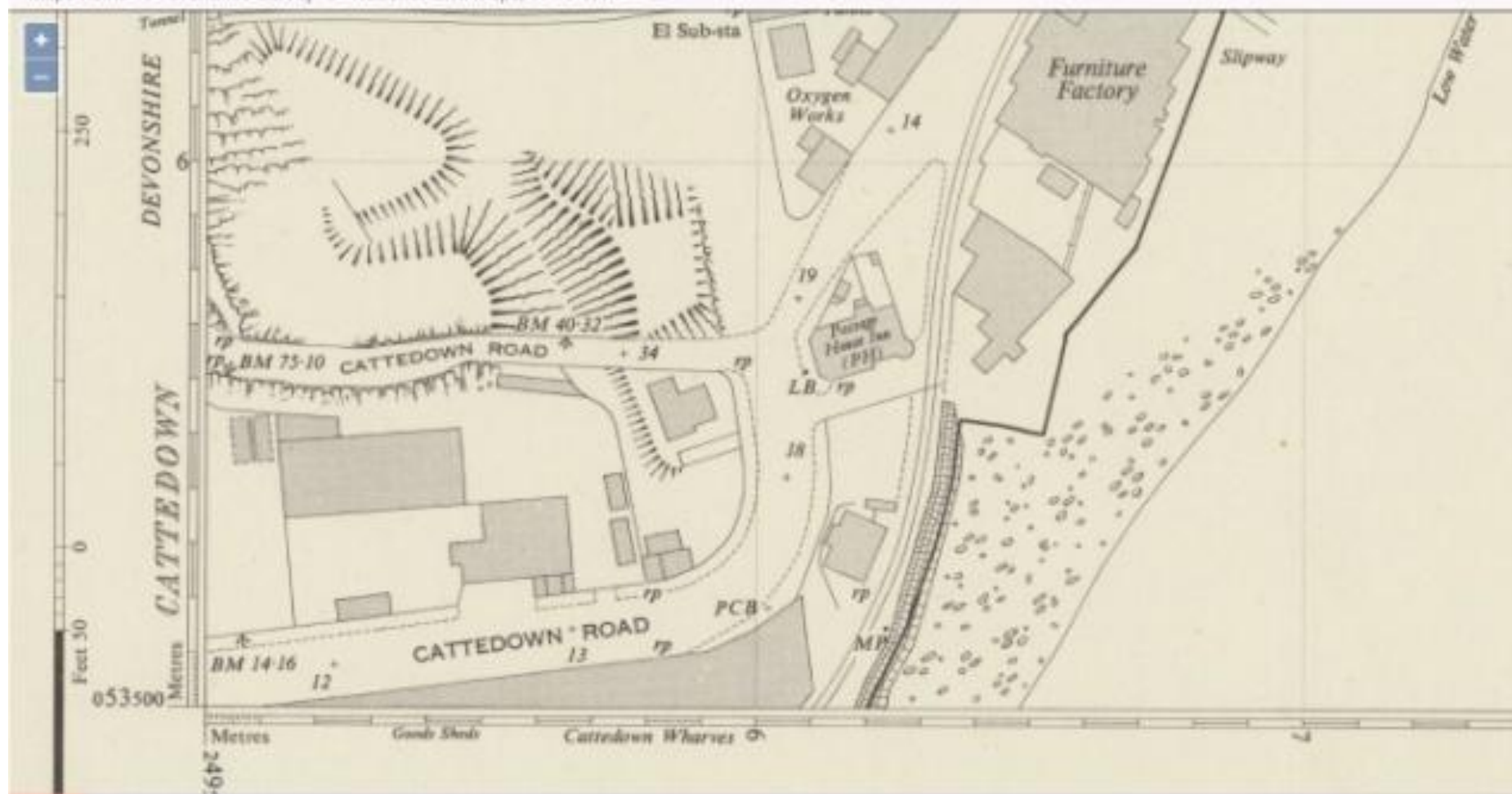
SX4953NE - A

Surveyed: 1949, Published: 1950

Size: map 40 x 40 cm (16 x 16 inches), on sheet ca. 56 x 49 cm (ca. 22 x 20 inches)

Map 03 - Cattedown Rd PCB, 1950

Maps home > Ordnance Survey > National Grid maps, 1944-1974

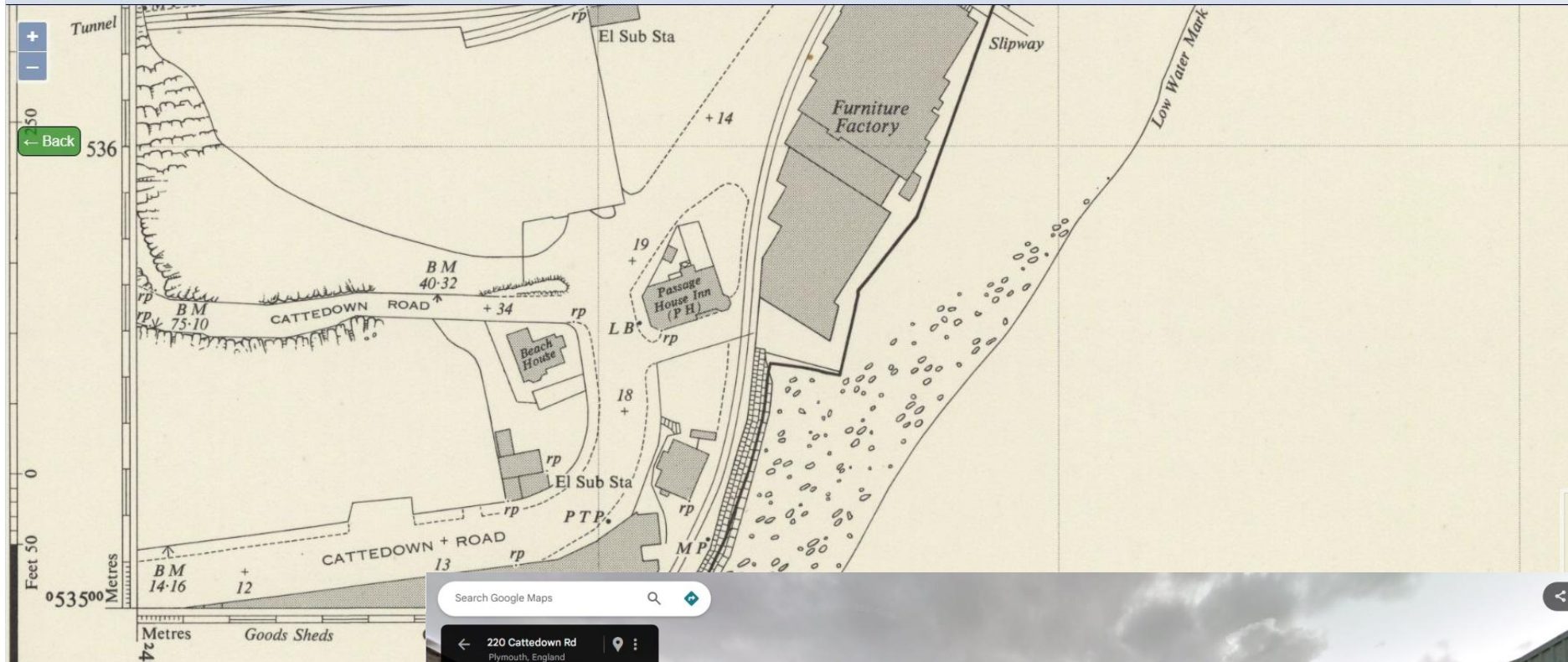


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Cattedown Road, another lonely place on the edge of Plymouth had a police box in 1950. However two years later, this had been replaced with a pillar. Was the box placed there because of the pub?



[Maps home](#) > [Ordnance Survey](#) > [National Grid maps, 1944-1974](#)





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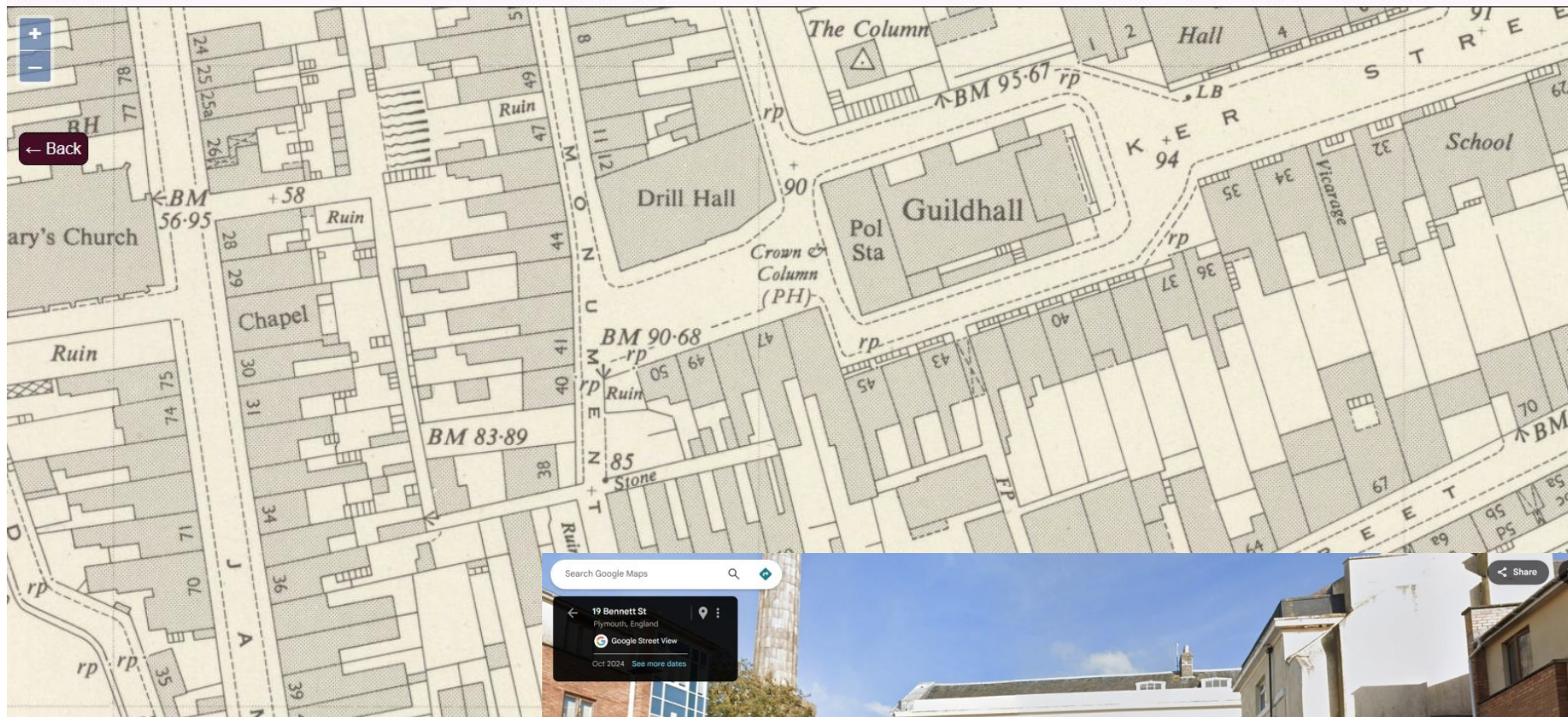
SX4554SW - B

Revised: 1951, Published: 1952

Size: map 40 x 40 cm (16 x 16 inches), on sheet ca. 56 x 49 cm (ca. 22 x 20 inches)

Map 04 - Devonport Police Station

Maps home > Ordnance Survey > National Grid maps, 1944-1974



The Devonport Borough Police was established in 1836. The force became part of Plymouth Borough Police on 1st November 1914, along with Stonehouse Police and part of the Devon Constabulary.

The Devonport Borough Headquarters, behind the Guildhall, was used by Plymouth officers after amalgamation.



Map 05 - Edgcumbe St, Stonehouse PTP

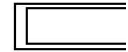
maps.nls.uk/view/144817106



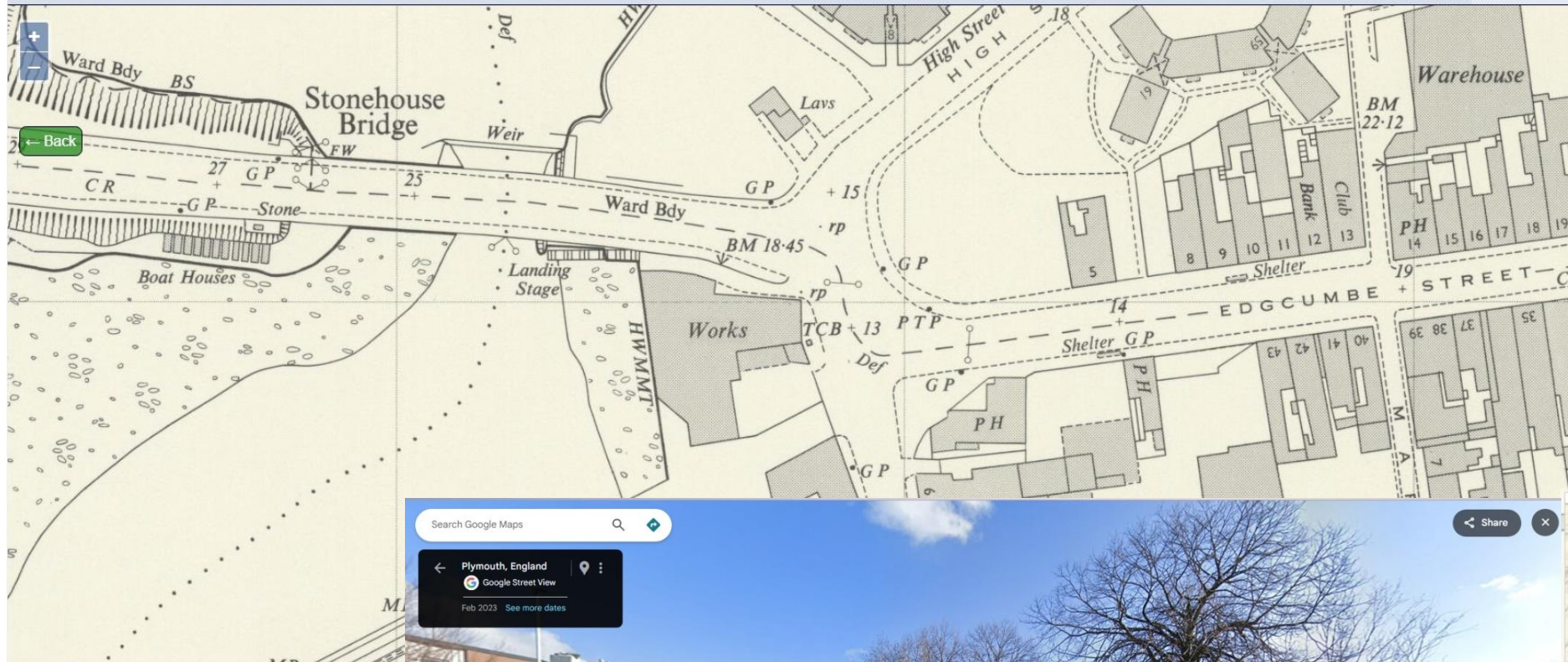
SX4654SW - B

Revised: 1959, Published: 1959

Size: map 40 x 40 cm (16 x 16 inches), on sheet ca. 56 x 49 cm (ca. 22 x 20 inches)



[Maps home](#) > [Ordnance Survey](#) > [National Grid maps, 1944-1974](#)





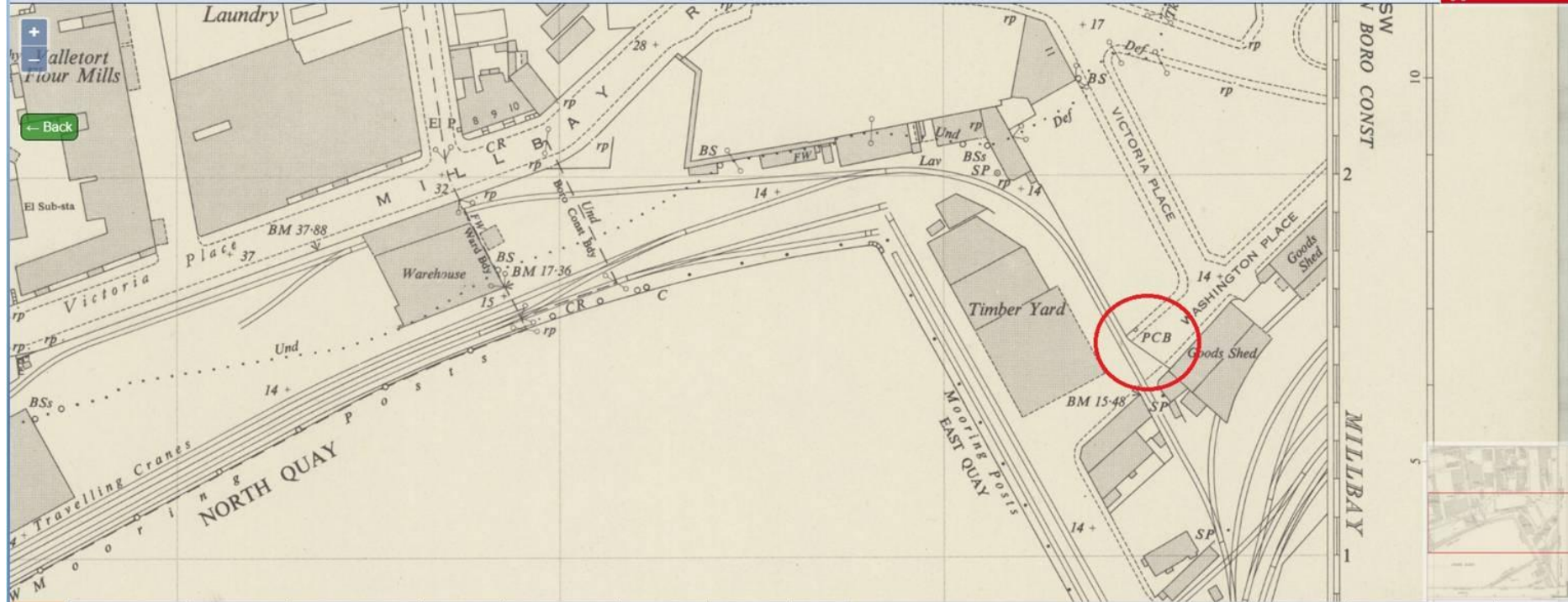
Maps home > Ordnance Survey > National Grid maps, 1944-1974



Map 6 – Washington Place PCB

[Maps home](#) > [Ordnance Survey](#) > [National Grid maps, 1944-1974](#)

[Order this map](#)



The foundations of the police box in this industrial area of Plymouth, now lie about where the lamp standard is in this car park. Probably together with the railway tracks...





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SX4654SE - B

Revised: 1955, Published: 1956

Size: map 40 x 40 cm (16 x 16 inches), on sheet ca. 56 x 49 cm (ca. 22 x 20 inches)

Map 6 - George Place PTP

Re-use: [CC-BY](#) (NLS).



This area has changed beyond all recognition from 1956.

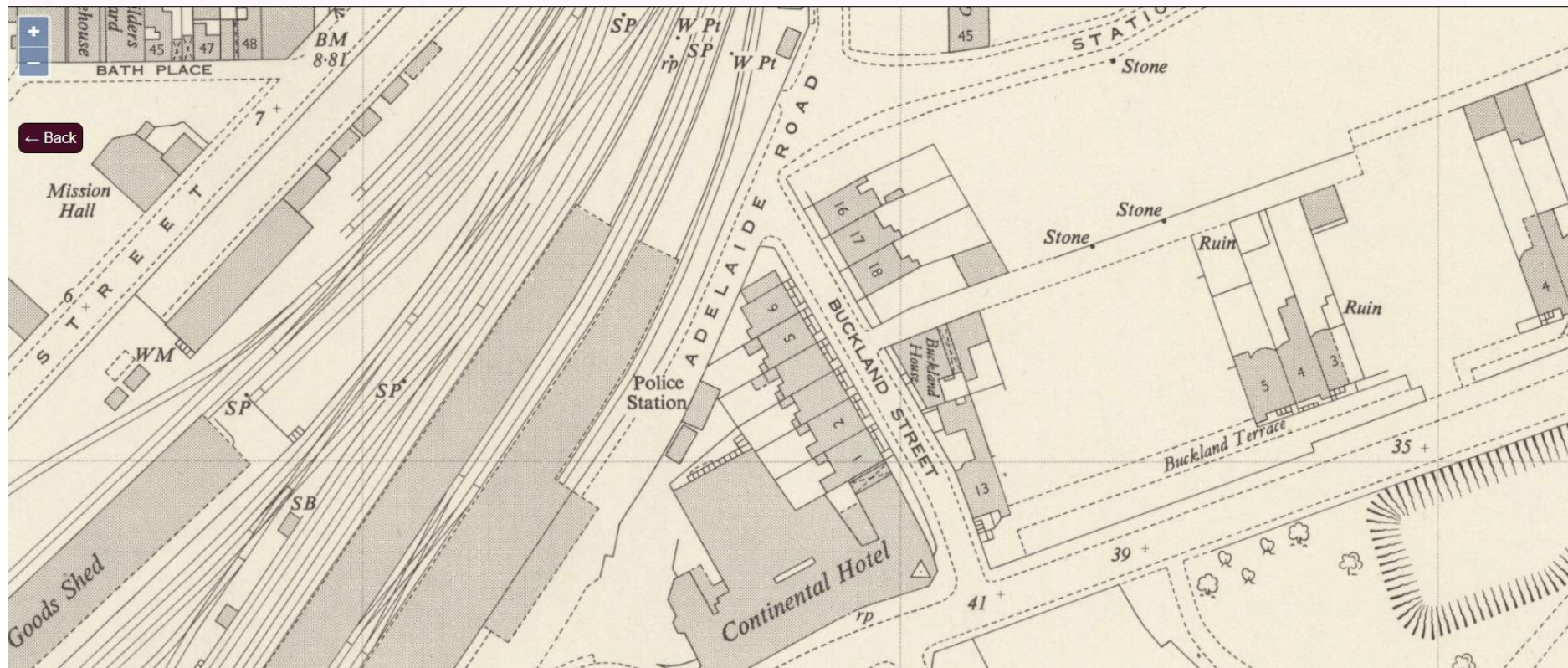
The police pillar stood on the corner where the yellow cross hatchings are today.





Map 7 - Adelaide Rd Police

Maps home > Ordnance Survey > National Grid maps, 1944-1974



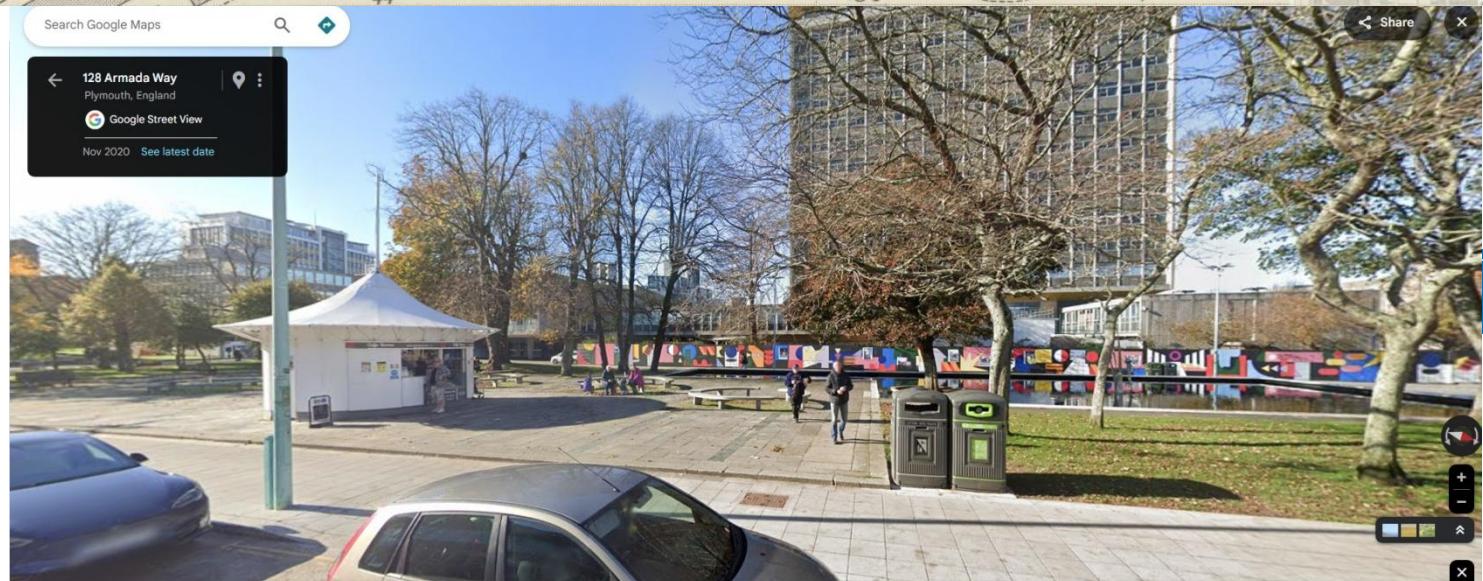
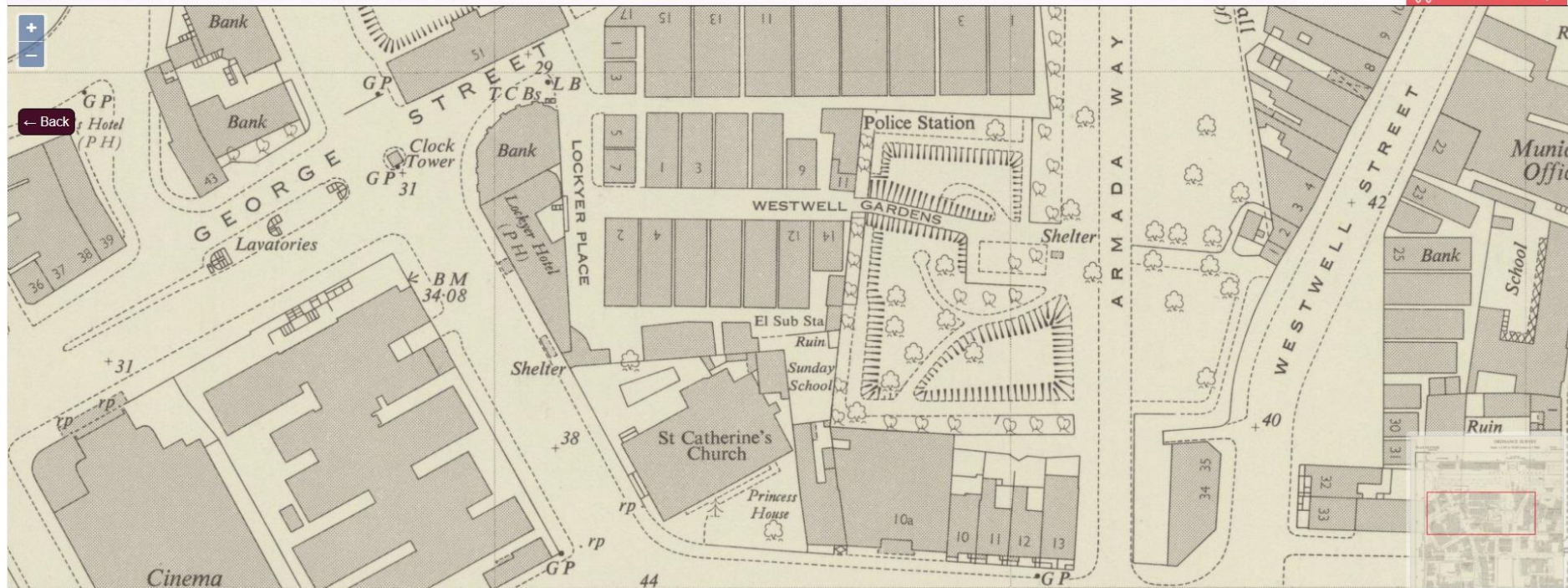
Another area which has changed beyond all recognition from this 1952 map.

The police overlooked the railway. Now it is somewhere under the Plymouth Pavilion.



Maps home > Ordnance Survey > National Grid maps, 1944-1974

Order this map





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SX4754SE - C

Revised: 1958, Published: 1958

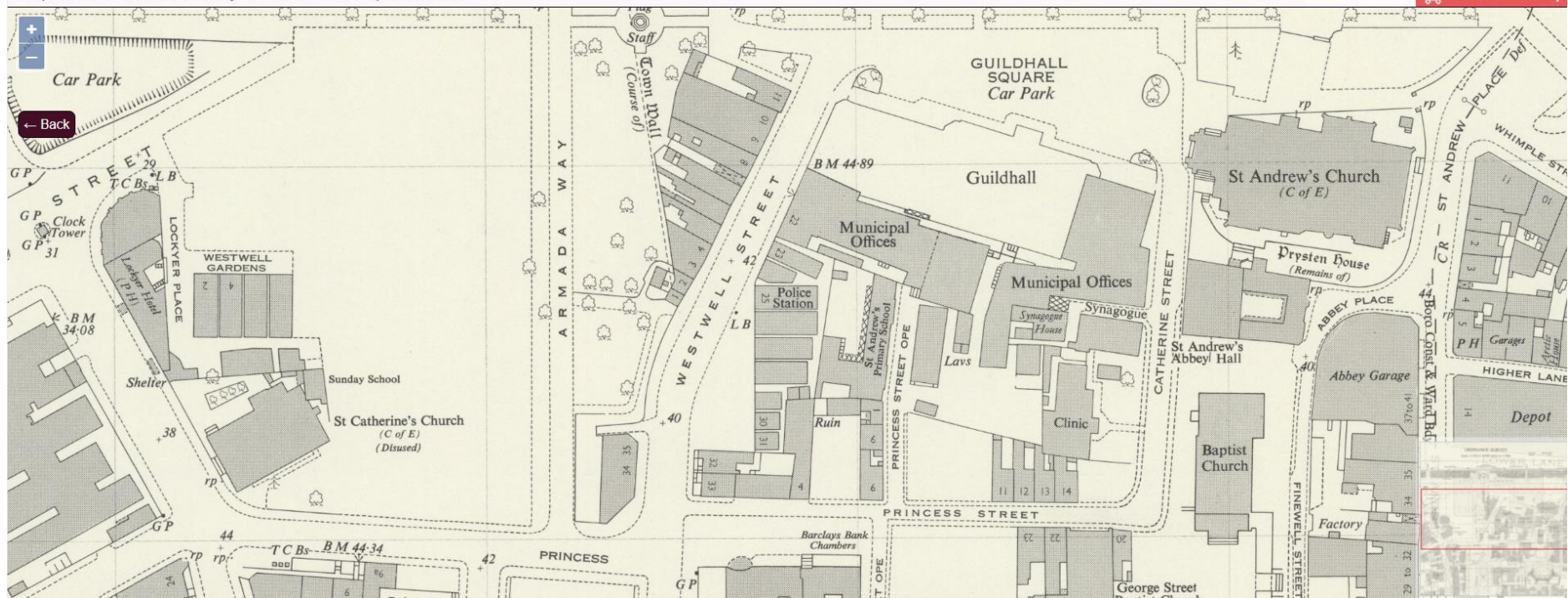
Size: map 40 x 40 cm (16 x 16 inches), on sheet ca. 56 x 49 cm (ca. 22 x 20 inches)

Map 8 - Westwell Street Police Station

Re-use: CC-BY (NLS)

Maps home > Ordnance Survey > National Grid maps, 1944-1974

Order this map



Westwell Street went when this area was redeveloped.

This is the combined courts centre and the road is now called Armada Way.





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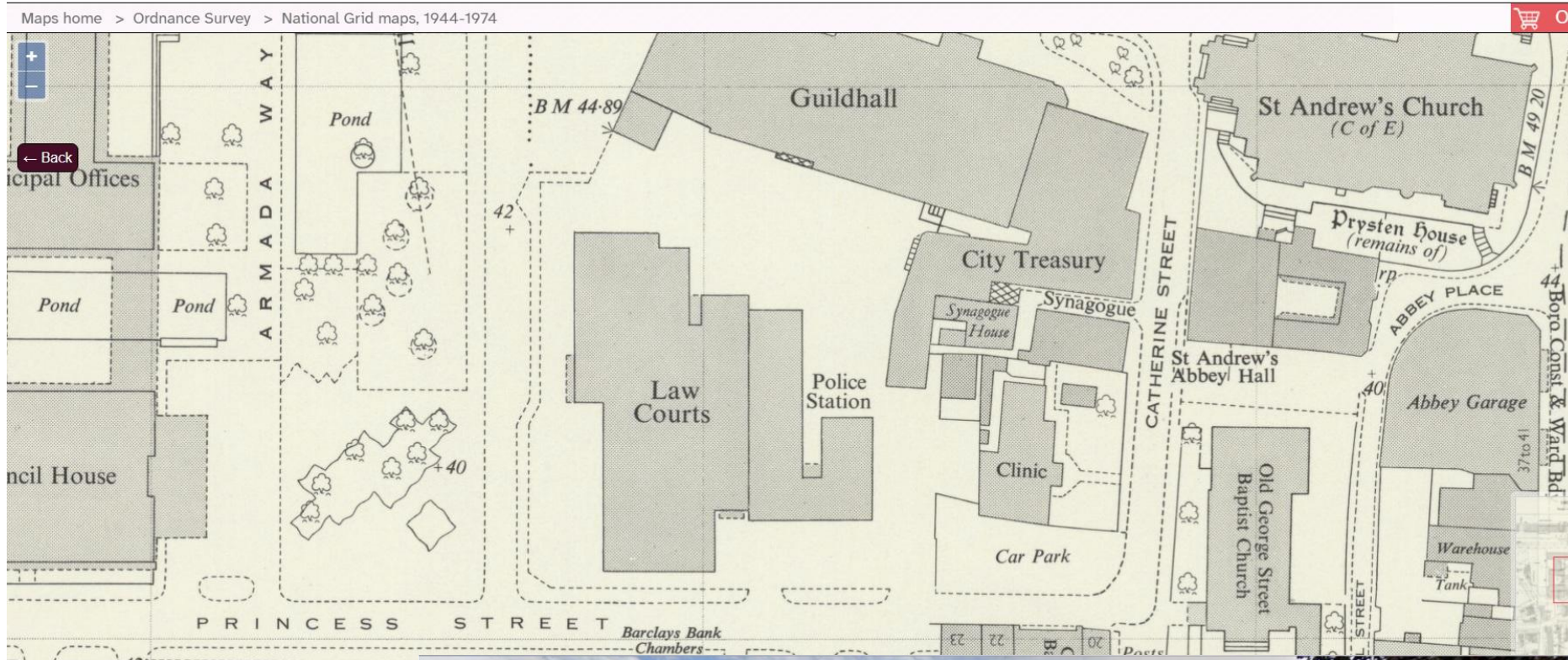
SX4754SE - D

Revised: 1962, Published: 1963

Size: map 40 x 40 cm (16 x 16 inches), on sheet ca. 56 x 49 cm (ca. 22 x 20 inches)

Map 8 - Princess Street Police Station

Re-u



Princess Street was the replacement station for Westwell Street when this area was redeveloped.



Maps home > Ordnance Survey > OS 25 inch England and Wales, 1841-1952

Order this map



A police fire report on the 14th September 1937 references the initial fire call being made from a police call box in Princess Square.

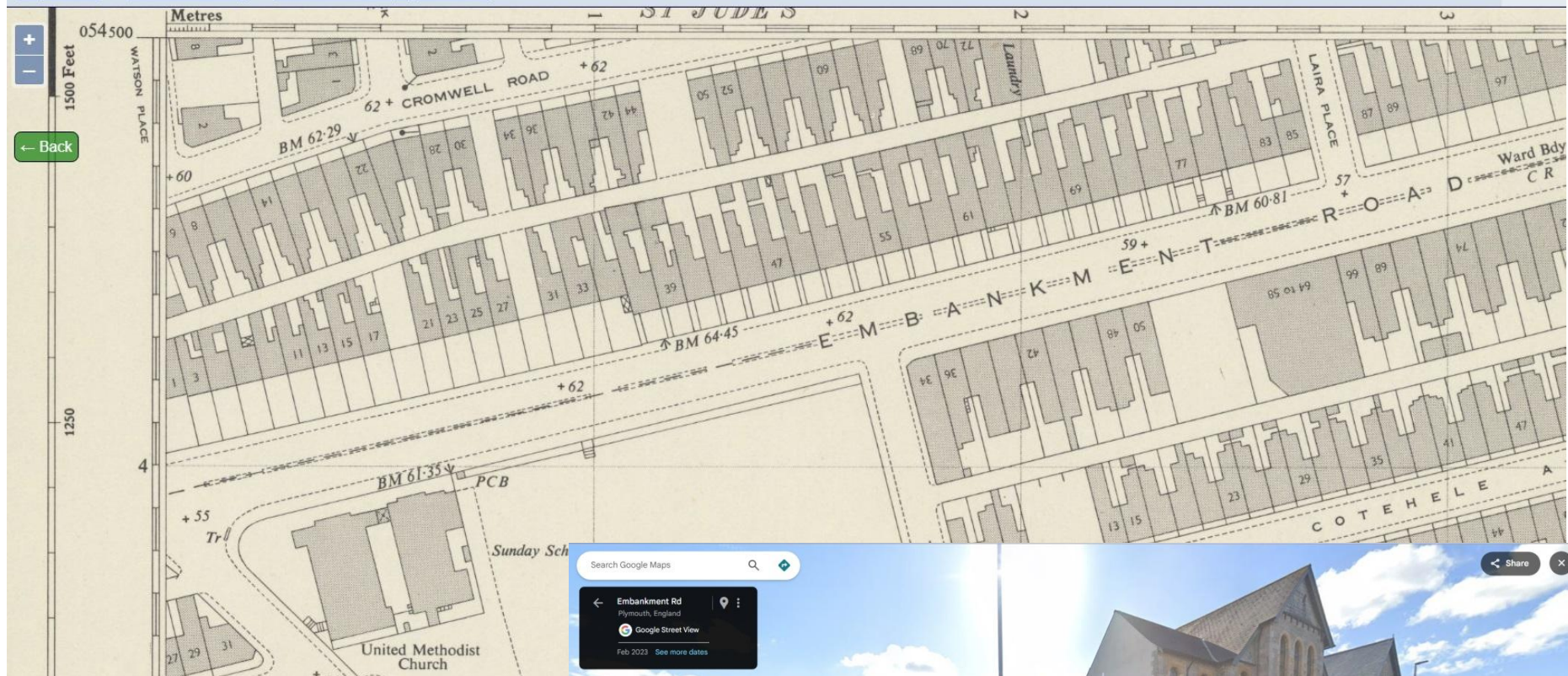
There is another gap in maps between 1914 and 1952 with the square shown in 1914 but no longer there in 1952.

Now called Princess Way, it is a concrete multi-story car park.

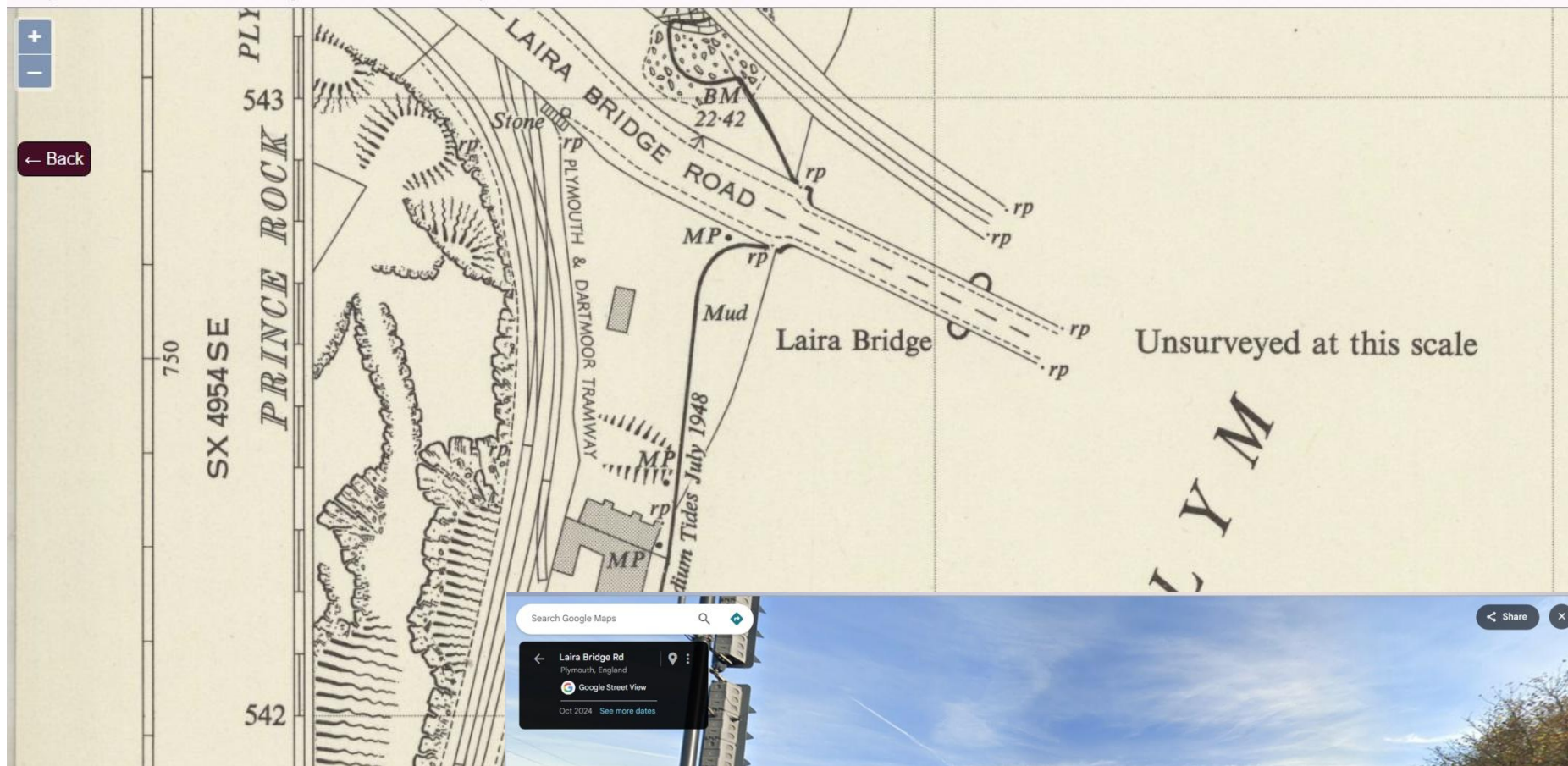


The building shown on the pier on the 1914 25" OS map was the registered office of the Plymouth Fish Selling Company before becoming a police station, it came into use in 1933 when the Watch House was demolished.

It is not shown as a police station until 1960, but was in use well before then. It is now a café. The pier also is given the name “Whitehouse Pier” on this map as well.



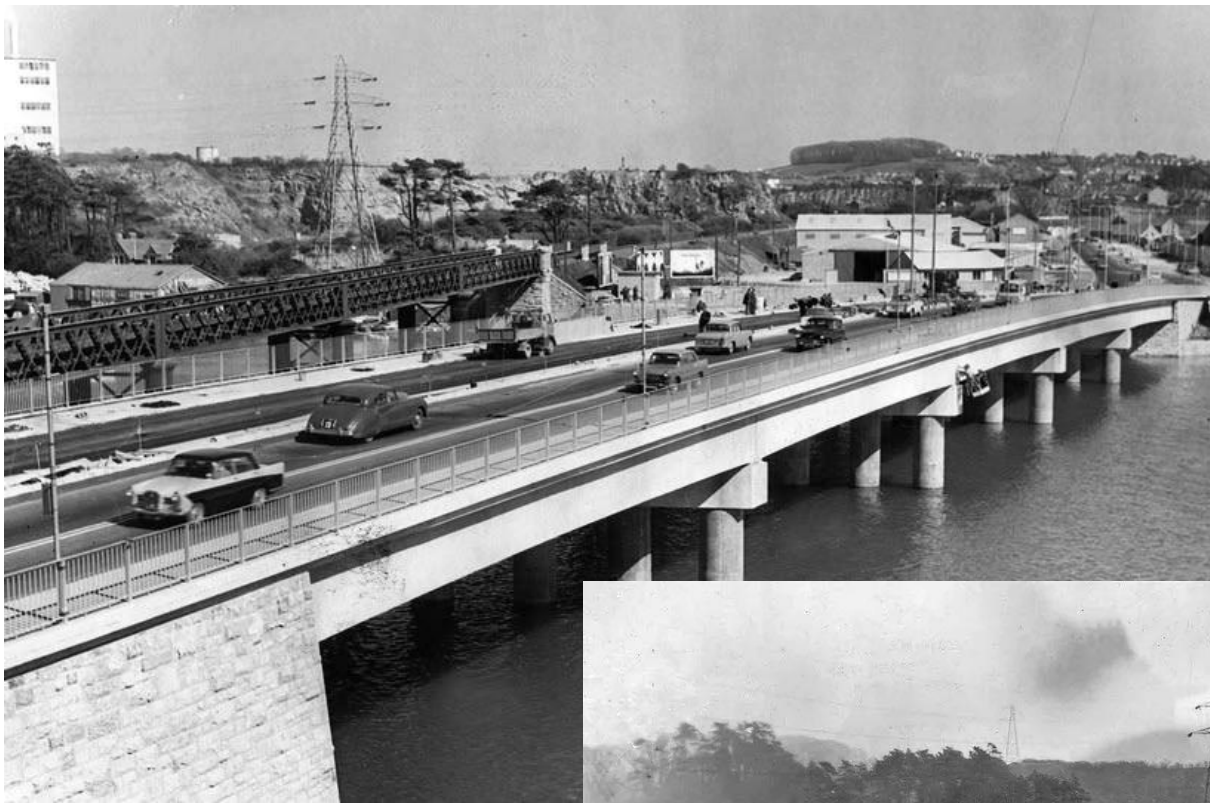
Maps home > Ordnance Survey > National Grid maps, 1944-1974



Not shown on any maps, but there are gaps in the map record. The photograph on the following page is of the police pillar on the approach to the old Laira Bridge.

It does not seem to have been replaced when the new bridge was built and opened in 1962.





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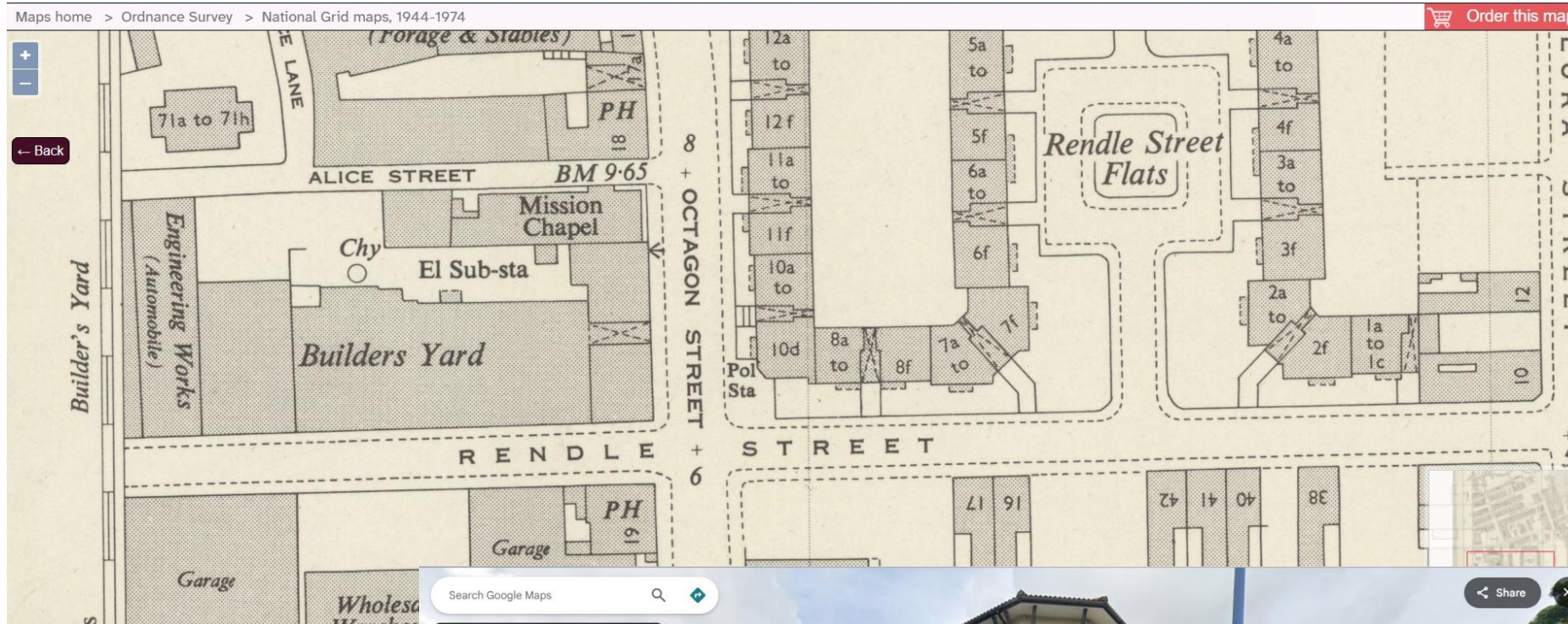
SX4654NE - B
Revised: 1959, Published: 1959
Size: map 40 x 40 cm (16 x 16 inches), on sheet ca. 56 x 49 cm (ca. 22 x 20 inches)



The Mill Bridge box was installed as part of the second group in January 1924.

This was also the location where Chief Constable William Johnson tested the new telephone system to Greenbank in February 1935.

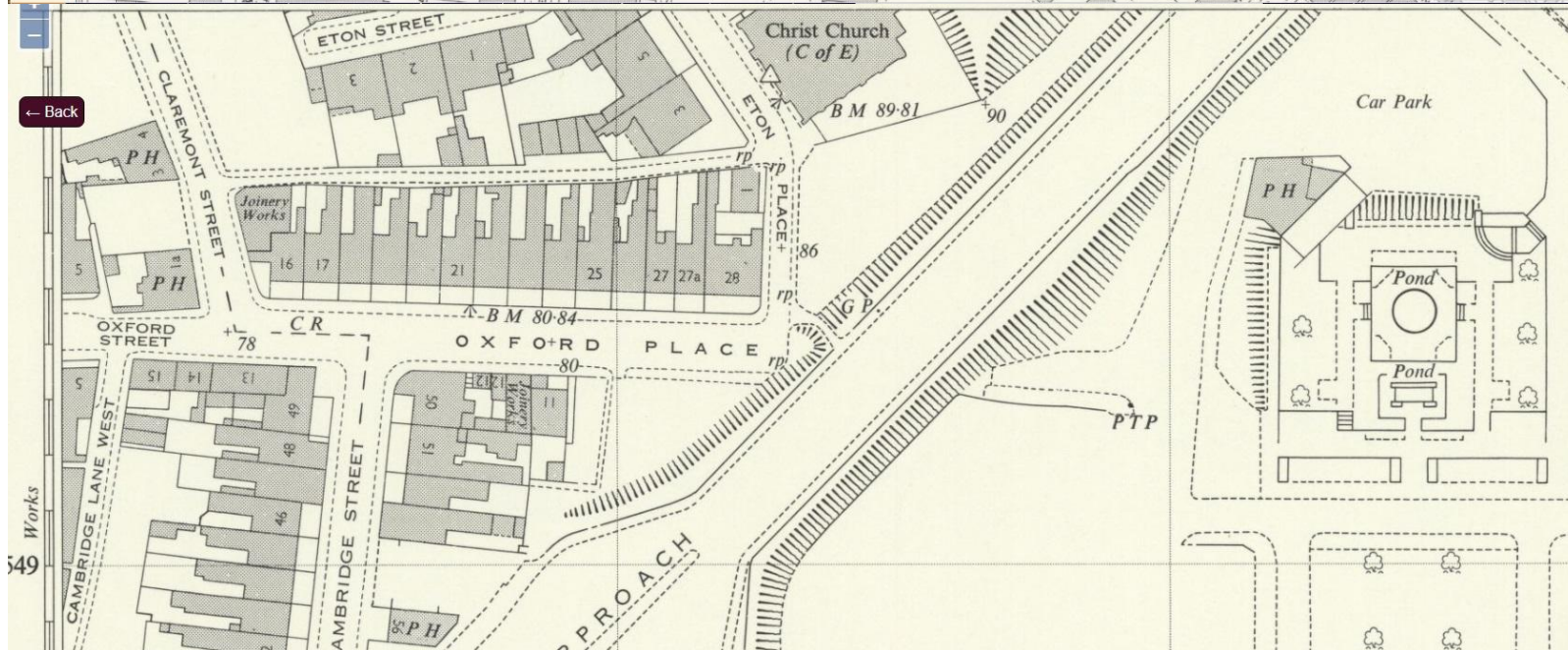
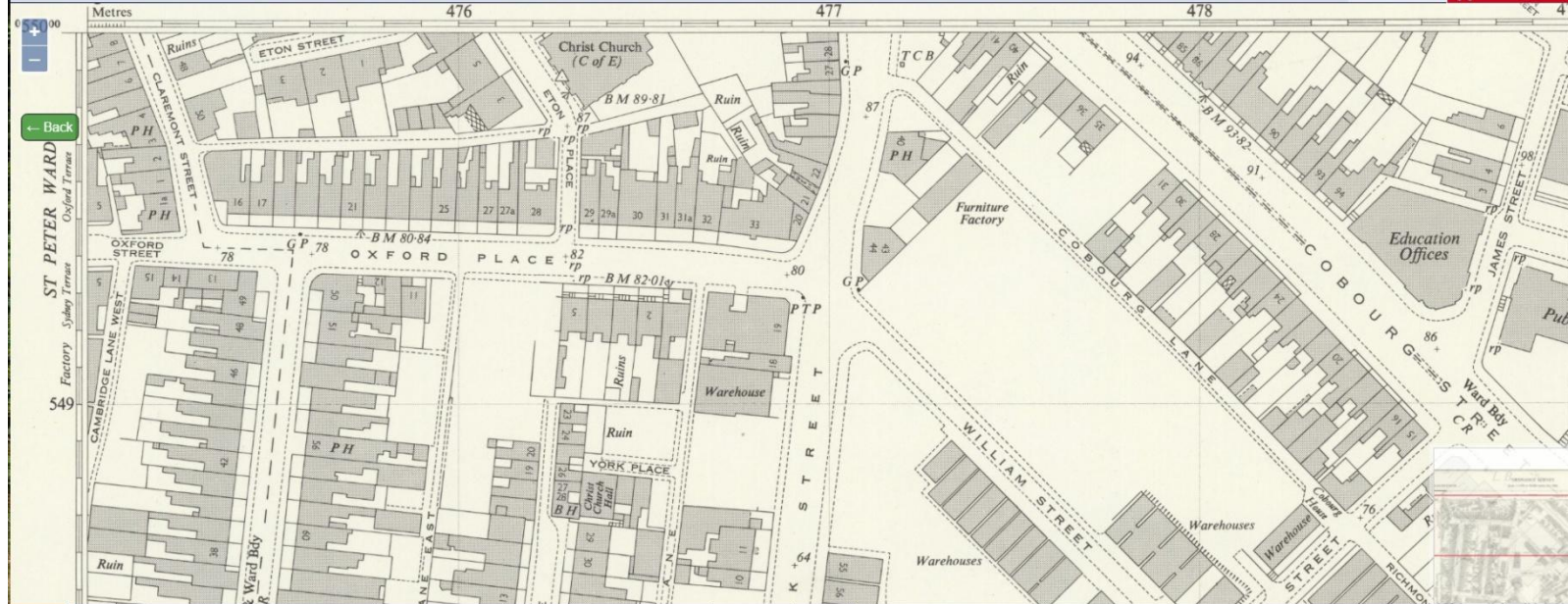




Although a station at Octagon has been mentioned since the 1860's, the first time it appears on a map is 1950.

This was probably a later station. However that now has been demolished and the block has been redeveloped.





In these two maps you can see the redevelopment of Plymouth in action.

The first maps shows many buildings around the Pillar.

In the second map, ten years later, a new road has been driven through where once there were buildings, but the pillar remains, isolated and cut off from everything...



The Oxford Place / York Street pillar is just visible in the grainy image looking down York Street.

Today, the location is somewhere under the Copthorne Hotel, near Sainsbury's Supermarket.

York Street has completely disappeared.





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SX4754NE - F

Revised: 1964, Published: 1965

Size: map 40 x 40 cm (16 x 16 inches), on sheet ca. 56 x 49 cm (ca. 22 x 20 inches)

Map 14 - New George St. PTP

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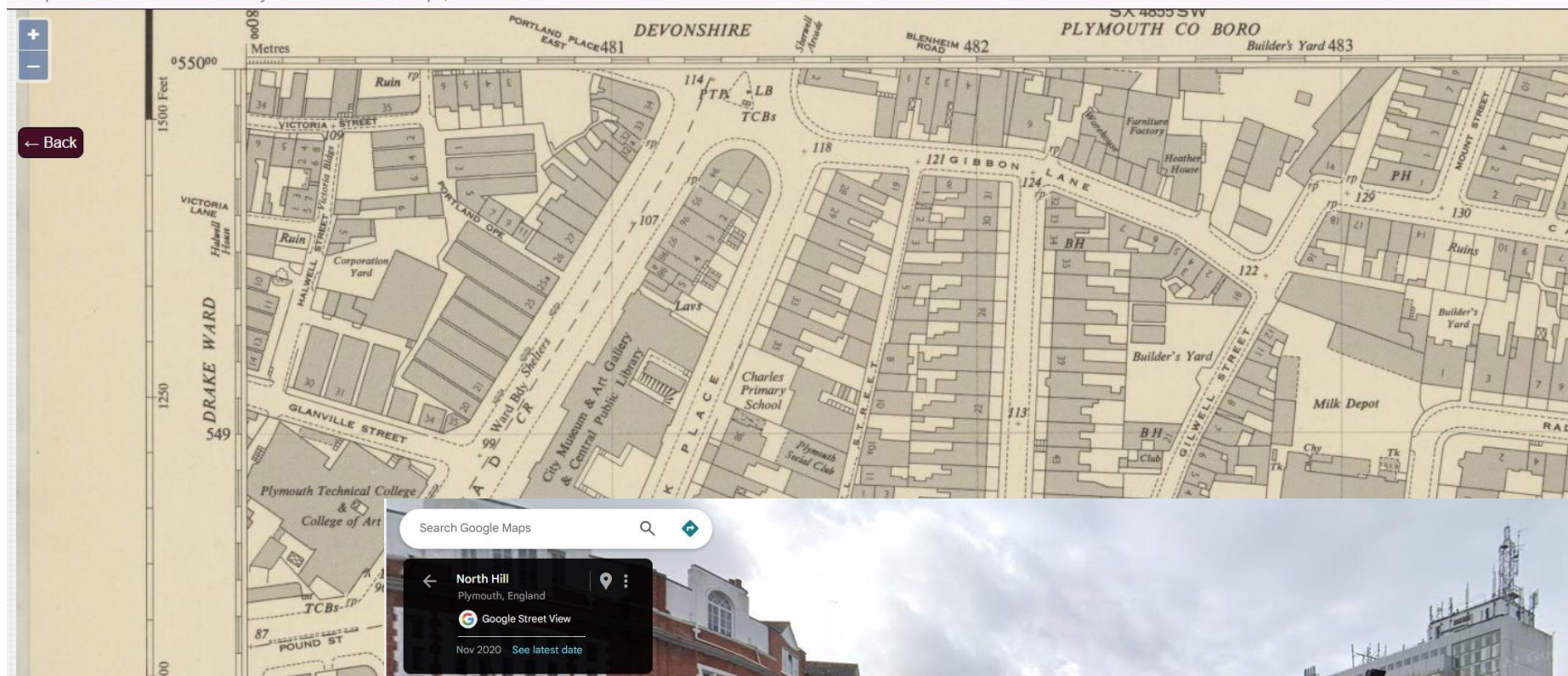
SX4854NW - B

Revised: 1953, Published: 1954

Size: map 40 x 40 cm (16 x 16 inches), on sheet ca. 56 x 49 cm (ca. 22 x 20 inches)

Map 15 - Tavistock Road / Portland Place East PTP

Maps home > Ordnance Survey > National Grid maps, 1944-1974



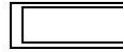
Physically, this pillar was located at the junction of Tavistock Road and Portland Place. Tavistock Road is now called Drake Circus.

To Plymouth officers it was known as North Hill Pillar.

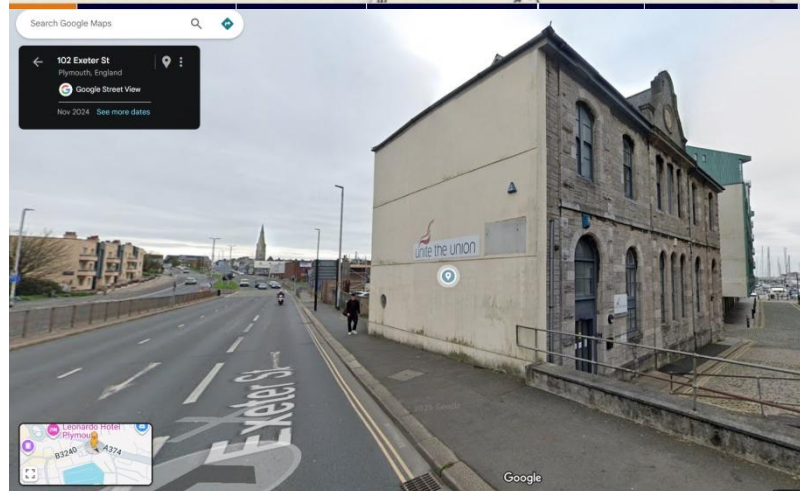
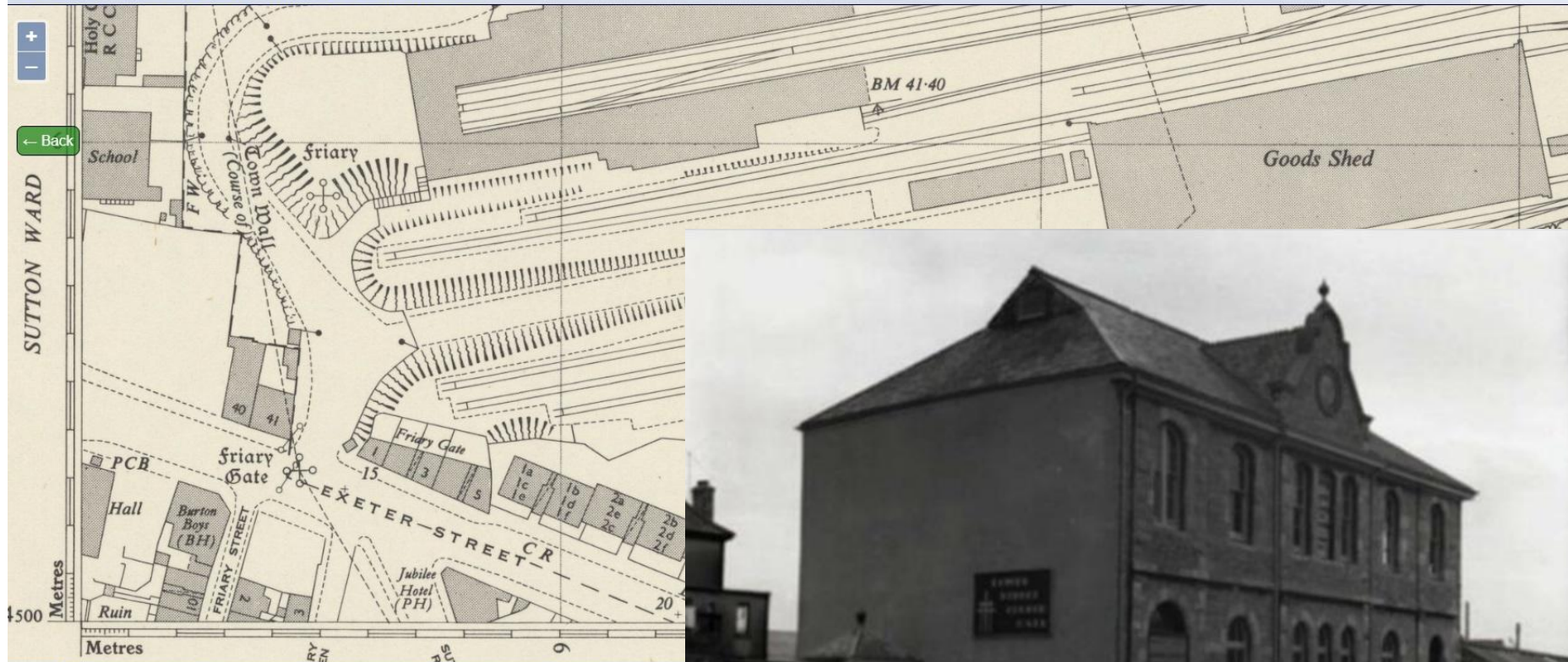




This high resolution photograph, including the North Hill pillar, deserves a page of its own because of the detail that it contains.



Maps home > Ordnance Survey > National Grid maps, 1944-1974

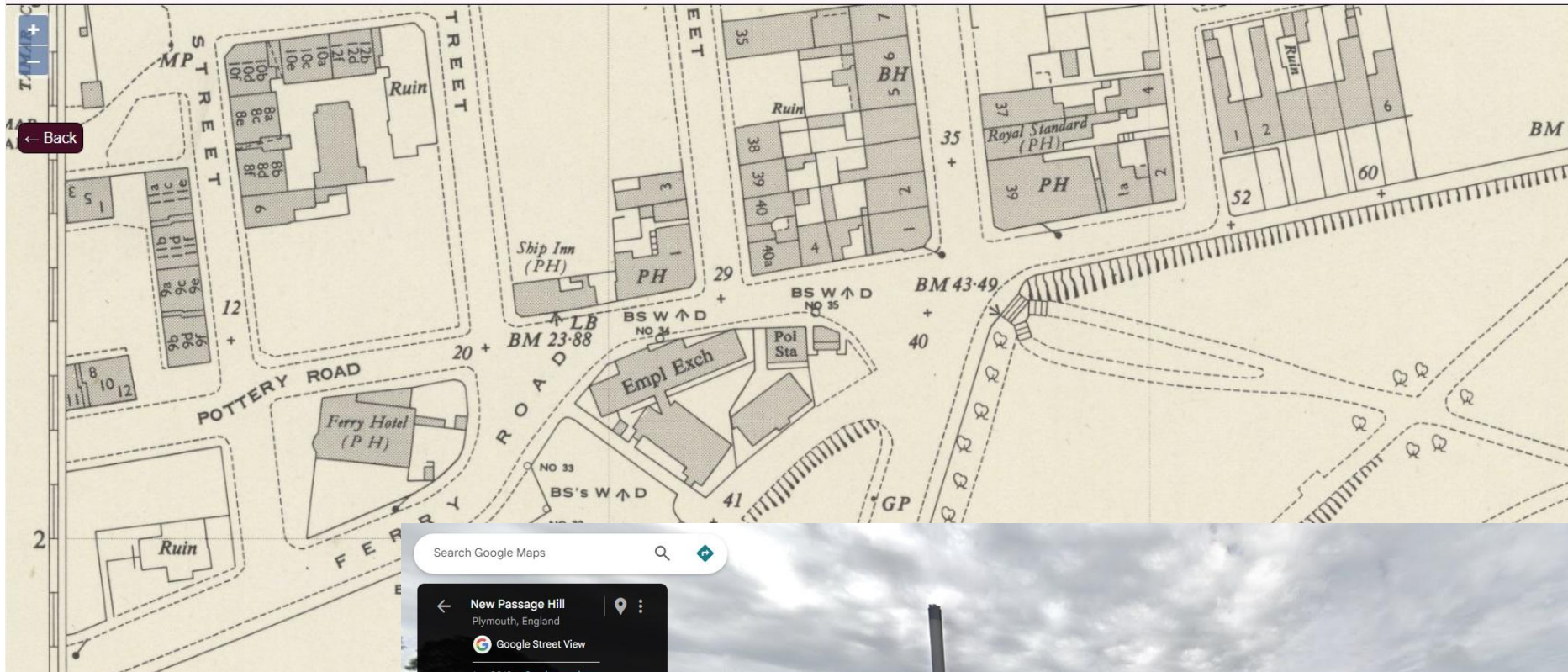




Another atmospheric shot taken on a wet winter's day of a Plymouth PC, a Specials Constable and a schoolboy by a pillar. This gives you an idea of their size. The location is the junction of Salisbury Road and Greenbank Avenue. However the pillar does not feature on any map.



Maps home > Ordnance Survey > National Grid maps, 1944-1974

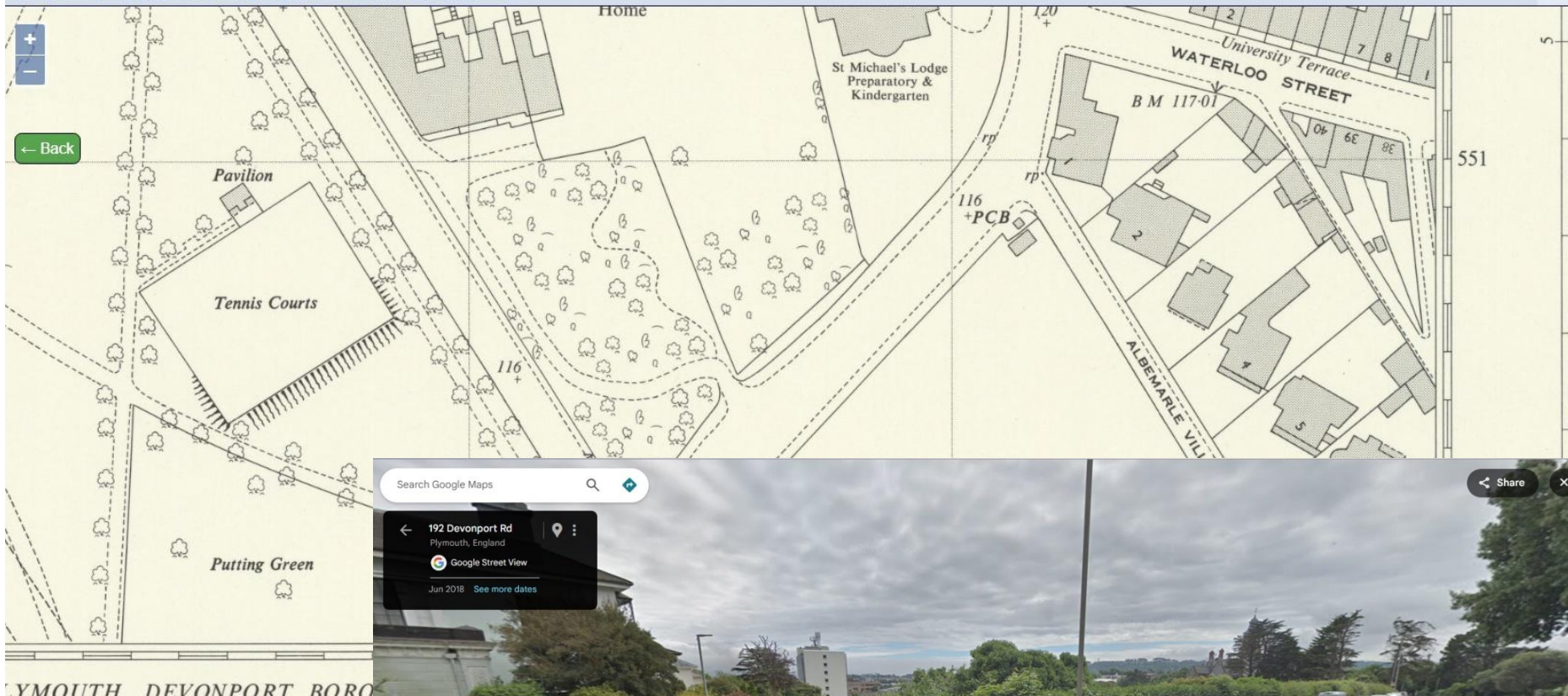


All the buildings which were in this area have gone, replaced with a grassy bank.

No trace of the police station remains and no photographs showing it have been found.



[Maps home](#) > [Ordnance Survey](#) > [National Grid maps, 1944-1974](#)





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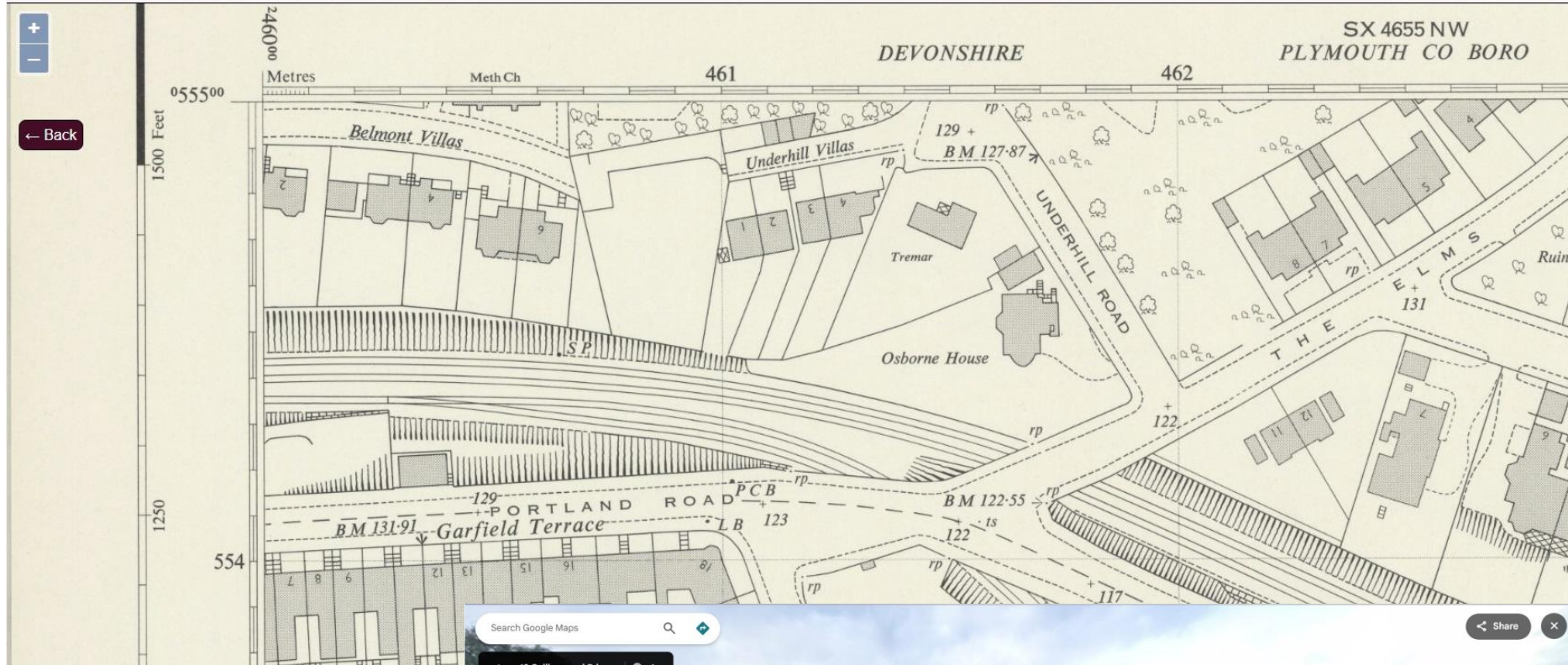
SX4655SW - B

Revised: 1957, Published: 1958

Size: map 40 x 40 cm (16 x 16 inches), on sheet ca. 56 x 49 cm (ca. 22 x 20 inches)

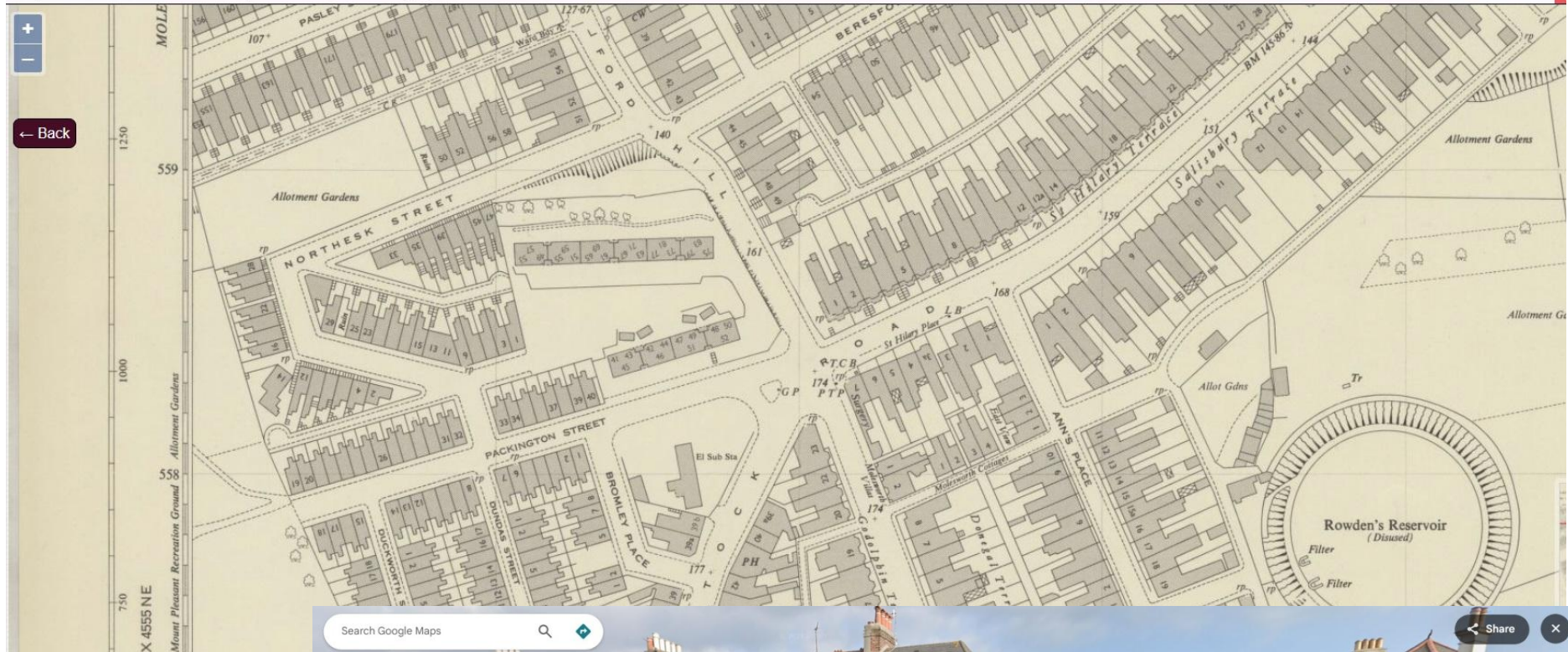
Map 19 - Portland Road / Garfield Terrace PCB

Maps home > Ordnance Survey > National Grid maps, 1944-1974





Maps home > Ordnance Survey > National Grid maps, 1944-1974



Once again the names have changed. To the right, Tavistock Road is now Devonport Road and to the left begins Milehouse Road.

Maps home > Ordnance Survey > OS 25 inch England and Wales, 1841-1952

[Order this map](#)

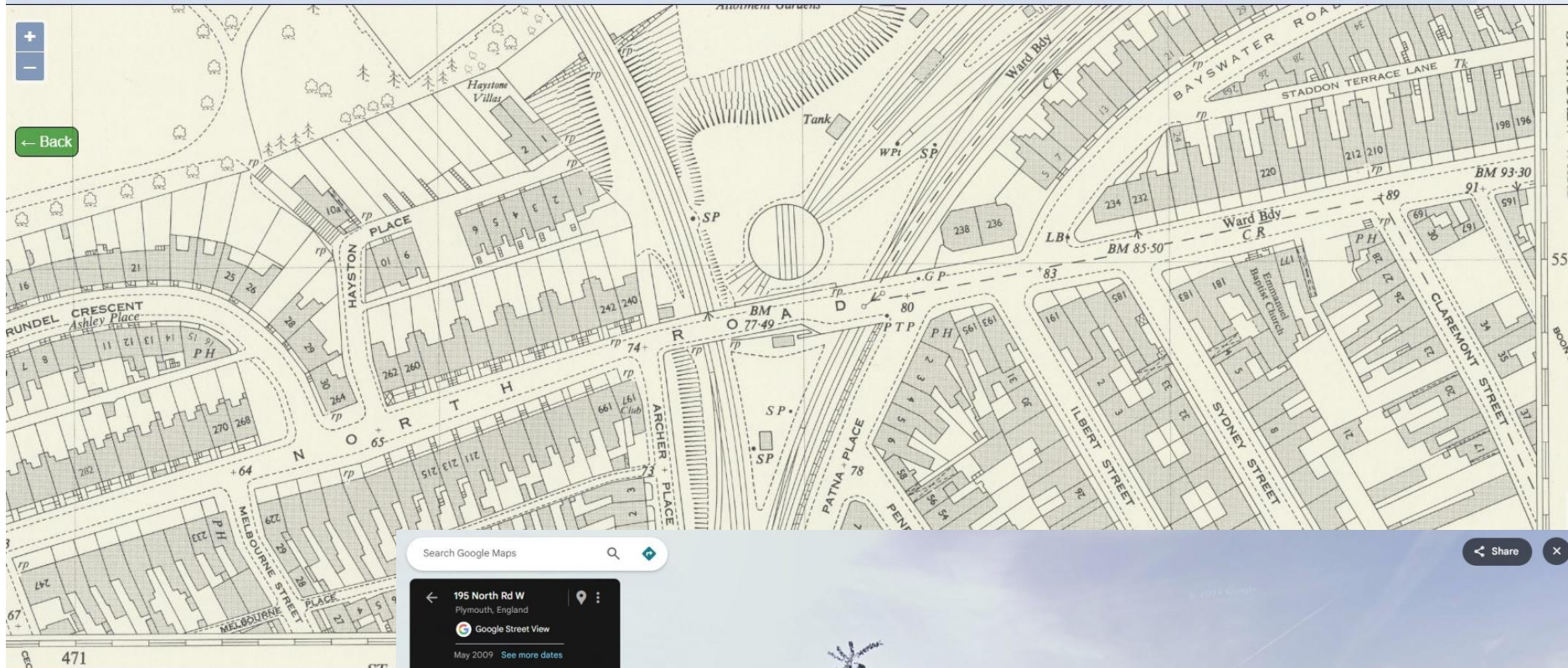


The police box was in the second group installed in January 1925. Again it was placed in the centre of the intersection.

By the 1950's it had been replaced with a pillar, on the pavement.







The light colour of this pillar suggests that the photograph was taken when the police pillars in Plymouth were all painted red. Red faded in sunlight over time.

The GPO changed their colours in 1950 to blue.



Reminiscence...

Adrian Trace shared the following happy memory:

"My finest memory is of my dad using the police phone in North Road West. While digging in the garden in the 1960s' my dad found two small bombs. When he called the Police they asked where the bombs were to which my dad replied "I brought them with me, here to the phone". The police went nuts. Pretty quickly a Bomb Disposal Land Rover arrived from HMS Drake and whisked them away."



Map 21 - Greenbank Police Headquarters

Maps home > Ordnance Survey > National Grid maps, 1944-1974



Way ahead of its time, the new police headquarters, planned in 1933 by Chief Constable William Johnson (later the first Chief HMI), was a tri-service facility.

Facilities for the police, the police fire brigade and the ambulance service were all built on the site of the former Plymouth Prison.

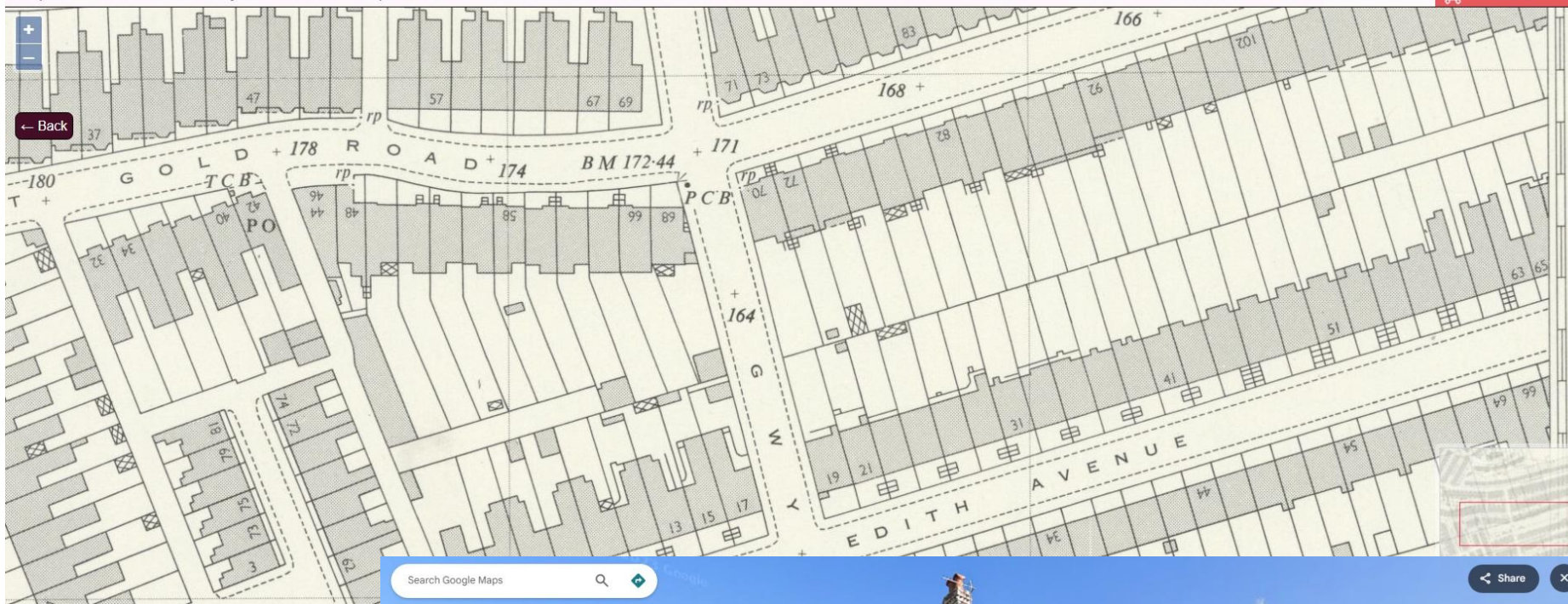
Only the fire brigade are still on site, but there are remnants of the old police buildings next to the supermarket car park.

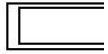




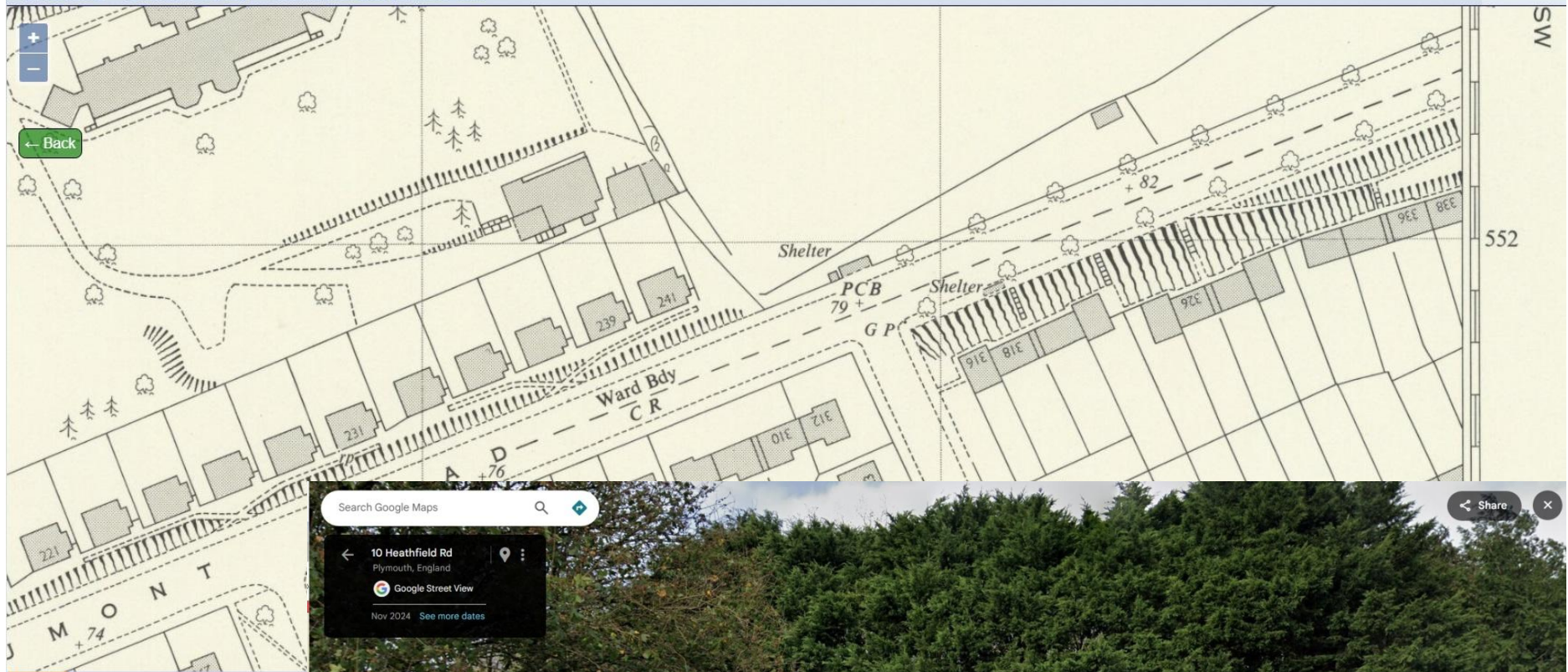
Maps home > Ordnance Survey > National Grid maps, 1944-1974

Order this map



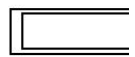


Maps home > Ordnance Survey > National Grid maps, 1944-1974



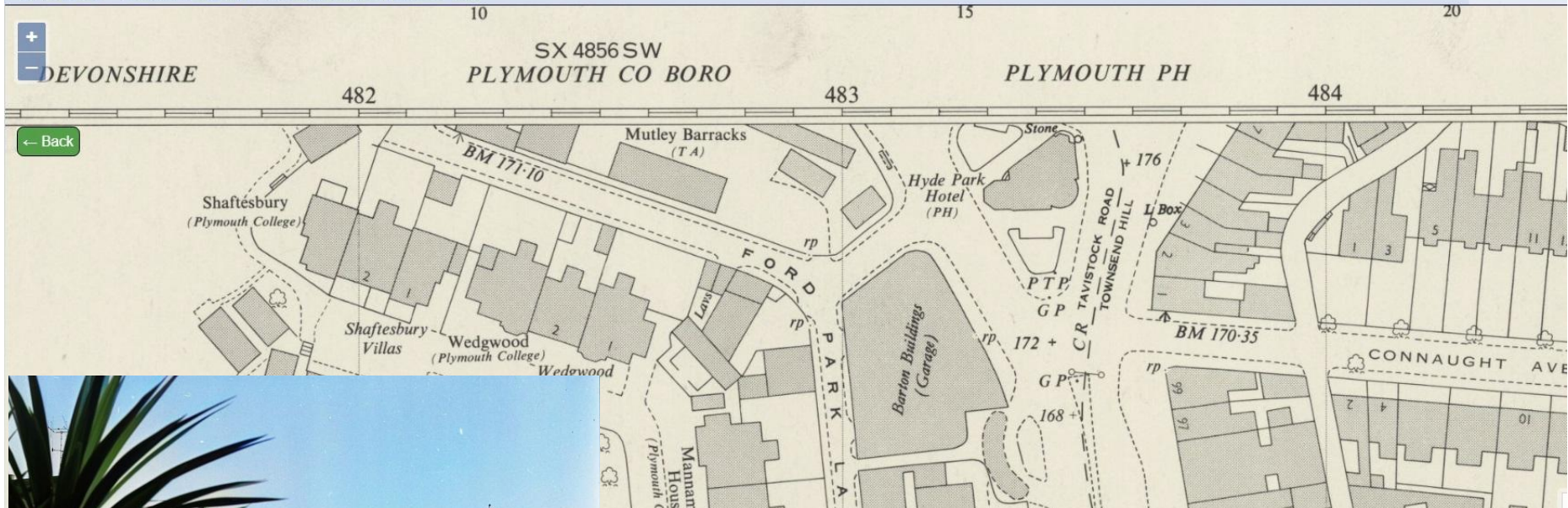


SX4555NE - B
Revised: 1961, Published: 1961
Size: map 40 x 40 cm (16 x 16 inches), on sheet ca. 56 x 49 cm (ca. 22 x 20 inches)



Maps home > Ordnance Survey > National Grid maps, 1944-1974





Few colour photographs of Plymouth police pillars exist, so this photograph (left) of the pillar in front of the Hyde Park Hotel is significant, because it is in colour, and it shows a red pillar. It is possible that it was taken before they were painted blue in 1950. Morris Minor cars were produced from 1948.

Map 25 - Hyde Park Hotel, Mutley



This photograph of a military parade taking the fork towards Townsend Hill, passing the Hyde Park Hotel (to the band's left).

In the background is the "Barton Building".

Once again the light colour of the pillar suggests it is red, so pre 1950.

Trams had last run in 1945.





Maps home > Ordnance Survey > National Grid maps, 1944-1974



A 19th Century police and fire station, at 226 Old Laira Road still exists – just! It was opened in the 1880's but was closed in 1924 when a police box was installed, further up the road.

Local people were most unhappy about the closure, even when the building became their local library.

Plymouth City Council closed the library in 2017, but still own the building. At the moment it is unoccupied.



Map 27 - Old Laira Road PCB

maps.nls.uk/view/144818276



SX5055NE - A
Surveyed: 1948, Published: ca.1949
Size: map 40 x 40 cm (16 x 16 inches), on sheet ca. 56 x 49 cm (ca. 22 x 20 inches)



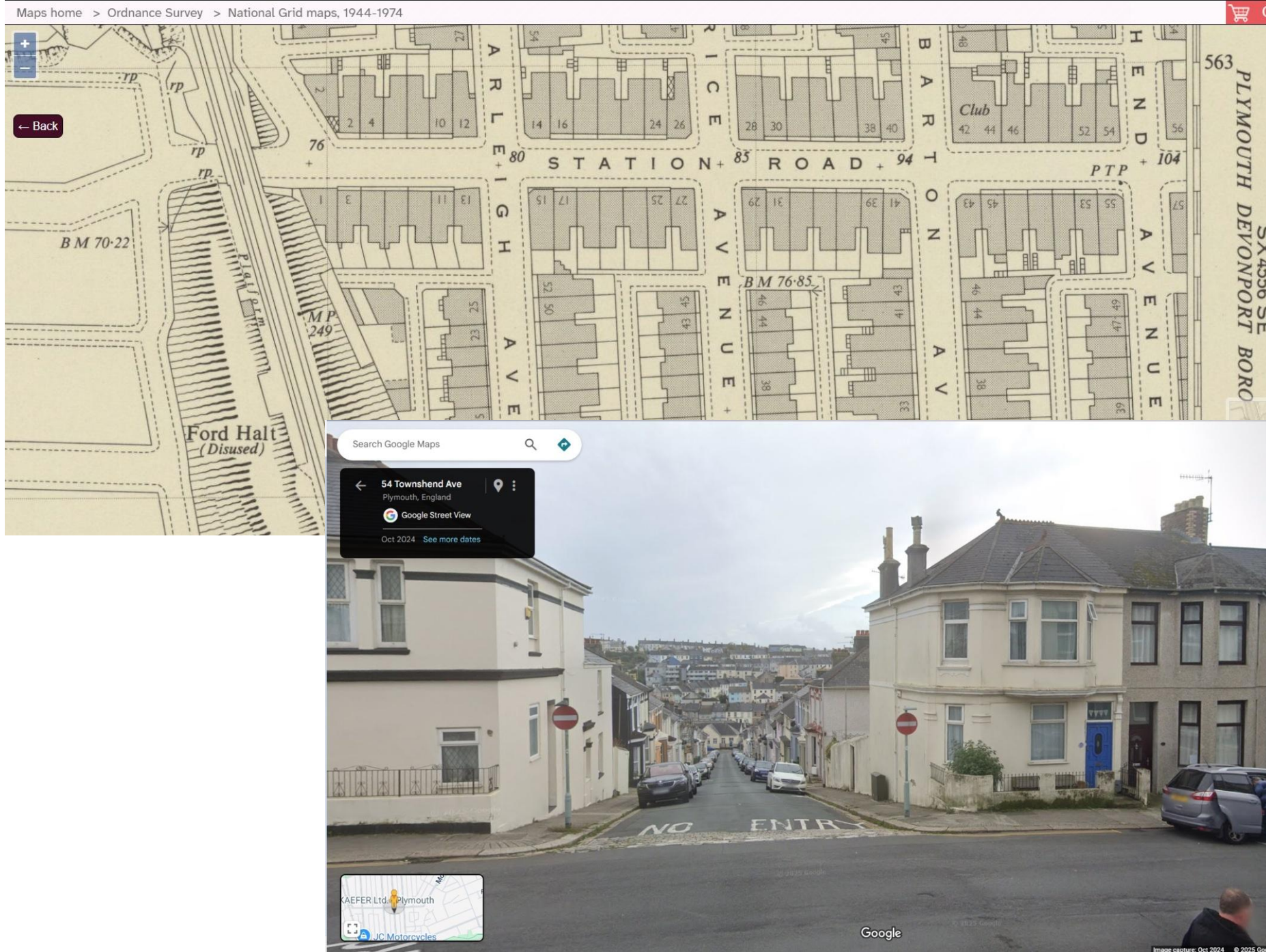
[Maps home](#) > [Ordnance Survey](#) > [National Grid maps, 1944-1974](#)



Road development has wiped away any remains of the police box at the end of Old Laira Road, together with several houses.

All that remains is a grassy mound.







Maps home > Ordnance Survey > National Grid maps, 1944-1974





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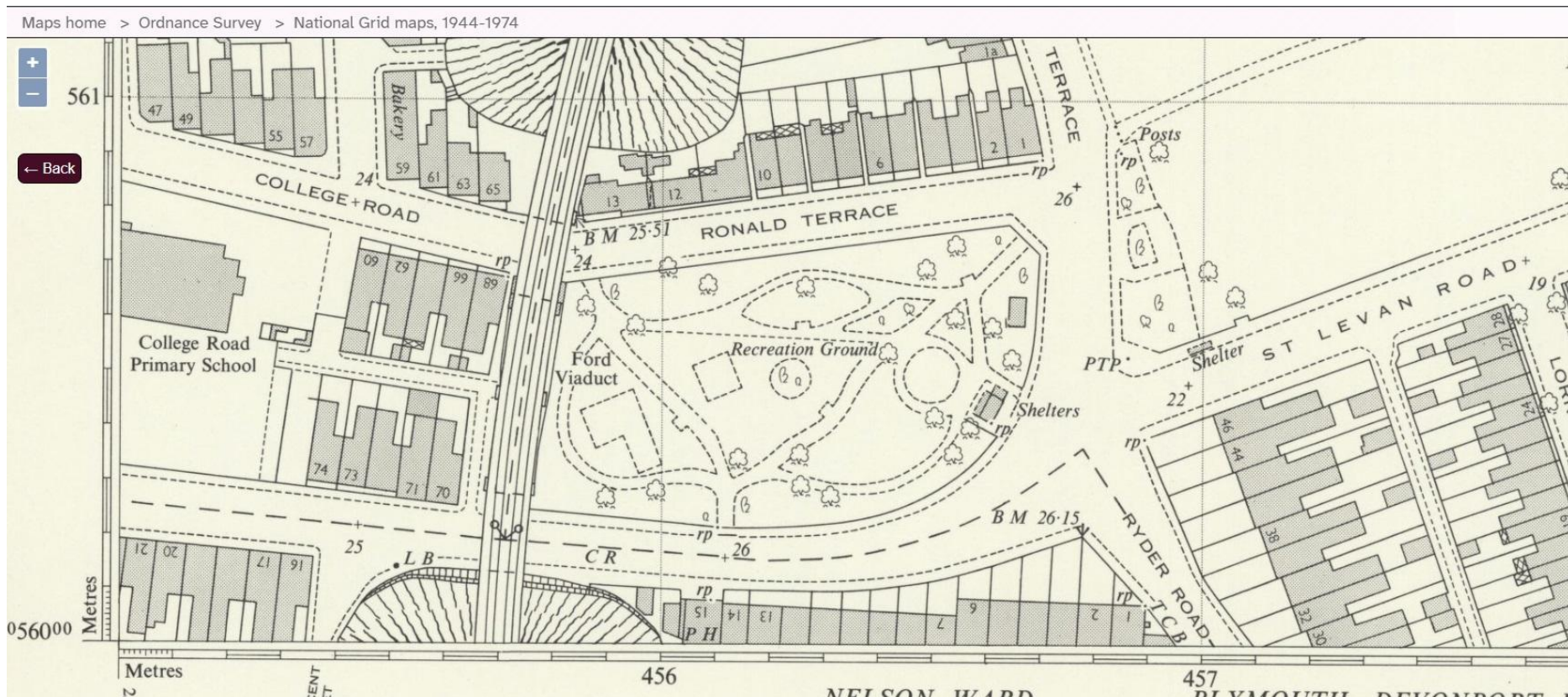
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SX4556SE - C

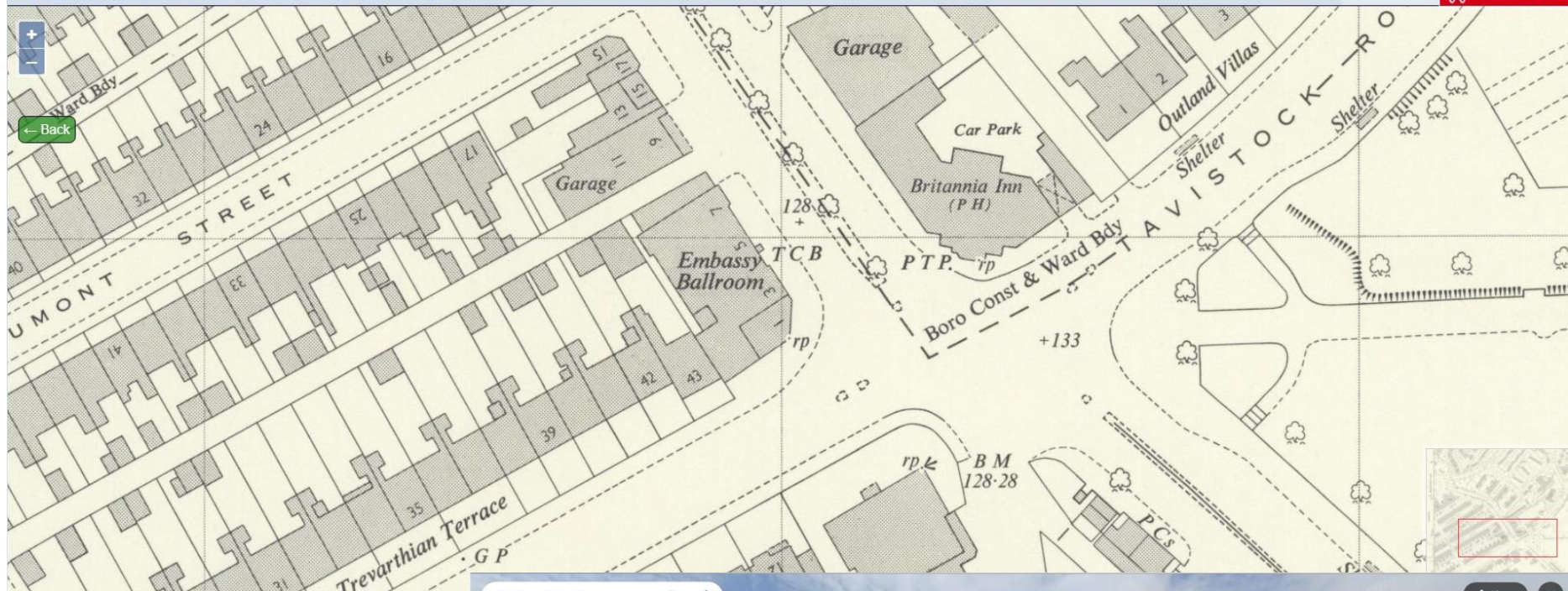
Revised: 1963, Published: 1964

Size: map 40 x 40 cm (16 x 16 inches), on sheet ca. 56 x 49 cm (ca. 22 x 20 inches)

Search:



At some point between 1950 and when this map was published in 1964, the police box at St Levan Road was removed and a pillar was substituted.

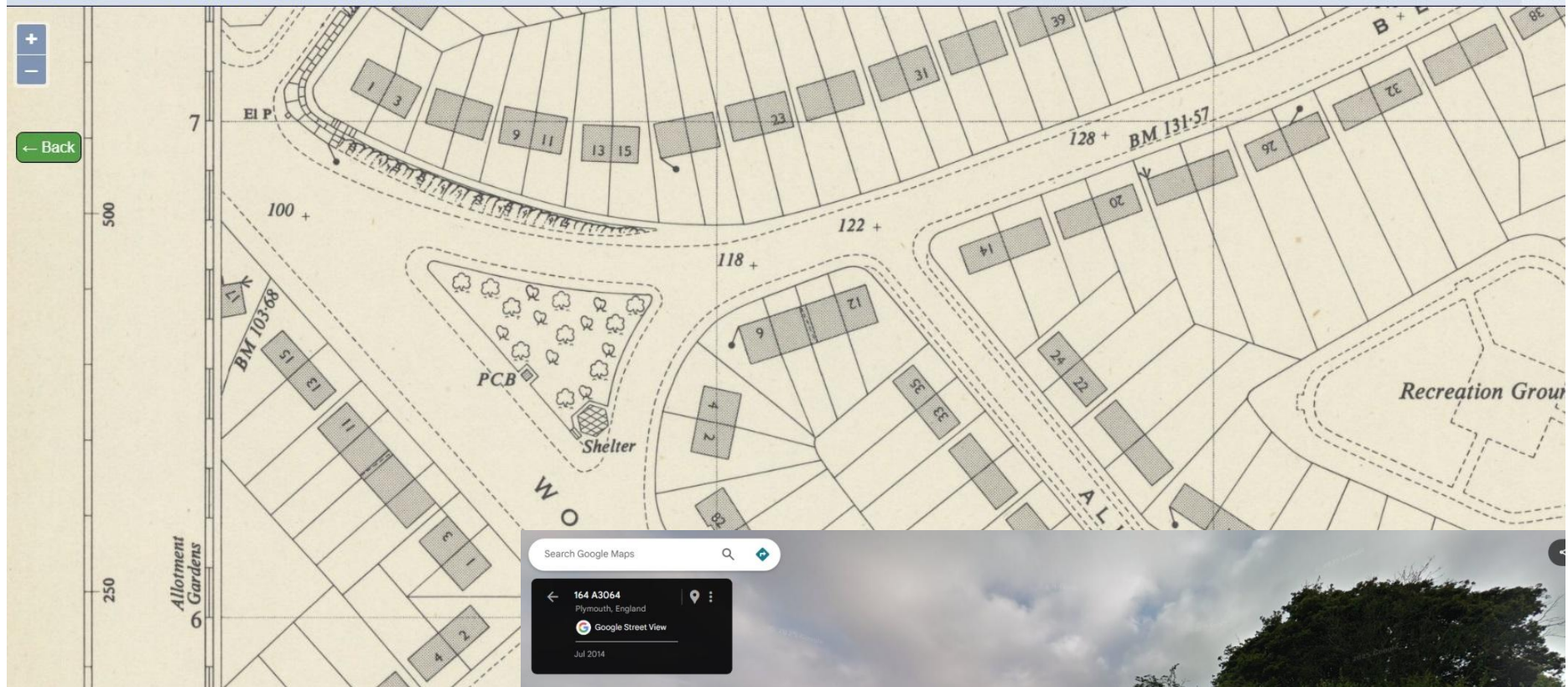


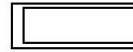
Another location changed beyond recognition. Tavistock Road / Wolsley Road, Mile House, in front of the Britannia Inn.

Now the junction of the A386 and A3064 and Tavistock Road is called Outland Road. The Inn is still there.

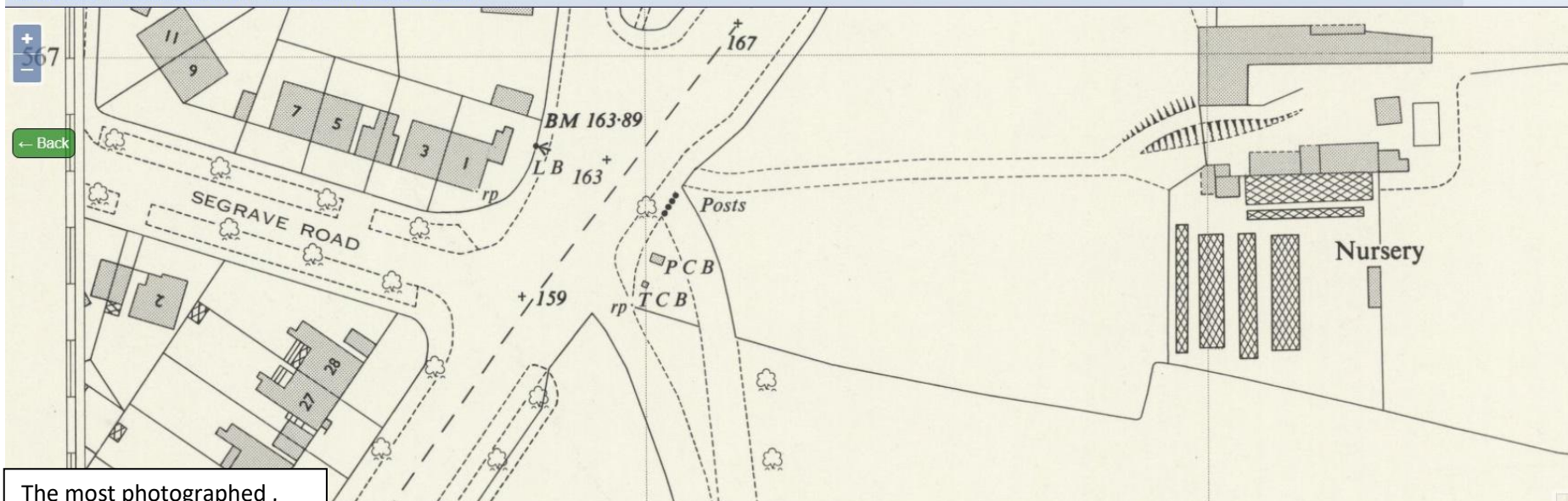








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The most photographed, the last and most well known police box was at Home Park, on what is now Outland Road (it had been Tavistock Road) at the junction with Segrave Road.

It was used into the early 1980's to store "No Waiting" cones for use on match days.

Earmarked for preservation, but when contractors tried to remove it, the box had succumbed to 'concrete cancer' and disintegrated.



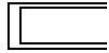
Map 34 - Home Park (Tavistock Road) Outland Road PCB



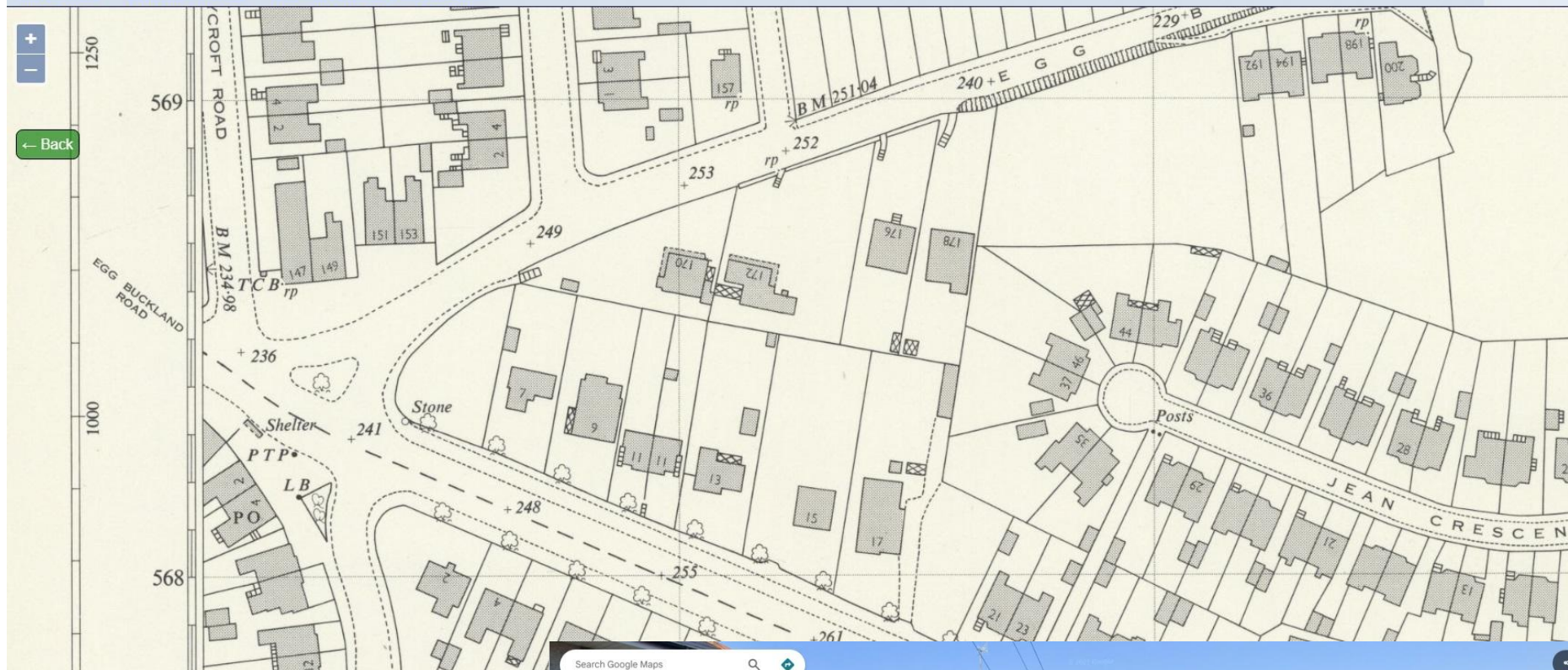
Only memories now remain...

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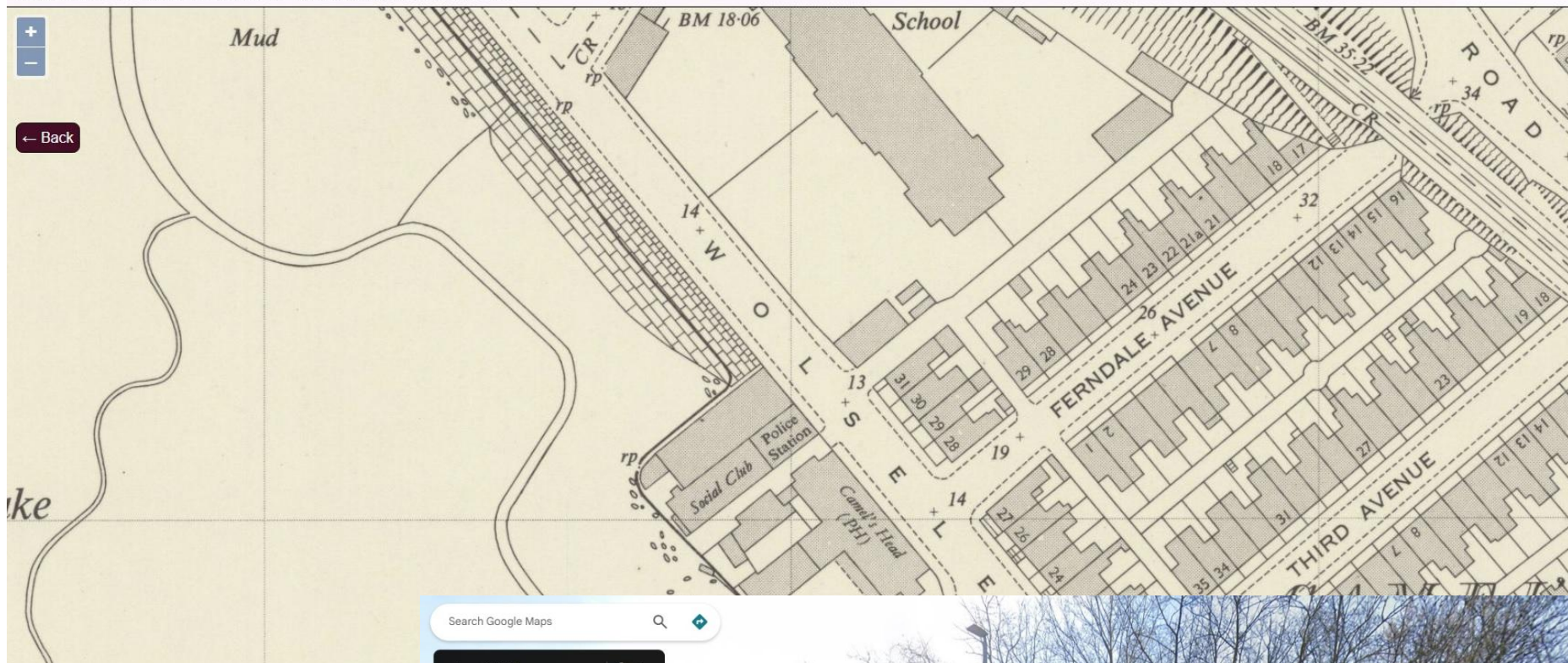


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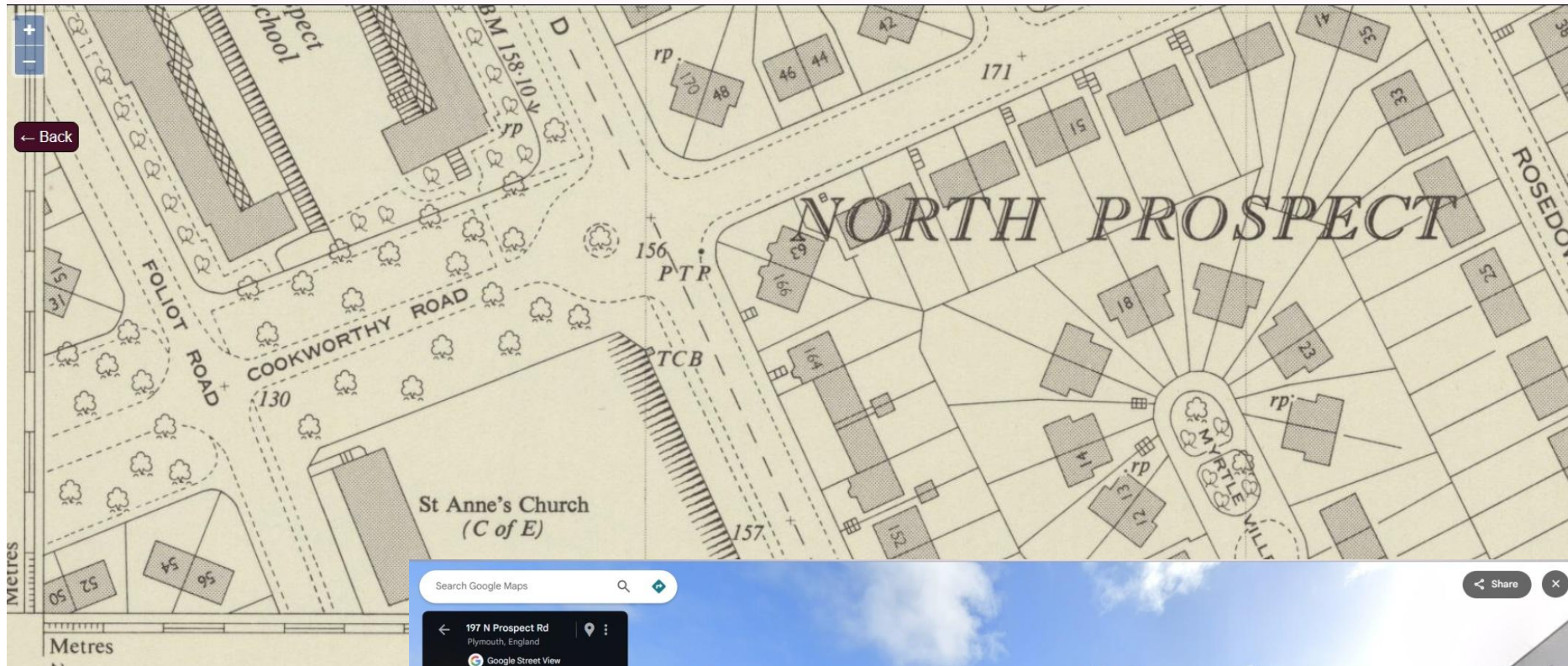
SX4657SW - B

Revised: 1954, Published: 1954

Size: map 40 x 40 cm (16 x 16 inches), on sheet ca. 56 x 49 cm (ca. 22 x 20 inches)

Map 38 - Swilly Road, North Prospect PTP

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SX4757SE - B

Revised: 1953, Published: 1954

Size: map 40 x 40 cm (16 x 16 inches), on sheet ca. 56 x 49 cm (ca. 22 x 20 inches)

Map 39 - Tavistock Rd / Chestnut Rd PTP

Maps home > Ordnance Survey > National Grid maps, 1944-1974



Tavistock Road /
Chestnut Road
police pillar.

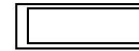
Tavistock Rd is now
renamed Outland
Road.



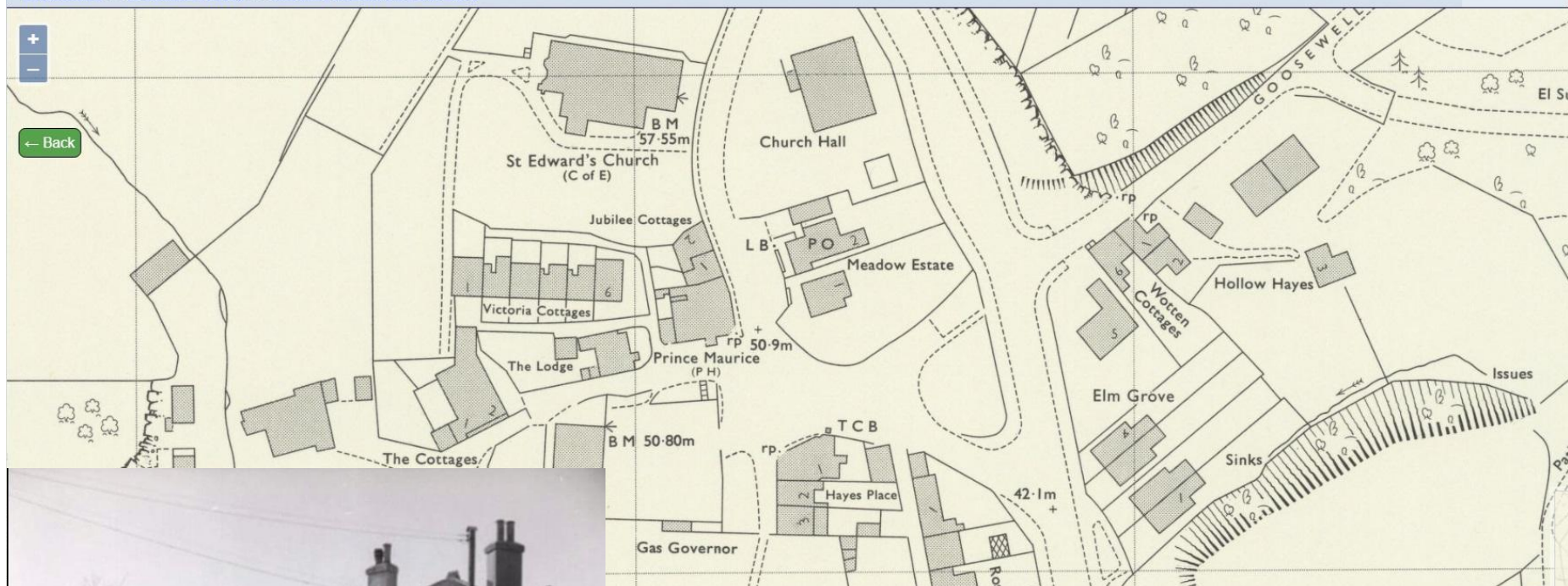


The last pillar – newly installed in 1934, this was the Corporation bus turn-around at the junction of Tavistock Road and Torr Lane.





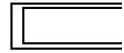
Maps home > Ordnance Survey > National Grid maps, 1944-1974



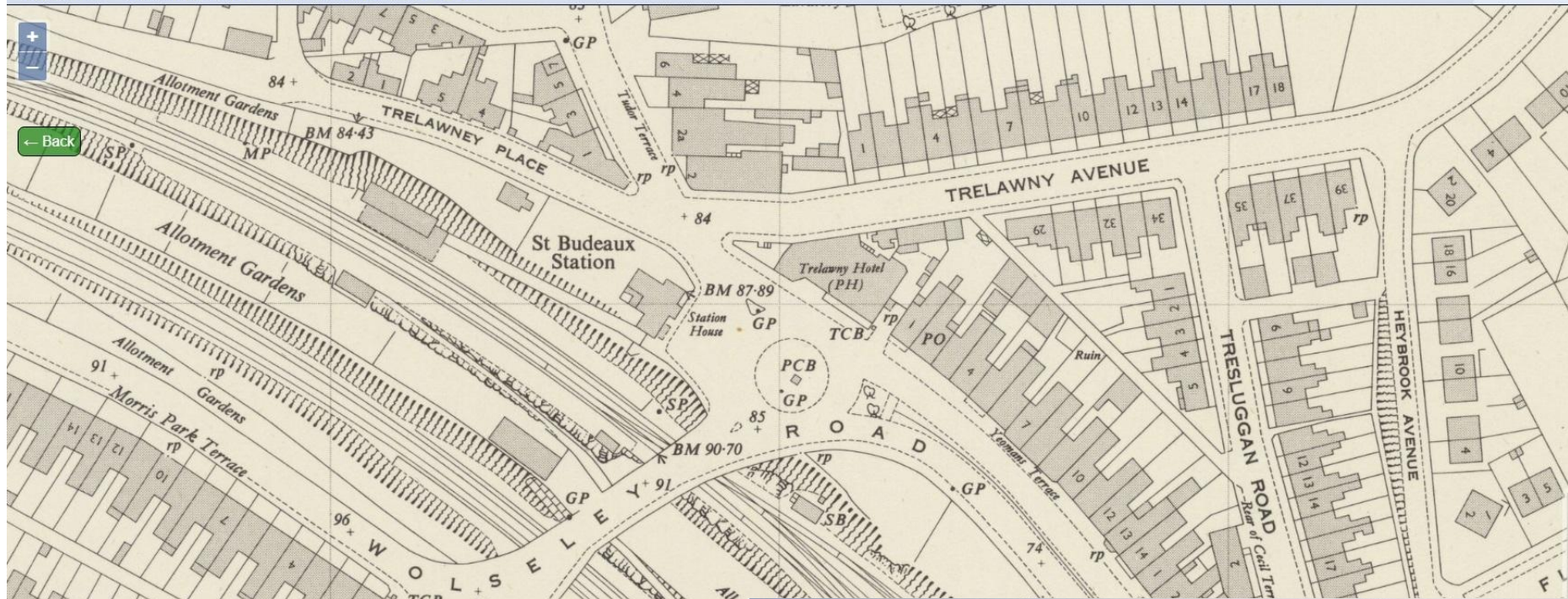
The Police box in Hayes Place has gone, but the telephone box is still shown on the map. The buildings have barely changed and are easily recognisable.

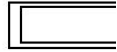


Another high quality image of a Plymouth police box, worthy of a page of its own.

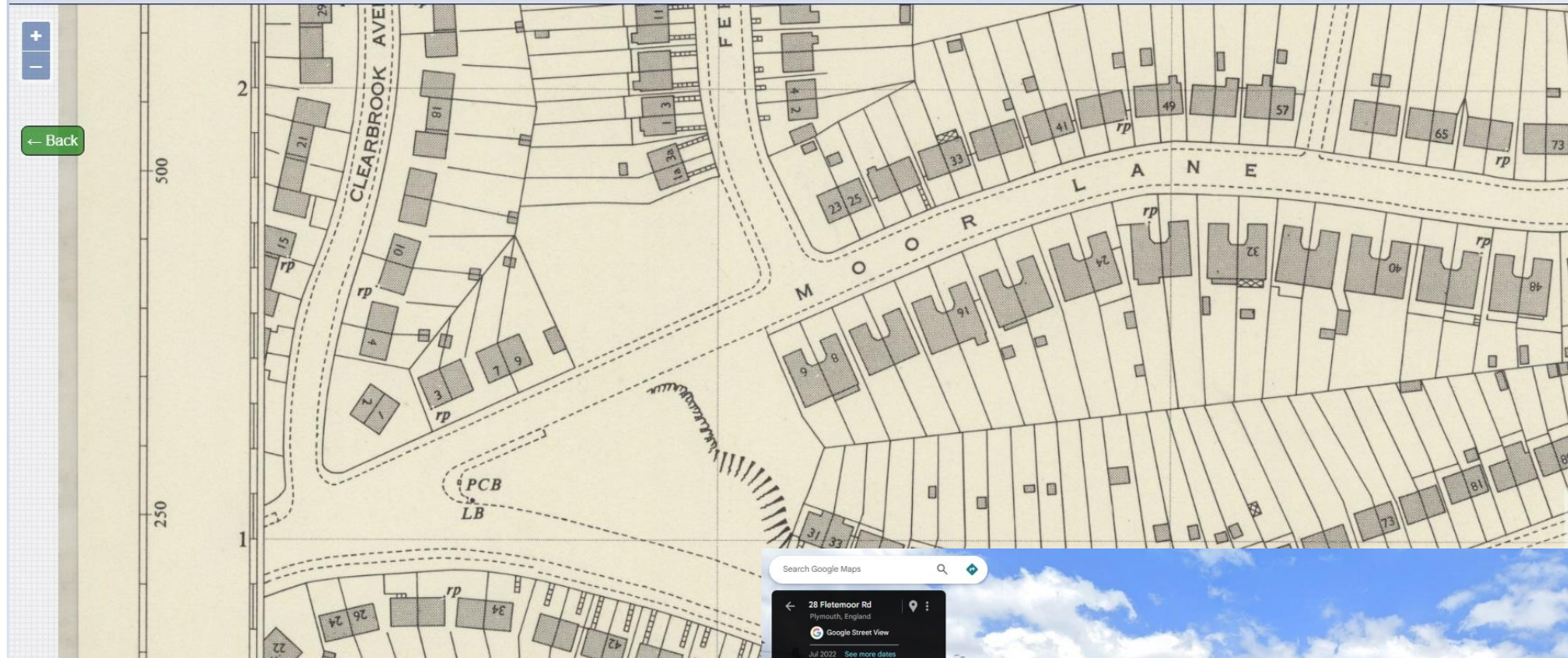


Maps home > Ordnance Survey > National Grid maps, 1944-1974





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Prince Rock Tram Terminus TCB



This photograph has been published, purporting to show a wooden Plymouth police box, in Prince Rock. It doesn't.

The structure on the right with a ball on top – the flue happens to be in the background, is a model K1 GPO Telephone Call Box - TCB.

The second picture below is a little clearer. On the following page is the map showing the Prince Rock tram terminus, and a TCB next to the toilets.





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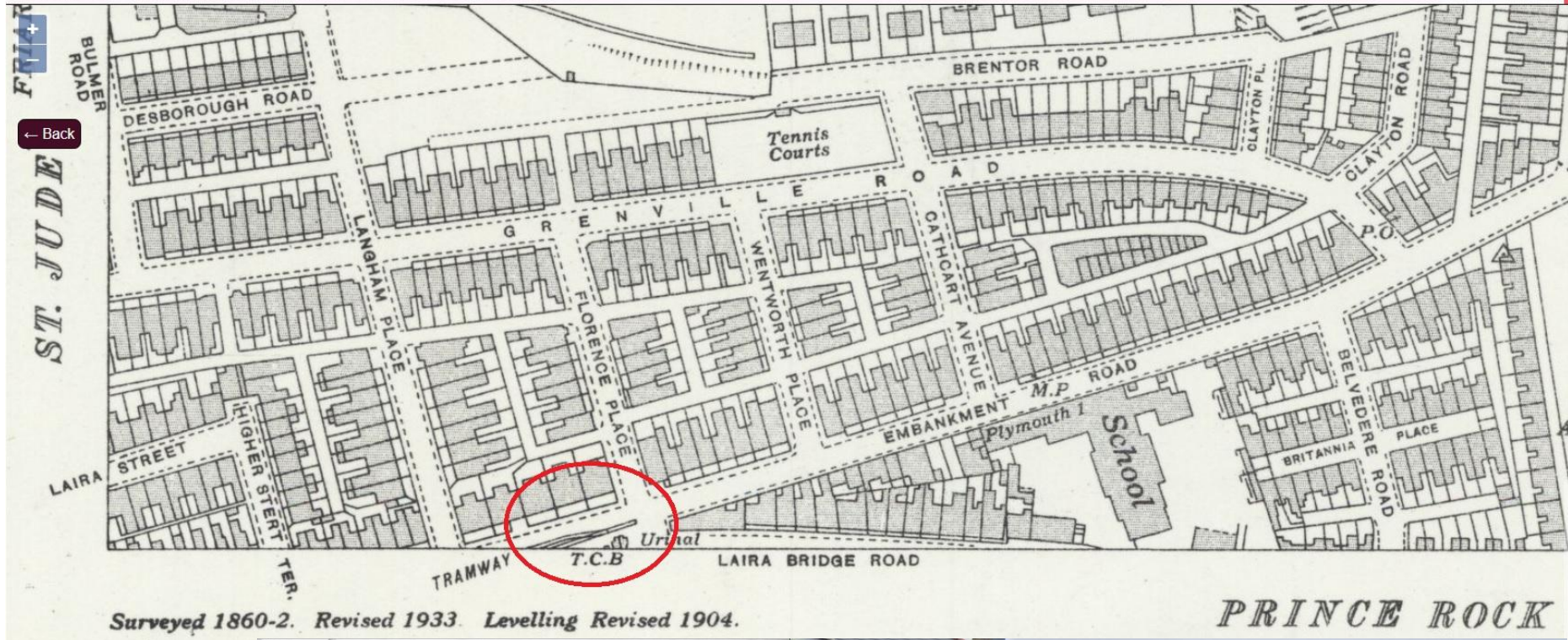
Devon CXXIV.5

Revised: 1933, Published: 1935

Size: map 64.4 cm x 96.6 cm (25.344 x 38.016 inches), on sheet ca. 76 x 104 cm (ca. 30 x 41 inches)

Prince Rock Tram Terminous TCB

Maps home > Ordnance Survey > OS 25 inch England and Wales, 1841-1952



Some errors are
easier to de-bunk
than others!



Retired officer Fred Davey MBE recalls beat working in Plymouth

PC Fred Davey joined Plymouth City Police in May 1948. He recalls that...

At that time they worked a system of three shifts: the early turn was from 6am until 2pm; the late turn was 2pm to 10pm, and the night shift was 10pm to 6am. Starting from a fortnight on early turn, there would then be a week on late turn, followed by two weeks on nights. This would be followed by a week of late turn before returning to the two weeks early turn.

During each shift there was a 45-minute break for a meal. Before the Second World War, and perhaps during the War, the night duty officers had their breaks in shop doorways. The station reserve officer would then carry around some coffee to these men and because of this the night-duty meal was for a long time known as “coffee”. This terminology continued even after things became more civilised and they returned to the police station for their meal breaks.

Those were the days of the six-day working week, of course, with only one day off in lieu of Sundays. For the police this meant a different day each week and only once in every seven weeks did you have both a

Saturday and a Sunday together. This was referred to as ‘a long weekend’.

Then the Chief Constable, Mr J F Skittery, brought in a seven week system with the intention of spreading the manpower over the 24-hour period and putting more men on duty at the times they were needed. The seven shifts were then: 6am to 2pm; 8am to 4pm; 9am to 6pm; 2pm to 10pm; 4pm to Midnight; 6pm to 2am and 10pm to 6am. The 9am to 6pm shift had a longer meal break than the others and was used mainly for traffic control duties.

This arrangement lasted for a short while but then the shifts were reduced to six in number, doing away with the 9am to 6pm one. Both these shift patterns were popular with the men because they did away with the 8-hour changeover and gave them more time with their families when they were off duty. The day off for those on day shifts was always a Sunday.

At some time during this period there was an increase to a day and a half off per week. This was fine but when this was further increased to two days a week, two things happened. The first, as Fred Davey himself puts it, was ‘that

the higher ranks in the Force thought the end of the world had come!’. More practically, it meant that the number of shifts was reduced to four, the three traditional ones plus a new 10am to 6pm one.

Plymouth’s ‘A Division’ covered Greenbank and the City Centre police stations, the latter being located after the War in a temporary building in Westwell Street. There were 20 beats. Number 1 covered an area to the west of Mutley Plain; number 2 was Mutley Plain itself; number 3 was to the east of Mutley Plain; number 4 was the west of Tavistock Road, number 5 to the east of Tavistock Road; number 6 was Mount Gould and number 7 was Laira. The man on this beat was provided with a pedal cycle and later a motor cycle.

Beats 8 and 9 covered Prince Rock and Cattedown. Beat 11 covered just Royal Parade and the south side of New George Street while a colleague on beat 12 covered the other side of New George Street and Cornwall Street. The remaining beats covered the Hoe and Barbican.

Not all beats were necessarily covered as Fred refers to one Saturday night when he was Acting Sergeant covering both stations that he

had 18 police constables on duty covering 20 beats.

The system used in 'working the beat' was that at the start of the shift the Sergeant would instruct the Officers to walk their beat in either the left or right direction from their starting point. The rule would apply throughout that shift. The idea was that the Sergeant should be able to walk the beat in reverse and meet the Constable part way round.

Perhaps the more useful rule was that a Constable should ring in to the police station once every 45 minutes from one of the blue pillar telephones or boxes.



And retired Police Constable Simon Dell recalls seeing the beat lists displayed in police stations. A time before personal radios...

The beat was rigid and only an emergency, or to make an enquiry that the Sergeant knew about, would be accepted as justification for leaving the set route.

It was also very complicated. For example, on even dates the officer might go one way around his beat but on odd dates he would take a slightly different route.

It could even vary between shifts. The only thing that was important was that the officer was at a particular spot, usually a police box, telephone post or major road junction, within ten minutes before and ten minutes after a specific time so that his Sergeant knew where to find him if required.

This was also used as a form of discipline, of course, to check that the officer was doing his duty. Old newspapers are full of reports of police officers being found asleep or even drinking in public houses, for which they were usually dismissed.



Newspaper cuttings from the British Newspaper Archive

BETTER POLICE PROTECTION.

ESTABLISHMENT OF POLICE BOXES.

ABOLITION OF SUB-POLICE STATIONS.

After experimenting for a few months with the use of four telephone-boxes for police, fire and ambulance service at Lyndhurst-road (Peverell), St. Levan-road (Ford), St. Budeaux-square, and Mount Gold-road, the Plymouth Watch Committee decided yesterday to provide seven additional boxes, to be placed at Compton Village, Laira, South Devon-place, Tavistock-road (Stoke), Swilly Hospital, Millbridge, and Pennycome-quick.

The committee are satisfied that the provision of the boxes will lead to greater police efficiency and improved protection for the inhabitants of the districts concerned, and it will also enable the police stations at Laira and Prince Rock to be dispensed with. The station at Laira will be offered to the Free Library Committee for the establishment, if they consider it desirable, of a branch library.

In his report on the subject to the committee, the Chief Constable observed he had come to the conclusion that the time had arrived when something must be done for the outlying districts, which remained practically unprotected should fire or other cause of great emergency occur. The system of police boxes was a great change from the old organization, but it was important that the police force should move forward with the times, and have at its command more modern methods of coping with the many and varied duties which today they were called upon to perform.

BOON TO OUTLYING DISTRICTS.

The proposed police boxes would be a boon to the inhabitants of outlying districts, and the whole of the borough would be much more efficiently policed than at present, this being rendered possible by an improved method of working beats. He emphasized the importance of installing the boxes in thickly-populated areas where at present there was no protection in case of fire, murder, or such cases that required immediate police attention. Many of the petty thefts, besides numerous minor offences, would thus be checked, and a salutary effect would be produced generally. The system had been in vogue in Sunderland for a year, and the benefits arising from it were pronounced.

↑ Western Morning News
18th December 1924

POLICE TELEPHONES. DEVONPORT GUARDIANS' OBJECTION.

Some discussion arose at Devonport Guardians yesterday, Mr. A. E. J. Pitcher presiding, in reference to an application for permission to erect a police telephone box near the eastern entrance to the institution.

The Master (Mr. Pryor) explained that it was proposed to fix the box in front of the legal notice board, thereby obscuring it. He suggested that this should be pointed out, and that the Board should inform the police that they had no objection to the box being placed a little further along the road.

Mrs. Daymond and Mr. Davey spoke of the utility of the boxes as a part of the new police system being adopted in Plymouth, and it was eventually agreed that there would be no objection if it could be erected a few feet further away from the entrance.

DESIGNATION OF NURSES.

INCREASED EFFICIENCY

BICYCLES FOR PLYMOUTH POLICEMEN

Another step towards increasing the efficiency of Plymouth Constabulary has been taken by the provision of pedal cycles for men in charge of the outlying districts.

With the use of the machines they can cover more frequently the principal thoroughfares on their beats, and are able to patrol a larger number of streets than has hitherto been possible.

Another advantage is that they are able to telephone from the police boxes to headquarters at shorter intervals, thereby reducing to the lowest practicable minimum any delay when their services are required.

↑ Western Morning News
25th August 1930

← Western Morning News
14th February 1925

Newspaper cuttings from the British Newspaper Archive

CONCRETE POLICE BOXES
PLYMOUTH WATCH COMMITTEE
DECISION

The fact that street collections in Plymouth during 1933 for various charities totalled £4,662 was reported at a meeting of the Watch Committee of Plymouth City Council yesterday, over which the chairman, Mr. W. J. H. Priest, presided. The total in 1932 was £4,180.

The committee also approved of the erection, for trial purposes, of a new concrete police box at Home Park.

The boxes are to replace the present wooden structures which the police use, and are larger and more conveniently fitted than the present ones. If this type of box proves satisfactory, sixteen others will be erected in different parts of the city.

↑ Western Morning News
18th January 1934

→ Western Morning News
21st September 1934

Notes In The
West

New Police & Fire Station

Good progress is being made with the new Plymouth police and fire-brigade headquarters on the old Prison site at Greenbank. The fire station is practically completed, and will be ready for occupation within a few weeks. The portion comprising the police headquarters should be available about the end of November or early in December. It is probable that a ceremonial opening will be arranged, but nothing definite has yet been settled. The transfer of the fire-brigade may possibly take place prior to the occupation of the main Police building.

Provision is being made to equip the fire-brigade headquarters with the latest type of alarm signals, which, in turn, will be connected with every police box and police telephone in the city. The public will only have to open a door and speak into a loud-speaker to give the alarm, and every police box and police telephone will be fitted for the purpose. The houses below the Prison, which were formerly occupied by the staff of warders, are being prepared for the accommodation of policemen who are attached to the fire-brigade.

The Seeing Eye

→ Western Morning News
17th May 1934

MICROTELEPHONES
FOR POLICE

PROPOSED SYSTEM
FOR PLYMOUTH

Plymouth Watch Committee decided yesterday to recommend the City Council to approve of the installation of a new telephone system in connection with the police and fire-brigade headquarters in course of erection at Greenbank.

The rental of the new system would be approximately £600 per annum, or about £100 less than the present rental.

In a report to the committee, the Chief Constable (Mr. W. C. Johnson) stated that at present all sub-stations and boxes were on separate lines to the switchboard, and since the Post Office charges were rental based upon the length of wiring maintained it was a fairly expensive system, but if efficient and adequate no criticism could be offered.

FEATURES OF THE SYSTEM.

If the existing system was to continue the only charge would be a removal charge consequent upon change of headquarters, but after consultation with an executive officer of the General Post Office, London, he recommended the installation of an entirely new system available specially for police purposes.

That system, on a scheme which he had prepared, would provide:

- "A microtelephone at each police box in place of the hand instrument;
- "Properly-erected pillars for public and police use in substitution of the instruments now fixed to tramway standards, &c.;
- "Two additional points of contact by pillars at the Hartley boundary and at Laira Bridge, those being two strategical points on the boundary which should be covered;
- "Flashing light signals to show at each point where a constable was being called;
- "Interior extensions from the switchboard to all departments at Greenbank;
- "An alarm system from the central fire station watch-room to all houses and single quarters."

The Chief Constable pointed out that no removal expense would be entailed, and there would be the most up-to-date apparatus in the country installed free of charge.

Newspaper cuttings from the British Newspaper Archive

"Western Morning News" Photo.

POLICE 'PHONE CH SYSTEM

Instant Service For Public

CITY'S LEAD IN NEW FACILITIES

THE efficiency of the new Plymouth police telephone system—the first of its kind in the country to be in operation—was tested yesterday, when from different points in the city emergency calls were put through for the fire-brigade, the ambulance service, and the police motor patrol.

In every case the results were highly satisfactory, and it proved that the service affords the very latest and "up to the minute" facilities for meeting any emergency in the way of fires, accidents, and crime.

The introduction of this efficient system comes into operation with the opening of the new police and fire-brigade headquarters at Greenbank, and forms one of the most important features of the reorganization of the police force in the city, under the direction of the Chief Constable (Mr. W. C. Johnson).

What might be called the "nerve centre" of the new telephone system is in a special room at Greenbank, where night and day a policeman, specially trained in the intricate duties of operator, sits before the exchange board, which connects 37 police pillars, boxes, and sub-stations in the city to the department required.

VOICE IN A PILLAR.

Yesterday's tests were carried out by the Chief Constable, the chairman of the Watch Committee (Mr. W. L. Bastard), vice-chairman (Mr. R. H. Baker), and Mr. J. R. Hembrough, the executive engineer of the Post Office.

The system which Plymouth is adopting is the outcome of a study which has been made of the particular requirements of police communications, and has been designed to give reliable, economic, and easy service. For the public the operation is simplicity itself.

All one has to do is to walk up to one of the pillars—which stand at the corner of the street and is very much like a miniature beacon—pull and hold open a small door. The opening of that door automatically makes contact with the police exchange. Inside there is a loud speaker, and immediately there comes the voice of the police operator—"Police Headquarters." The caller then states what is needed—fire-brigade, ambulance, or police assistance. The place from which the person is speaking is indicated on the switch-board at headquarters.



Operating the police switchboard.

FLASHING BEACONS.

One of the most interesting features is that each of these pillars, police boxes, or sub-stations equipped with this apparatus is surmounted by a beacon light.

In an emergency the operator at headquarters can set the whole of these beacons flashing. Any policeman within sight of such a beacon would instantly see the flashing and get in contact with headquarters.

It was at the corner of Edgcombe-street, Stonehouse, near the bridge, that the first test was made. The chairman of the Watch Committee stepped up to the pillar, pulled open the door, and was instantly challenged by the voice from headquarters. Without disclosing his identity, he said: "Please send the fire-brigade."

Inside five and a half minutes the fire-engine from the Central Police Station at the Guildhall, with full complement, was on the scene. Bearing in mind that contact had had to be made between the new headquarters and the old, and that the engine had to be sent through the busiest streets of the city when traffic was at its highest, it was a good achievement.

AMBULANCE CALL.

The next test was made from a police box at Millbridge. Here the Chief Con-

(Continued in Next Column.)

↑ Western Morning News
28th February 1935

Newspaper cuttings from the British Newspaper Archive

(Continued from Previous Column.)

stable requested a woman member of the public to put through an urgent call for ambulance service. She just pulled open the door and asked that the ambulance should be sent to Millbridge. Within a few minutes the first motor ambulance—one from the station at the Prince of Wales's Hospital, Devonport—was on the scene, and in less than another half-minute there were three more in attendance from the Plymouth headquarters in Notte-street.

The third test was made from a police-sergeant's house at Swilly, which is a sub-station. Here the apparatus has been fitted into the corner of the window, and the opening of the door not only connects with headquarters, but also rings a bell in the house itself.

From here an urgent call was made for the police motor patrol. In this case the headquarters officer has to get in touch with the patrol, whose route is plotted out. It so happened that the motor patrol constable was "picked up" at the Central Police Station. He was out at Swilly in four minutes.

As the Chairman of the Watch Committee remarked: "Plymouth can take very great pride in the fact that once again it leads the country in the matter of progress."

AMBULANCE APPEAL

↑ Western Morning News
28th February 1935

OVERCROWDING

May Become An Offence Next January

The Chief Constable's recommendations for an extension of the police signal service in Plymouth was approved. At present, he stated, the system comprised an installation of 33 points. Nine of these were at police stations and houses, fifteen at police boxes, and eight on pillars.

A survey of the city revealed to him that wide gaps existed between the existing telephone points which it was necessary to fill, and he proposed an extension of twenty pillars.

The present installation cost an annual rental of £495, and with the proposed extension would cost £725 per annum, and a small non-recurring charge would be made by the Electricity Department for an electrical connection to supply light to the pillars.

↑ Western Morning News
21st January 1937

Police boxes to be blue

In future all police street telephone pillars throughout the country will be painted azure blue, the General Post Office stated yesterday.

↑ Western Morning News
4th July 1949

↓ Western Evening Herald
6th October 1950

POLICE TELEPHONE BOXES NOW BLUE

Change From Red

Some 36 police telephone call-boxes in various parts of Plymouth, formerly in red, have been painted azure blue, conforming with the red to blue switch throughout the police areas in the country.

The end of this chapter... but not the story

Research is a never ending story. This Monograph is as complete as I can make it, but it is not finished.

It will be shared to the members of various facebook groups, to local archive services in Plymouth and Devon and to retired police organisations and groups.

My experience is that before the digital ink is dry on the pdf, someone will produce new information and photographs. These will be incorporated into the next version.

If you have something, an anecdote, reminiscence or photograph, please share it via email with me at policepillars@pmcc-club.co.uk

My thank to everyone who has helped, especially the following:

Peter Hinchliffe

Adrian Trace

Cyberheritage

NARPO Plymouth Branch

[Old memories, old photographs and Plymouth chat Facebook group](#)

[Plymouth Old Pics facebook group](#)

[Police Pillars and Boxes Facebook group](#)

Devon Archives and Local Studies Service
Devon Heritage Centre

About the author:

Norman Woollons joined the York and North East Yorkshire Police straight from school as a Cadet in November 1969. He had been interested in Military history, writing projects on the (then) 25th anniversary of the 'D-day' landings.

On his joining day he was given some York City badges by a retiring Constable, sparking a lifelong interest in police history.

Becoming part of Humberside Police in the 1974 Local Government reorganisation, he became the honorary curator of the police museum. He saved everything he could but still regrets *"not doing enough to preserve the police heritage"*.

As the "Special Projects" Inspector at force headquarters in 1992, he succeeded in getting the role of curator included as part of the job description for the post, recognising its importance and making the role an official part of the work of future post holders.

Norman holds a Commercial Pilot's Licence (Helicopter) and before retiring after 33 years service, was head of his local Police Air Support unit. In the 1999 New Year Honour's he was honoured by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II with the award of the Queen's Police Medal, for "Services to Policing".

After retiring he then moved into the area of International policing, working in Europe and the Middle east for 11 years, developing air support, resilience and emergency planning. His interest in history continued and he promoted the saving of local policing artefacts during his international role.

Retiring a second time and capitalising on social media, he writes extensively on police history and has founded several groups to promote the subject. He edits the PMCC quarterly magazine.

Contact: policepillars@pmcc-club.co.uk

