

The VAULT

MULTI-APPLICATION

**TRICK
TREAT?
OR**

SECURITY meets INNOVATION

The Story Of The Irish Passport Book Design

By Dave O'Connor, DLRS Group



In September 1923 an Irish delegation, led by President Cosgrave, travelled to Geneva to seek admission for the Irish Free State to the League of Nations. The Irish Times of September 08, 1923 reports that the party were travelling on Irish passports, the first occasion on which Irish passports had come into use. The report continues that the passport was printed in Irish, French, and English and encased in a green cover. Whereas little further detail is reported about these passports, which would not be made available to the general public for a considerable time, the security features of the documents were considerably different to those, which appear on the modern Irish passport.

□ Ninety years later, the Irish Passport Service launched the latest incarnation of the Irish passport book. In this version the Passport Service worked with a group of commercial partners, led by the Irish based DLRS Ltd., to release a book that delivers enhanced security features but with a distinctive Irish identity. The passport may not be encased in a green cover but the design and development story is one with an Irish twist on security meeting innovation, resulting in the award of Regional ID Document of the Year 2014 and most importantly an enthusiastic reception from Irish citizens around the globe.

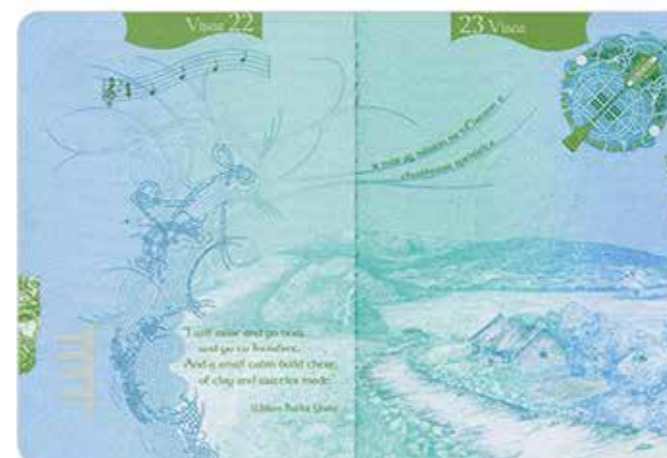
On opening the book your eyes are immediately drawn to the triple spiral drawing in the colour shifting ink Spark technology, one of the first occasions Spark has been used on an international travel document. This representation of the entrance stone to the passage

grave of the Neolithic site Newgrange in County Meath – the entrance point to the new passport book. The Royal County theme continues with the use of the font “Meath” for the request page, a throwback to the type of fonts used on Irish passports from the 1940s.

Ireland's world renowned literary tradition is beautifully represented in the passport.

Dave O'Connor, Sales Director at DLRS Ltd, explains that the use of innovative security printing techniques continues through the book. “Shining a light through page 21 of the book towards the natural light, a shamrock appears through the elegant background surrounding the Aviva Stadium. Image perforation has been used in security documents, such as motor tax disks, in the past, but this is the first occasion the approach was taken in an international travel document.”

Perhaps one of the most striking features of the Irish passport is the use of interesting celtic figures in half form on each of the visa pages. O'Connor explains that the Passport Service was looking for a simple feature that individuals could use to test the authenticity of the book. Fold the pages in on themselves a celtic God emerges in full. In 1781 James Gandon commissioned Edward Smyth to sculpt a series of figures to appear on the façade of Dublin's Custom House. Images of Smyth's river Gods, which continue to adorn the landmark building in Ireland's capital are used on the passport, a different half figure on each page. O'Connor continues “The Passport Service experimented with a range of images to be used on the pages and ultimately settled on these hand drawn images, which had last appeared on the “c” series of Irish banknotes, last seen in 2002”.



WB Yeats

Images of Irish landscape, heritage, culture and modern Ireland, which adorn each visa double page were carefully chosen to resonate with Irish citizens. From the opening breath-taking landscape of the Cliffs of Moher in County Clare, to the stone ringfort of Grianan of Aileach in County Donegal, Croagh Patrick in County Mayo and the Rock of Cashel in County Tipperary.

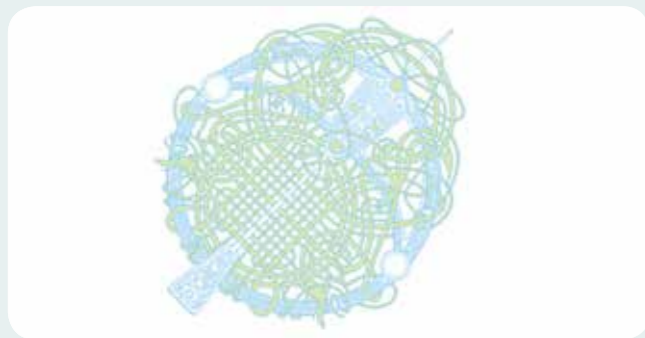
O'Connor confirms that the design was an evolutionary process. “Enhancing the security features of the passport was at the heart of the preliminary design stages. Our early discussions focused on the possibilities and limits of the range of security techniques to be used. The discussions then broadened to consider how each individual technique could be represented in a suitably Irish manner. The Passport Service had identified in advance a range of images to be tested for use on the visa pages. However it was only when the images were laid down on paper printed using security inks that real decisions could be made on whether or not individual images would be used or not. The Aviva Stadium image on page 14 of the book is a case in point. At first a photograph of this representation of modern Ireland was considered, but in the end a hand drawn sketch worked better on paper.”

O'Connor points to some of the tricks used to capture the essence of locations while straying slightly from the visual reality. The image of Cork's Opera House is clear but is the foreground an exact representation of the site on Cork's Emmet Place?

It is the attention to detail that is striking throughout the new book. Wil Byrne, Technical Director of Absolute Graphics, chief designer for the book says that Ireland's world renowned literary tradition is beautifully represented in the passport. Images which embody three Irish poems are used. Byrne takes out a magnifying glass to showcase the true minute detail of the drawings. In one of these, Yeats' Lake Isle Of Innisfree, pages 22 and 23 of the book, the poem's nine bean rows align along the cabin of clay and wattle and hovering around you can see the honeybee.

As the landscape images cross two pages, early design samples showed that it was necessary to find a suitable printed element to tidily close the image on each left hand page. To address this issue, an intricate design of two intertwined trees was used. Wil Byrne also explains that the trees represent the two traditions on the island. The birds, which make up part of this design are depicted dispersing seeds in the same way that our diaspora carry Irish values and traditions with them, as they travel the globe. The birds face outwards, suggesting that the sharing of values and traditions is a two-way process, which enriches us all.

ELEMENTS OF THE IRISH PASSPORT



Celtic Brooch

The Celtic Brooch is taken from Irish history. This original illustration not only shows the brooch design but also is placed at the traditional angle that this item of clothing was used representing care and security for children.



Bird Knot

The bird knot is used to tidily close the images on each two-page spread. It features an intricate design of two intertwined trees and two birds. The birds are depicted dispersing seeds in the same way that our diaspora carry Irish values and traditions with them as they travel the globe. They face outwards, suggesting that the sharing of values and traditions is a two-way process, which enriches us all.



Spark

The entrance to the passport sees a depiction of the entrance stone to one of Ireland's oldest monuments – the 5000 year old passage tomb at Newgrange.



Landsdowne Road

Ireland's lush green landscape and Irish nature are appropriately represented throughout the book. Ogham was an Irish alphabet in use up to about the tenth century, where essentially names of trees were given to letters of the alphabet. An ogham character appears on the bottom right hand corner of the datapage, printed in thermo-chromic ink, i.e. the colour of the character changes when heat is applied. On each left hand page a different ogham character is also used. However, a new dimension to the passport emerges and when the passport is inspected under UV the name of the tree associated with the individual ogham character and a hand drawn trace of each tree leaf, lights up under ultra-violet inspection.

O'Connor is keen to emphasise how attention to detail was so important to the Passport Service. Other examples of this detail include the celtic brooch pattern, used on each right hand page, containing small green dots indicating the page number; and the microtext printing of articles of the Irish constitution used to create the musical staves of the Irish national anthem.

The design of the polycarbonate datapage, which holds the personal data and the RFID chip within the passport, created other challenges advises Rory Noone of HID Global Ireland, who manufacture the datapage in their Galway factory. "The printing techniques and security features available on a plastic card are markedly different to those used on the paper visa pages, so it was important to design a data page, which maintained the Irish character and feel of the rest of the booklet, whilst ensuring high security and adhering to the international standards, which govern the layout of such pages. The Celtic knot motif and the harp symbol are quintessentially Irish, but we needed a theme, which would run through the whole book".

At the start of the design process, the focus was inevitably on improving the security features of the Irish passport book. This was undoubtedly achieved. However, at the same time a book was designed that brings together so many aspects of the rich Irish identity. O'Connor says this was achieved by the client



Polycarbonate Datapage

and service provider, spending the time up front to understand and be sensitive to national identity, and to innovate by building on this identity. The smiles on the faces of Irish citizens, who proudly show off their new passport when travelling, are testimony to the achievement of this aim. ☒

DLRS Group Security Concepts is Ireland's largest security printer. Established since 1976, DLRS is the market leader in vouchers, revenue stamps, cheques, passports and other security solutions.

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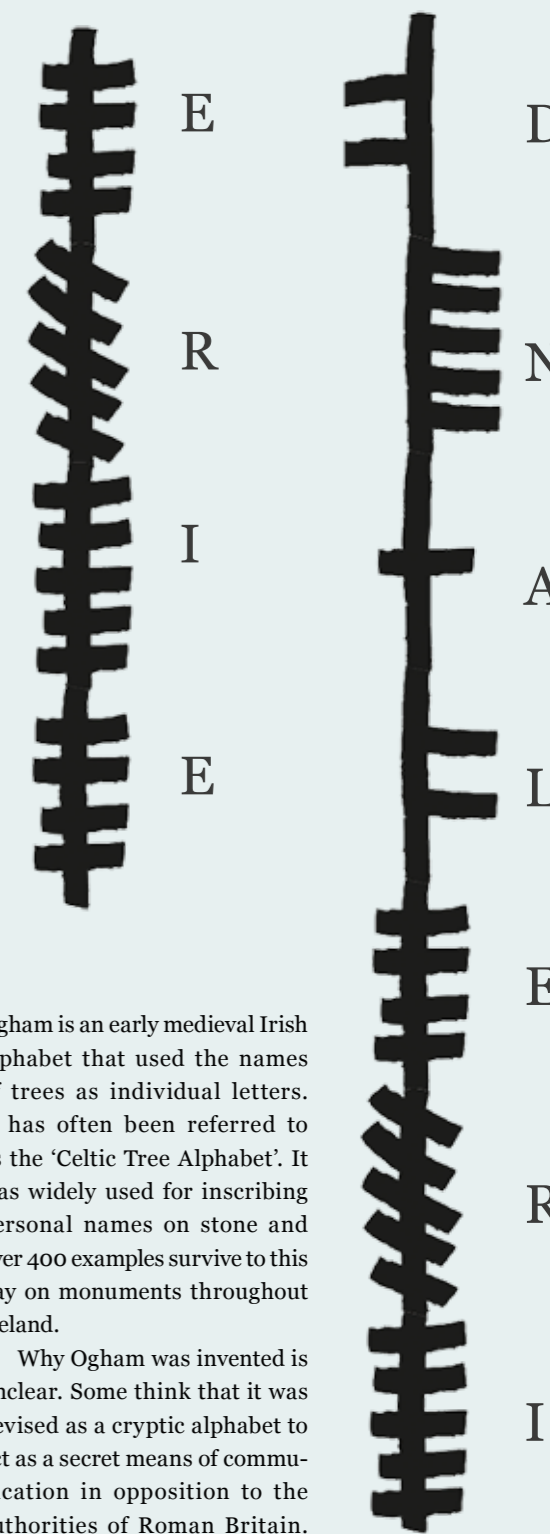
HID Global is the trusted source for innovative products, services, solutions, and know-how related to the creation, management, and use of secure identities for millions of customers around the world.

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Absolute Graphics is the market leader in the design of security and anti-counterfeiting print solutions in the Republic of Ireland.

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OGHAM ALPHABET



Ogham is an early medieval Irish alphabet that used the names of trees as individual letters. It has often been referred to as the 'Celtic Tree Alphabet'. It was widely used for inscribing personal names on stone and over 400 examples survive to this day on monuments throughout Ireland.

Why Ogham was invented is unclear. Some think that it was devised as a cryptic alphabet to act as a secret means of communication in opposition to the authorities of Roman Britain. Others think that it was invented by early Christian communities to write short messages in the Irish language.