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THE HISTORY, DESIGN & EVOLUTION OF  
IRISH BANKNOTES

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## INTRODUCTION.

This paper is based on a study of the history and design of Irish banknotes. The two components being, so closely related and inter-dependent that one cannot be dealt with adequately without the other. In order to evaluate the design of Irish banknotes, since their introduction, in the eighteenth century, it is necessary to learn of the factors which influenced their development. A knowledge of the numerous issues and varying designs which prevailed is also essential. Having achieved an understanding of all aspects of Irish banknotes, it is then possible to monitor the evolution of their design, in retrospective fashion over the two hundred years of their existence. Certain conclusions may then be derived from this analysis. My study is divided into sections, which are arranged chronologically for reasons of clarity.

Banknotes are so much a part of everyday life, filling an essential role in the economy, and yet are largely overlooked by the public in terms of graphic design. In general these notes are identified as a monetary vehicle; as a representation of value or according to Aristotle as 'the common mean between objects and services which cannot otherwise be satisfactorily evaluated against each other'.

Early Irish banknotes were utilitarian in nature, employing engravings and intricate scroll devices for the sole purpose of foiling counterfeiters, and disregarded design for aesthetic reasons. However, these designs soon took on a life of their own, adding a new dimension to the note. Nowadays, banknotes are designed to fulfill both aesthetic and security requirements, while also conveying visual information through their design elements, and monetary values and information through typography.



Banknotes are a relatively recent development in the history of numismatics in Ireland. Although they lack the intrinsic value from which coins are composed, according to Yasha Bereismer 'the artistic quality, the infinite amount of information and the 'collectability' of a paper note must often supersede that of a coin'. It is interesting to bear in mind that from the Renaissance onwards, technical links have existed between minting and printing, long before the birth of our modern banknotes. 'Gutenberg, the inventor of printing with moveable type was the son of a Mainz mintmaster and himself trained as a goldsmith. The invention of the coinpress followed very closely upon that of the printing press and is obviously very closely related to it'. This portrays a point concerning the production of coins and banknotes. Although coins preceded notes in numismatic history, the production methods of notes in the form of the printing press appears to have been the predecessor of modern mass coin-production techniques.



STAGE 1.

Prebanking Note Issue in Ireland.

(A) Goldsmiths Notes.



(A) GOLDSMITH NOTES.

The birth of banknotes in Ireland began with 'goldsmith notes'. As goldsmiths were the only people with facilities for storing valuables securely in their strong rooms, the people turned to them with the large sums of coin which they did not require for immediate use. The goldsmiths issued receipts, for these cash deposits, which were called 'notes' or 'cash notes'. These 'notes' were handprinted and made out to the bearer without indicating his name. At first, they were payable only to the customer himself, on demand, but they soon passed around from hand to hand and became general practice during the 1600's.

These receipts were often used in settlement of a debt and as security for a loan. It is from these early notes that our present day paper money has evolved. During the time of their use, it appears that these notes were not recognised, as such, as legal tender, nor the goldsmiths as bankers because the first mention of a 'banker' in Ireland is in an Irish Act of Parliament of 1708.



## STAGE 2.

### Early Irish Banknotes & Banking.

(A) Promissory Notes or Bills of Exchange.

(B) Irish Act of Parliament 1708:

The first mention of a banker.

(C) Restrictions placed on bankers & banknote issue.



(A) PROMISSORY NOTES OR BILLS OF EXCHANGE.

Promissory notes or bills of exchange as they were also known, marked the next stage of development in paper monetary issues in Ireland. These notes came to be used in much the same way as paper money is used to-day. They marked the beginning of private banking on a large scale, in Ireland.

At this time in England, paper money was already in circulation. More advanced than the Irish counterpart, these receipts and promissory notes were accepted as a form of legal tender following an Exchequer Order made by the Authority of King Charles II in 1665. Another thirty years had elapsed before paper money as we understand it to-day, was issued in Britain.

Promissory notes were adopted by merchants in payment for seasonal purchases, such as agricultural produce. They soon became popular with traders of every class. These notes acted as a more convenient form of currency than coin, which in large amounts had become too cumbersome. With a promissory note or a bill of exchange the debtor committed himself to either paying on demand, or at a fixed time, a sum of money, to the order of a specified person or to the bearer of the note. The note was an 'unconditional promise in writing, made by one person to another'.<sup>1</sup> This constituted an important step in the perfection of banking techniques, which was crucial to the growth of Irish banking at this time.

During the severe shortage of precious metals after the Napoleonic wars in 1795, letters of exchange increased the availability of money. They contained only a promise, but they became a mode of payment just like gold or silver.



Sometimes, promissory notes passed from hand to hand for a considerable time before they were eventually presented to the original issuer for redemption. The only difference between these notes and our legal tender bank notes to-day is the fact that our present day notes may be re-issued after payment whereas promissory notes were not.

(B) IRISH ACT OF PARLIAMENT 1708.

The first mention of a 'banker' in Ireland.

The first mention of a 'banker' in an Irish Act of Parliament is as recent as 1708, when it was stated that 'notes issued by any banker, goldsmith, merchant or trader should be assignable or transferable by delivery or endorsement, in much the same way as inland bills of exchange are or may be according to the customs of merchants'.<sup>2</sup> These bills of exchange originated from earlier times, but, the issue of notes payable to the bearer on demand was a more recent development. This distinguished the modern banker from a discount merchant, bill broker, deposit accepting goldsmith or moneylender.

Many private bankers were issuing notes on a large scale by the middle of the eighteenth century, but their use was limited outside Dublin. By 1754, through a financial crisis all but two of the Dublin banks failed. These two retired their notes, so for a brief time, Ireland was without a circulating paper currency. Soon after, the private banks re-issued notes in Dublin and some provincial cities. In Northern Ireland, banknotes did not circulate until 1808.

(C) RESTRICTION PLACED ON BANKERS & BANKNOTE ISSUE.

In 1756, a restriction was placed upon private bankers causing many of them to cease their banking enterprises, and causing difficulty for those who remained. This Act which was passed by the Irish



Parliament required that:-

- (a) 'the names of all partners were to be stated on all notes and receipts',<sup>3</sup> a small point but rather awkward when there were many partners and frequent changes.
- (b) A more substantial restriction declared that 'no person or persons carrying on business as bankers might trade or traffick as merchants in goods or merchandises imported or exported'.<sup>4</sup>



## STAGE 2

### Modern Irish Banking: The Development of The Banknote.

(A) Bank of Ireland

(A1) Bank of Ireland: Establishment (1783)

(A2) Bank of Ireland: First Banknotes (1783)

(A3) Bank of Ireland: Note-issuing Monopoly (1783)

### THE BANK OF IRELAND: THE HISTORY OF EARLY BANK OF IRELAND BANKNOTES

## STAGE 3

### Bank of Ireland Banknotes 1783

### Modern Irish Banking: The Development of The Banknote.

(A) Bank of Ireland Banknotes 1783 Dublin.

(B) Early Irish Banknotes 1797 1st Issue.

(C) English Treasury Notes 1914

(D) Irish Free State Legal Tender Notes 1927

(E) Consolidated Banknotes 1927 1st Counterfeiting.

(F) Irish Free State Legal Tender Notes 1975

### CONCLUSION of Ireland Printers John Gidney.

(A1) Bank of Ireland: Printing Facilities.

Revised Steel Plate Note Production.

Gidney: Innovator of Banknote Printing Processes.

Printing Process

(A11) Example 1: Early Bank of Ireland Banknote 1801

(A12) Example 2: Early Bank of Ireland Banknote 1801

### (B) Early Irish banknotes

(B1) New Note in the Economy. 1797

(B2) Bank of Ireland Restriction Act 1797

(B3) Private Banknote Issues: Restriction 1797

(B4) Silver Notes.



### STAGE 3

#### Modern Irish Banking; The Development of The Banknote.

##### (A) Bank of Ireland

(A1) Bank of Ireland: Establishment (1783)

(A2) Bank of Ireland: First Banknotes (1783)

(A3) Bank of Ireland: Note-Issuing Monopoly (1783)

#### DESIGN, PRODUCTION & PRINTING OF EARLY BANK OF IRELAND BANKNOTES.

##### Bank of Ireland Banknotes 1783

(A4) Banknotes: First Consignment.

(A5) Banknote Engraver Appointed in Dublin.

(A6) Banknotes: First Irish Printed Issue.

(A7) Banknote Paper Problems.

(A8) Banknote Counterfeiting.

Act of Parliament passed against Counterfeiting.

Watermark: Security Measure.

(A9) Bank of Ireland Printer: John Oldham.

(A10) Bank of Ireland: Printing Facilities.

Engraved Steel Plate Note Production.

Oldham: Innovator of Banknote Printing Processes.

Printing Presses

(A11) Example 1 : Early Bank of Ireland Banknote 1841

(A12) Example 2 : Early Bank of Ireland Banknote 1813

##### (B) Early Irish Banknotes

(B1) New Role in the Economy. 1797

(B2) Bank of Ireland Restriction Act 1797

(B3) Private Banknote Issue: Restriction 1799

(B4) Silver Notes.



(B5) Banknotes: Increasing Demand.

(B6) Banknotes vs. Gold 1821

(B7) Postbills.

(B8) Banker (Ireland) Act 1845

DESIGN, PRODUCTION & PRINTING OF EARLY IRISH BANKNOTES.

(B9) Private Banknotes: Printing, Design & Composition.

(B10) Example 1 : Early Private Banknote 1820

(B11) Example 2 : Early Private Banknote 1839

(C) English Treasury Notes

End of Golden Age of Sovereigns.

(C1) Treasury Notes in Ireland :Composition, and Design.

(D) Irish Free State Legal Tender Note Issue (1st)

(D1) Ireland adopts her own currency.

(D2) The Saorstat Pound.

(D3) Currency Commission Act 1927.

(D4) Conditions of Issue of Legal Tender Notes.

(D5) Advisory Committee Appointed For New Designs.

(D6) New Banknote Design: Front.

(D7) New Banknote Design: Reverse.

(D8) Inscriptions.

(D9) New Banknotes: Printing.

(D10) Example 1 : First Legal Tender Notes of Irish Free  
State. Contrast between £1 & 10/- notes.

(E) Consolidated Banknote Issue 1929

(E1) Issuing Banks.

(E2) Consolidated Bank Notes: Design Composition & Printing.



- (F) Irish Free State Legal Tender Issue 1975
- (F1) Designs for New Series of Legal Tender Notes 1971
- (F2) Competition for the Commission of the New Notes.
- (F3) Servicon Planning & Design: Designers of New Notes.
- (F4) New Designs in conjunction with Central Bank Printing Facilities.
- (F5) Design of New Notes : Research.
- (F6) Portrait.
- (F7) Emerging Design of New Notes.
- (F8) Ten Pound Note.
- (F9) Five Pound Note.
- (F10) One Pound Note.
- (F11) Twenty Pound Note.
- (F12) Fifty Pound Note.
- (F13) Typographical Information.
- (F14) Typeface.
- (F15) Finished Visuals.
- (F16) Platemaking & Printing.
- (F17) Inks.
- (F19) Size.
- (F20) Paper.
- (F21) Watermark.
- (F22) Security,

#### CONCLUSION

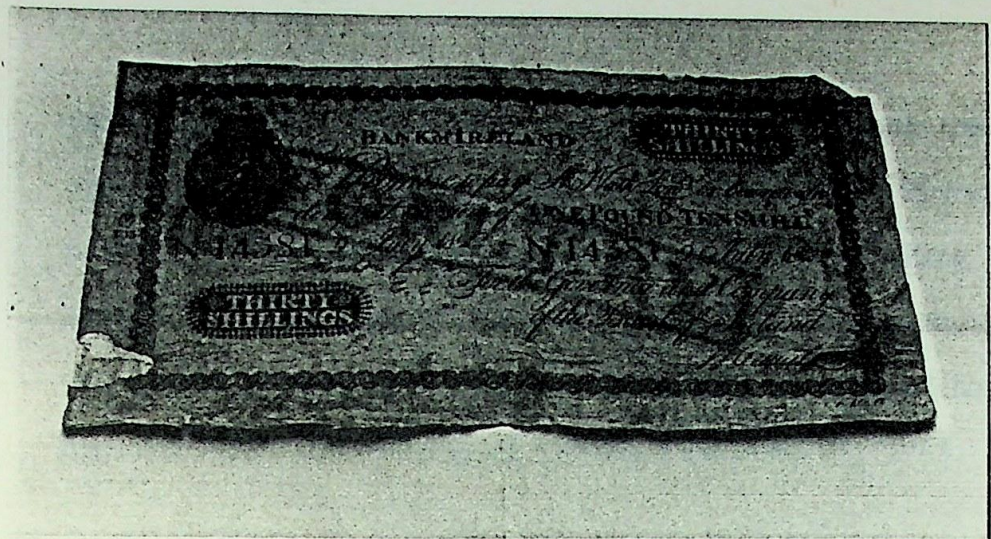
The Design Question

Typography & Imagery

Imagery

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BANK OF IRELAND.

(A1) Bank of Ireland: Establishment (1783).

The birth of modern Irish banking occurred with the establishment of the Bank of Ireland in 1783, a century later than the Bank of England and the Bank of Scotland. The National Bank under the style and title of the "the Governor and Company of the Bank of Ireland",<sup>5</sup> opened its doors on June 25, 1783, under an exclusive charter. This forbade any other company with over six partners from issuing circulating notes. Ireland was already well served with private banking institutions who issued their own banknotes, a function which was looked upon as an important and lucrative 'perquisite of a commercial bank'.<sup>6</sup>

(A2) Bank of Ireland: First Banknotes (1783).

At its first meetings the Bank of Ireland directors considered whether to print and issue banknotes. 'In March, 1783, George Godfrey Hoffman, one of the directors, went to London to seek the advice of the Bank of England on the organisation of the new establishment. According to Denis Kelleher and Thomas P. O'Neill, in their article on 'Early Paper Currency of the



Bank of Ireland', 'It is not surprising that he took the opportunity to interview Joseph Portal of Freefolk Pryors, near Laverstoke in Hampshire regarding paper for making Bank of Ireland notes'.<sup>7</sup> Shortly afterwards, a contract was signed with Portals and the first Bank of Ireland notes appeared with the opening of the Bank on June 25, 1783.

(A3) Bank of Ireland: Note Issuing Monopoly (1783).

The Bank of Ireland note issuing 'monopoly' from the Bank's inception in 1783, meant that the private banks were unable to expand by taking on extra partners and still continue to issue banknotes. This also meant that banking facilities outside Dublin were inadequate as the Bank of Ireland had not yet provided branch banking throughout the country.

'After a serious financial crisis in 1820, the law was changed to provide a reliable banking system for the provinces'.<sup>8</sup> This law, enforced in 1821, stated that banks of any size outside a fifty mile radius of Dublin could issue notes. Joint stock banks whose capital was subscribed by a large number of shareholders could now operate throughout the country. Bank of Ireland also began to operate provincial branches in the 1820's.



DESIGN, PRODUCTION & PRINTING

OF

EARLY BANK OF IRELAND BANKNOTES.



(A) BANK OF IRELAND BANKNOTES 1783.

(A4) Banknotes: First Consignment.

When George Godfrey Hoffman visited Portals in England in 1783, the well established papermakers had already sixty years experience in making paper for banknotes. Hoffman, before his interview with Joseph Portal, grandson of Henry, the founder of the business, was instructed by the court of the Bank of Ireland, to insist that the notes be of the same quality paper and of the same size as the Bank of England notes. He was, however, allowed a free choice of scroll and ornament.

In April 1783, a contract was signed for a supply of banknotes of sixteen denominations ranging from £10 to £500 in Irish currency. At this time Irish currency was not exchangeable at par with its English counterpart: one pound, one shilling and eight pence Irish was needed to equal one pound English.

When Bank of Ireland commenced business at ten o'clock on June 25, 1783, it had already received several consignments of notes from Portals, containing in all 12,700 notes, representing £882,500

These notes had been printed in England, and resembled the english notes, in style and design. The early english notes were 'large in size and beautifully printed in black copper plate on white paper made of a mixture of linen rags and cotton. The date, bearers name and cashiers signature, were entered in hand writing, while the rest was printed'.<sup>9</sup> It was not until over one hundred years later in 1853, that hand written figures and words were eliminated. In August 1783, the directors of the Bank of Ireland examined the question of printing notes in Ireland.



(A5) Banknote Engraver appointed in Dublin.

George Terry, an English engraver was asked asked by the Bank of Ireland, to provide proof plates and other apparatus necessary for printing banknotes. The directors were pleased with his work and offered him permanent employment if he transferred his business to Dublin. When he refused, Edward Fitzgerald, a Dublin craftsman was appointed engraver to the Bank.

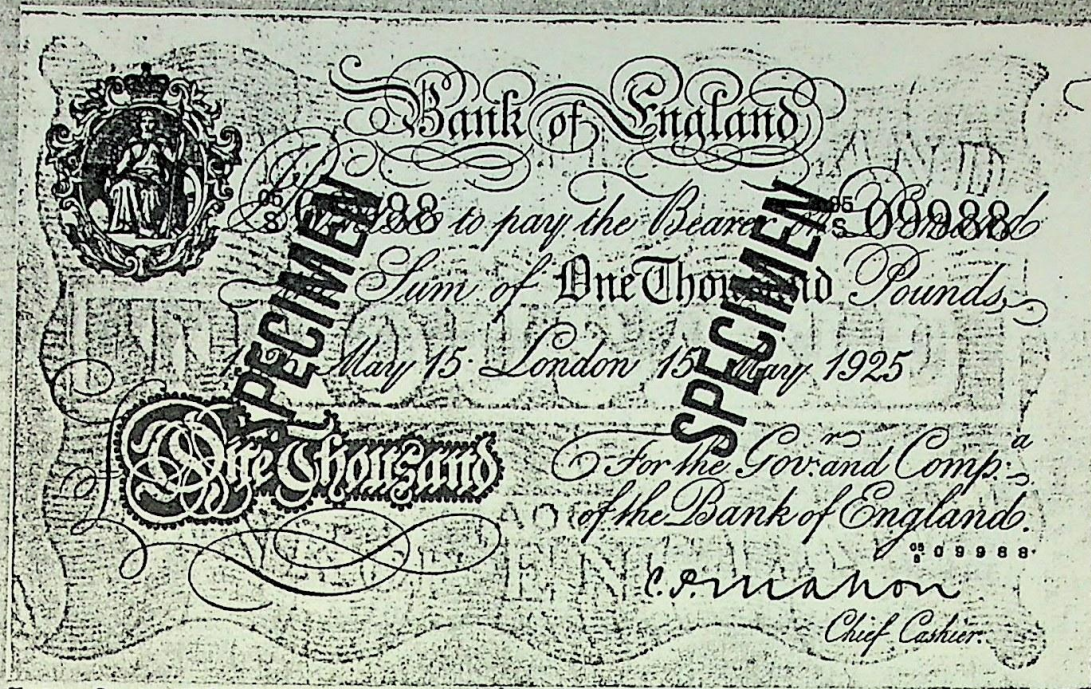
(A6) Banknotes: First Irish Printed Issue.

During the early months of 1784, the printing of notes was carried out by William Wilson in the Bank Printing House, which was located on the north side of the West Yard of Parliament House. (Prior to the establishment of the Bank of Ireland at College Green, this building was the house of the Irish Parliament). Besides the sixteen denominations issued from the beginning, a further eleven, ranging from five to one hundred guineas, were printed.

(A7) Banknote: Paper Problems.

Banknote paper was still being produced by Portals of England, but its regular supply became a constant source of worry to the directors of Bank of Ireland. 'Towards the end of 1784, the directors of the Bank were complaining that the paper was being delayed and tampered with at Chester, before crossing the Irish Sea. They asked the Lord Lieutenant to intervene, and a few weeks later they petitioned to have the duty, on paper imported into Ireland, remitted altogether'.<sup>10</sup> There





EARLY BANK OF ENGLAND BANKNOTE 1925

THERE IS A NOTICEABLE SIMILARITY IN THE COMPOSITION OF THE BANK OF ENGLAND ISSUE DISPLAYED ABOVE AND THE BANK OF IRELAND BANKNOTE BELOW. THIS BANK OF ENGLAND NOTE WAS USED IN A COUNTERFEITING SCANDAL, BY THE NAZI'S, IN AN EFFORT TO CAUSE THE COLLAPSE OF THE BRITISH ECONOMY. THE OPERATION WAS CODED NAMED OPERATION BERNHARD, AND WAS UNSUCCESSFUL.

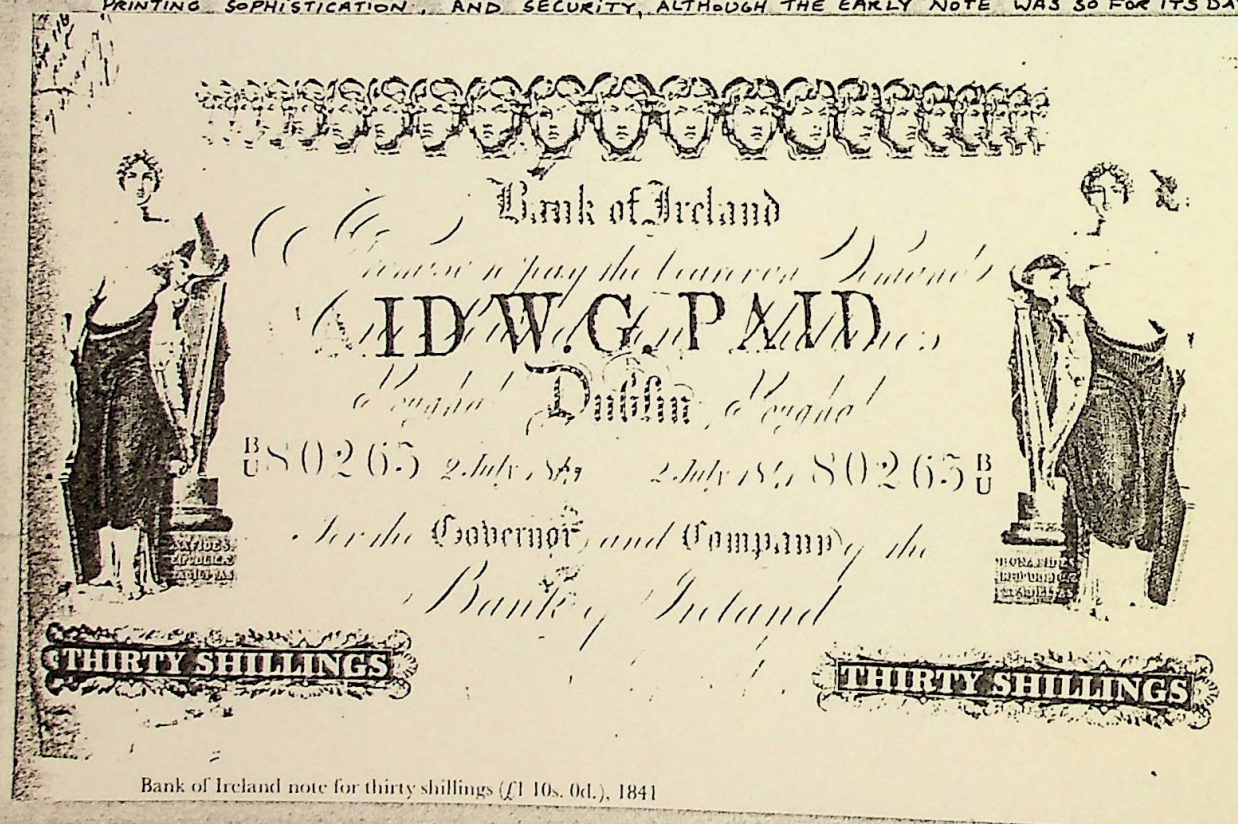


Bank of Ireland note for one and a half guineas (£1 14s. 1½d.), 1806





PRESENT DAY BANK OF IRELAND NORTHERN IRELAND ISSUE.  
THIS NOTE CONTAINS ELEMENTS FROM THE EARLIEST BANK OF IRELAND NOTES. THIS IS EVIDENT WHEN COMPARED WITH THE EARLY NOTE DEPICTED BELOW. DESIGN AND COMPOSITION OF BOTH NOTES ARE SIMILAR, BUT THE PRESENT NOTE IS FAR SUPERIOR IN TERMS OF PRINTING, SOPHISTICATION, AND SECURITY, ALTHOUGH THE EARLY NOTE WAS SO FOR ITS DAY.



Bank of Ireland note for thirty shillings (£1 10s. 0d.), 1841

is no evidence that this request was granted, and Portals continued to supply banknote paper for some years.

During the following years complaints were made as to the quality of the paper supplied. It was deemed to be inferior to that supplied to the Bank of England. In 1791, Portals lost the contract for paper and it was given to Richard Nun, a paper manufacturer at 46, Bridge St., Dublin. Nun endeavoured to produce a high quality paper, but failed to satisfy the bank directors for long. After two years Portals had again secured the contract which they held for six years more until 1799. During this year the contract was signed by another Irish firm, Cuppidge and Co., of Dame St., Dublin. After a short period Portals regained the contract for paper, which they still retain to-day, together with a large international clientele of Central Banks including the Bank of England since 1724.

(A8) Banknote: Counterfeiting.

From their introduction the most difficult problem with banknotes was forgery. Since its birth the Bank of Ireland had great trouble in protecting the public from forgeries, despite severe penalties attached to the crime. The Bank of England suffered similarly and it is likely that all banknote issuers are subject to this problem. 'Within eighteen months of the opening of the Bank, Follett Whiteway presented a forged note for payment. It was detected and the directors decided to take criminal proceedings against him and against all others involved in forging or passing imitation notes'.<sup>11</sup>



Counterfeiting was costing the Bank up to £3000 per annum in legal expenses as circulation of its notes increased and forgery of them became more prevalent. The time had come to introduce laws and security measures which would curtail this crime. At this time a variation in the watermark on the paper was the only means of detecting a forgery. The engravings on the note could not act as an efficient means of security because of their slight differences, through printing with copper plates, which were not always uniform.

#### Act or Parliament passed against Counterfeiting.

In 1797, the Irish Parliament passed a statute laying down severe penalties for persons involved in forging Bank of Ireland notes. This Act laid down that any unauthorized person who "shall make or use, or cause to procure to be made or knowingly aid or assist in the making or using or ..... have in his ..... custody or possession ..... any frame, mould or instrument for the making of paper with the words 'Bank of Ireland' visible in the substance of such paper or shall make ..... any paper in which the said words 'Bank of Ireland' shall be visible ..... (he) shall for such offence be adjudged a felon and shall be transported for his or her life".<sup>12</sup>

In the following years constant war was waged against forgers. The Bank of Ireland offered a reward of £25 to anyone who would 'discover and prosecute to conviction',<sup>13</sup> persons having instruments for making paper with the banks watermark or possessing such paper. In order to protect the notes there were rewards offered for detection of counterfeits and each one presented for payment was stamped with the word 'Forgery'.



#### Watermark - Security Measure:

The Bank of Ireland employed the watermark as a security measure in protecting its notes against forgery. This method was first adopted by the Bank of England in 1697. It is caused by the thinning of the paper at a particular point, so that it shows up when the paper is held up to the light. Watermarks result from 'the use of special wires or strips of metal fixed to the dandy roll, which is rotated over the paper pulp during the manufacture of the paper'.<sup>14</sup>

Great care was taken in watermarking banknote paper as it was difficult for counterfeiters to precisely imitate this mark. Paper and watermarks became less important in the identification of forgery with the introduction of steel plates which assured that engraving was uniform. 'In fact the Bank of Ireland appears to have used wove instead of laid paper used formerly and not to have any watermark around 1820'.<sup>15</sup> The day of counterfeit detection in illegal paper and watermark alone was over. Security measures had progressed in the form of more efficient means of printing, security threads, inks, engraving and many other devices employed to-day. Mr. Oldham, a printer with the Bank of Ireland, was instrumental in many of the innovations and improvements in security printing, against counterfeiters for banknotes.

#### (A9) Bank of Ireland Printer: John Oldham.

In 1816, the Bank of Ireland took into service, John Oldham of Dublin, who was a well known miniature painter and engraver, and a 'real inventive genius'.<sup>16</sup> Oldham was in charge of the printing of Bank of Ireland notes, which had by this time been



taken over by the Bank itself. He was responsible for many innovations in the development of banknote printing, achieving the greatest success in security printing of the notes, against forgers.

(A10) Bank of Ireland: Printing Facilities.

The Printing House at the Bank of Ireland had been fitted up 'according to the advice and under the superintendence of Mr. Oldham'.<sup>17</sup> The growing number of forged banknotes from the beginning of banknote printing had induced the Directors to seek some form of remedy 'in the formation of a proper circulating medium'.<sup>18</sup> Mr. Oldham succeeded in satisfying their requirements with the invention of a numbering machine for numbering banknotes. This somewhat resembled the Bank of England numbering device but, was more advanced in that the 'Bank of England machinery only executes units without additional adjustments and thereby requires confidential assistants'.<sup>19</sup> Oldham's apparatus continued the series to 100,000 independently of the control of the operator.

Engraved Steel Plate Note Production.

Oldham's most important invention for the prevention of forgeries was his system of producing notes from engraved steel plates. Copper had been used formerly, but this material got worn quickly and had to be renewed frequently. This meant that notes were not always uniform in design. The fact that each plate was produced by hand meant that it was impossible to reproduce each one identically.



The engraving engine which Oldham updated was capable of engraving an indefinite number of notes, which would be absolutely identical. Identity was not only preserved between different parts of the same note, but, the machine was capable of reproducing the same precise characters on all successive notes. Oldham, in his modification of this engraving system was probably influenced by Jacob Perkins of Philadelphia. Around this time, Perkins had devised a system by which a master steel plate was used to produce any number of identical engraved steel plates. This ensured that engraving was uniform on all notes.

#### Oldham: Innovator of Banknote Printing Processes.

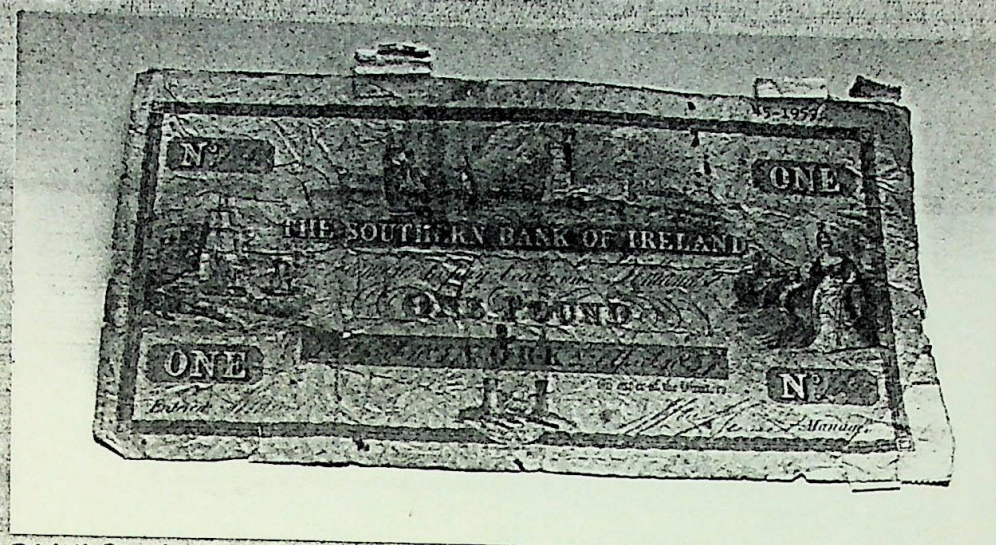
Mr. Oldham also introduced a method of dampening paper before printing. This had a great advantage on methods usually employed. 'Instead of passing three or four sheets at a time through a trough of water, and stacking them for printing the next day, Oldham built a special container and placed from 1,000 to 5,000 sheets of paper inside'.<sup>20</sup> When water was added the container was sealed and a partial vacuum created, through the extraction of air. This allowed the water to penetrate the paper, and within fifteen minutes, the sheets were thoroughly dampened and ready for printing. Oldham was the innovator of many other devices which employed the use of steam and water, and made the printing processes more efficient. These devices included the driving of printing presses, the heating of printing plates, and the drying of printed notes.

#### Printing Presses.

There were four printing presses in the Bank of Ireland printing

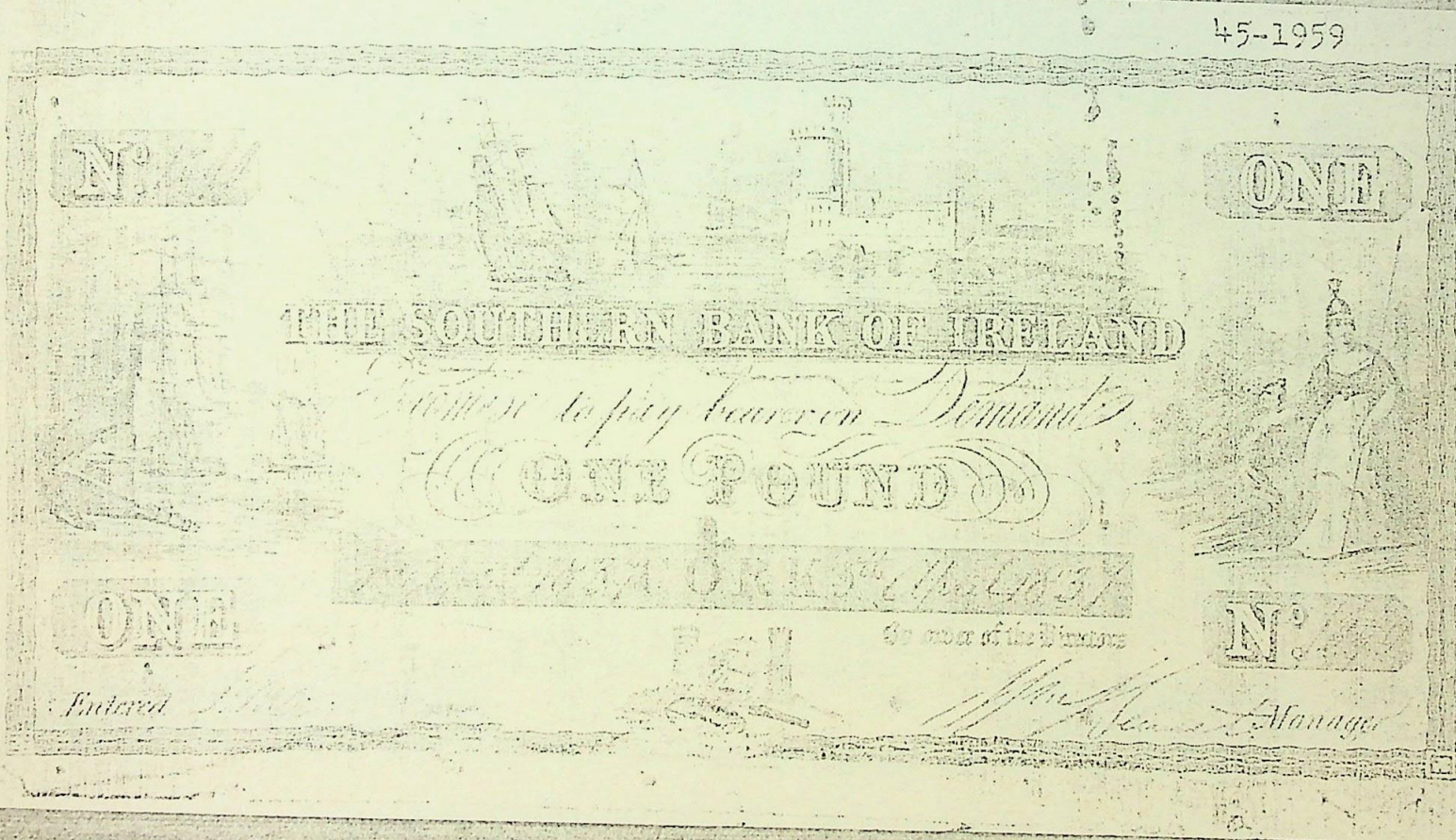


Fig. 1A



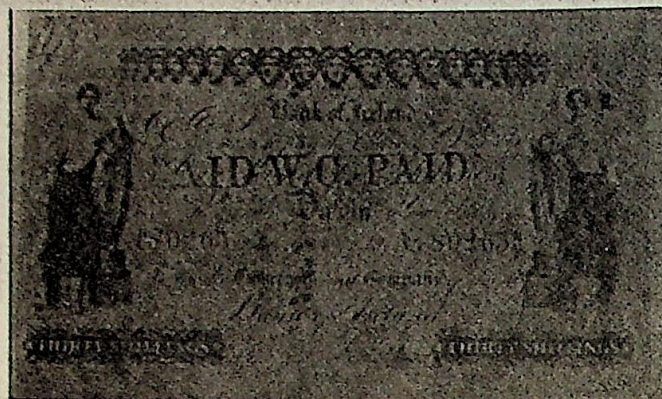
EARLY BANK OF IRELAND NOTE ISSUED FOR THE SOUTHERN BANK OF IRELAND. A DETAILED COPY IS SHOWN BELOW. THE NOTE WAS ISSUED IN 1831.

Fig. 1A



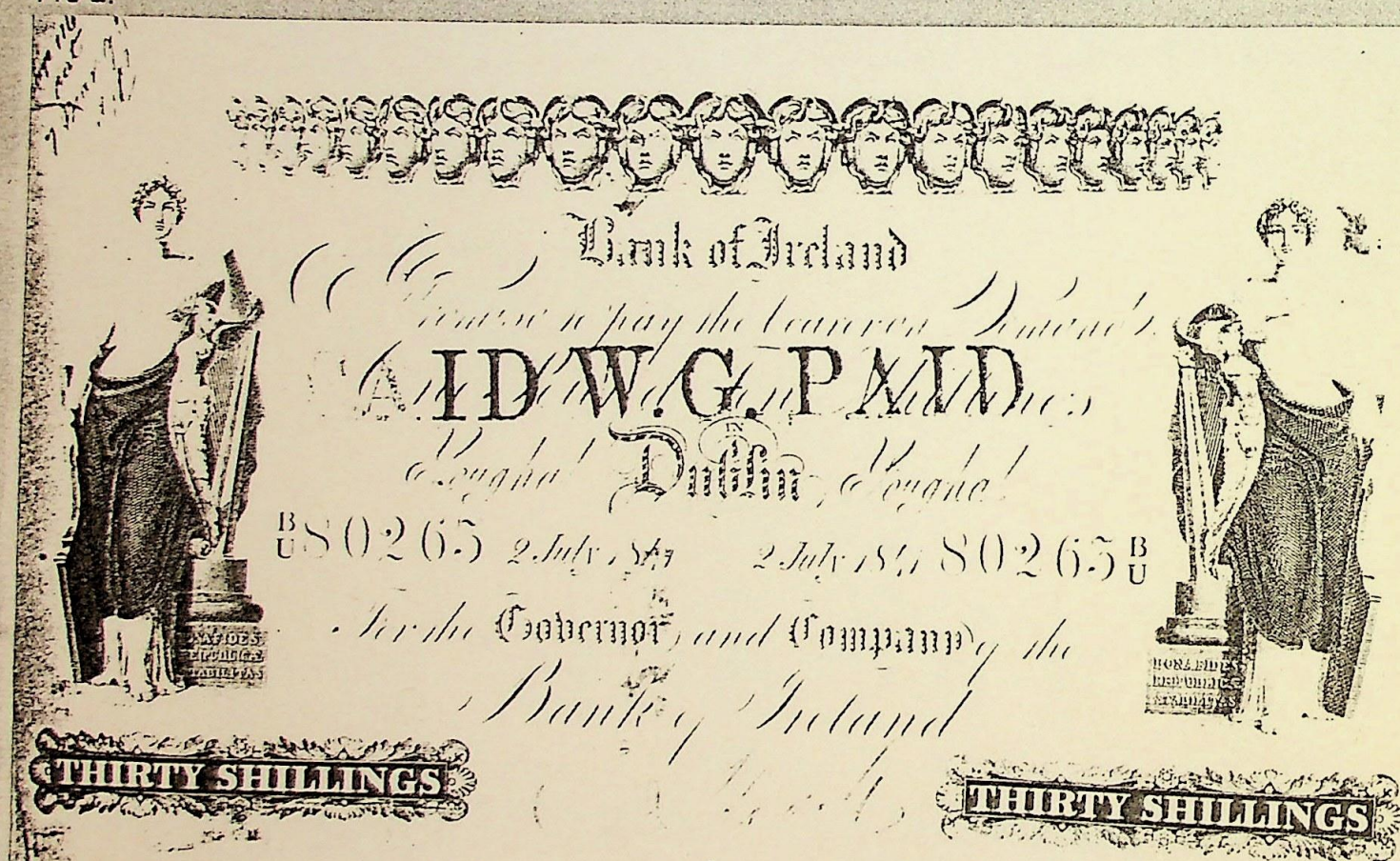


EXAMPLE 1.  
FIG 1



EARLY BANK OF IRELAND NOTE DATED 1841.  
DETAIL SHOWN BELOW.

Fig 1.



Bank of Ireland note for thirty shillings (£1 10s. 0d.), 1841

works, which included a flatbed press driven by an eight horse power steam engine. This was 'an exceedingly improved construction',<sup>21</sup> and was 'almost certainly the first instance of the use of steam for driving a plate printing press'.<sup>22</sup> Five thousand notes could be struck off each day, each one a proof impression. The printing press employed a security precaution devised by Oldham in the form of a system of counting the proof impressions of the press, ensuring that notes could not be stolen without detection. 'To one of the supports of every press a small box is attached, with glazed apertures in the top, in which figures present themselves successively at each pull of the press, indicating the number of impressions taken up to that time of the day. This registering apparatus is secured from the interference of the printer as the box containing it is locked'.<sup>23</sup>

(A11) EXAMPLE I

EARLY BANK OF IRELAND BANKNOTE.

Fig. I is an example of an early Bank of Ireland note, displaying the expertise of Mr. Oldham, and printed in the bank's own print workshop. It employs the most advanced techniques in security printing for its day, in 1841. Advanced technology caused alterations in design throughout the history and evolution of banknotes, so that each note is testimony to the sophistication of printing of its particular period.

This note resembles the Bank of England note of the same time, in terms of layout and design. It is large in size and is printed in black ink on white paper made by Portals. Design elements include type used in conjunction with varying images of Hibernia

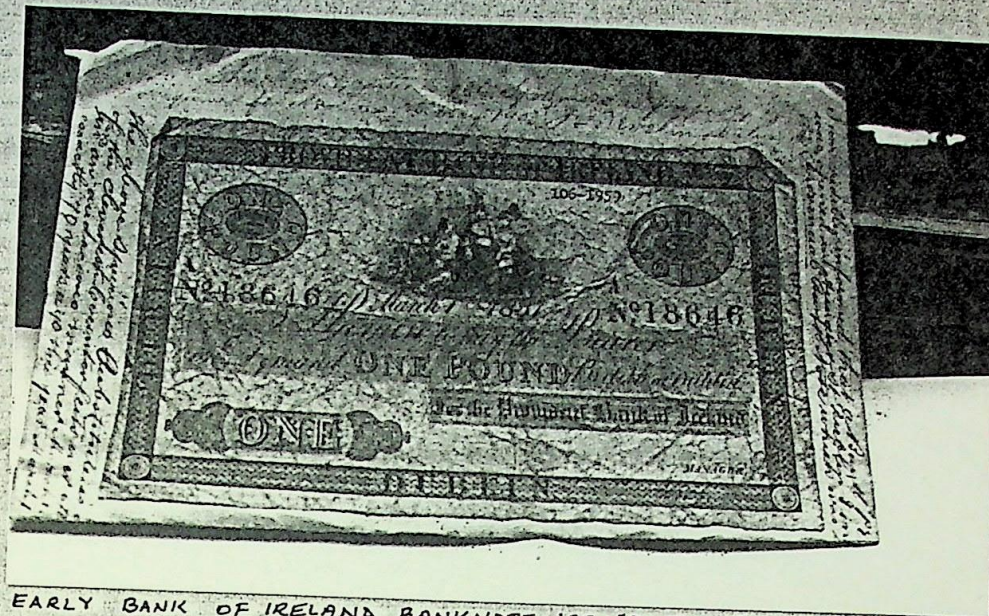


and Medusa. On the right Hibernia is depicted with a raised hand, while on the left the same figure stands with lowered hand. Along the top of the note, there is a distinctive row of Medusa heads, which are often wrongly referred to as that of Mercury. The heads which are twenty-one in number seem to form a semi-circle each one looking at a different angle, while the centre head seems to look directly at the viewer. This note was a promise from the Bank of Ireland to pay the bearer, on demand, the sum of 'One Pound, Ten Shillings', in Dublin. The note was issued in Youghal, Co. Cork on July 2, 1841.

The type stating this promise appears in the centre of the note amidst the engraved images, and is in script form. The amount appears only in words, and not in numerals simultaneously, although the two did occur on other notes printed at this time. On both the left and the right of the bottom portion of the note the words 'Thirty Shillings' appear enclosed in an engraved decorative border, reversed out in white capital letters in a serified type. The signature of the issuer of the note is between the two denominations. When the note was paid to the bearer, it was stamped 'Paid', as is evident in this example. The serial number of the note appears twice on the same line as the date which also appears twice.

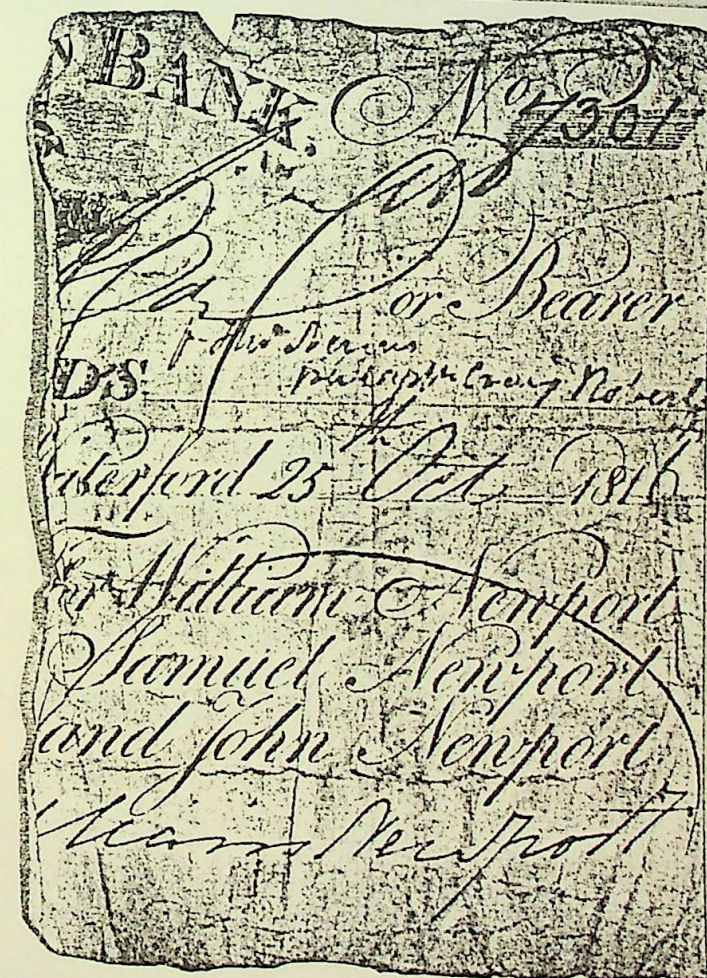
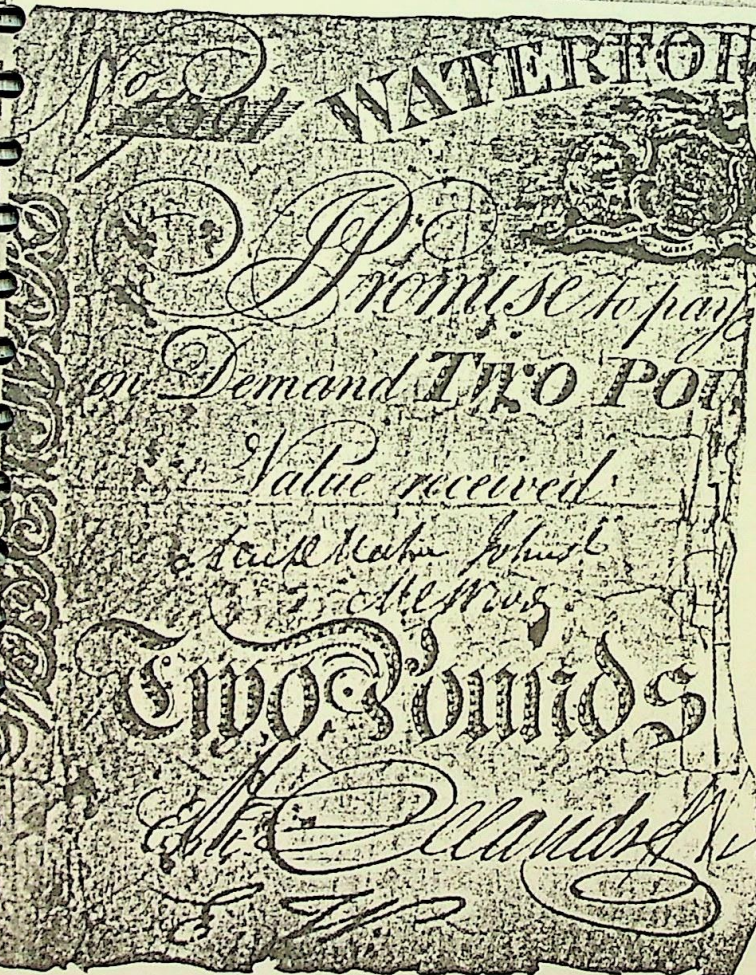
The reason for the duplication of data on the note was for security. If the note was torn in half, the matching half could be redeemed by checking the similar serial numerals and other relevant information. In the early nineteenth century it was common practice to tear a banknote in half, if the note was to be mailed. Each half was sent separately





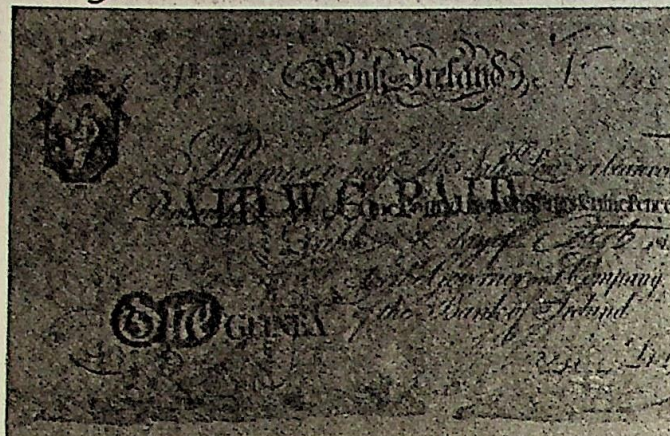
EARLY BANK OF IRELAND BANKNOTE ISSUED BY THE PROVIDENT BANK OF IRELAND IN 1837.

Fig 2.



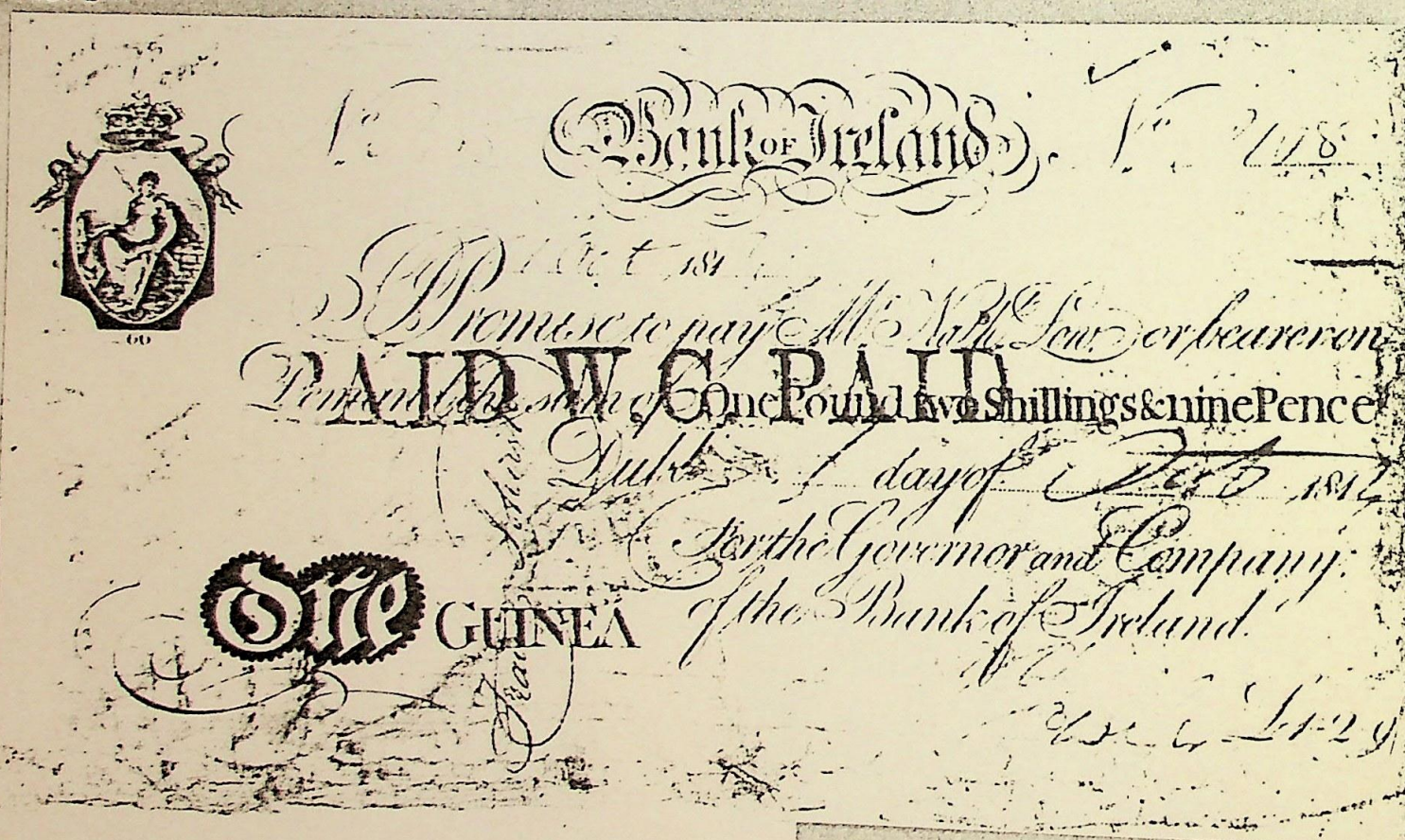


EXAMPLE 2.  
FIG. 3.



EARLY BANK OF IRELAND BANKNOTE FOR ONE GUINEA, DATED 1813. DETAIL SHOWN BELOW.

FIG. 3



Bank of Ireland note for one guinea (£1 2s. 9d.), 1813

through the post, the second being withheld by the sender, until acknowledgement of receipt of the first half was received. This was in an effort to foil mailbag thieves. An example of this can be seen in Fig. 2 which was issued in Waterford. The note is still accompanied by the original pin used to join the two halves together.

(A12) EXAMPLE 2  
EARLY BANK OF IRELAND BANKNOTE.

Fig. 3 is an earlier example of a Bank of Ireland banknote, dated 1813. In contrast to Fig. 1 dated 1841, this note contains more typographical material than engraved imagery. As time and technology progressed it was proven that larger and more detailed engravings, especially those which included a portrait, were more difficult to forge, and so for security reasons the ensuing designs were changed.

From 1783 to 1838, the main adornment on the Bank of Ireland note was an engraving of the Bank Seal, which appears on the upper left hand side of this example. This note was also a 'promise' made by the Bank of Ireland, 'to pay the bearer on demand' a certain sum of money, but in this case, also included the name of the person to whom the note was first issued, in the promissory clause. The wording of the note is similar to that described in Fig. 1, but, certain words and numbers which were handwritten in the early issue, were substituted for print in the later issue. These included the date and the serial number. The denomination on the note issued in 1813, appears in both numerical and worded form. Both notes Fig. 1 & Fig. 3 were blank on the reverse, allowing for endorsements at the time of payment.



EARLY IRISH BANKNOTES.

(81) Early Irish Banknotes: New Issue in January 1797.

Banknotes were relatively unimportant in Ireland before 1797. Until this century the currency in circulation around the time was coin, as notes used were mainly of high denomination and were employed almost exclusively to finance large transactions. Currency, however, became increasingly necessary, as a result of the rise in costs, and volume of Irish exports between 1795 and 1797 (44) in which Ireland had to supply the world with wheat, which was sold at a profit of 25% (45). This together with the fact that the value of the pound was falling, led to the issue of banknotes in 1797, but the Bank Restriction Act.

(82) Bank of Ireland: Restriction 1797.

This Act freed the Bank of Ireland from paying its notes in gold for what was to prove a period of a year. Banknotes in Ireland were now a reality, as the Bank of Ireland was the only bank to issue them. The Bank of Ireland was the only bank to issue them, as the Bank of Ireland was the only bank to issue them.

(83) Private Banknotes: Restriction 1797.

Private banks in Ireland had issued banknotes since 1797 and greatly increased their issue after 1797. In 1797, a measure to control the issue of banknotes was introduced. The measure was to control the issue of banknotes, as the Bank of Ireland was the only bank to issue them.



(B) EARLY IRISH BANKNOTES.

(B1) Early Irish Banknotes: New Role in Economy 1797.

Banknotes were relatively unimportant in Ireland before 1797. Three quarters of the currency in circulation around this time was coin, as notes used were mainly of high denomination and were employed almost exclusively to finance wholesale and large transactions. As time elapsed, paper currency, became increasingly necessary, as a result of the rise in costs, and volume of Irish exports between 1795 and 1815 (40% in volume and 120% in value).<sup>24</sup> This together with the drain of gold, which had passed out of circulation over most of the country after the suspension of cash payments in 1797, led to the Bank Restriction Act.

(B2) Bank of Ireland: Restriction Act 1797.

This Act freed the Bank of Ireland from paying its notes in gold for what was to prove a quarter of a century. Banknotes in Ireland were now a necessity as the static supply of gold could not deal with an expanding volume of production and trade without even more severe deflation. The volume of notes in use in 1820 had increased to three times the 1797 level.

(B3) Private Banknote Issue: Restriction 1799.

Private banks in Ireland had issued some small notes before 1797 and greatly increased their issue after that year. 'In 1799, a measure of control was attempted by an Act which prohibited all notes payable to the bearer for less than five guineas, other than those for 9s, 6s and 3s 9½d issued by bankers outside Dublin'.<sup>25</sup>



Many notes to the value of 3s 9½d, which is one-sixth of a guinea were issued between 1799 and 1804 and were known as silver notes.

(B4) Silver Notes.

Silver notes were invented by Mr. Sadlier of Cork in 1798, and were designed to avoid the stamp duty payable on a bankers note. They ranged in value from 3½d up to 10s and were used by merchants and other traders to pay their employees wages. They became so common that according to Sir John Carr, a British tourist, 'Bankers' were almost as common as potatoes'<sup>26</sup> in the counties of Limerick, Kerry and Cork in 1805.

During 1804, silver notes together with all notes for less than 20s - our modern day £1 - were declared void. This prohibition repeated by an Act of 1805, was the only statutory restriction on note issue in force in 1820. At this time large notes of £5 and over were used mainly for commercial payments and remittances and small notes of under £5 were passed from hand to hand as currency.

(B5) Banknotes: Increasing Demand 1800.

Banknotes became increasingly popular in the early 1800's as time progressed and the economy began to thrive. As trade increased the buyers from the ports were being replaced by more numerous inland commodity dealers who exported directly on their own account. This meant that there was a need of access to local banking units to convert bills into the paper which now financed a growing volume of trade. Ireland was now ready for larger banks and the emergence of branch banking.



FIG 4



FIG 5

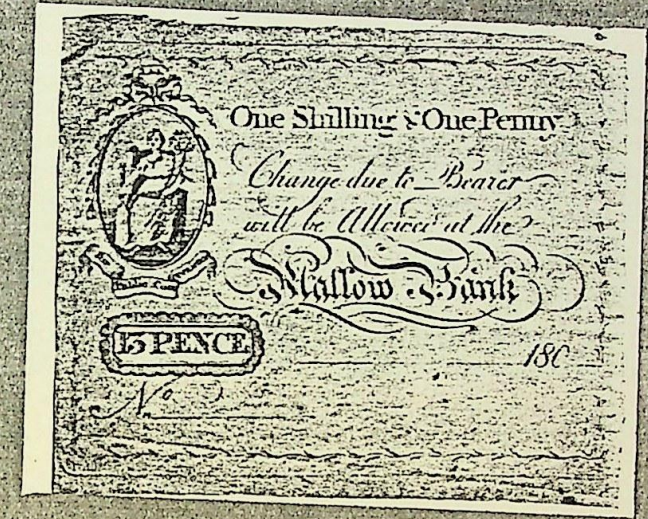


FIG 6

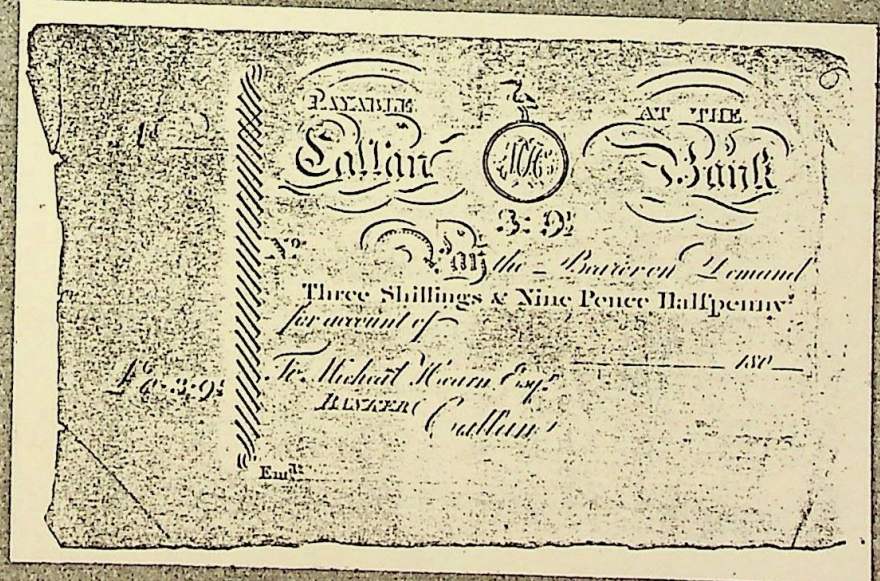




FIG 7.



EARLY BANK POST BILL ISSUE IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY. THIS WAS ISSUED BY A PRIVATE BANK AND FOLLOWING THE RESTRICTION ACT 1756, BEARS THE NAMES OF THE BANK PARTNERS. A DETAILED COPY OF THE ORIGINAL IS DISPLAYED BELOW.

FIG 7.



(B6) Banknotes Vs. Gold in 1821.

Through the wartime inflation the ordinary people of Ireland had become more familiar with paper money in their 'modest sales and purchases'.<sup>27</sup> In 1821, one of the Grubb family from Clonmel, commenting on the Irish peoples preference for paper as opposed to gold, said that he had not known "anything more extraordinary than the reluctance of the Irish people to take gold".<sup>28</sup> Banknotes were no longer confined to large scale transactions and for the first time there was a need for notes of denominations of less than five pounds. The Bank of Ireland had not issued any smaller denominations prior th the Restriction, although it was legally permitted to do so. In England, notes for less than five pounds had been prohibited by an Act of 1777, but had been allowed as an emergency measure under the Restriction Acts.

(B7) Postbills.

Postbills, (See Fig. ), were printed in addition to notes, by the Bank of Ireland and the private banks. They were designed to allow time to stop payment in the event of loss in transit and were therefore made payable some days after issue, normally seven, but sometimes five, ten or twenty-one. They were more analogous to bills of exchange than to banknotes. The many endorsements on those that survive indicate that they did pass from hand to hand as currency.

Banknotes and postbills were usually denominated in Irish currency. The word 'Sterling' commonly added after the amount did not indicate British currency, but, seems to have been no more than a promise of sound value. When British currency was intended, the words 'British Sterling' or 'British' were used.



It was only in 1824 that discount accounts were authorised for 'respectable persons in the interior of Ireland'<sup>29</sup> and arrangements formalised to transmit notes and postbills to them through the mail. Prior to this date, notes were issued only over the counter in Dublin and merchants in the country had to employ agents to collect and despatch them.

(B8) Banker (Ireland) Act 1845.

In 1845, the Banker (Ireland) Act was passed, which had a significant influence on the development of banking. This Act removed the Bank of Ireland Monopoly, thus allowing existing note issuing banks to expand their issues, provided the excess above the permitted fiduciary issue was fully backed by gold. At this time, only six banks had the right of note issue; The Bank of Ireland, the Belfast Banking Company, the National Bank, the Northern Banking Company, the Provincial Bank of Ireland and the Ulster Bank. The new Act did not allow other banks to issue notes. By the 1840's note issues had reached their limit and were not to expand in the remainder of the century. The future growth of banking lay firmly with deposits and cheque transferral.



DESIGN, PRODUCTION & PRINTING

OF

EARLY PRIVATE BANKNOTES IN IRELAND.



Fig. 7



EARLY PRIVATE BANKNOTE

Fig. 8



EARLY PROVINCIAL BANK OF IRELAND BANKNOTE FROM 1875.

(B9) Private Bank Notes: Printing, Design & Composition.

Private bank notes were printed in much the same manner as Bank of Ireland notes, which circulated simultaneously. They too were printed on one side only and required an endorsement before being passed on. Many of the surviving notes are a mass of signatures and ink marks due to their many endorsements. These notes were often presented as evidence at bankruptcy trials and bore a record of the dividend paid. As with Bank of Ireland notes, private bank notes were often cut in half for security, or trimmed for lightness in posting.

In the early years of banknotes many varying styles and designs were in circulation. This was due to the numerous note issuing private banks, together with Bank of Ireland, who changed their note issue from time to time. Banknotes were continually being withdrawn as businesses were curtailed and new notes came into circulation with new enterprises. Private bank note designs were commissioned by the issuer to reflect his course of business. The size and style of the note was dictated by the size of the business and flourishing trade. These notes took many shapes and forms ranging from a simple strip of paper bearing the issuers name together with a promissory clause, as in Fig. 4, to a more technically advanced engraving as displayed in Fig. 5.

Private bank notes were printed in either Ireland or England, by a printer who was chosen by the issuer of the note. T. Gorman, from Clonmel was responsible for printing the note in Fig. 4, and judging by this note was not as advanced in printing technology as WH Holbrücke of Dublin who engraved the Provincial Bank of Ireland note of 1875 in Fig. 5. Due to its style and size the



1-2

note in Fig. 4, even though it does not bear a date was probably one of the earliest private bank notes. It resembles a receipt more closely than a banknote. Other printers of Irish private bank notes included Ashby of Lombard St. in London, the engraver and printer of the Bank of Limerick note in Fig. 6, Rowe, Kentith and Co., London who executed notes for Gibbons & Williams of Dame St. Dublin, Fig. 7 and J. Kirkwood of Crow St. in Dublin who engraved on steel the design for the Southern Bank of Ireland notes, Fig. 8.

(B10) EXAMPLE I  
EARLY PRIVATE BANK NOTE.

Pikes Bank 1820.

Fig. 9 is an example of one of the earliest surviving private bank notes from Pikes Bank in Cork, dated October 16, 1820. Pikes Bank was one of the first private banks in existence in Cork. It evolved from the mercantile firm of two brothers Edward and Joseph Hoare, in the last quarter of the century. When Joseph Hoare died in 1729, the bank was continued by his brother-in-law and partner as Pikes Bank.

This note is more primitive in design and composition than the Bank of Ireland notes described in Examples 1 & 2 of Section B, even though it was issued seven years later than the earlier Bank of Ireland note in Example 2, B. The engraving is less sophisticated than that in Fig. 10 and is comprised of a simple monogram of the letter 'P', surrounded by a decorative border. This appears on the left side of the note, the remaining area being taken up with type.



Fig 9

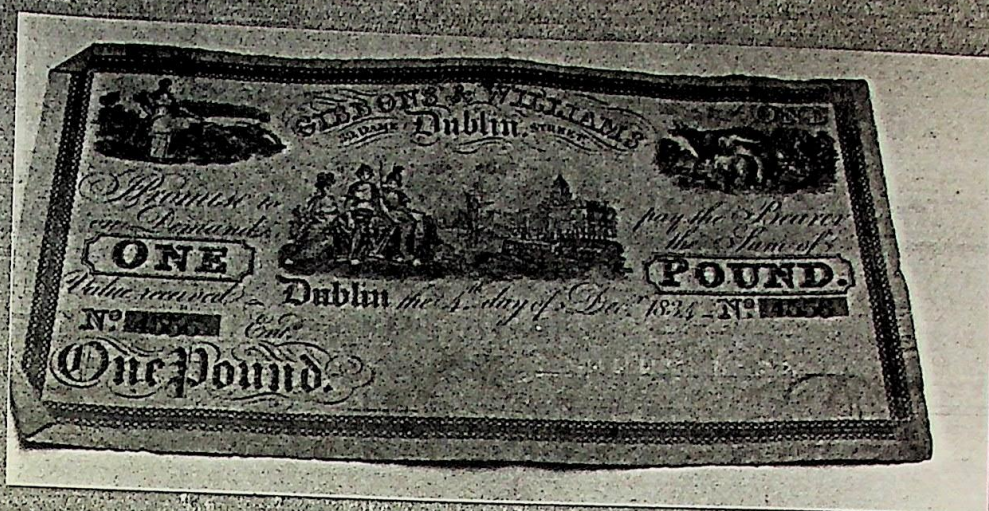


Fig 10

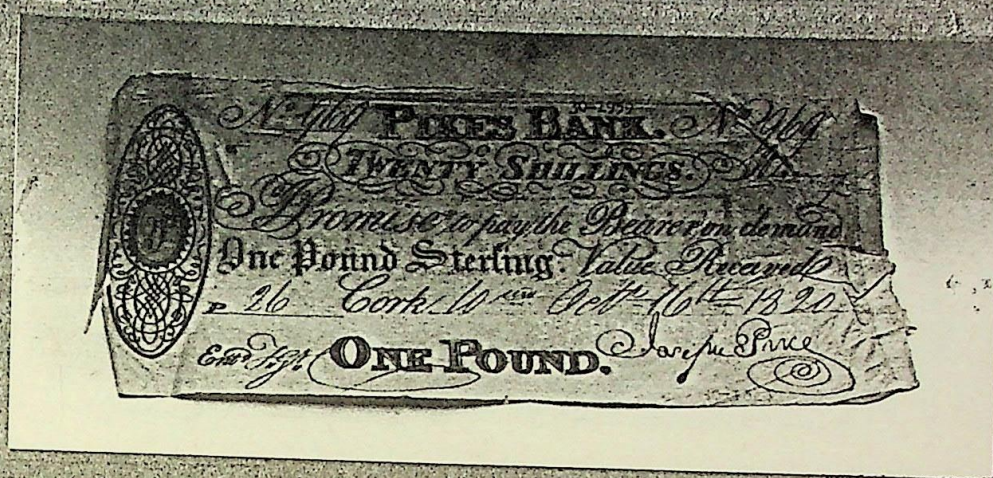


Fig 10





Fig. 11

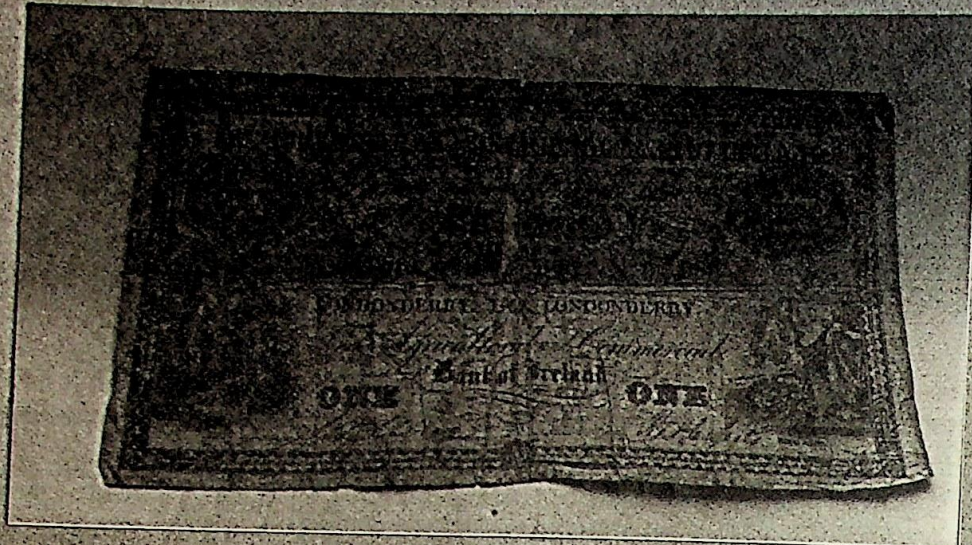
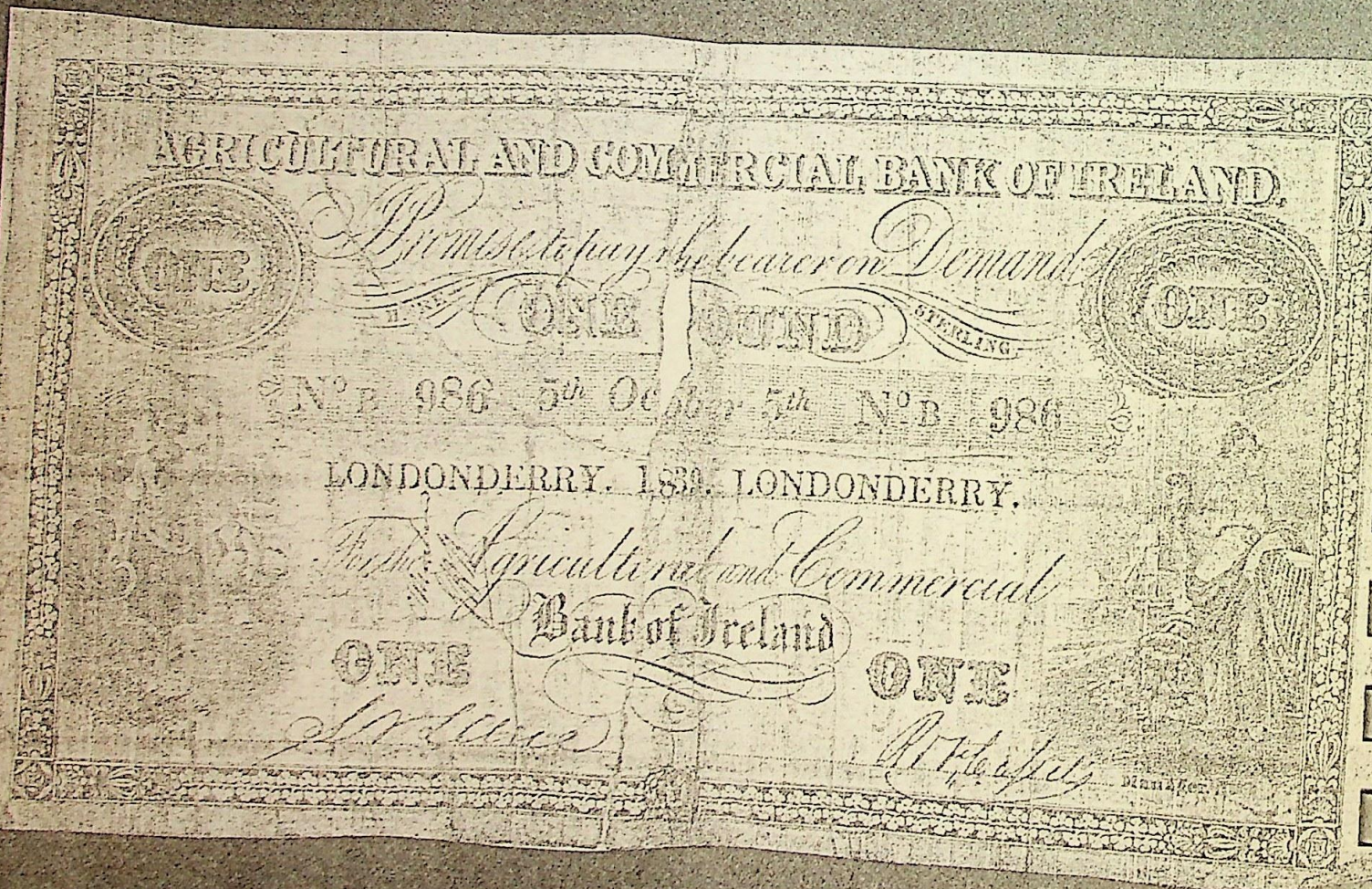


Fig. 11



The type used is of script-like qualities, but is less graceful than that depicted in Fig. and appears in a larger size. The name of the bank - PIKES BANK - is in a bold serified typeface, which is almost 3-dimensional in style. It is rather crude when compared with the elegance of the lettering in the title 'Bank of Ireland' in Fig. 10. The information given on the note from Pikes Bank is similar to that conveyed on the Bank of Ireland early issue, but the 'bearer' is not named. The serial numbers, date and signatures are handwritten as on the Bank of Ireland issue.

(B11) EXAMPLE 2

EARLY PRIVATE BANK NOTE FOR 'AGRICULTURAL & COMMERCIAL BANK OF IRELAND' 1839.

Fig. 11 dated 1839, displays a further progression in the field of engraving and printing than that exhibited in the earlier note of Pikes Bank in Fig. . This note is dominated by typography, as was the case with most banknotes of earlier years, and is enhanced by engraving on both sides, with a decorative border surrounding the perimeter. The note was engraved by W.H. Lazare, as indicated by the small print at the centre lower half of the border. This note was issued by the Agricultural and Commercial Bank of Ireland at its London-Derry office, and was payable to the bearer on demand.

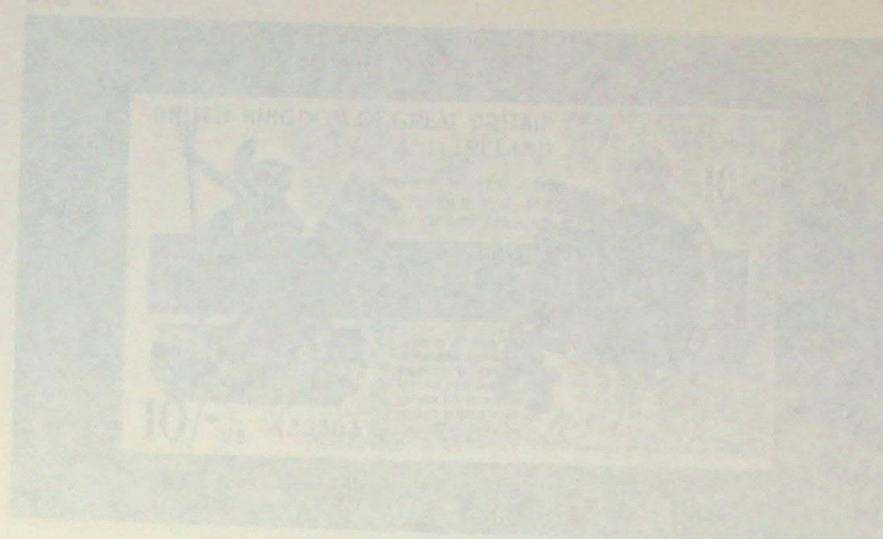
The engravings on the note echo the tradings of the bank. Agriculture is featured on the left, while Hibernia and her surroundings symbolise commercial dealings in Ireland, on the right. The denomination of the note appears within an engraved oval, in typographical form. The name of the issuing bank



occupies the first line on the note, as is the case on most of the private bank notes.

The layout and design of this note is far superior to that of Pikes note, displaying an inevitable refinement, in the space of nineteen years. It's style is more comparable to that of the Bank of Ireland note, dated 1841, in Fig. . Both notes have a similar layout, in that they are both comprised of an engraved image at either side, with the denomination in words enclosed in a decorative border.





ENGLISH TREASURY NOTES: COMPOSITION & DESIGN

(1) ENGLISH TREASURY NOTES, 1914-19

English Treasury notes were the first recognised legal tender notes to circulate in Ireland. They were so called because they were issued on behalf of the English Treasury. Before the creation of the Irish Free State, Ireland issued her own legal tender notes 'the circulating media consisted mainly of U.K. Treasury notes and coinage, which were legal tender, together with Bank of England notes and Irish bank notes which were not'. Irish bank notes had been legal tender in 1914, as a wartime measure, but, this status had been withdrawn at the end of 1919.

End of Golden Age of Sovereigns.

Treasury notes first appeared in 1914 with the outbreak of the war and marked the end of the 'Golden Age' of sovereigns. They soon became known as 'Bradbury's' after the man, whose signature they bore. A facsimile of the signature of John Bradbury, who was the Secretary to the Treasury, appeared in the bottom right hand corner.



FIG 12



(C) ENGLISH TREASURY NOTES. Fig. 12

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(C1) Treasury Notes in Ireland: Composition & Design.

Even though this thesis is concerned with Irish banknotes and their design I feel it is necessary to include an interesting feature in the production of Treasury notes (Fig. ). In spite of the fact that these notes were designed and printed for the Treasury in Great Britain, they did actually circulate in Ireland for a period of time. This feature which interests me, concerns the paper used for the first Treasury note issue, and constitutes an example of emergency currency in circulation in Ireland.

Because of the sudden decision to issue Treasury notes, suitable banknote paper was unavailable, so the first series of £1 and 10/- notes had to be printed on paper normally used for postage stamps. This accounts for the continuous watermark of the royal monogram, appearing on the notes, which was employed on British stamps of that period. Postage stamp paper, as one can imagine, proved quite unsatisfactory for banknotes as it was much lighter and less durable, than that normally used. It was not designed to withstand the hardship to which banknotes are subject. Soon afterwards a second issue of Treasury notes, on suitable banknote paper, was produced to rectify this matter.

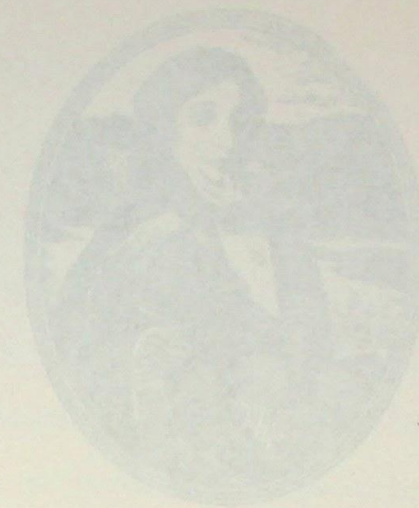
On this second issue the name of the country appeared for the first time and read "United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland". With the introduction of the Irish Free State in 1921, this was soon to change to include the word 'Northern' in front of Ireland, as the United Kingdom no longer included the whole country as before (Fig. ). Treasury notes were no longer valid in this country.



The production of Treasury notes ceased in November 1928, when the Bank of England took over responsibility for £1 and 10/- notes, from the Treasury. These notes continued to circulate in Northern Ireland and Great Britain until July 1933, when they were taken up by the banks and cased to be legal tender.

After 1921, there was now a suitable climate for the introduction of the first issue of Irish Free State currency.





## IRISH FREE STATE LEGAL TENDER NOTES 1927

(1) IRISH FREE STATE LEGAL TENDER NOTES 1927

### (1) Ireland Adopts her own currency.

On March 8, 1926, a few years after the establishment of the Irish Free State, the Minister for Finance appointed a Commission "to consider and report to him what changes, if any, in the law relating to banking and banknote issue are necessary or desirable having regard to the altered circumstances arising from the establishment of Saorstát Éireann".<sup>31</sup> The main purpose of the Commission was to decide what monetary system and what currency standard the Irish Free State should adopt.

The United Kingdom had restored the gold standard as a backing for their currency and the Final Report of the Commission stated that "no efficient substitute for gold has been found, and the proposals were or less fanciful proposals for relying on a different monetary standard have not borne the test of analysis, when subjected to critical examination".<sup>32</sup> The Commission was strongly in favour of the gold standard and added that currency regulation was impossible.





(D) IRISH FREE STATE LEGAL TENDER BANKNOTE ISSUE (IST).

(D1) Ireland Adopts her own currency.

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(D2) The 'Saorstat Pound'.

The Banking Commission's main recommendation was the creation of an Irish Free State legal tender note, which would be known as the 'Saorstat Pound' and would be exchangeable as par with the British Pound. The Commission also suggested that the existing banknote issue be discontinued, to be replaced by a new issue of consolidated banknotes which would be convertible into legal tender on demand. These notes would be issued to all banks carrying on business in the Free State, and would exist alongside the legal tender note issue.

The management and control of the new Irish Currency would be in the hands of a non-political and independent authority to be entitled 'The Currency Commission'.

(D3) Currency Commission Act 1927.

The majority of the recommendations of the Banking Commission were incorporated in the Currency Act of 1927, by which the Currency Commission was established. The Currency Commission consisted of six ordinary commissioners and a chairman.

According to Geraldine Alvey, the Currency Act 1927, Section 45(2) states that 'Every legal tender note shall be of such form, size and design and printed in such manner as the Commission shall, with the sanction of the Minister for Finance, prescribe'.<sup>33</sup> Notes were to be printed in denominations of 10/-, £1, £5, £10, £20, £50 and £100.



(D4) Conditions of Issue of Legal Tender Notes.

The Currency Commission was authorized to issue legal tender notes to any bank in the Free State in exchange for:-

(a) 'A bank draft payable at sight in London, approved by the Commission and of a nominal amount equal to the amount of legal tender notes so issued'.<sup>34</sup>

or (b) 'The transfer to the Commission of such amounts of British Government securities approved by the Commission, as in the opinion of the Commission, is equal in value, at the current market prices, to the amount of legal tender notes so issued'.<sup>35</sup>

The full range of note denominations was offered to each bank, but was only accepted by the Bank of Ireland, the Munster and Leinster, the Royal Bank, and the Ulster Bank.

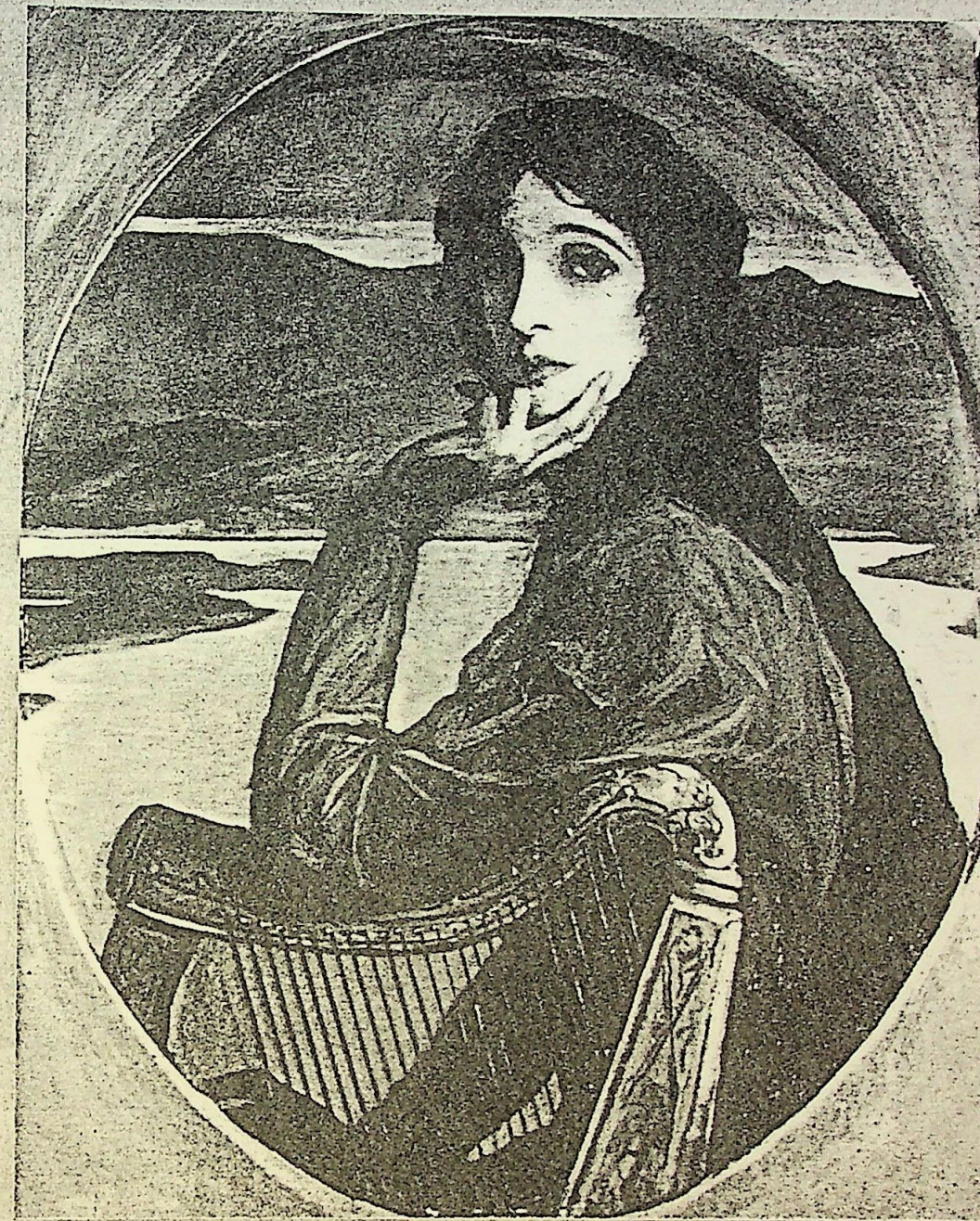


DESIGN, PRODUCTION & PRINTING

OF

IRISH FREE STATE LEGAL TENDER NOTES (1st Issue).





THE PORTRAIT PAINTING OF LADY LAVERY EXECUTED BY JOHN LAVERY AND DEPICTED ON THE FIRST LEGAL TENDER NOTE ISSUE OF THE IRISH FREE STATE, AS A SYMBOL OF THE NEW IRELAND. THE PORTRAIT WAS DEPICTED IN REVERSE ON THE NEW NOTES.



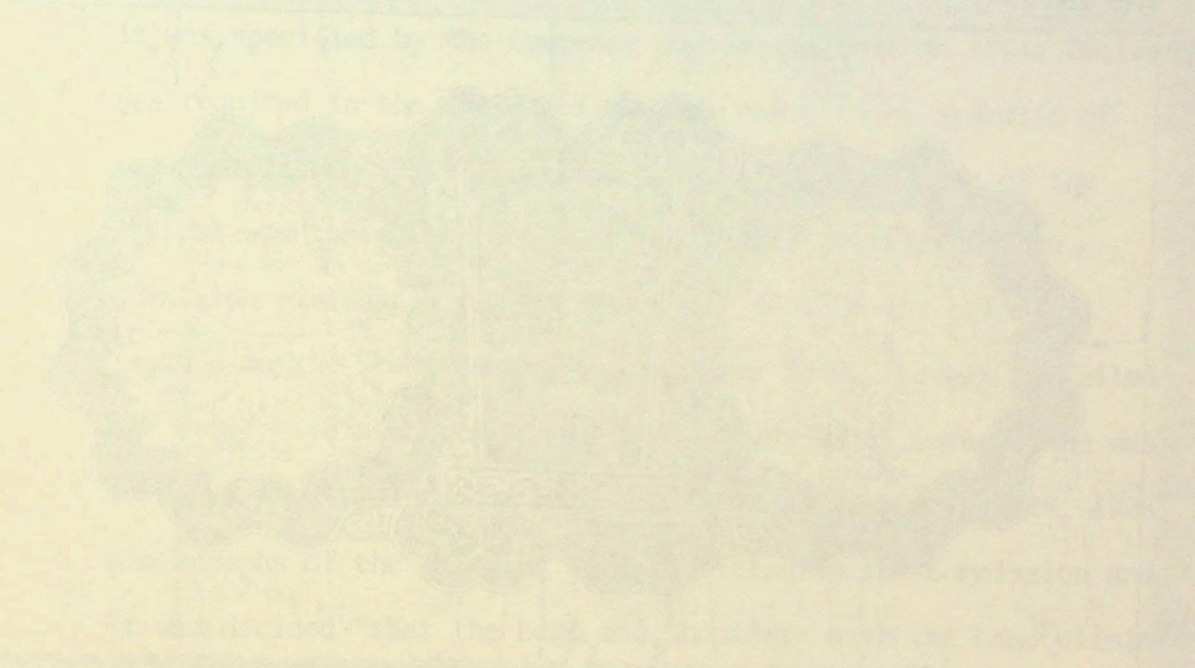
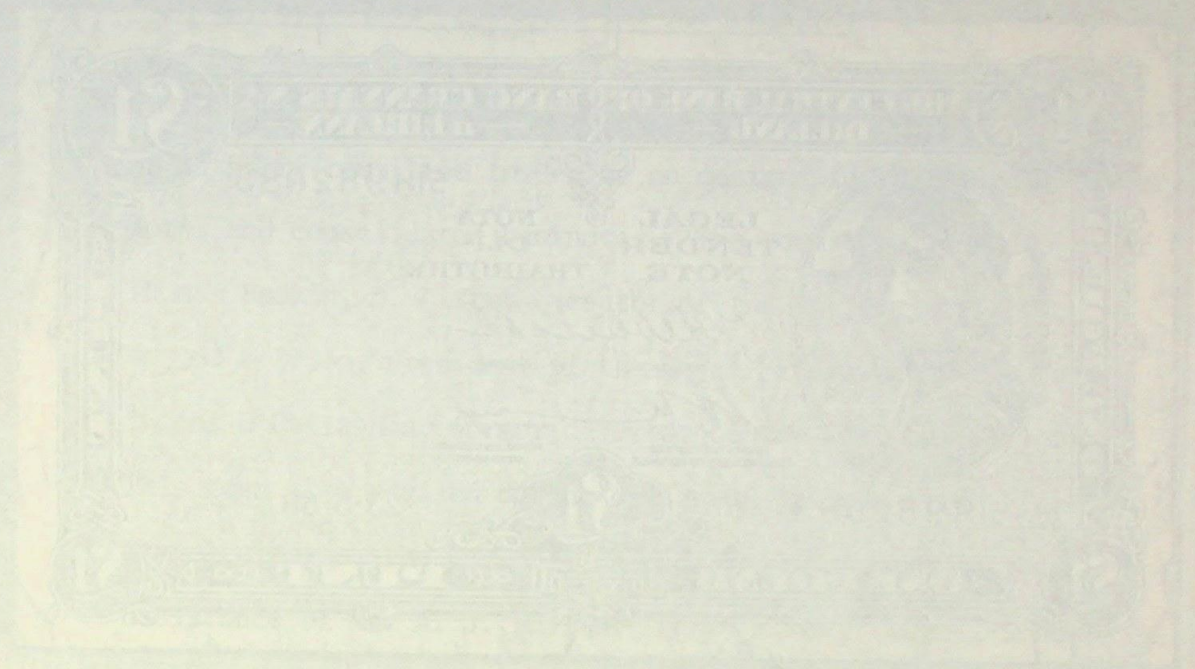
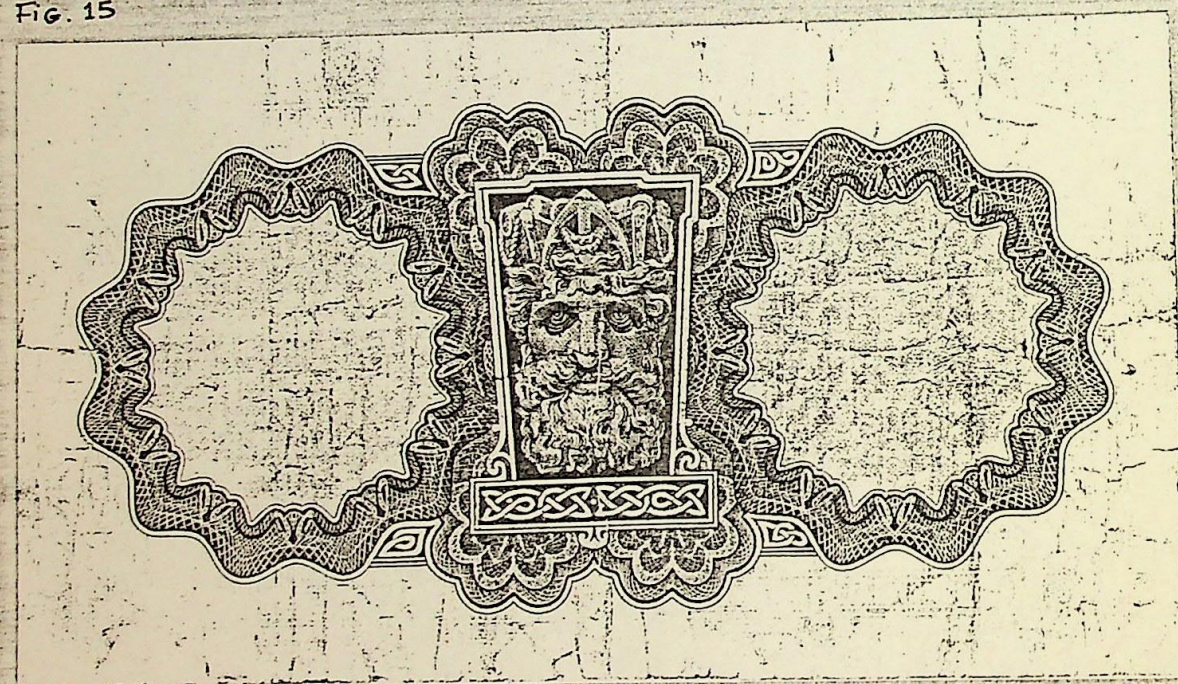




Fig. 14



Fig. 15



(D5) Legal Tender Notes:

Advisory Committee Appointed for New Designs.

One of the first tasks of the Currency Commission was to appoint an advisory committee to decide on designs for both legal tender notes and consolidated banknotes. The committee was made up of Thomas Bodkin, D. Litt., Director of the National Gallery, Dermot O'Brien, President of the Royal Hibernian Academy and Lucius O'Callaghan, former director of the National Gallery. This team also advised on the design of the new Irish Free Stage coinage. The Currency Commission also summoned the assistance of Mr. A. J. Bull of London County Council School of Photo-Engraving for advice on colours and inks.

(D6) New Banknote Design: Front.

It was specified by the Currency Commission that an Irish Colleen, was required in the design of the new note, to be symbolic of the new Irish state. The first step in the execution of the designs was taken when Sir John Lavery was commissioned to paint 'an emblematic female figure',<sup>36</sup> to form the principal feature on the front of the legal tender note. Lavery fulfilled the brief with a portrait of his wife Lady Hazel Lavery, who was to adorn the legal tender note from 1922-1977. On June 18, 1928, photographs of the painting were submitted to the Commission and it was decided 'that the head and shoulders with the hand eliminated should be placed on the notes of the three smaller denominations',<sup>37</sup> while a reproduction of the whole painting would be reproduced on the denominations of £10 and upwards.



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(D7) New Banknote Design: Reverse.

The designs for the reverse of the notes were based on a series of sculpted river masks, executed in the eighteenth century by Edward Smyth for the facade of the Custom House in Dublin.

Smyth sculpted fourteen river masks representing the Atlantic and thirteen Irish rivers. Seven of these were selected to be depicted on the banknotes. They included representations of the rivers Blackwater, Lee, Lagan, Bann, Boyne, Shannon and Erne.

(D8) Inscriptions.

The inscriptions which were to appear on the notes were discussed by the Commission in 1928. The chairman suggested that as well as a reference to the Currency Commission of the Irish Free State, the description 'Legal Tender Note' and the value, in both Irish and English should also bear a redemption clause in both languages, in order to inspire public confidence in the issue. Notes were completely bi-lingual unlike the coinage issued in the same year which bore Irish language inscriptions only.

(D9) New Banknotes: Printing.

Having decided on the main design for the new notes, Waterlow and Sons in England were chosen to print them. Their chief portrait engraver John Harrison was commissioned to engrave the dies. Notes were to be printed in seven denominations including 10/-, £1, £5, £10, £20, £50 and £100. Waterlow and Sons continued to print all the notes until 1959, when the printing of the £1 was taken over by Thomas De La Rue and Co. Ltd.



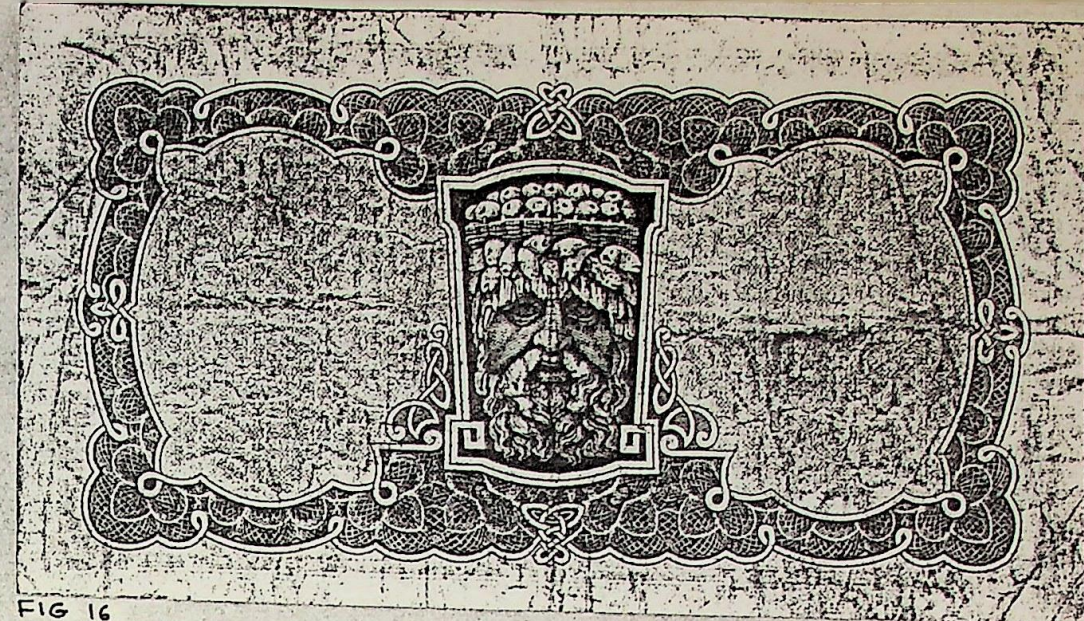
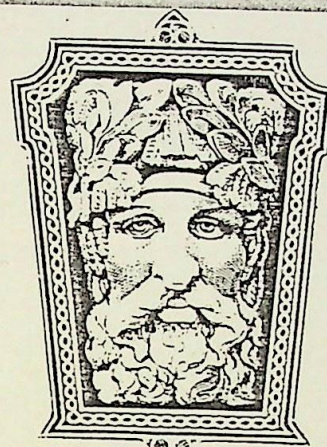
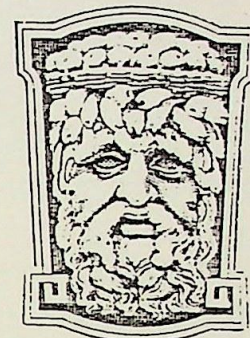


FIG 16



£20 River Boyne



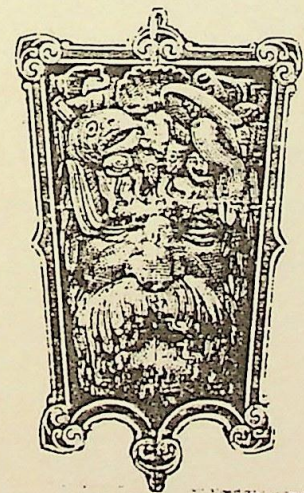
10/- River Blackwater



£1 River Lee

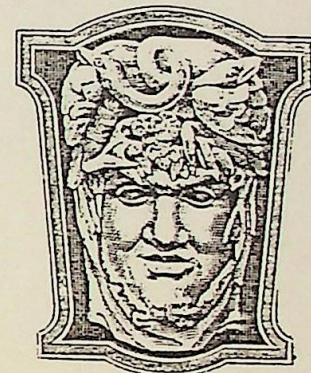


£50 River Shannon



£100 River Erne

FIG. 17



£5 River Lagan



£10 River Bann



Fig. 18

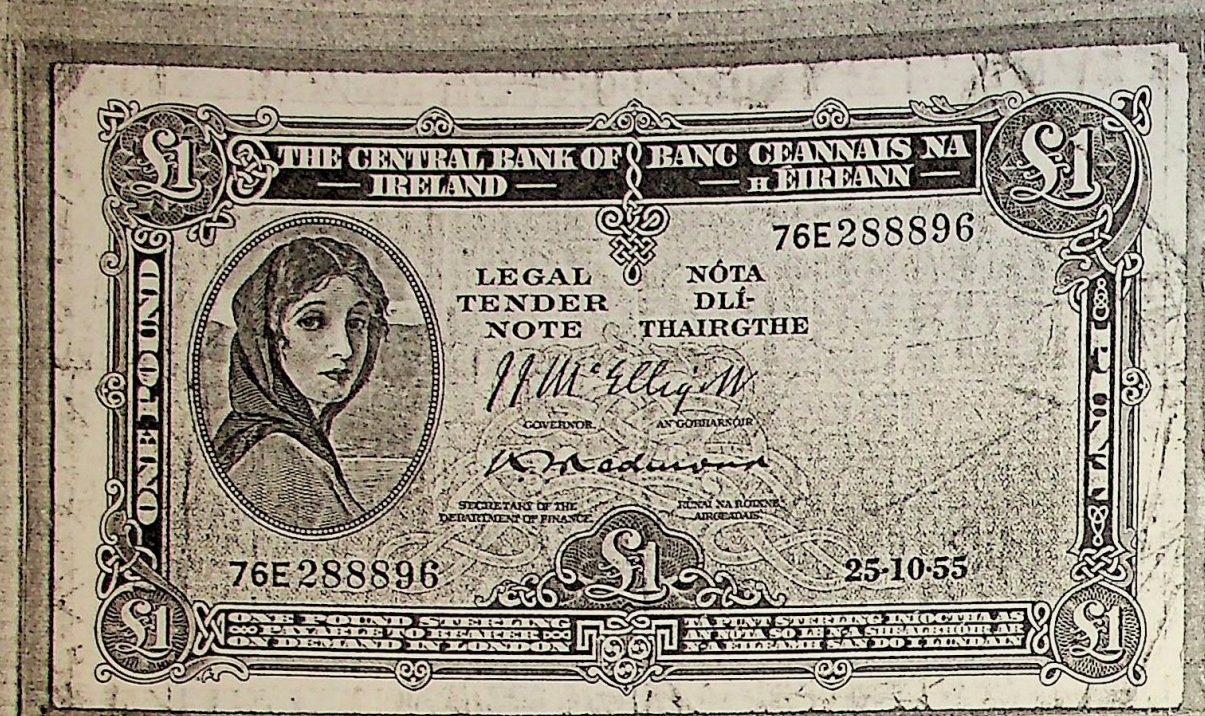
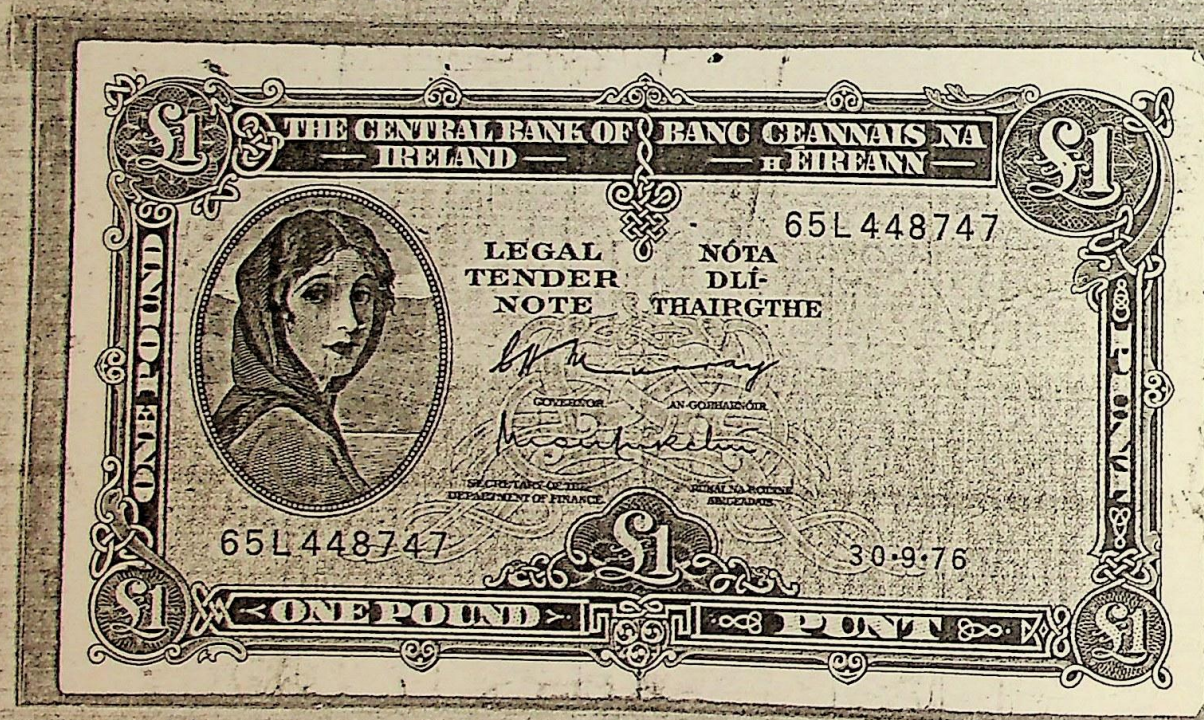


Fig. 19



In 1961, De La Rue took over the printing of all denominations, and Waterlow and Sons disposed of their printing business in that year. In 1968 all Irish note printing was transferred from England to De La Rue's printing branch in Ireland.

The first legal tender notes were printed by intaglio process from engraved steel plates. The details of the design were hand-tooled by highly skilled engravers who carved dots and lines of varying depths into soft pieces of steel with delicate steel cutting instruments called gravers.

In 1975, a modification to the back of the £1 notes came into effect (See Fig. 8) on July 30. All notes issued to the bank as and from that date were lighter in colour and print than the previous notes. Only the £1 note was affected by the modification and it resulted from a change in the printing process at the Central Banks printing works. Before this the notes were intaglio printed front and back. By the new process they were printed on a dry offset perfecter. The front of the notes continued to be printed by the intaglio process while the reverse was printed with ultra-violet ink, which becomes fluorescent under u.v. light, as an additional security precaution.

(D10) EXAMPLE I  
FIRST LEGAL TENDER BANKNOTE OF IRISH FREE STATE.

Contrast between £1 & 10/- Notes.

Fig. and Fig. are both examples of legal tender notes issued by the Currency Commission and The Central Bank of Ireland. The two notes are from the same family, and are similar in design, excepting a few changes in information



1-2

displayed, which occurred through their development.

On the left hand side of both notes Lady Lavery is depicted within an oval frame, while on the right the Head of Erin in profile appears in the watermark. This was taken from a model by Irish sculptor Hogan, which is in the National Museum. In earlier issues additional watermarks included the letters LTN for 'legal tender note' together with the value of the note in symbols and figures.

Changes in signature on the notes was determined by the acting official at the time of issue of the note. The replacement of 'Currency Commission, Irish Free State' with 'The Central Bank of Ireland' occurred with the abolition of the Currency Commission and the introduction of the Central Bank of Ireland as the new note issuing authority. The most significant change was the omission of the phrase which appears at the bottom of the 10/- note, from 1961 onwards. This states 'Payable to Bearer on Demand in London', and was replaced, as is evident in Fig. by the value of the note in words. This phrase had given rise to a number of misunderstandings regarding the Irish currency, which at one time was backed mainly by British securities and sterling. By this time it also had substantial backing from dollar investments and gold. The phrase simply meant that the Irish notes were 'exchangeable for British legal tender at the Central Bank's London Agency which happened to be the Bank of England. The omission of the phrase in no way altered the fact that the notes were still exchangeable with sterling at par value.



Fig. 20



Fig. 21





Another significant development in the first legal tender note issue occurred in October 1974 with the introduction of an additional security measure. This took the form of a metallic strip inserted into the centre of the note, during paper manufacture (See Fig.20 ).

The reverse of both the 10/- note and the £1 note (Fig.15 & 16 ) are similar in design. They both feature a rivermask in the centre surrounded by a decorative engraved border. The rivermask on the 10/- notes represents the River Blackwater, and depicts the head with a head-dress of a basket of apples and a harvest of fish. The £1 note employs a rivermask representing the River Lee. The borders surrounding the masks on the reverse of the notes, differ in shape, but are executed in the same fashion.

FIG.22 £10 RIVER BANN









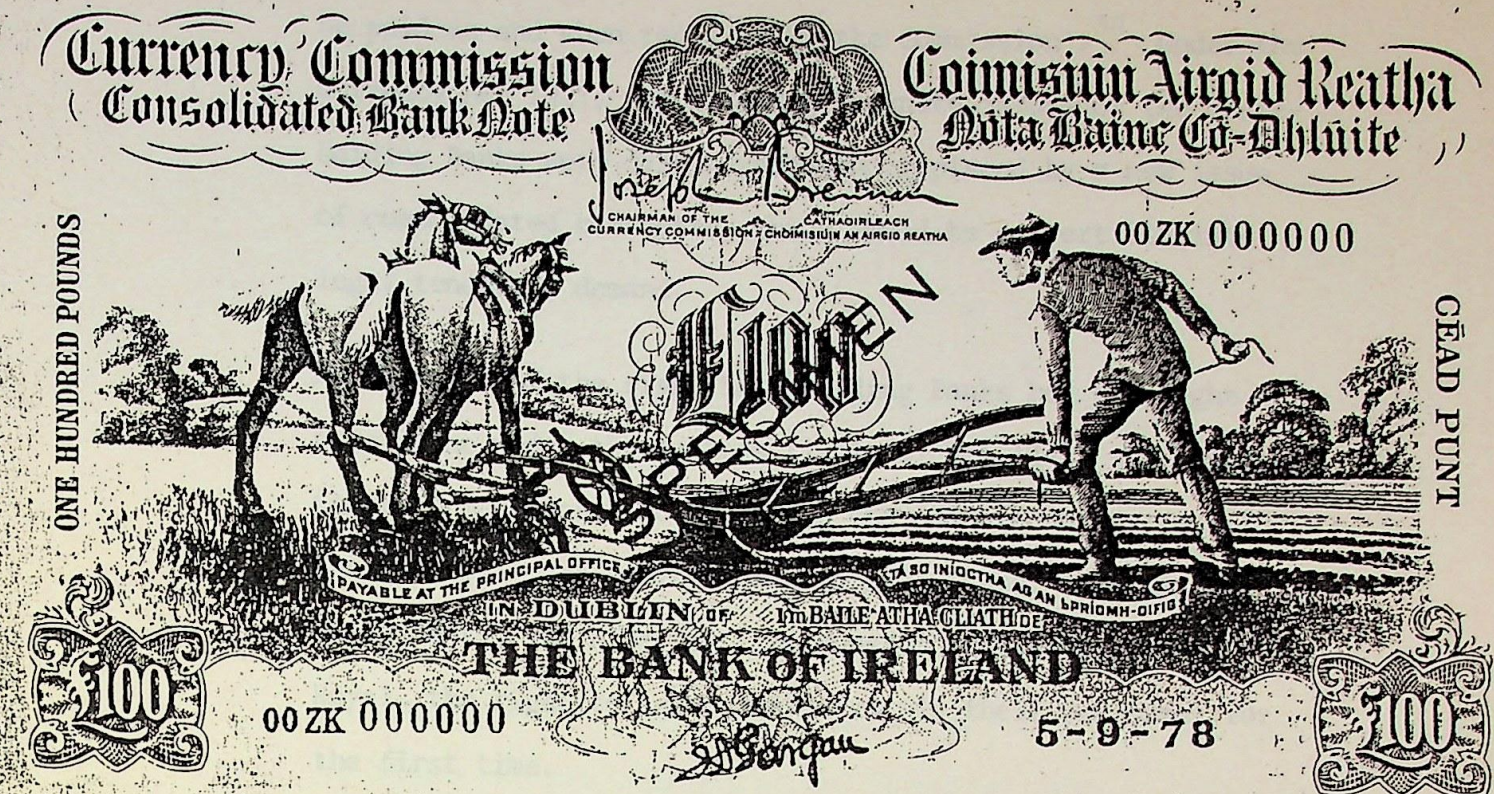


Fig. 23

(E) CONSOLIDATED BANK NOTE ISSUE 1929.

The first series of consolidated banknotes was issued in Ireland between 1929 and 1941, by individual banks through the Currency Commission. These notes, which were similar in size and colour to legal tender notes, circulated simultaneously, but did not include the ten shilling note in the denomination range. Consolidated banknotes, soon became known as 'Ploughman's Notes', because of their design which depicted a ploughman and a team of horses. The notes issued by each of the eight individual banks were of the same design, the only difference being, the name of the issuing bank and the date. Fig 23

(E1) Issuing Banks.

The eight major banking establishments in Ireland were admitted as 'Shareholding Banks' of the Currency Commission upon payment of £1000 and the assumption of liability for a further £4000 to



be paid as and when required by the Commission'.<sup>38</sup> Under the Currency Act 1927, the existing banknote issues of the Shareholding Banks were discontinued and replaced by a new issue of consolidated banknotes, which would be convertible into legal tender on demand.

As only six of the eight Shareholding Banks had the right of note issue under the Bankers (Ireland) Act 1845, the Currency Commission proposed to issue the consolidated notes to all banks carrying on business in the Free State, thus giving three banks, the Hibernia, the Munster and Leinster, and the Royal, the right to issue banknotes, in their own names for the first time.

One of the conditions stipulated by the Currency Commission concerning the right to issue consolidated banknotes was that the banks could not issue or re-issue any other notes. The Currency Commission insisted that these banks withdraw and destroy all notes which were in circulation before May 6, 1929. This was in an effort to curtail the banks previous note issue quota. The allocation of consolidated banknotes to each bank would depend on the "the relative amount of advances and deposits, and capital and reserves reported by each of the banks operating in the Saorstat and modified by the relative number of branches established and maintained by the various banks'.<sup>39</sup>

On May 4, 1929 the banks began to withdraw their own notes from circulation. Two new note issues came into circulation on May 6, 1929, the consolidated banknote in the Irish Free State, and a



new Northern Ireland issue appeared in the area outside the control of the Currency Commission. The Northern Ireland notes were issued by the Provincial Bank of Ireland, the Belfast Banking Company, the National Bank, the Northern Bank, the Bank of Ireland and the Ulster Bank.

In 1934, a Banking Commission was appointed. In 1938, it recommended that a central bank be established to replace the Currency Commission, and that the right of note issue be withdrawn from the commercial banks. 'The consolidated banknote issue should be terminated by triennial contractions over a period of twelve years'.<sup>40</sup> The 'Ploughmans Notes' were terminated in 1934 and were finally withdrawn in 1953, the end of the triennial period. The recommendations of the Banking Commission were incorporated in the Central Bank Act 1942, which 'provided for the liquidation of the Currency Commission and the transferral of its assets and liabilities to a new institution known as the Central Bank of Ireland'.<sup>41</sup> The Central Bank of Ireland replaced the Currency Commission on February 1, 1943. The Central Bank Act, 1942 decreed that it would have the sole right of banknote issue on and after December 31, 1956.



## CONSOLIDATED BANKNOTES.

### Design, Composition & Printing.

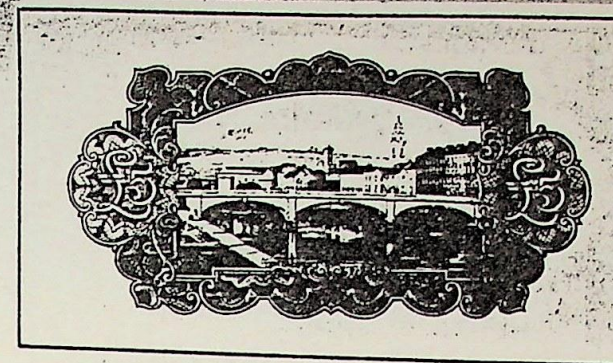
The consolidated banknote issue was designed by Dermot O'Brien, the President of the Royal Hibernian Academy. They were similar in paper and colour to the corresponding legal tender notes, but had a different watermark. This was a five stringed harp in the top left-hand corner of the note with the denomination in figures in the top right-hand corner. The CBN monogram appeared in the bottom left-hand corner, and a shamrock in the bottom right-hand corner.

The basic design of the front of the banknotes was the ploughman with a team of two horses. This was identical for each of the eight issuing banks, the only distinguishing features being the name of the bank and the signatory. The reverse of the notes were all different, bearing the commissioned designs of E.L. Lawrenson. These were almost 'picture postcard' in conception and included: The Custom House, Dublin on the £1, St. Patrick's Bridge, Cork on the £5, The Currency Commission Building, Dublin on the £10, The Rock of Cashel on the £20, Croagh Patrick on the £50 and Killiney Bay, Co. Dublin on the £100.

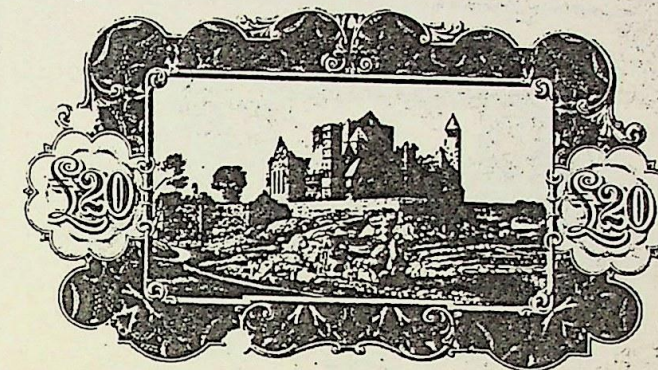
The notes were printed in the same manner as legal tender notes, by De La Rue in England. Mr. Bull of the London County Council School of Photoengraving had been consulted on colour, and inks to be used, as he had also been with the legal tender notes.



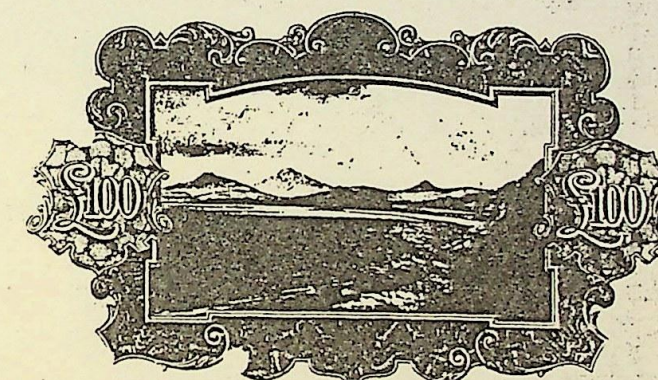
Fig. 24



*St. Patrick's Bridge, Cork, on the £5 reverse.*



*The Rock of Cashel on the £20 reverse.*

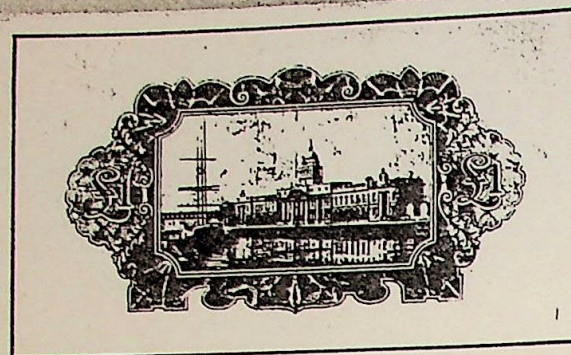


*Killiney Bay, Co. Dublin, on the £100 reverse.*

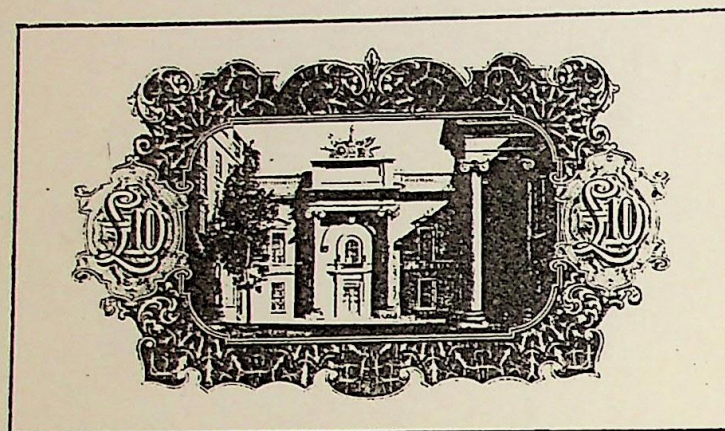
THE DESIGNS WHICH APPEARED ON THE REVERSE  
OF CONSOLIDATED BANKNOTES.



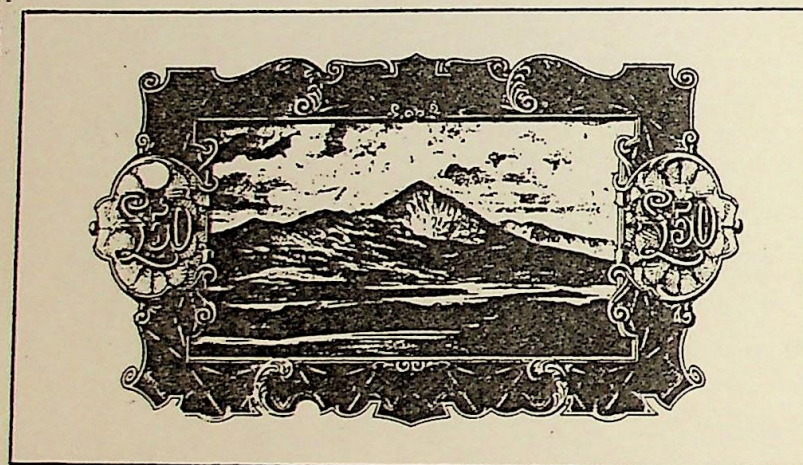
FIG. 25



*The Custom House, Dublin, on the £1 reverse.*



*The Currency Commission Building on the £10 reverse.*



*Croagh Patrick on the £50 reverse.*

THE DESIGNS WHICH APPEARED ON THE  
REVERSE OF CONSOLIDATED BANKNOTES.

IRISH FREE STATE LEGAL TENDER NOTES 1975

IRISH FREE STATE LEGAL TENDER NOTES 1975

In December 1971, the Central Bank of Ireland announced that it proposed to seek the sanction of the Minister for Finance to introduce a new series of legal tender notes. The announcement stated that 'The new designs would be both outstanding examples of graphic design and have a genuinely Irish motif'.<sup>42</sup> When Ministerial sanction was granted in August 1972, the Central Bank announced that the new and redesigned legal tender notes would be in circulation by 1973.





(F) IRISH FREE STATE LEGAL TENDER ISSUE 1975.

In December 1971, the Central Bank of Ireland announced that it proposed to seek the sanction of the Minister for Finance to introduce a new series of legal tender notes. The announcement stated that 'The new designs would be both outstanding examples of graphic design and have a specifically Irish motif'.<sup>42</sup> When Ministerial sanction was granted in August 1972, the Central Bank announced that 'smaller and redesigned legal tender notes' would be in circulation by 1975.



The reasons given for the change in note design, was that the current banknote issue lacked certain security features employed in modern currency. In addition, the new notes, - which would bear different portraits and have a theme running through the series, - would be a more accurate reflection of modern Ireland. Another factor to consider was the size of the note, which would be smaller than the previous issue and therefore would be more economically produced.

By early 1973, the Bank had received a "satisfactory response" to their invitation to design the new notes. The design team which was selected on a competitive basis was called Servicon Planning and Design. The new designs were based on various aspects of Irish learning and influence between the seventh and eleventh centuries. The first new legal tender note, which was the £5 note, entered circulation on November 1, 1976. The remainder of the series followed at one and two year intervals. The £100 note is presently being redesigned. The reason for the gradual introduction of the new notes was in an effort to familiarise the public with each note separately, avoiding confusion. Security measures also prompted this introduction as counterfeits could circulate undetected by the public if an array of new designs were circulated simultaneously.

(F1) DESIGN FOR NEW SERIES OF LEGAL TENDER NOTES 1971.

Having received the sanction of the Minister for Finance in 1971, on the introduction of the new series of banknotes the Central Bank of Ireland declared the design of the new notes open to competition. Qualifications and suitability of designers and artists determined eligibility. The appointed designer or designers would be required to 'carry out preliminary research, engage in consultations with



experts in other disciplines, and following the production of finished designs, supervise engraving, plate-making and printing'.<sup>43</sup> Three teams were shortlisted to compete for the commission and included:

Raymond Kyne (Kyne & Murphy),  
Kilkenny Design Workshops,  
Servicon Planning and Design.

(F2) Competition for the Commission of New Notes.

The three teams were taken on a tour of four sophisticated European security printing firms, in Copenhagen, Vienna, England and Milan. This was, to assist the designers in the specialised area of bank-note design, giving them an understanding of the methods and limitations of printing banknotes and the opportunities available. According to Patrick Hickey, a member of the design team of the present banknote issue 'it is not enough to produce a pretty picture and hand it to the printers. It is likely to be impossible to execute or easy to forge'.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, a knowledge of banknote printing is of the utmost importance to the designers, in the production of finished visuals. The new banknotes should employ high sophisticated printing and design techniques, in order to combat forgery and yet be pleasing to the public eye. The notes should also be as familiar as possible to the general public, displaying a visual unity within the series, facilitating memorizing of the currency and each denomination in particular, therefore making it difficult for forgers.



(F3) Servicon Planning & Design - Designers of New Notes.

The team chosen in the final analysis as the winners of the commission to design the new banknotes was Servicon Planning and Design. Each team had submitted finished visuals of the notes, and the Servicon team designs were deemed the most suitable. The winning team had been formed in 1969, to provide a design service to the construction industry; It included:

Michael Biggs, Typographer

Patrick Hickey, Painter/Designer

Brian Hogan, Architect

Richard Hurley, Architect, and

Sean Mulcahy, Engineer.

(F4) New Designs in conjunction with Central Bank Printing Facilities.

Prior to the Servicon team being chosen the Central Bank printing workshops in Sandymount had just invested in new and advanced equipment and machinery. The team was asked to design the new notes, so that through the printing these machines would be used to their best advantage, employing the most skillful techniques resulting in the highest quality possible. It was felt that the ability of the machinery should be exploited, in order to produce the most advanced and sophisticated notes, so that it would be impossible for counterfeits to circulate undetected.

(F5) Design of New Notes - Research.

There were no guide lines supplied by the Central Bank as to the new designs of the banknotes. It was up to the Servicon team to decide



what elements should dominate the note and what form the design should take. The notes could be basically similar, a series, or all different. The only stipulation was that the design should satisfy both security and technical requirements. According to Roger Pfund, a reputed Swiss conceptualiser and creator of banknotes; in the design of a banknote 'there is a need for technical procedures, artistic creativity and cultural and security precautions to be brought together to fulfill the needs of fiduciary circulation'.<sup>45</sup>

The Servicon team did much research in the area of banknote design, examining the notes of other countries. It was found that certain features dominated and certain styles emerged in the banknotes of the West. The majority of nations had opted for a portrait, usually a famous individual who at one time or another had played an important role in the history of the respective country.

#### (F6) Portrait.

One of the first decisions of the Servicon Planning and Design team was to use a portrait as the major design constituent of the new notes. The portrait was chosen as a security measure as it is difficult to forge. The lines in the engraving need to be identical to the original, as any thickening or variation will change the expression, causing public awareness of the counterfeit and alerting the bank tellers. With a picture, or a building, a slight difference would not be as obvious as an expression of which everybody is most familiar.

Having decided on a portrait the next choice to be made was the figure to be used. The previous issue of notes had incorporated a single



mythical figure, that of Lady Lavery who represented Ireland. According to Patrick Hickey, 'in the interests of change, perhaps and also in the consciousness that there are towering figures who are the sons and daughters of Ireland, it was decided, to have six, one for each note'.

After much consideration, Ireland's contribution to the culture of the world was chosen to be depicted on the notes, in the form of portraits. Irish periods of cultural attainment could be divided into six categories, which proved convenient as there were six note denominations to be redesigned. For the portraits, a protagonist of each era was selected to portray the happenings in Ireland during each particular period of time. Concluding consultation it was decided to open the new note series with a portrait of a woman, followed by four men, and another portrait of a woman would close the series.

For the first note which was the £1, Medb, Queen of Connaught and heroine of the Tain, the earliest Irish manuscript, was chosen to exemplify the age of prehistory; the age of myth and lore. It was thought, by the designers that as this was a portrait of a woman it could also be thought to represent all Ireland. John Scotus Erigena, a foremost philosopher of his day was chosen to be depicted on the £5 note. This choice was prompted by the need of a figure of universal relevance for the early christian era. It was decided that Dean Swift should feature on the £10 note, reflecting the learning of the eighteenth century. William Butler Yeats appeared

Fig 26

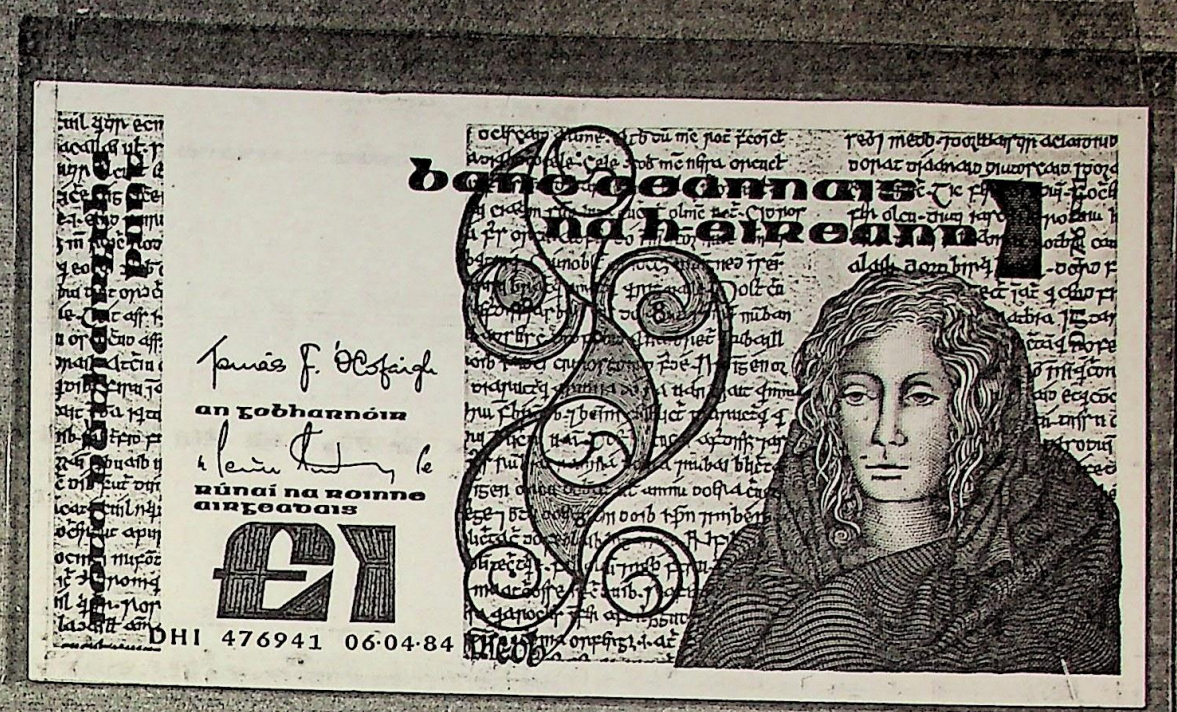


Fig 27





FIG 28



FIG 29

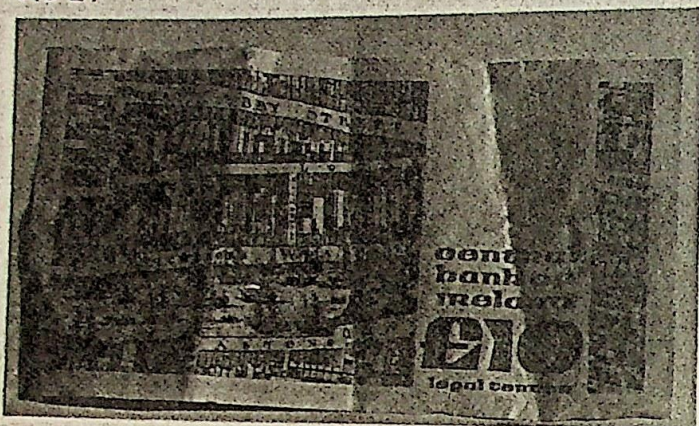


FIG 30



SCRAPBOOK FOR DESIGN OF £10 NOTE

on the £20, which was symbolic of literary Ireland. Turlough O'Carolan, the blind harpist and composer represent Ireland's musical heritage on the £50 note. The £100 pound note is presently being redesigned.

(F7) Emerging Design of New Notes.

Having selected the portraits for each note the design which began to emerge required that each should be accompanied by a symbol. This symbol should be associated with the particular era it was chosen to reflect, and should be identifiable with the character in the portrait. A substitute was also needed for the background curlicues of the previous note issue.

(F8) Ten Pound Note.

A fine seal of the city of Dublin, from the Royal Hibernian Academy was chosen to accompany Swift on the £10 note. Swift appears beside his woodcut City Seal and the background incorporates a letter in Swift's own hand. The reverse side of the note features a detail from John Rocques' Famous Map of Dublin. All the design elements of the £10 note are inter-related and reflect the learning and architecture of the eighteenth century.



1-2

(F9) Five Pound Note.

The five pound note, depicting John Scotus Erigena, was enhanced by the inclusion of an illuminated form of the initial letter A of Psalm 17 from the Psalter of Ricemarcus. The background was a script extract from the Book of Durrow. The back of the note is dominated by an adaptation of animal and script extracts from the Book of Kells. All three manuscripts are in the library of Trinity College. The design of the £5 note is based on various aspects of Irish learning and influence between the seventh and eleventh centuries.

(F10) One Pound Note.

A problem had arisen concerning the accompanying symbol and the two dimensional background for the £1 note. Very little two dimensional material had survived from the time of Medb, apart from the Tain. This recounted her adventures and was the first manuscript in Irish. A section of a page from it was used on the back of the note, while a smaller version of print appeared behind her on the front. The symbol beside Medb was an early Irish geometric design, based on a design found on bone slips dating from the last centuries B.C. and on display in the National Museum, Patrick Hickey, in his article 'Punt Art', states that this symbol was 'probably a decorative pattern which predates the great decorations of the Early Christian books by seven centuries, and fascinatingly suggests an unbroken and developing tradition, culminating in the type of script used on the £5'.

(F11) Twenty Pound Note.

The portrait of William Butler Yeats, on the £20 note occurred together with a motif based on the Abbey Theatre symbol of the legendary hero Cuchulainn, and designed by Elinor Monsell. This is set against a





Fig. 33

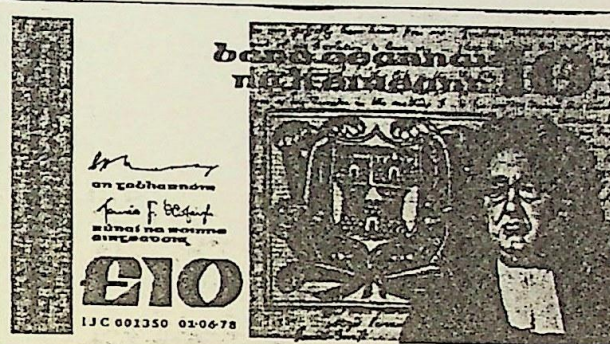
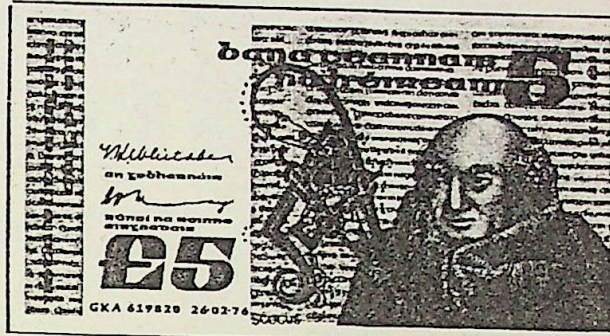
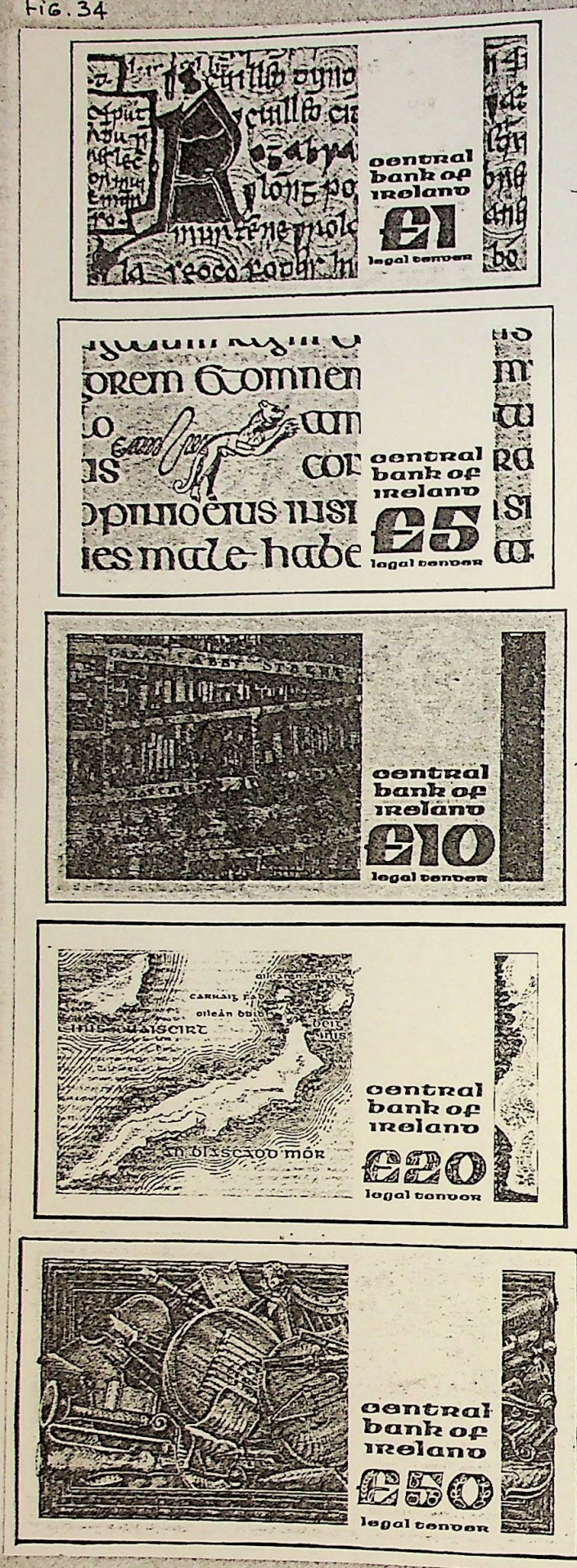




Fig. 34



background of an excerpt of Yeats Deidre manuscript. The design on the back of the note sets a group of the Blasket Islands, off the coast of Kerry, against the background of an excerpt from an early edition of Tomas O'Críomhthain's classic *An tOileanach*.

(F12) Fifty Pound Note.

Reflecting Ireland's musical heritage, Turlough O'Carolan is surrounded by details from a painting by Timbrell, set against the background of excerpts from the music of Carolan and Field, and an excerpt from Bunting's collection. The design on the back of the note is based on the wood carving in the organ loft of St. Michan's Church, Dublin.

(F13) Typographical Information.

It was necessary to include a certain amount of information on the new notes. This included the name of the issuing authority which is the Central Bank of Ireland, and was to appear in both Irish and English. At an advanced stage in the design of the banknotes, the design team had not been informed of the necessity to include the name of the bank in Irish as well as English. It was then decided to include the Irish version on the front of the note, while the English version was inserted in the information panel on the reverse. The signatures of the Governor and the Secretary of the Department of Finance must also feature on the note, together with two serial numbers, the date and the denomination. The denomination appears three times in figures on the note, twice on the front and once on the back. It appears once in words and is in the Irish language along the left side of the note. The words 'Nota Duthairgthe' meaning legal tender appear above the denomination. The words 'legal tender' are in the information panel on the reverse.



The names of the characters whose portraits are depicted on the notes are handwritten in a script type style by Patrick Hickey.

In contrast to earlier Irish banknote issues (See Fig. ) the amount of typographical information on our present day notes has been reduced considerably. Type size has also been reduced. Even though the type is smaller and less dominant, its essential role as an informational vehicle is fulfilled. When comparing early notes with our modern day issue it is evident that there has been a role reversal in the emphasis placed upon the importance of data, and imagery. The main area of the early Bank of Ireland notes was occupied by type stating that the Bank promised to 'pay the bearer on demand' a certain amount of money. At this time banknotes were relatively new and it was essential that the note explained itself clearly, carrying enough information to make the bearer aware of its function. With the passing of time banknotes became a common means of exchange and it was no longer necessary to include all the information carried on early notes. This was refined to include the essential requirements of the legal document. Imagery now began to play the dominant role, for reasons of security. A finely scripted type would be far easier to forge than a complex line engraving, as depicted in any of the banknote examples shown, from the earliest to the modern day issue. Through an examination of banknotes from the earliest to the present day, it is possible to monitor the gradual takeover of the image from the type. This is one of the essential differences between early Irish banknotes and the modern issue and displays the evolution and development of our notes to-day.

(F14) Typeface.

The typeface for the new legal tender note issue was designed by Michael Biggs, the typographer on the team. The team felt that the typeface should be original and unavailable commercially as this would facilitate



Fig. 35

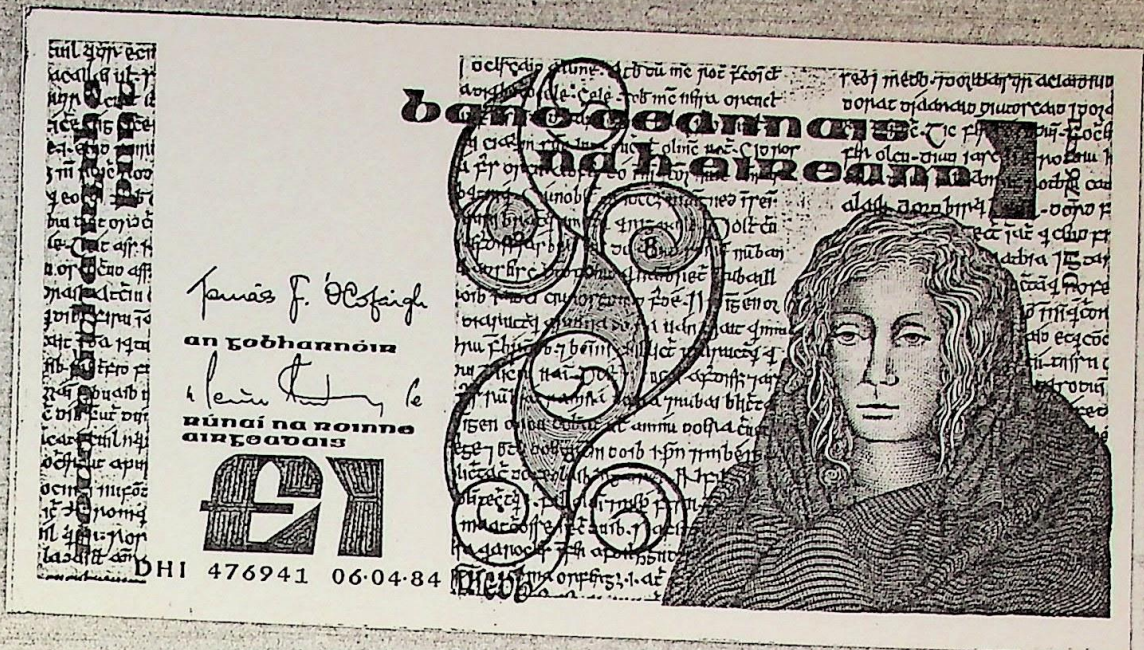


Fig. 36



Fig. 37

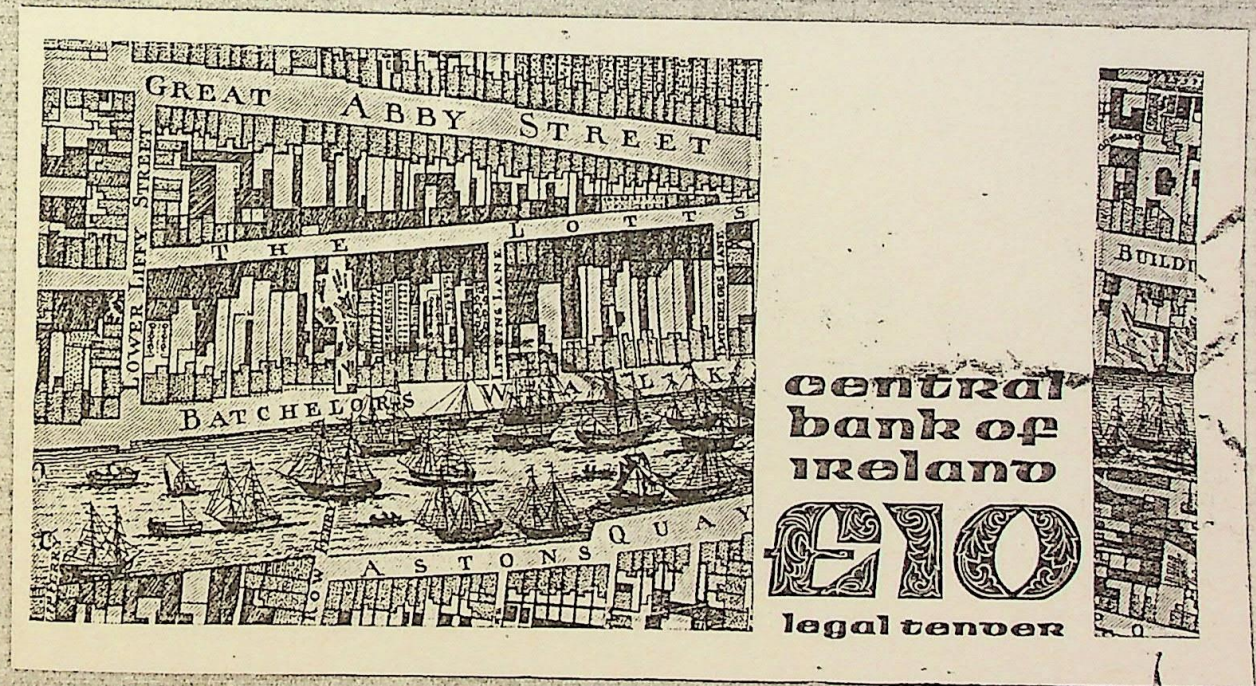






Fig. 39



Fig. 40



forgery. This is in contract to certain note issues of other countries, who employ standard typefaces on their notes. All the typographical information apart from the signatures and serial numbers are carried out in this rather bold sans serif type, with a somewhat gaelic 'feel to it'.

Within the number specifying the denomination on each note, there is an individual design pertaining to the theme and time period of each particular note and executed by Patrick Hickey. This pattern fulfills a printing specification which required that areas of flat colour were to be kept to a minimum. The pattern breaks up these areas of colour facilitating this need. It also acts as another security device, making use of meticulous lines and intricate details. These patterns make an interesting investigation. On the £20 note the numerical denomination on the front is enhanced by an Art Nouveau design while on the reverse it appears as a viewfinder into the deep sea where shoals of fish are seen swimming by. The numeral on the £10 note is decorated with a design taken from a medieval lock. The same design occurs on the reverse, but is inverted. On the £5 note, the main theme of the note is echoed in the inclusion of dogs and rabbits of celtic design. The reverse is illustrated by a selection of animals differing from those on the front. A maze constitutes the pattern found on the £1 numeral denomination, on both the reverse and obverse.

#### (F15) Finished Visuals.

The finished visuals employing all the design elements of the finished notes were produced by Patrick Hickey. Primarily he painted the portraits for each note, and executed the designs four times larger than the size of the finished note. These were then sent to the printer where they



were copied very meticulously by a specialist. The copy was the same size as the note and appeared in painted form as the note should appear when finished. At this point in the design and production of a note, according to Patrick Hickey, it is the specialist painter who has the most difficult job. He must be highly skilled in this specialised area as the engraver will copy exactly his rendering of the original design. The painting must be precisely in accordance with the designers visual, so that the engraver will be able to carry out a successful job. When completed the painting was given to the engraver.

(F16) Platemaking & Printing.

The next stage in the development of the new designs was the plate making. The plates for the first three notes were made in Vienna. They proved to be of very high quality and were very satisfactory in printing. The last two plates were produced in England as Vienna could not undertake the production due to a heavy workload. Printing soon got under way. Notes were printed in sheets of 24 (4 X 6) for the smaller denominations and 15 (3 X 5) for the larger. The first stage in production was the unprinted, watermarked paper. The three methods of printing, lithography, letterpress, and intaglio or deep print, were employed in the execution of the notes. The note goes through the litho process first, followed by intaglio and then letterpress. There are a few different printings with each method depending on the colours used. Lithography and intaglio are the means of printing the image and main areas while letterpress is responsible for the serial numbers and the date.

(F17) Inks.

The inks used in the production of our present day notes are specially made by a company in Italy called Sigpar. They must undergo many tests before being rendered suitable for banknote printing. They must be



surface free, waterproof and crackproof. Some of the inks used act as a security device, in that they show up as fluorescent colour when subjected to ultraviolet light.

The colour and quality of inks used in banknotes to-day are far removed from those used on our first notes. Who would have thought, in 1783 that a security device in the form of a fluorescent ingredient could be introduced into the ink. It is worth noting that security devices employed in 1783 were quite advanced for their day and such a feature as that described in the ink of to-day would have had no place in a more primitive society.

#### (F18) Size.

The reduction in size of the new issue of notes was as a result of a request from the Central Bank. This was primarily for economy reasons, utilising less paper, and reducing the print area, therefore cutting costs. Smaller notes would also facilitate handling and would be more suitable for a wallet.

Early note issues were much larger than those in use to-day. This was due to the fact that people were quite unfamiliar with pieces of paper to which so much value was attached, in their everyday tradings. These notes needed to be of a substantial size, resembling a legal document or important paper. Small sizes could not have accommodated the many endorsements which had to appear on early notes. The amount of typographical material to be included on the note, also demanded a large area of paper. The note needed to be big enough to attract attention and familiarise the bearer with the real value of the note.



(F20) Paper.

The paper used in the present issue of Irish banknotes is a mixture of cotton and linen rags, together with certain other ingredients. It is made from a secret recipe and is unobtainable on the market. After special treatment the resulting paper is highly durable and has a special "feel" characteristic of banknotes. The strength of the paper is tested under controlled atmospheric conditions to ensure its capacity to withstand the pressures of printing machinery and to meet the rigours of use in circulation. Cylinder mould machines are used to ensure the greatest evenness in strength of the paper and to give the clearest watermark reproduction. The use of a watermark is the main feature by which genuine banknote paper is recognised.

(F21) Watermark.

The watermark present in our modern legal tender notes is of a portrait of Lady Lavery. As her face graced our first legal tender note issue for nearly fifty years, it seems fitting that she should be chosen for the watermark design. Perhaps, she exists on the new issue as a ghost of her former self, connecting the new design with those of old. The watermark acts as a security precaution and is produced during the manufacture of the paper. The concentration of the fibres in the paper are altered, the dark parts of the watermark having a heavier concentration of fibres than lighter parts. 'The mark is either continuous with the figure being reproduced in panels running the entire depth of the sheet or is registered to a certain position on each note'. Normally a section of the banknote is reserved for the watermark during the design stage. This area may be lightly over-printed or left blank. The watermark becomes visible when held up to the light.



## (F22) Security.

The design of a banknote is influenced greatly by the security printing required. It is essential that all notes should have both distinctive security devices and distinctive features of design, of which the general public is aware. The highest degree of security is achieved through the combination of design, inks, colours, paper, watermarks and threads. Our modern day note issue employs the latest in security printing, incorporating all the features mentioned above.



## CONCLUSION



### THE DESIGN QUESTION

Having analysed banknote issues in Ireland from earliest times to the present day, and having achieved an understanding of the factors which contributed to their development it is now possible to perceive the evolution of their design. The major factor which influenced their design through over two hundred years of their existence was security. Security governed the certain design elements which were to appear on the note, in an effort to overcome the problem of forgery. In our modern day note design an effort is made to satisfy both security and design requirements, but, security is of primary importance. Certain conclusions may now be delineated arising from the examination of the design elements employed for security reasons, and judging the banknotes as design entities in themselves.

### TYPOGRAPHY & IMAGERY

One of the major changes which occurred in the design of Irish banknotes is the role reversal of typographical information and imagery. Early banknotes employed typography as their dominant design element. As time progressed the engraved image appeared, and gradually began to assume superiority over typography as is displayed in our present day notes. This development was realised through improved security precautions, as simple typography would facilitate forgery, in comparison to a complex engraving which would cause difficulty in this sphere. Even though typographical information has been reduced to the minimum necessary, the banknotes still include sufficient information. This displays a modification and refinement in design composition, discovered through the circulation of the notes and



dictated by the requirements of an everchanging society.

### IMAGERY

Many varying images have occurred on Irish banknotes throughout their development. All images which appeared have one striking feature in common with other banknotes of the Western world. They largely contain references only from the past. Contemporary economic or technological events or achievements are never represented. This is emphasised by the fact that the designers of our present issue of banknotes wished to represent Irish drama, on the new £50 note, with a portrait of Siobhan McKenna. Their request was refused by the Central Bank. According to Patrick Hickey, the portrait of Siobhan McKenna, a striking character in Irish drama, would have been an ideal subject for the note. Could it have that the Central Bank were apprehensive of breaking with tradition and depicting a living person on the Irish banknotes. (Even though Lady Lavery's portrait was portrayed on Irish notes during her life, it was not representative of her, but rather of an Irish colleen.) Or perhaps, the portrayal of a woman from contemporary Irish life would cause friction amongst other prominent public figures. In general, banknote portrait designs throughout the world are dominated by male figures. Portraits of women have appeared but only in an allegorical setting. Our present issue of notes does not conform to this way of thinking, as the age of prehistory, of myth and lore is exemplified by Queen Medb on the £1 note. The £100 note will also depict a female portrait.



Irish notes throughout their history have employed many representative symbols in their imagery. This is evident in all notes, from the earliest to the present day. In early days when notes were less common, with many circulating issues from the private banks, the early Bank of Ireland notes established a certain authority by employing the Bank Seal. Alternative 'power' symbols included the use of Hibernia as a representation of Ireland. This type of nationalist representation has appeared in all Irish bank note issues. With the birth of the Irish Free State legal tender notes in 1927, the new issue employed the portrait of an Irish colleen, who happened to be Lady Lavery, and was symbolic of the new Irish Free State. In our present note issue Lady Lavery still exists in the form of the watermark.

A significant change has occurred in the imagery employed on our modern day Irish banknotes. The purpose of the previous issue was to make a statement concerning the Irish Free State. Earlier banknote issues strived, by use of their imagery to inspire public confidence in their issues. The private banknotes depicting engravings of their line of business, while the Bank of Ireland used Hibernia and the Bank Seal. Now that people are very familiar with banknotes in everyday use, and the Irish Free State currency is well and truly established, it is possible to introduce a new form of imagery to the banknotes. The varying images on the present issue have been employed to tell a story, rather than simply make a statement, concerning Ireland's contribution to the culture of the world.



The design elements included, inspire fascinating investigation, and are amongst the most interesting in European banknote designs.

It is interesting to note that the elements included with the portraits in the composition of the notes are of two dimensional. This feature separates the Irish issue in terms of originality from many European notes which employ three dimensional objects. According to Patrick Hickey, on banknote design it is more favourable to use a two dimensional object in its own right, rather than a three dimensional object drawn in greater or less perspective.

The examination and investigation of Irish banknotes through the years is a fascinating study. One not only gains a knowledge of the history and design of the notes but through these one learns much about life in Ireland at their time of issue. Each note constitutes a testimony to the sophistication of advanced technology and printing of the day, in an effort to combat forgery. As Martin Monestier poses the question, 'Will paper money under pressure from other modern means of payment disappear' to be replaced by plastic money in the form of cheques and credit cards. With inflation increasing at its present rate causing the introduction of a £1 coin in England, there is no telling what may happen to our banknotes in future years. Let us hope that these amazing works of graphic design which have passed through the fingers of many an Irish man, will exist for many years to come.



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