

National College of Art & Design

Department of Communication Design

*'The Role of Design in the Revival of the Irish
Language'*

Eimear O'Keane

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Chapter 1

“For centuries, Ireland had suffered under the might of the British empire... the native Gaelic language was banned in schools and close to extinction... But a few key organisations helped Irish people begin to recognise the fact that their island was not a mere backwater colony of the British Empire, but a vibrant locale teeming with ancient art and folklore, its own stories and mythology, and a beautiful Gaelic language holding even more secrets to its past. (Geraghty, A., 2020)

The focus of this research is to explore the role Design played in the effort to revive the Irish language throughout Irish history. Through an analysis of books, archives, articles and podcasts, examples of visual communications that evidence the successful methods employed to restore the native tongue of the Irish people. For the purpose of this research, Chapter One will briefly focus on the broad background of what caused the Irish language to decline and why there was a need for an Irish language revival. Chapter two will discuss publications printed in Irish and how they were key aspects in keeping the Irish language alive. Chapter three will examine Irish typography and its significance to Ireland's national identity. Chapter four will explore *Aire Poist agus Telegrafa* which was responsible for the development of Irish postage stamps and coinage. Finally, the last chapter will look into contemporary uses of the Irish language in design and explore the language's place in design today.

Irish people refer to their native tongue as *Irish*. It is the Gaelic language of the Celtic language family and is one of the world's oldest written languages, believed to be

2,500 years old (Údarás na Gaeltachta, [No date]). Irish is a complex language with many layers to each word; it is not as straightforward as English. *“Every word has layers of wisdom and insight encoded in it that allow us to delve deeper into the psyche and landscape of this island”* (Magan, M., 2020). From this example, it is evident that Irish is a rich, poetic language that is dense with imagery embedded in its words.

Irish was once Ireland's first language but began to decline for several reasons: colonisation and the Famine being the most significant reasons. Ireland was subject to colonisation by the British for centuries, and during this reign, the British aimed to wipe out the entirety of Irish culture and identity. These actions were to weaken Ireland as a whole (Maurice Franks-Topic, 2015).-

“For centuries, Ireland had suffered under the might of the British empire, resulting in an erosion of local cultures and communities. The native Gaelic language was banned in schools and close to extinction” (Geraghty, A., 2020)

From 1660-1782, Penal Laws established that there were several things Irish people could not do. These laws were to *“extinguish their sinister traditions and customs”* (Ó Ruairc, P Ó., 2018). One of the laws was specific to the erasure of the Irish language. *“Sinister traditions and customs”* referred to the use of the Irish language being viewed as a rebellion against the powers of Britain. Speaking Irish and being educated was suddenly against the law, meanwhile people's Gaelic names and place names were Anglicised. For example, the name Pádraig Ó Catháin was anglicised to Patrick Keane, and the place name 'Cluain Meala', meaning *The Meadow of Honey*, was changed to 'Clonmel'. The suppression of education led to

secret schools being set up illegally in 1695. They were called Hedge Schools and there, people would meet in hedges, fields, and barns to receive an education (Dowling, P.J., 1997).

When the penal laws ceased, in an effort to further this language erasure the British colonial power established a national education system in 1831 so that young Irish people would be taught solely through English, even if they could not speak it. In the article *‘Review: Language Decline in Ireland’* by Máiréad Nic Craith, Nic Craith states that,- *“emphasis on the English language was designed to establish homogeneity and commonality within the British Empire as a whole and to lessen ‘regional’ differences.”* Nic Craith goes on to say,-

“in any colonisation process, the role of formal education has been regarded as crucial in the construction of a print community in the language of the coloniser” (Nic Craith, M., 2007).

The Irish Parliament passed the Administration of Justice Act (Ireland) in 1737. This Act forbade the speaking of Irish in the courtroom and prohibited the completion of legal documentation in Irish. A notorious example of this Act in use was in 1882. Eight Irish speaking monoglots were tried for a murder they did not commit and they could not defend themselves in court as they did not know how to say “not guilty”, (Waldron, J., 1992). That day, Maolra Sheoighe was one of the men sentenced to death in a complete miscarriage of justice. In 2018, Sheoighe was pardoned for his crimes by President of Ireland Michael D. Higgins, 130 years later (The Irish Times, 2018). Seoighe’s trial took place a generation after the Famine. Before the Famine,

the level of spoken Irish stood at about 40% and rapidly declined after that (Waldron, J., 1992).

The Great Famine, or *The Great Hunger* of the 1840s as it was also known, took over one million Irish people's lives and led to more than two million emigrating mainly to England and America. The cause of The Famine was the potato crop failing due to blight, while the British exported the surplus of Irish grown food that could have fed the population (Mulvihill, J., 2017).

"...seismic social and demographic effects of the 1840s Famine had combined to reduce Irish-speaking communities to a minimum, largely concentrated on the western seaboard. Nationalist orthodoxy believed that this was, on more than one level, the result of a deliberate British policy" (Foster, R.F., 2014).

One third of the population that migrated were Irish speakers, and of those who stayed, many learned English so they could get jobs other than farming if they decided to emigrate (O'Reilly, E., 2015). All of these events combined, resulted in the Irish language being at the point of extinction.

"Those who remained slowly gained a sense of unity amongst each other...influencing various Irish writers such as John McCormack and William Butler Yeats" (Howell, S., 2016).

Douglas Hyde, a Protestant Irish language scholar, became worried about the huge decline of the language as he saw great importance in the development of a national identity separate from Britain. In the book *Vivid Faces*, R.F. Foster highlights that in Ireland, the feeling amongst the Irish was that *"reclaiming a threatened national language was an essential part of asserting a distinct cultural identity"*.

Hyde felt the same, and he strongly stood up for the preservation of the Irish language, becoming a key figure in advocating for a cultural revival. He essentially changed the course of Irish language history when in 1892, he wrote *'The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland'*. In this piece, Hyde declares, - *"In order to de-Anglicise ourselves we must at once arrest the decay of the language"*.

The impact this piece of writing had on the Irish people led to the formation of *Conradh na Gaeilge* (The Gaelic League).

Conradh na Gaeilge is an organisation that promotes the Irish language and cultural activities such as Irish dancing, music, sports, and the arts. It was established in 1893 by Douglas Hyde, Eoin Mac Néill, and Father Eoghan Ó Gramhnaigh, along with others. The League gained a mass following at the time and focused on running language classes to get more people speaking Irish and introduced it into more schools, as the leaders believed that *"Learning the Irish language was a necessary prelude to an independence which was implicitly political"* (Foster, R.F., 2014).

Among the Irish language teachers in the League was Pádraig Pearse.

Pádraig Pearse was a school teacher and advocate for the Irish language, and later, a leader of the 1916 Easter Rising. When Pearse went to Belgium on an educational trip, he was impressed by their bilingual street signs, inscriptions in public spaces, and official documents in Flemish, French and German (Fallon, D., 2021). This furthered Pearse to advocate for the use of Irish language in design around Ireland in a bid to promote and revive it. This included publishing books, creating signage, using Irish typefaces in print, branding in Irish, and continued publishing of the Irish language newspaper *An Claidheamh Soluis*, meaning 'The Sword of Light'.

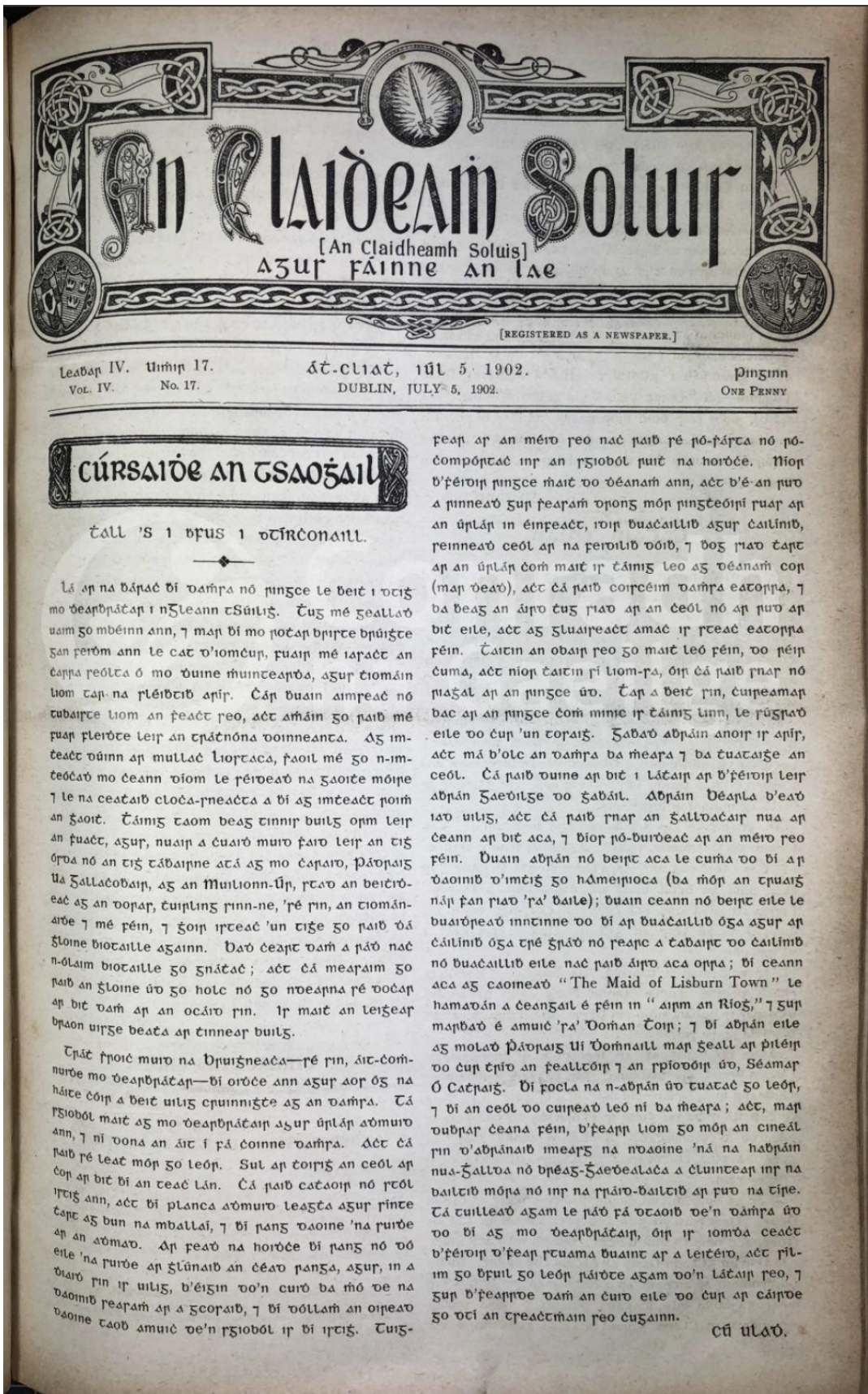


Fig 1. Photograph of An Claidheamh Soluis Newspaper, September 1902

Chapter 2

Publications

An Claidheamh Soluis

An Claidheamh Soluis was a bilingual newspaper published between 1899 and 1932. The newspaper was important for the revival of the Irish language, literature, art and design,- *“It is a major source for the study of developing Irish cultural and political nationalism in the early 20th century”* (Koch, J.T., 2005).

In terms of design, the newspaper used Irish typefaces throughout, known as *Gael Cló* or *Cló Gaelach*, meaning ‘Irish Fonts’. *Gael Cló* has been used to preserve a national identity for Ireland throughout history. In the book *‘Irish Type Design’* by Dermot McGuinne, a quote by Canon Bourke explains,-

“English letters are... Most unfit to display the natural grace and energy of the Irish language... No Irishman ought to write his native tongue in any other than in Irish or Celtic characters” (McGuinne, D., 1992).

Bourke’s idea was that Irish should be written in *Gael Cló* as it is cultural to Ireland. He felt that the language belongs with its own typeface, to preserve an Irish identity, and this idea was no doubt the reasoning behind the use of these typefaces in *An Claidheamh Soluis*.

Similarly, the use of Celtic interlacing, a historical Irish art style, was also present in the design of the paper. The design choices for this paper promoted the language in a way that invited the reader to appreciate the visual culture of Ireland.

An Gúm

Like *An Claidheamh Soluis*, design also played a role in the promotion of Irish language literature. There was a need for modernising Irish literature, not only through the stories told, but also through its design. In 1899 *Conradh na Gaeilge* established *Coiste na gClódhanna* (The Publications Committee) later known as *Clódhanna Teo*. This was to bring more Irish literacy into people's homes and to nurture the Irish language. They published '*Eachtra Robinson Crúsó: Cuid 1*' and '*Cill Áirne*' which were the first illustrated Irish language books made for adult audiences. This use of illustration showed Irish language publishers using modernist styles in their design for the first time.

In 1915, *Coiste na Leabhar*, (The Book Committee), now known as *An Gúm*, was set up to replace *Clódhanna Teo* due to their sales declining. The establishment of *An Gúm* changed Irish language publishing as it gained popularity.

An Gúm was a "*Nation building project*" (King, L., Sisson, E., 2011) with their book covers being brightly coloured with eye-catching illustrations while keeping with an Irish identity by using *Gael Cló* for the cover typography. This was a fresh new look for Irish publishing and appealed to all age groups.



Fig 2. Book covers for An Gúm [Date unknown]

Austin Ó Maolaoide (Austin Molloy) was a stained glass artist, illustrator, and graphic designer. He illustrated a number of *An Gúm*'s Irish language books using bold shapes, colour, and Irish typography.

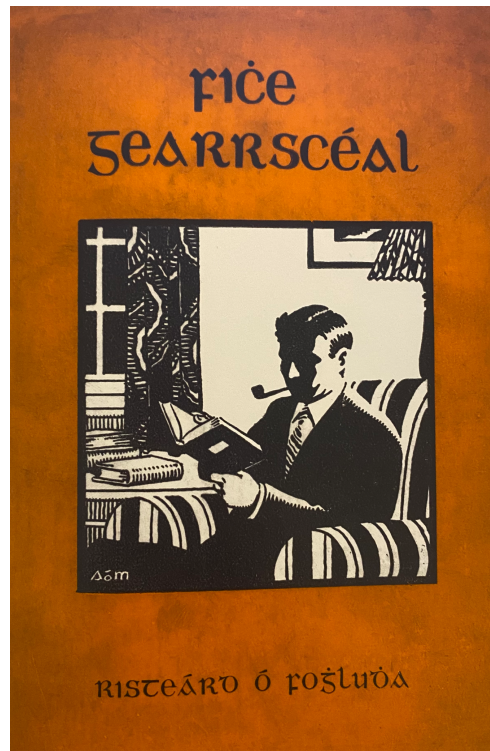


Fig 3. Austin Ó Maolaoid's cover for *Fiche Gearrscéalta*, 1930

The above book cover by Ó Maolaoid shows a man reading under a lamp which suggests this house has electricity. Meanwhile, a lot of homes in rural Ireland where most of the Irish speakers lived did not have electricity. This suggests that Austin's illustration was an aspiration for the Free State, or an "*ideal Ireland*" for national improvement (King, L., Sisson, E., 2011).

An Gúm played a vital role in reviving the Irish language as they sold more than 2,000 books, which was a huge achievement for Irish literacy. In the book 'Ireland, Design and Visual Culture', Brian Ó Conchubhair says,-

"As the embodiment of the Free-State's Irish language revival project, these books were designed and produced as impressive, weighty and sturdy tomes destined for longevity and prominent display"

Today, *An Gúm* continues to publish works and there are a number of texts by them that are still used in Gaelscoileanna (Irish speaking schools).

Chapter 3

Irish Type

Gael Cló

“The designing of special type for printing Irish language texts began in the late sixteenth century and lasted into our own day” (McGuinne, D., 1992).

Irish typography played a significant role in the language revival through its unique style and cultural significance. When the Irish language was first written, it was done in the ‘Half-Uncial’ style which is familiar today as an Irish typeface. It was frequently used in the handwriting of scribes and was seen in the earliest known Irish manuscript, The Book of Kells. This calligraphy inspired the development of Roman letters in later years. Following on from this, when Roman letters were used to print Irish, vowels and consonants often had diacritical marks on them (dots above them), which represented different sounds and made the letters phonetic. However, many people did not agree with the printing of Irish in the Roman alphabet. This is referred to in Dermot McGuinne’s book *Irish Type Design* where the Irish language being written in Roman is compared to Greek,- *“To write Greek in the characters of any foreign language is to destroy half its worth”* (McGuinne, D., 1992).

Despite this argument, there are a few key moments in history when Irish type rose to popularity. Firstly, religious and political powers influenced the development of early printed Irish. Bibles in Irish were in high demand and were read easier in Irish typefaces as this is what Irish people were used to from the Half-Uncial.

Bonaventure O'Hussey, a Louvain Franciscan encouraged the printing of Irish material as he was worried Irish people would be converted from Catholicism to another faith if they did not have their own bible.

Secondly, due to this demand for Irish language books, an increase in awareness of the language led to the production of Irish printing at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century. This occurred as scholars began to take interest in the books that were published in Irish.

Another key moment in the history of Irish typography was the Irish Literary Revival. The Irish Literary Revival was responsible for a significant growth and demand of printing of Irish as there was,- *"a number of Celtic scholars who contributed greatly to a general appreciation of her cultural past."* (McGuinne, D., 1992)

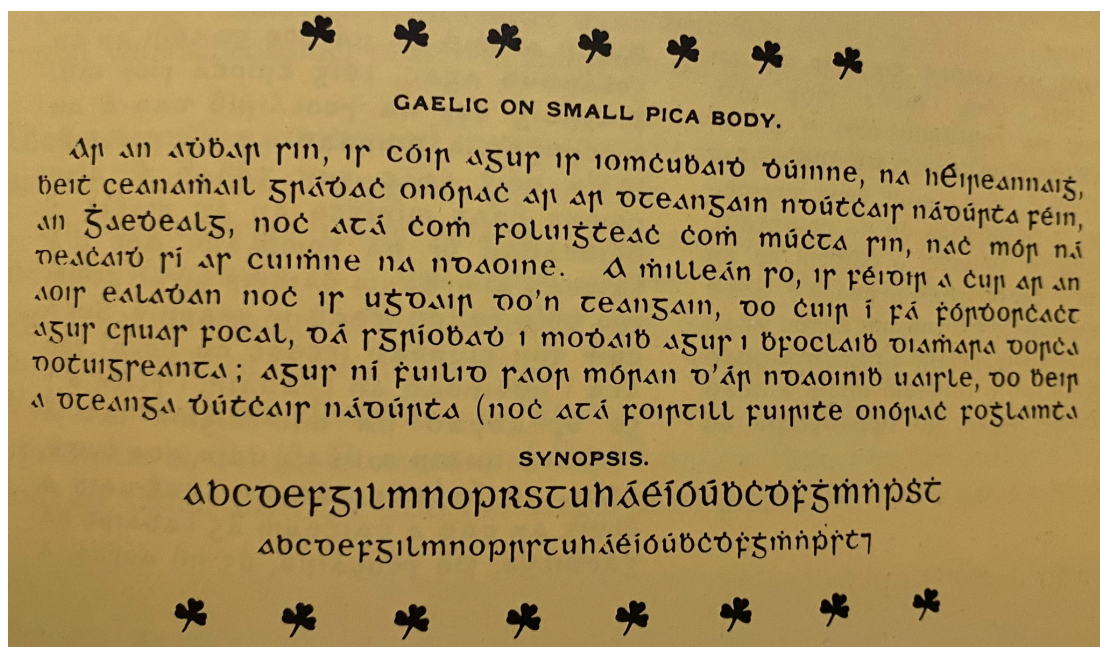


Fig 4. Figgins Type by Pádraig Ó Briain ,1899

Following the popularity of Irish type in the 1830s, in 1897 James Figgins produced a typeface which was used in *An Claidheamh Soluis*. It was called *The Figgins Type* and was popular during the early nineteenth century. There was a need for Irish typefaces to be used during this period as Irish people were more inclined to read it, especially during a time when they were searching for a national identity separate from Britain.- *"I observe in the people an attachment to both to the Irish language and character"* (McGuinne, D., 1992).

As a result of Figgins's typeface, in 1913 *Monotype Corporation* foundry's typeface *Monotype Series* which was based off *The Figgins Type*, was used as a masthead for *An Claidheamh Soluis*. Then, in 1913, Michael O'Rahilly who was the editor of *An Claidheamh Soluis*, designed his own sub-heading type for the newspaper. These typefaces were a huge success with the readers of *An Claidheamh Soluis* and drew many others in with their Irish style.

O'Rahilly was a huge advocate for the use of Irish typography but when he and other Irish typeface enthusiasts died, Irish type declined as there was no pressure put on officials to keep using it. The decline of Irish type was looming again, and it did not help that Irish letters were more time consuming to set in the press, along with being more expensive to obtain. Attitudes about Irish type were mixed, with some feeling it was outdated and should be left in the past,- *"Gaelic type be laid aside to take its place with Ogham as something belonging to another era"* (McGuinne, D., 1992).

While many Irish people felt strongly for its use,- *"It is our own Irish character, and should be as patriotically preserved as are the German and Greek"* (McGuinne, D., 1992).

There was also controversy with it while Ireland was under British rule. The Crown already did not tolerate the Irish language and saw Irish type as going against Britain,- *“The printing of Irish, particularly in the Irish character, was opposed by officialdom, as it was seen to foster nationalism, and thereby serve the enemies of the Crown”* (McGuinne, D., 1992)

While Irish type seemed to dwindle, the new Irish constitution of 1937 was printed in Irish type despite the popularity of Roman type at the time. This furthered the notion that Irish typography was sentimental to Irish identity. Typographer Liam Miller explained-

“Within the language movement itself, there are two major schools of thought about the printing of the language, one adhering to the so-called tradition of Cló Gaelach and the other to Cló Rómhánach”.

As previously mentioned, the Roman alphabet derives from the Half-Unicial calligraphy by Irish scribes. In response to this, based off Monotype’s Times New Roman, Willian Britton and Liam Miller developed a new Irish typeface called ‘Times Roman Gaelic’ in 1964, which incorporates the ‘t’ and ‘f’ of the Irish character with the Roman character and includes the diacritical dot on top of the letters. Although there was only one use for this typeface in the printing of *An Béal Bocht* by Myles na gCopaleen, it is impressive that such a typeface was successfully developed, coexisting with its competitor.

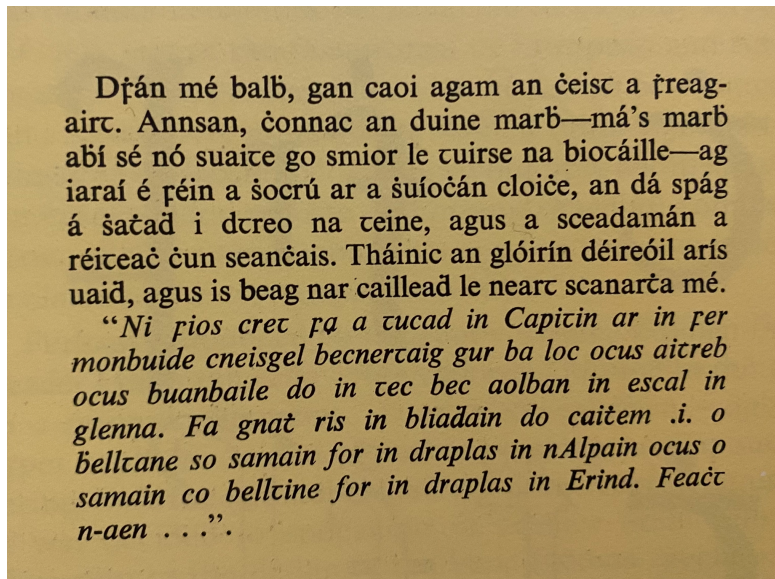


Fig 5. Willian Britton and Liam Miller's Times Roman Gaelic typeface in *An Béal Bocht*, 1964

Cló Gaelach Typewriter

Until the 1960s, the company *Underwood* produced a number of typewriters using Irish type, “known as the *Cló Gaelach*” (Scríobh., 2016). The typewriters included diacritical marks and fadas on the letters. Unfortunately, these typewriters were discontinued due to the cost.

However, these typewriters give us a glimpse at a period in history when there was a demand for Irish type.



Fig 6. Photograph of the Cló Gaelach Underwood typewriter, Scríobh, 2013

Poblacht na hÉireann

The Irish Proclamation, or *Poblacht na hÉireann*, was a document proclaiming Ireland's independence from Britain. Interestingly, the Proclamation is not perfectly printed. When typesetting, it was noticed that there were not enough letters. To solve this problem, letters were cut to mimic others. Notably, the capital letter 'F' was changed to 'E'. When the Proclamation was finally ready to be printed, there were 2,500 copies made and distributed to the people of Ireland, but today there are not many left. In a talk she gave at City Hall, Dublin, Dr. Mary Clark makes an observation,-

This is the first line of the Proclamation: Poblacht na hÉireann. This word Poblacht is very important. It means of course Republic. But it was the name chosen by the signatories for the 1916 Rising to express what they meant by Republic. Poblacht is a portmanteau word and it is pobal acht, so it's the 'actions of the people'. And it is much more meaningful than the word Republic... So there is a great deal more impact in the Irish, it means 'people acting together' and that's what a republic really is all about."

Undoubtedly, the use of the Irish language in the Proclamation emphasises the poetic nature of the native tongue. This first document of an independent Ireland paves the way for the nation's independence and beautifully uses the Irish language to convey the sense of a cultural identity through linguistics.

Art O'Murnaghan

Arthur O'Murnaghan was an artist fascinated by the Irish language. Some of his work is displayed in the National Museum of Ireland along with information about his work on *Leabhar na hAiséirighe* (The Book of Resurrection) and *Saorstát Éireann Official Handbook* (Irish Free State Official Handbook) which is where my information for this segment of my research was obtained.

Art was skilled in calligraphy, celtic interlacing and illumination. He joined *Conradh na Gaeilge* in 1893 and designed badges for the organisation. Art was commissioned by the *Irish Republican Memorial Committee (IRMC)*, to illustrate *Leabhar na hAiséirighe* (The Book of Resurrection), which took him thirty years to complete. “Celtic art is the best claim we have upon the world’s recognition of us as a separate nationality,” (Hyde, D., 1892)

O'Murnaghan's work represented Irish national identity with its use of Celtic art and Irish script. Below is a photo of the *Saorstát Éireann Official Handbook* which he was commissioned to design by the Free State in 1932. The handbook honoured those who died in the struggle for Irish independence, and celebrated the achievements of the State. The cover is an example of Celtic Revival art and was inspired by *The Book of Kells*. It uses Celtic interlacing and Irish inspired calligraphy with a modern twist. Art O'Murnaghan's work was a key ingredient in promoting the Irish language as it used Irish design and type in a way that discreetly advertised the language.

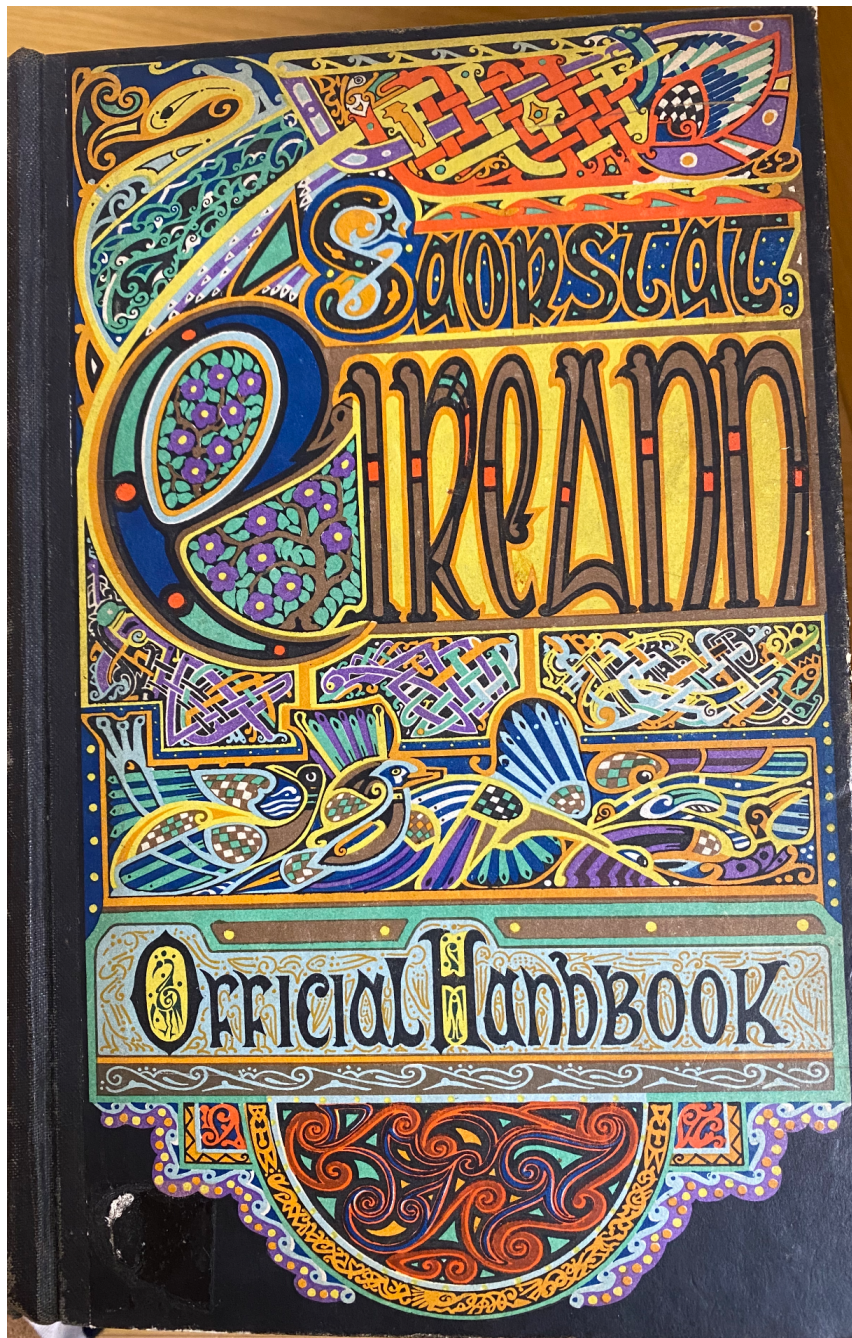


Fig 7. Art Ó Murnaghan's cover for the Saorstát Éireann Official Handbook. Accessed in the NIVAL archive, photo taken by me

In conclusion to this chapter, it cannot be denied that Irish typography had a huge impact on the revival of the Irish language throughout history. From the influence it had on people to read the bible, being used in the newspaper *An Claidheamh Soluis*, and especially in the successful books of *An Gúm*.

Chapter 4

Aire Poist agus Telegrafa

Postboxes

When Ireland gained independence, the new government wanted to erase evidence of British rule, so they had all the red British post boxes painted green as red was associated with the Empire. *“In terms of identity formation, the psychological impact of independence was made apparent through the country in one small and inexpensive act”* (Caffrey, P., 2011) Paul Caffrey highlights the simple yet significant impact this act had on Irish society. This shade of green is still used to paint post boxes to this day. In the image below, shown is a green post box with the use of the Irish language for the locations of the post, and the Irish P \rightarrow T logo.



Fig 8. Photo of green Irish postboxes with P \rightarrow T logo, 2021

The Minister for Posts and Telegraphs was responsible for Ireland's postal and telecommunications services from 1924 to 1984. The logo P↗T in an Irish typeface can be seen on manholes and postboxes all over Ireland to this day.



Fig 9. P↗T logo on a manhole, 2022

P↗T is the logo for Aire Poist agus Telegrafa (Minister for Posts & Telegraphs). The Tironian note in the centre of the 'P' and 'T' stands for '*agus*' which means 'and' in Irish. The Minister for Posts & Telegraphs organised the new systems of government in Ireland after the Free State was established in 1922.

Irish Stamp Design

Before Ireland gained independence, British stamps with imperial imagery were used. As a retaliation against this and "*to indicate an independent Irish postal system*" (Shortall, B., 2021) these stamps were overprinted with '*Saorstát Éireann*' in Irish typography, which means 'Free State Ireland'. It was important for the Irish

language and typefaces to be used in this act of protest to align with Irish identity. An example of these overprinted stamps can be seen in Fig 10 below.



Fig 10. British postage stamp with 'Saorstát Éireann 1922' overprint, 1922

March 31st, 1922 marked the day Ireland gained control over the postal system and with that, new stamp design was required for the new State. The new stamps were to be designed as part of de-anglicising Ireland and to give the people of Ireland their own visual identity.

Prior to this, in February 1922, Postmaster General J.J. Walsh TD held a competition to design stamps for Ireland. Designs were required to be symbolic of Ireland and have *Gael Cló* typefaces with Irish inscriptions.

James Ingram's design was one of a few who won, and the first Irish designed stamp used in the Free State. His stamp was for: *Dhá phingin* (Two pennies). Its colour was dark green on white paper, and was watermarked with S.E. for *Saorstát Éireann*.

Ingram's design was inspired by Celtic motifs and had the map of Ireland as the focal point.



Fig 11. James Ingram's Free State stamp design, 1922

Irish stamps symbolised Ireland's rich history and culture, with the *Gael Cló* on them reflecting this as it is written in Irish. After the first stamps were designed, Irish stamp design developed its own visual history and each year the stamp designs told stories of moments in history. The commemorative stamp below was commissioned to celebrate the constitution of Ireland being signed. It was important for the new State to use Irish symbols and designs on official objects along with the Irish language “to build a distinctive Irish identity” (Shortall, B. 2021).



Fig 12. Constitution Stamp, 1937

Walsh was also the minister responsible for having the imperial red post boxes painted green throughout the country, and as well as this, he brought in Irish passports in 1923, official government seals in 1924, and Irish coinage 1928.

The use of the Irish language in all of these visual elements was a key aspect in shaping the new Free State, and stamping the Irish language into the minds of the people. W.B. Yeats referred to coins and stamps as *“the silent ambassadors of national taste”*.

Irish Coinage

Fig 13 below shows cardboard tokens that The National Museum of Ireland says were a form of currency used by internees at Ballykinlar Internment Camp, Co. Down in 1920/21. The use of the Irish language and typography on the tokens highlights the role design played in keeping the language alive and how important it was to these people to distinguish themselves from the British as they fought for Ireland. The inscription on the coins translates to *'Irish men under lock camp no2 in Ballykinlar'*. The tokens were printed by the Dublin firm of O'Loughlin, Murphy, Boland Ltd.



Fig 13. Ballykinlar Internment Camp Tokens, 1920.

A few years after this, similarly to Irish stamp design, Irish coinage was also developed for the new Free State. The changing politics, social circumstances and history of the time can be seen in the visual culture of the coinage, much like the

Irish stamps from that period. Before Irish independence, Irish people used British pounds and so there was a need for new coinage to reflect the establishment of the Irish Free State.

In 1926, after Ireland became independent from Britain, there was a competition to design coinage for the new Free State. In the official book *Coinage of Saorstát Éireann 1928*, James J McElligott states what the guidelines for designing the coinage were. The guidelines were as follows:

- *That a harp should be shown on one side of the majority of coins, if not on all*
- *That the inscriptions should be in Irish only*
- *That no effigies of modern persons should be included in the designs*

The design of the coinage was a,- *“prestigious symbol of the sovereignty of a new nation, epitomising a new Irish identity”* (Caffrey, P., 2011) which rejected British influence and used the Irish language to proclaim an identity separate from Britain and the rest of the world. William Butler Yeates, a famous figure in Irish literature, was Chairman of the Committee of the new coinage and was in charge of selecting whose designs would win. Percy Metcalfe, an Englishman, won the competition.

In his essay *‘Nationality and Representation’* which is in the book *Ireland, Design and Visual Culture*, Paul Caffrey describes the choice of Irish typeface used for the new coins,- *“A stripped-down Gaelic script, was both elegant with references to tradition whilst at the same time understated and modern”*.

Additionally, coins were designed with a theme of animals relating to Ireland, as it was important that the design of the coins didn’t have any political or religious imagery on them. The harp symbol, which is the most recognised in Irish heritage, represents Ireland’s musicians and resembles *“the harp of the Great State Seal”*

(Caffrey, P.). Metcalfe's intricate version of the harp bears beautiful detail, while the animals on his coins are simple yet modern.



Fig 14. Saorstát Éireann Coin, 1928. Percy Metcalfe. Photo taken by me at The National Museum of Ireland, Collins Barracks, Dublin, January 2022.



Fig 15. Tailteann medal awarded at 1924 Tailteann games

The Tailteann Games were like the Irish Olympics. They reflected Ireland's search for identity and culture through sports and other activities. Fig 15 shows a medal which was given at the games, and reads 'An Bhainrioghan Tailte' meaning 'The Tailte Queen'.

In more recent history, Robert Ballagh designed Irish bank notes before the country changed to Euro. The notes portrayed figures from history next to a relevant building and they were written in the Irish language using Gael Cló. This shows a more recent effort by the state to recognise the Irish language as an important part of our cultural identity.

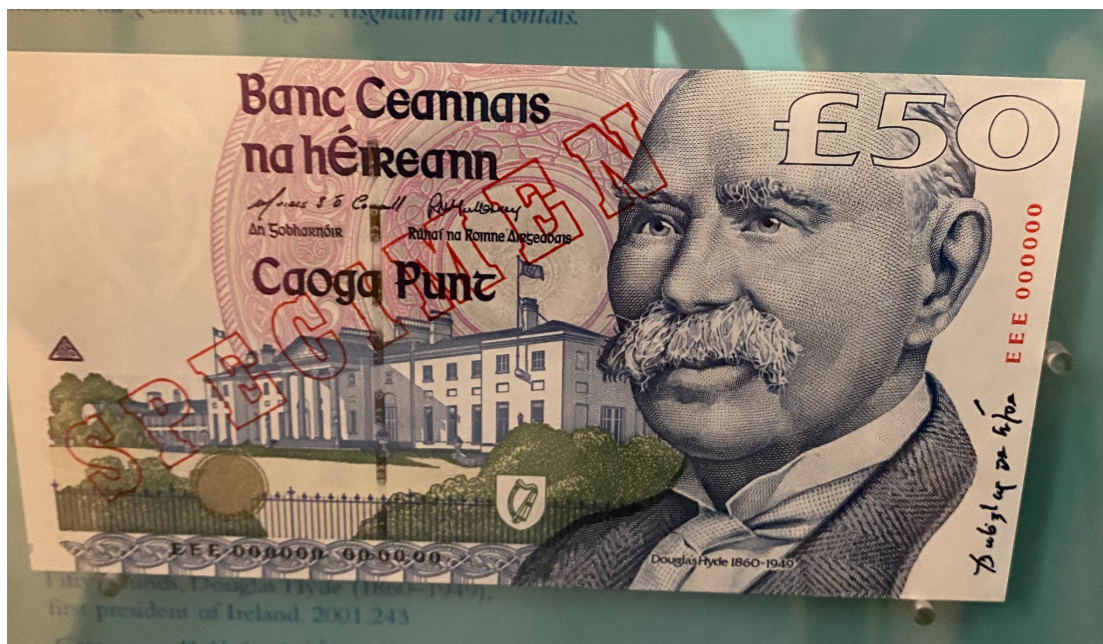


Fig 16. Robert Ballagh's Bank note of Douglas Hyde, first president of Ireland and the founder of Conradh na Gaeilge (The Gaelic League), 1992



Fig 17. Queen Medhb bank note, 1992

Like the Irish stamp design, Irish coinage played a role in preserving the Irish language. Irish is used in all the coinage with no English translation, and we once again see the use of the Gael Cló throughout. Fig 17. depicts Queen Medhb of Connacht from Irish mythology. In this note you can see a modern take of an old Irish typeface, and in the background you can further see the use of the Irish language in handwritten script.

Signage

"By encrypting the public sphere as a Gaelic realm, in the understanding that signage does not merely navigate the individual through communal space but in this process co-opts the individual to this space, Irish language signs guaranteed that the civic experience was also emphatically that of national belonging." (Graham, A., 2015)



Fig 18. Irish bilingual street sign using Gael Cló, 2021

With regard to Pádraig Pearse's advocating for bilingual street signage which is mentioned in Chapter 1, Irish street signage came into effect in the 1900s. This signage used Gael Cló typefaces which can be seen in Fig... Bilingual street signage was important in instilling a *"national belonging"* (Graham, A., 2015) in the minds of the Irish people after they were under British rule for so long. These signs preserve their native tongue which is exhibited through its specifically Irish design.- *"'Fir' and 'Mná' were among the most prominent of new public signage which articulated the idea of a revived Ireland to the citizens of the new Free State."* (Graham, A., 2015) Irish signage is still used throughout the country today.

To sum up this chapter, from the evidence given, it is clear that through the design of stamps, coinage, signage, and branding, that these methods are successful ways to create a national visual identity for Ireland while promoting the Irish language. To give one example, Irish signage is still in full use throughout the country - in shops, on our streets, on many shop fronts, and more. Everytime an individual lays eyes on these visual elements they are muttering the Irish words in their head, giving life to the Irish language.

Chapter 5

Modern Design

In the final analysis of this research, I will discuss more modern uses of the Irish language in design, which has helped the promotion of the language. Contrary to the attitude that Gael Cló should be left in the past, there are still some instances of these typefaces or variations of them being used today. The most well known example would be in the work of Michael Biggs.

Michael Biggs was a renowned stone carver and typographer. Biggs was known for using the Irish language in his work with Gael Cló typefaces. He hand carved the *Arbour Hill Memorial Wall* in 1959-63, which is shown in Fig.... This is the burial place of the leaders of the 1916 Rising who were executed, including Pearse.

Biggs also worked with typographer Liam Miller who was mentioned in Chapter 3. Miller commissioned Biggs to cut '*A Gaelic Alphabet*' out of wood, which was 18 letters using the Irish Insular alphabet.

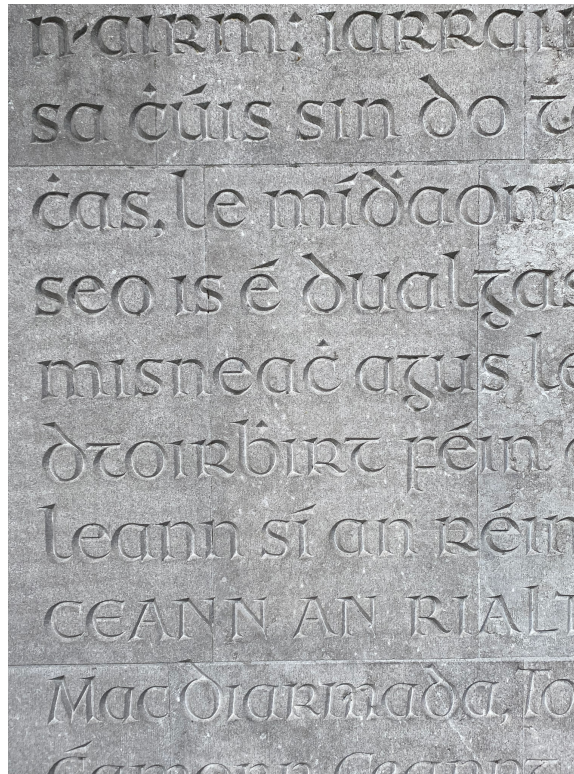


Fig 19. Michael Biggs' *Arbour Hill Memorial Wall*, 2021

Another notable individual who has worked with the Irish language through design is the late Jarlath Hayes. Hayes designed the harp for the two euro coin, along with creating a Gael Cló typographic logo for famous Irish band *Clannad*. For this logo he incorporated Celtic interlacing through the Irish type. Furthermore, Hayes' most significant work which is still discussed today, is his designing of the typeface '*Tuam Uncial*' for the television show '*Glenroe*' in the 1970s.



Fig 20. Jarlath Hayes' *Tuam Uncial* typeface for the *Glenroe* TV series, ca.1970s

Hayes designed 'Tuam Uncial' to be "*reminiscent of the kind of forms that were done with a broad tip pen in traditional Irish lettering*" says Max Phillips in an article written by Laoise Neylson about Hayes, which is entitled *After Almost 50 Years, a Renowned Irish Font Is Brought Into the Digital Age*. It was important for him to create a logo that was "*modern but definitely an Irish typeface*" (Neylson, L., 2020), which is evident in its form. In the article, Neylson explains there was a surge of design in the 1960s and 70s which celebrated traditional Irish art forms by mixing them with modern design. This style of traditional Irish design combined with the modern is still seen today, and Jarlath Hayes' work can be accredited to influencing this, as Max Phillips of type foundry *Signal Foundry* explains that Hayes is, - "*one of the grand old men of Irish graphic design and advertising*". Phillips has created a tweaked digital version of Hayes' *Tuam Uncial* which will soon be available to the public under the name *Jarlath* (Neylson, L., 2020). This furthers the notion that Irish type is still relevant today, and will in turn promote the Irish language when it is used in that vein.

Language Transcends Politics

Finally, it must be highlighted that the use of Gael Cló has been utilised to campaign for an Irish Language Act in the North of Ireland. Six counties in the North of Ireland are still ruled by the British Crown, and although 6% of the population there are fluent in Irish, the use of the language is illegal in their courts and is punishable by law if spoken in court. This strips the rights of the Irish speaking people in the North to speak their own language.

Hostile attitudes towards the language by Unionist (British) officials in Northern Ireland are due to them seeing the language as a political tool used to go against the crown, and not a significant element of cultural identity to the Irish people up there.-

“there is a very vibrant Irish language community in urban areas of Derry, Belfast and further afield among young people who view the language as a vital part of their cultural and political identity.” (Ó Ruairc, P., 2018)

With the power of design, the movement ‘*Language Transcends Politics*’ (LTP) campaigned for an Irish Language Act. They developed a contemporary typeface named ‘*Joyce*’ which was modelled off ancient Irish typefaces, and like Hayes’, they modernised the type to fit in today’s society. The typeface is named after Irish scholar James Joyce. The creation of this typeface was to hold a strong Irish identity for the movement and show the beauty of Irish visual culture.- *“Our campaign and interventions invite people to look at the language from a different point of view.” (Language Transcends Politics, [Date Unknown])*

From Fig... you will see that as well as developing the typeface, LTP projected the typeface around the streets of Belfast using the Irish language, and created a series of posters to spread awareness about the movement.

In essence, this campaign is successful in its promotion of the Irish language through design as its modern take on ancient typefaces, and rebellious act of projecting them around the city in the native tongue, really pushed the boundaries of promoting the language by placing it on a stage to be admired and respected.

Δ Δ̂ a á b c ð e é f g h
i ĭ j k l m n o ó p q r s t
u ů v w x y z . , _ - : ; ! ? ' " ”

All things considered from this chapter, it is evident that there is still a place in today's society for design to successfully promote the Irish language. This is clear from the modern style choices for visualising the language seen in Jarlath Haye's 'Tuam Uncial' typeface and the *Language Transcends Politics* campaign identity. Not

forgetting Michael Bigg's stone carving of the *Memorial Wall*, this is a particularly alternative method of design which is not seen that much today. Hence, the Memorial Wall becomes an Irish language spectacle for anyone that lays eyes on it, in turn promoting the beauty of the mother tongue of Ireland.

Conclusion

“If the roots of a national culture are in the soil, they flower at the top, in the arts, which in turn shower down seeds a hundredfold.” (Kennedy, B., 1998)

Ultimately, I have argued throughout this work that the Irish language has been kept alive through design. Undoubtedly, the research shows how the language would not have survived if it was not for *Conradh na Gaeilge* and their publishing of *An Claidheamh Soluis* which was the only bilingual newspaper at the time. Likewise, the establishment of *An Gúm* and their output of over 2,000 beautifully illustrated Irish language books continued the revival of the language as it meant Irish speakers could read books in their own language. In particular, forming a national visual identity for Ireland in the creation of coinage, stamps, and signage to name a few, was key in keeping Irish alive as it gave Irish people a sense of pride when seeing the grace of their own native tongue on official material and documents.

In conclusion to my question of design as a tool for reviving the Irish language, this research document is relevant to Irish linguistics as it brings forward the idea that design is important if change is to be made on a wide scale level. Without design, the Irish language would have ultimately become extinct. To this day, the Irish language is still being promoted through design as is seen in the work of *‘Language Transcends Politics’* and typographers like Max Phillips who has developed the ‘Jarlath’ typeface.

I will continue to research Irish design as I feel there is so much more to unpack and discover. I would like to look into ceramic, textiles, and the Dun Emer Gild for future works, which I believe will further my research here.

“...thanks to the efforts of the league it is now a protected language that is looked upon affectionately and is even being taught in many places beyond Ireland” - Hugh Lane

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Fig 15. Tailteann medal awarded at 1924 Tailteann games. Photo taken by me at The National Museum of Ireland, Collins Barracks, Dublin, January 2022

Fig 16. Robert Ballagh's Bank note of Douglas Hyde, first president of Ireland and the founder of Conradh na Gaeilge (The Gaelic League), 1992. Photo taken by me at The National Museum of Ireland, Collins Barracks, Dublin, January 2022

Fig 17. Queen Medhb bank note, 1992. Robert Ballagh. Photo taken by me at The National Museum of Ireland, Collins Barracks, Dublin, January 2022

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