

Your Irish Passport Is a Work Of Art, let's look at it again.

~ and a Lancashire born Irish poet chosen to have her verse included ~

Story and pictures Gerry Molumby

At the Global Irish Civic Forum in Dublin (May 2017) there was a wonderful presentation on the work that went in to the renewal of the Irish Passport, incorporating the latest security technology, but also making it a piece of Irish art. So from notes and further research I have been on a voyage of discovery....come along with me. The first thing you will notice are the illustrations of Gaelic Sports and Music along with landmarks such as Croagh Patrick, Kylemore Abbey, Croke Park, the Cliffs of Moher and my native Rock of Cashel, which adorn the pages with the Brian Buru harp being the rightly expected watermark on each page.



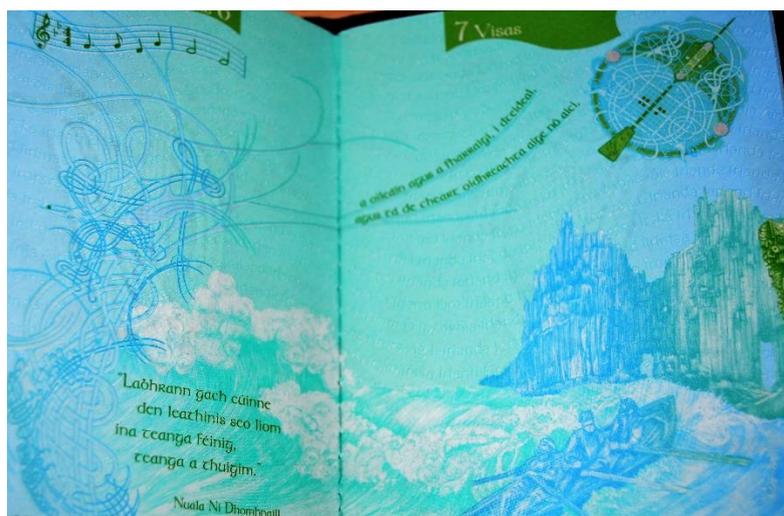
Picture 1: Brian Buru harp being the rightly expected watermark on each page.

At the conference I was alerted to the inclusion, throughout the pages, to the full music score of Amhrán na bhFiann, the full text of Article 2 of the Irish Constitution, which appears alternately in Irish and in English.

It is the entitlement and birthright of every person born in the island of Ireland, which includes its islands and seas, to be part of the Irish Nation. That is also the entitlement of all persons otherwise qualified in accordance with law to be citizens of Ireland. Furthermore, the Irish nation cherishes its special affinity with people of Irish ancestry living abroad who share its cultural identity and heritage.

The written and spoken word is fully included with verses by William Butler Yeats and James Orr and Nuala Ní Dhomhnaíll. Born in Lancashire, England in 1952, of Irish parents, Nuala moved to Ireland at the age of five, and was brought up in the Dingle Gaeltacht and in Nenagh, County Tipperary. A couple of Ní Dhomhnaíll's lines written in Irish on page six are - *Labhrann gach cuinne den leathinis seo liom ina teanga feinig, teanga a thuigim* - loosely translated and with a nod towards the Irish abroad to mean - *every corner of the land speaks to us.*

Dedicated to the Irish language Nuala writes poetry exclusively in Irish and is quoted as saying "Irish is a language of beauty, historical significance, ancient roots and an immense propensity for poetic expression through its everyday use", she currently lives near Dublin with her husband and four children and is a regular broadcaster on Irish radio and television.



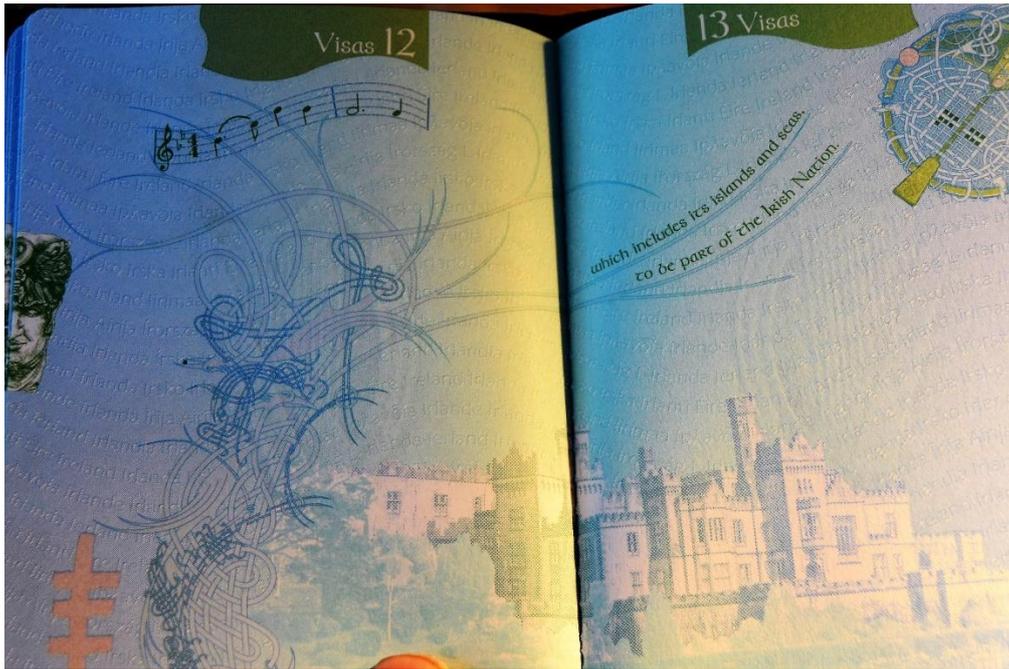
Picture 2: Verse by Nuala Ní Dhomhnaíll



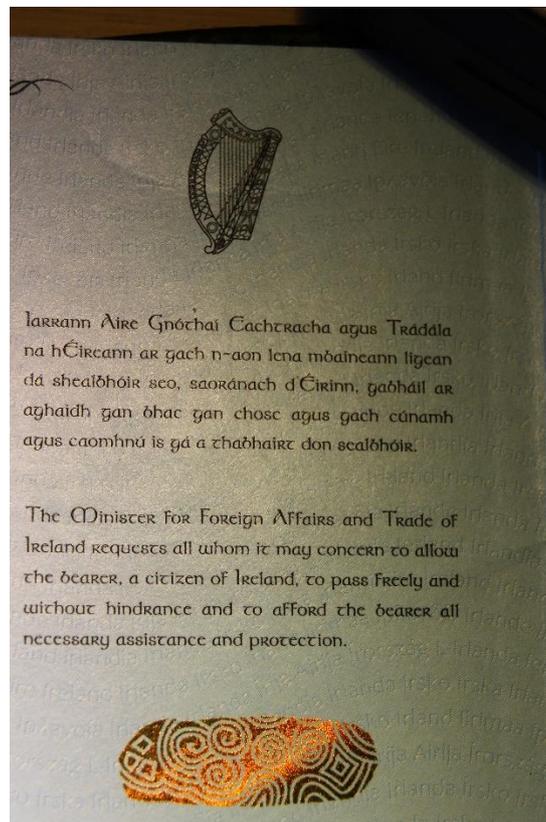
Picture 3. The River Gods as seen under the Liffey Bridge are seen in all their glory when you bend two pages into each other.

Note also the Ogham characters (on lower left of the picture above) are printed in thermo-chromic ink, i.e. the colour of the character changes when heat is applied. The individual Ogham character and a hand drawn trace of a tree leaf, also lights up under ultra-violet inspection. Printed with shifting ink Spark technology, the image shimmers in the light. This is the first time this technology was used on an international travel document.

Ogham is an Early Medieval alphabet used to write the early Irish language. There are a number of surviving orthodox inscriptions on stone monuments throughout Ireland, mostly in southern Munster.



Picture 4: The Bird Knot, (centre of left page) the intricate nature of these original designs makes replication very difficult. Note the seed in the bird's beak to represent the 'scattering' of the Irish Abroad and part of the score from the national anthem on top left of each page in the passport.



Picture 5. Newgrange Entrance Stone image. Again this is printed with shifting ink Spark technology behind the front page and as with the Ogham the image shimmers in the light.



"Be advised, my passport's green" Seamus Heaney