# Flagging Ireland

## Irish Guide to Flag Design
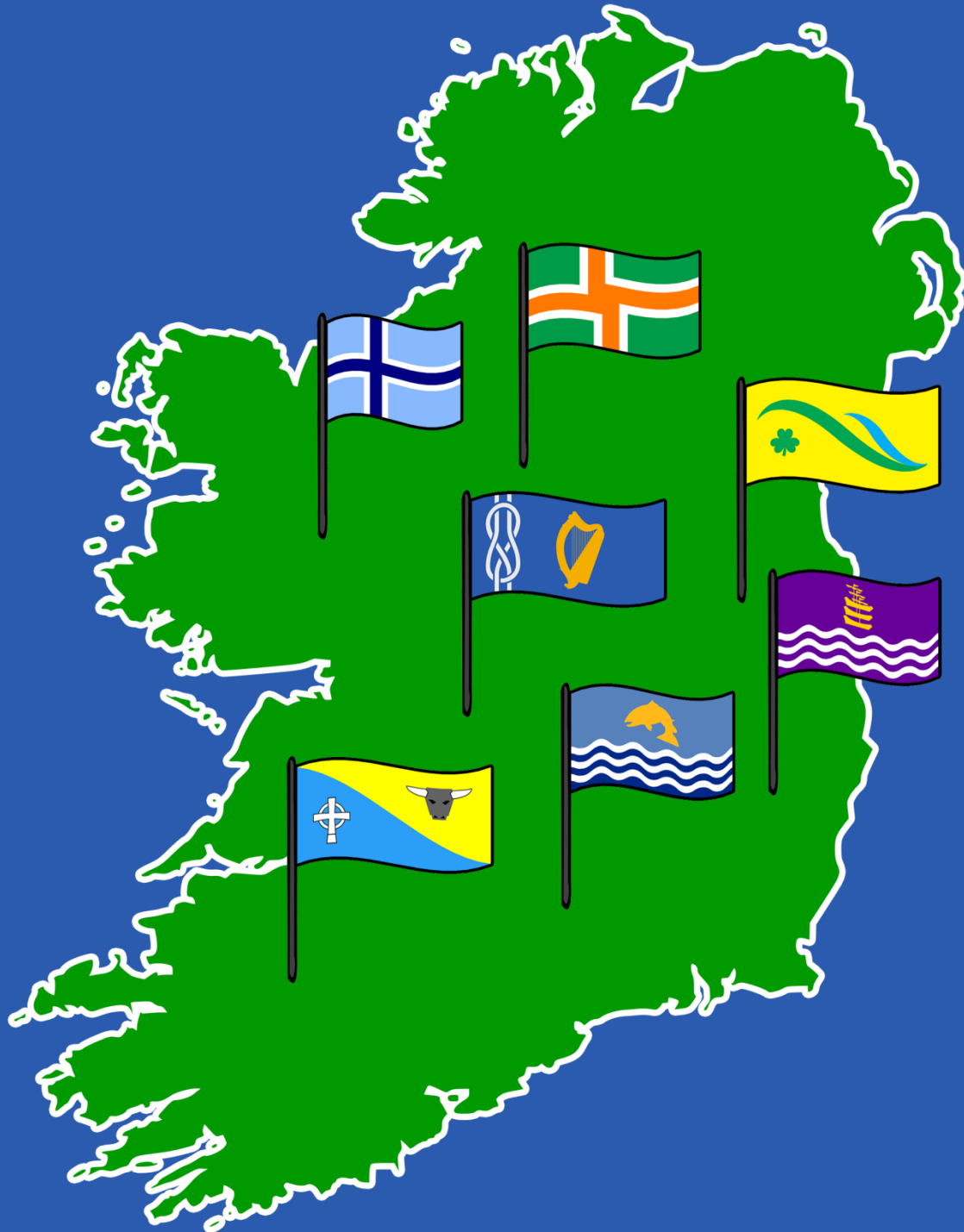
**Stan Zamyatin**
**Editor**

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### In Memoriam

As this publication was being finalised we learned of the tragic death on July 18th 2015 in Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, of **Luke MacMahon** from Dún Laoghaire. Luke is pictured (holding his younger brother Tom) on page 45 of this Guide with other members of Dún Laoghaire Town Football Club.

*Ar Dheis Dé go Raibh a Anam Dílis*

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*For*

**Lyuba and Thom Moore**

*for always being there to support and inspire me*


## Acknowledgements

Over the past year researching and writing this work, I sincerely and gratefully acknowledge the very kind assistance, encouragement and support received from many people along the way and, in particular, the following:

Stanislav Zamyatin, MGSI, MVI, MHI.
*Chief Executive Officer / Príomh-fheidhmeannach*
***Vexillology Ireland : Brateolaíocht Éireann***
August : Lúnasa 2015

# 1. Foreword

The political scientist Benedict Anderson coined the term 'Imagined Community' for the large groups of people we know as nations. They are imagined communities because they are glued together by the idea that they share things in common. Within a nation people feel that they are in communion with millions of people who they will never know and never meet. But this sense of commonality requires people to hold emotional allegiances to symbols that represent the nation. Perhaps most important amongst those symbols are flags.

Around the world and throughout history flags have been used to represent different social groups. They communicate messages and provide meaning. For that reason the design of a flag, and the way that it used, is considered very important. If flags are being used for official purposes they are usually accompanied by rules on how, when and where they should be flown. If they are being used by people at popular events to mark identity the context in which they are used will suggest a range of different meanings.

Understanding the way flags are designed and used is thus a window into our society. They are more than just interesting footnotes in history, they are part of the political changes through which are societies have progressed. They might tell us a story of the past but they are also a reflection of our present and often an attempt by people to imagine a future. In the case of the Irish Tricolour it might be argued, it was designed imagining a future that has yet to be achieved.



*Queen's University Belfast*

This book is more than a guide on how to design a flag; it is also an insight into the history and politics of Irish society. It is equally pertinent for sociology. It tells a story of unity and division. Perhaps, most intriguingly, the design of flags not only tells us about the past but allows us to imagine a future.
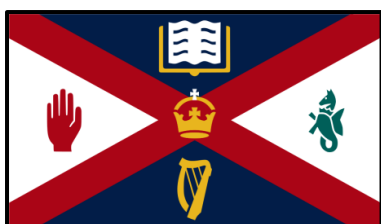


*Flag of Queen's University Belfast*

- Dr. Dominic Bryan, Director of Institute of Irish Studies at Queen's University Belfast and flag expert in Northern Ireland

## 2. Introduction

*From the dawn of her history, Ireland has had more than her share of wars, invasions, rebellions, political movements and upheavals. It is only to be expected then that the history of Irish flags and emblems is a rich and varied one.*

G.A. Hayes-McCoy, *'A History of Irish Flags: From Earliest Times'*, Dublin, 1979


*Satellite image of Ireland taken by Jeff Schmaltz of NASA*

The story of flags is closely interlinked with that of historical events, therefore the history of Irish flags is the history of Ireland. Flags have represented the aspirations of Irish people over centuries and reflected the political movements that have taken place on all sides. Flags, as we all know, can be a source of conflict and peace, a source of unity and division, they can be evocative as well as provocative, yet their powerful symbolism endures to reinforce and sustain our connectivity with our cultural, linguistic, national, religious and political identities. One of the most fundamental needs that all humans have is the need for a sense of identity and belonging. A strong feature of this is the human attachment to flags. It is undeniable that flags play a very important role in encouraging a sense of pride amongst people, as they provide a real and tangible sense of identity. Flags serve as uniting symbols for people to recognize and unite under, based on shared beliefs and values.

Today, flags have in many ways become the greatest symbol of identity and there are now more flags in the world than ever before. For that reason, there is no better time to start learning and designing flags than right now. Flagging Ireland aims to assist in this by providing a vehicle for the understanding of the symbolism, culture, history and identities associated with the use of flags and emblems on the whole island of Ireland.

Flags have long been a divisive and controversial issue in Ireland and this guide recognizes this contentious and emotional side. Therefore it must be stated that there are no political aims of this guide, only flag related ones. *Vexillology* is the 'scientific study of flags and emblems' and this guide tries to promote it and nothing else. Flagging Ireland has been compiled by *Vexillology Ireland*; *Brateolaíocht Éireann*, a branch of the Genealogical Society of Ireland (GSI) dedicated to the promotion of an awareness, appreciation and knowledge of Ireland's vexillological heritage and of vexillology in general.

# 3. Vexillology and Vexillography

*Charles A. Spain, Jr., the Secretary-General of FIAV, the International Federation of Vexillological Associations, describes the difference between vexillology and vexillography:*

FIAV, the *Fédération internationale des associations vexillologiques*, defines vexillology as "the creation and development of a body of knowledge about flags of all types, their forms and functions, and of scientific theories and principles based on that knowledge." Dr. Whitney Smith, who coined the word, defined it in his 1975 groundbreaking book *'Flags Through the Ages and Across the World'* as "the scientific study of the history, symbolism, and usage of flags." Prior to the 1960s, research into flags consisted mainly of collecting and organizing information. But with the establishment by Smith in 1962 of The Flag Research Center, vexillology as a social science took root with the analysis of that data by historians, sociologists, political scientists, and social psychologists.

Napoleon shrewdly observed, "C'est avec ces hochets qu'on mène les hommes"—"It is with these things that men are led." These mere bits of cloth that people fight and die for are surely worthy of serious study as a part of understanding the human condition. This is why vexillology matters.

Vexillology
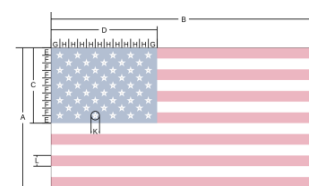
Vexillography

Vexillography, the art and practice of flag design, is allied with vexillology, but is not synonymous with that discipline. As demonstrated in this Guide, vexillography embraces aesthetic values, but vexillology, a social science, does not. To a vexillologist there are no bad flags, only flags to be studied. A flag designer, however, most certainly has opinions on good and bad flags. While one can be both a vexillologist and a flag designer, it is important to distinguish between working as a social scientist versus working as a designer.

## FIAV Membership

FIAV is the international association of flag associations and institutions that provides the area for collaboration, cooperation and consultation amongst vexillologists and flag enthusiasts around the world. The Genealogical Society of Ireland became a member of FIAV at the 25th International Congress of Vexillology in Rotterdam in 2013. Vexillology Ireland is proud to represent Ireland in this prestigious international body.

*Flag of FIAV*

# 4. Flag Terminology

There are many different types of flags. In order to help you better learn about them and assist you in designing new ones, there are a number of different flag categories to know.
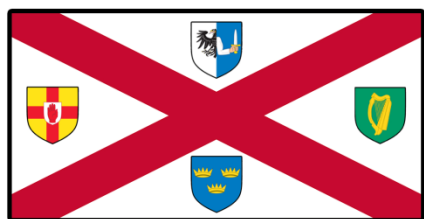

**Saltire**


**Cross**
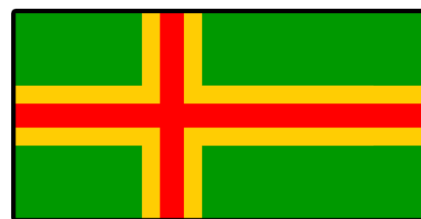

**Scandinavian Cross**
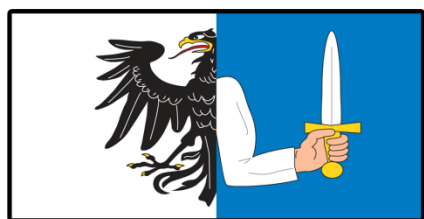

**Bicolour**


**Tricolour**
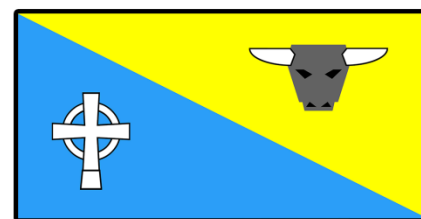

**Bend**


**Triangle**


**Canton**


**Quartered**

Historically, the first national flags were used at sea and the flags of the UK, Russia, Greece and Spain, all started as naval flags.

## Naval flags

A *Naval Ensign* is a naval flag that is flown at the back of a ship (*stern*) and used to represent the navy of a country at sea. Ireland along with countries such as France and Brazil, simply uses the national flag as their naval ensign. The use of the Irish tricolour began during WWII when it replaced the 'Red ensign', a red flag with the Union Jack in the top left-hand corner (canton), under the *Emergency Powers Act* of 3 September 1939.

# Naval Ensign                                    Naval Jack

A Naval Jack is an additional flag that is flown at the head of a ship (*bow*) and used to represent a country. The Irish Naval Jack was adopted in 1947 after the establishment of the Naval Service (*an tSeirbhís Chabhlaigh*) in 1946. The flag consists of a gold harp with 14 diagonal strings on a green field. The jack is usually flown when an Irish naval ship is anchored, moored or when it is under way and dressed with masthead ensigns. Be careful not to mix up this flag with the flag of *Leinster.*


*Flag of Leinster*

## Parts of a flag

Specific terminology is needed to describe various parts of a flag. Most 'modern' flags have simple divisions, such as the *Dublin municipal flag* (below) which was adopted in 1885 by the Dublin Corporation. The flag contains a simple green *field*, a *canton* featuring the coat of arms of the city and a charge made up of the harp.



**CANTON:** *The upper quarter nearest the staff*

**FIELD:** *The backround colour of the flag*

**FLY:** *The part of the flag that is furthest from the staff which flies in the wind*

**CHARGE:** *Any emblem placed on the field*

**STAFF:** *The pole from which the flag is flown from*

**HOIST:** *The part of the flag that is closest to the staff which is used to hoist the flag*

**RATIO:** *The relative proportions of height against width. For example, the Dublin City flag has a ratio of 1:2*

## Irish Vocabulary

*Vexillology Ireland* in Irish is *'Brateolaíocht Éireann'*. The Irish word for flag is 'Bratach' and unlike most other words ending in –ach, it is a feminine word. The plural form is 'na Bratacha', which can also mean "the colours" in the regimental sense. Irish Gaelic (Gaeilge) belongs to the *Goidelic group* of Celtic languages, which includes Scottish and Manx. In Scottish Gaelic (Gàidhlig) flag is also spelt 'bratach', while in Manx (Gaelg) writes it as 'brattagh'. Below you will find a list of useful words:

- Vexillology Ireland = Brateolaíocht Éireann
- Flag of Ireland = Bratach na hÉireann
- Vexillologist = Brateolaí
- The flag = an bhratach
- Flagstaff = Crann brataí

# 5. Flag Proportions

*The proportions of flags are described as a ratio of height to width.*

Different countries use different flag ratios and almost half of the world's national flags have a ratio of 2:3, while the rest have mainly 1:2, including Ireland's national flag. The Irish ratio  creates a very long flag and it is second only to Qatar's 11:28.

Ireland's flag design was modelled on the French tricolour (2:3), while the ratio was based on the Union Jack, especially the version that is flown at sea. Land flags in the United Kingdom are normally a ratio of 3:5, including the Welsh and Scottish flags. This proportion is used as it creates a ratio of 1.667 which is numerically close to the *Golden Ratio* which equals to 1.618. When many flags are displayed side-by-side, especially in bunting, their aspect ratio is modified to 3:5 in order to create balance and uniformity.
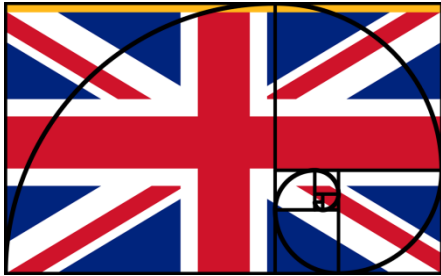
Switzerland and the Vatican City are the only countries to have square (1:1) flags, however:

- When used on Swiss lakes, the flag of Switzerland has a ratio of 2:3, a practice that was adopted in 1941
- The actual flags that fly in the Vatican are 2:3, so as to match the proportions of the Italian flag. The Vatican flags in Ireland have a ratio of 1:2

The table below lists the main proportions in increasing size:



| 1:1 | 2:3 | 5:8 | 3:5 | 10:19 | 1:2 |
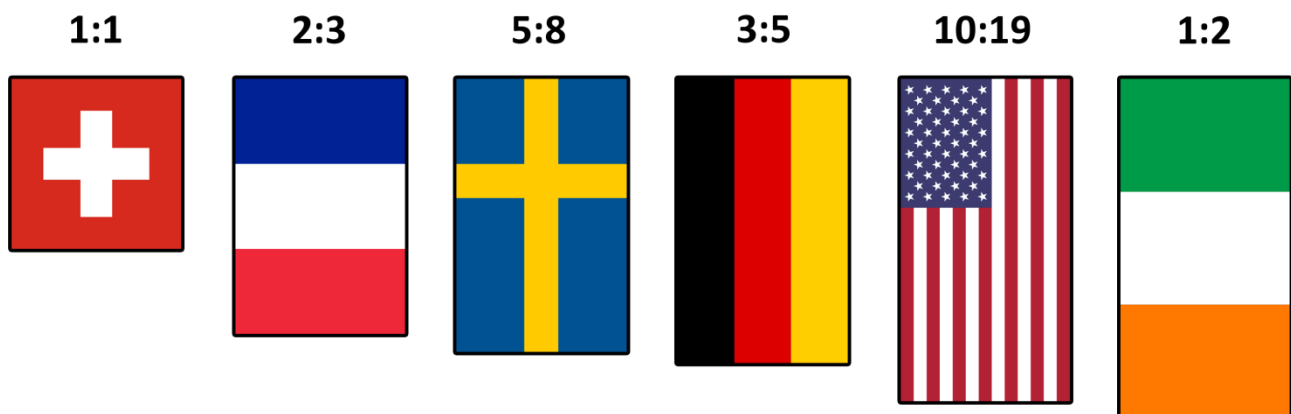
At first appearance, the U.S. flag (above) might look like it is hanging the wrong way, however, this is actually the proper way to hang it vertically - the canton (blue field with stars) needs to be in the upper left-hand corner. The US, Germany and other countries, have specific flag protocols for hanging their national flags vertically, therefore it is very important that you know these for official purposes.

# 6. Irish Flag Protocol

*Ireland has no legislation for the use of flags, however, there is a flag protocol.*

The Irish flag protocol sets out a number of guidelines for how flags should be flown and used in Ireland. These guidelines are mostly the same in every country in the world and act as a guide to general flag etiquette. Here are some points on the Irish National flag:
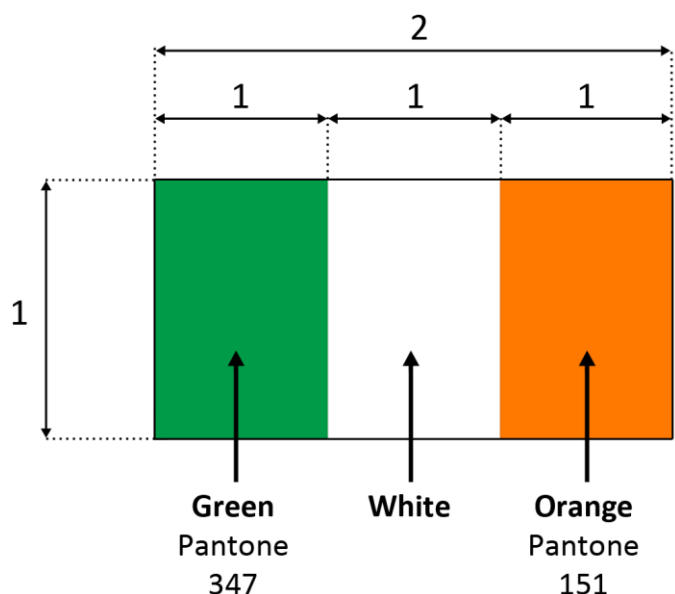


## Proportions

The correct ratio of the Irish National flag is 1:2, meaning that it is twice as long as it is tall. If these proportions are kept, then the flag can be made into any size that is convenient. Cheaply made flags tend to have an incorrect ratio of 3:5, so make sure you use the right one for official purposes.

## Colour

The colour of the outer stripe of the flag is orange and not 'gold' as some people might describe it. The use of a tricolour with a 'yellow' outer stripe is incorrect and strongly discouraged as this is not the official national flag and it does not represent Ireland. Article 7 of the Irish Constitution (Bunreacht na hÉireann) clearly states that: 'The national flag is the tricolour of green, white and orange'. Make sure you use the official *Pantone®* colours for the flag: *Green: 347* and *Orange: 151.*

## Flag Protocol of Ireland

Graham Bartram, a world-renowned vexillologist and Honorary Vexillologist of the Genealogical Society of Ireland explains the protocol of flying and displaying flag in Ireland:

The national flag of Ireland should be displayed only in a dignified manner befitting the national emblem. It should not be displayed in a position inferior to any other flag or ensign.

It is improper to use the national flag as a table or seat cover or as a masking for boxes, barriers, or the intervening space between a dais or platform and the floor. The use of the national flag to cover a statue, monument or plaque for an unveiling ceremony is discouraged.



*Graham Bartram at the ICV in Rotterdam in 2013*

## Flying the Flag

Flags may be flown on every day of the year, and are normally flown from sunrise to sunset but they may also be flown at night, when they should be illuminated. No permission is needed to fly the national flag.

The national flag should never be flown in a worn or damaged condition, or when soiled. To do so is to show disrespect for the nation it represents.

## Position of Honour

The order of precedence of flags in Ireland is: the national flag, the flag of the President of the Republic, the European Union flag, flags of other nations (in alphabetical order in English or Irish), the flags of the four provinces, county flags, flags of cities or towns, banners of arms, and house flags.

When the Irish national flag is flown with the flags of other nations each flag should be the same size (or have the same width - the measurement from top to bottom) and should fly from a separate flagpole of the same height. The Irish national flag should be raised first and lowered last, unless all the flags can be raised and lowered simultaneously. Flags should be raised and lowered in a dignified manner. An alternative tradition for flag raising is to hoist the flag while rolled up and secured with a thin piece of cotton or a slip knot. A sharp tug of the halyard will break the cotton and release the flag to fly free. This is known as 'breaking' the flag, and is sometimes used to signal the beginning of an event, or the arrival of a VIP.
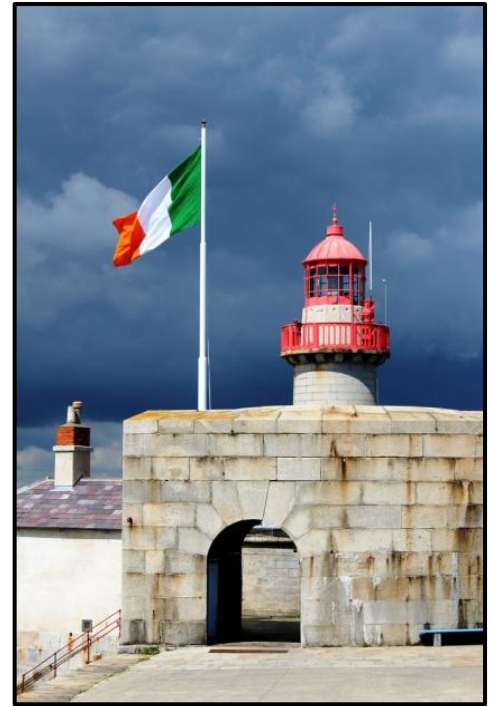
## In Front of and On a Building

Where there are two or more flagpoles parallel to the building line, the national flag should be the first flag on the left of an observer facing the main entrance of the building. The remaining flags then appear in order of precedence from left to right.

Where there are two or more flagpoles on the forecourt of a building angled to the main entrance, the national flag should be flown on the outermost pole when the flagpoles are to the left of the main entrance and on the innermost pole when the flagpoles are to the right of the main entrance.

If only one flag is to be flown and there are two flagpoles, it should be flown on the flagpole to the observer's left. If there are more

than two flagpoles, it should be flown as near as possible to the centre. This only applies when the other flagpoles remain empty. It is permissible to fly the same national flag on more than one flagpole by repeating the order of precedence.

If one flagpole is higher than the rest, then the national flag can fly from that flagpole; however no other national flags can be flown on the other flagpoles. These can be used for more junior flags such as province and house flags. Alternatively the higher flagpole can be left empty and the remaining flagpoles used. In general when siting flagpoles it is preferable to keep them at the same level to avoid protocol restrictions.



## In Processions

The national flag should always lead in a single file of flags. When two or more flags are carried side-by-side, the national flag takes the position of honour at the right-hand side of the line facing the direction of movement (the left of an observer watching the line approach).
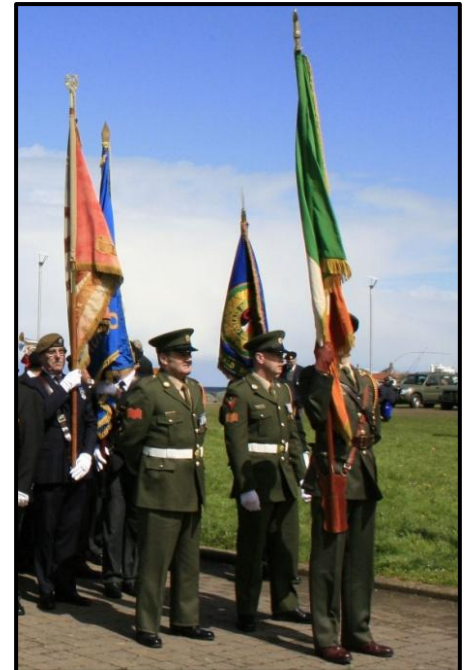
## On Vehicles

A car flag should be placed on a staff fitted to the front-right wing, in the centre of front edge of the bonnet, or in the centre of the front edge of the roof. If two flags are to be flown, the senior flag should be on the front-right wing and the junior flag on the front-left wing. When flags are painted onto a vehicle, or on the tail fin of an aircraft, the flag on the port side should show the obverse of the flag (ie. the flagpole on the left), while that on the starboard side should show the reverse (ie. the flagpole on the right). On surfaces perpendicular to the direction of travel (eg. the back of the vehicle) the obverse of the flag should be shown.



## On a Speaker's Platform

When displayed from a staff, on a speaker's platform, the national flag should be placed on the right-hand side of the speaker, and therefore to the audience's left.

## With Crossed Flags

Whenever crossed with the flag of another nation or organization, the national flag should be on the left of the observer facing the flag. Its staff should be in front of the staff of the other flag.

## As a Pall for a Coffin

If the national flag is to be used on a coffin, it should be placed so that the top-left corner of the flag is over the deceased's left shoulder. The flag should be removed before interment or cremation and folded.



## Flags at Half-mast

Half-mast means the flag is flown two-thirds of the way up the flagpole, with at least the height of the flag between the top of the flag and the top of the flagpole. Flags cannot be flown at half-mast on poles that are more than 45° from the vertical, but an alternative mark of mourning is to add a black cravat or ribbon to the top of the flag, at the hoist.

When a flag is to be flown at half-mast, it should first be raised all the way to the top of the mast, allowed to remain there for a second and then be lowered to the half-mast position. When it is being lowered from half-mast, it should again be raised to the top of the mast for a second before being fully lowered.

When the national flag is at half-mast, other flags on the same stand of poles should also be at half-mast or should not be flown at all. Flags of foreign nations should not be flown, unless their country is also observing mourning.

## National Flag at Sea

Although the use of the national flag on land may only be protocol, the use of the flag at sea is put into law.  Section 10.3 of the ***Mercantile Marine Act, 1955***, states:

> 10. (1) The proper national colours to be worn by Irish ships shall be the national flag or that flag with a white border except that
>
> a)  in the case of State-owned ships for which a special flag is prescribed under subsection (2) of this section, the proper national colours shall be the flag so prescribed, and
> b)  in the case of ships in respect of which a special flag is authorised by flag warrant under subsection (3) of this section, the proper national colours shall be the flag so authorised.
> c)  The Minister may prescribe a flag to be worn in lieu of the national flag by State-owned ships or by specified classes of such ships.
> d)  The Minister may, by flag warrant issued to any body of persons, authorise the members of the body to use a flag in lieu of the national flag on specified Irish ships, and may by any such warrant impose conditions and restrictions on the exercise of the authority thereby conferred and may revoke any such warrant.

# 7. Irish Flag History



An Bhratach Náisiúnta
The National Flag

*The Department of the Taoiseach has produced a booklet entitled 'An Bhrathach Náisiúnta / The National Flag' that outlines the history and protocols surrounding the use of the national flag.*

The booklet was compiled in 1948, first published in 1949 and re-published in 1953, 1978 and finally in 2000 in the format that we now see. It is currently only available online:

English version: http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/upload/publications/1104.pdf

Irish version: http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/upload/publications/1105.pdf
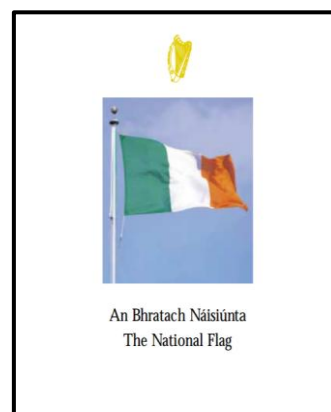
The first section of the *National Flag guide* deals with the history of the tricolour. The following text is taken from the guide:

## History of the National Flag

"The Irish Tricolour is intended to symbolise the inclusion and hoped-for union of the people of different traditions on this island, which is now expressed in the Constitution as the entitlement of every person born in Ireland to be part of the Irish nation (regardless of ethnic origin, religion or political conviction).



A green flag with harp (left) was an older symbol of the nation, going back at least to Confederate Ireland and Owen Roe O'Neill in the 1640s, and was subsequently widely adopted by the Irish Volunteers and especially the United Irishmen. A rival organisation, the Orange Order, whose main strength was in the North, and which was exclusively Protestant, was founded in 1795 in memory of King William of Orange and the 'glorious revolution' of 1689. Following the 1798 Rebellion which pitted orange against green, the ideal of a later Nationalist generation in the mid-nineteenth century was to make peace between them and, if possible, to found a self-governing Ireland on such peace and union.

Irish tricolours were mentioned in 1830 and 1844, but widespread recognition was not accorded the flag until 1848. From March of that year Irish tricolours appeared side by side with French ones at meetings held all over the country to celebrate the revolution that had just taken place in France. In April, Thomas Francis Meagher, the Young Ireland leader, brought a tricolour of orange, white and green from Paris and presented it to a Dublin

meeting. John Mitchel, referring to it, said: 'I hope to see that flag one day waving, as our national banner'.

Although the tricolour was not forgotten as a symbol of hoped-for union and a banner associated with the Young Irelanders and revolution, it was little used between 1848 and 1916. Even up to the eve of the Rising in 1916, the green flag held undisputed sway. Neither the colours nor the arrangement of these early tricolours were standardised. All of the 1848 tricolours showed green, white and orange, but orange was sometimes put next to the staff, and in at least one flag the order was orange, green and white. In 1850 a flag of green for the Catholics, orange for the Protestants of the Established Church and blue for the Presbyterians was proposed. In 1883 a "Parnellite" tricolour of yellow, white and green, arranged horizontally, is recorded.
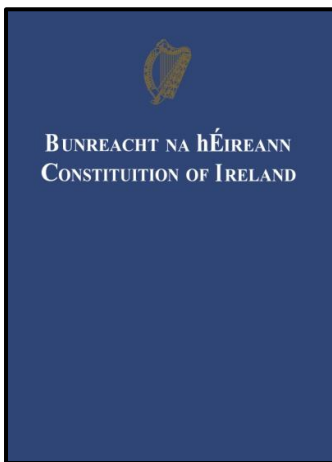


Down to modern times yellow has occasionally been used instead of orange, but by this substitution the fundamental symbolism is destroyed. Associated with separatism in the past, flown during the Rising of 1916 and capturing the national imagination as the banner of the new revolutionary Ireland, the tricolour came to be acclaimed throughout the country as the National Flag. It continued to be used officially during the period 1922-1937, and in the latter year its position as the National Flag was formally confirmed by the new Constitution (left), Article 7 of which states: 'The national flag is the tricolour of green, white and orange'."

## Milestones of the National Flag

The story of the Irish national flag is closely interlinked with that of historical events. The flag serves as a reference-point for events in Irish history, that allows for a visual point around which to orientate. Below are a number of milestones in the history of the tricolour. It is expected that that the reader would know or find out for themselves the events that took place during each particular year.

- 1848 – first unveiled in Ireland
- 1915 – first verifiably used in a cause
- 1919 – first officially adopted
- 1922 – first internationally recognized
- 1937 – first constitutionally recognized
- 1955 – first wide international exposure
- 1990 – first great display of the tricolour in Ireland
- 1998 – first great celebration of the tricolour
- 2013 – first endorsement by Oireachtas of the flag protocol

# 8. The National Emblem – the Harp

*The harp is an incredibly historic, cultural, controversial and enduring Irish symbol that has very appropriately become the national emblem of Ireland.*

The harp (cláirseach) is an ancient Irish symbol that forms an inseparable part of Irish identity. It is one of the oldest national symbols in the world and is widely recognized as symbolising Ireland - the only country to have a musical instrument as its national emblem.

## The Harp and Irish Identity



Dr. Mary Louise O'Donnell is a person who understands the importance of the harp as a symbol of Irish identity. She is an accomplished harpist, the author of *'Ireland's Harp: The Shaping of Irish Identity'* (University College Dublin Press, 2014), and numerous other publications. Here is a piece she has written especially for this guide:

"The Irish harp in various shapes and sizes, surmounted by a crown or phrases in Irish or English, set against a blue or green background, has been a mediating symbol between Irish and colonial cultures for centuries. Although the iconic instrument was first employed on Irish coinage minted in England in the sixteenth century, its importance as a symbol of Irish music and culture predates this by several hundred years. Since the eighteenth century, the popularity of the harp icon on the flags and insignia of various political and cultural movements has secured the instrument's status as a significant marker of national identity."

## History of the Harp



The oldest depiction of the harp as the arms of *'le Roi d'Irlande'* (King of Ireland) is found in the *Wijnbergen Armorial*, a French roll of arms that dates to around 1270. It describes a gold harp on a blue field. The earliest known depiction of the harp as an 'Irish emblem' dates to 1534 on a 'halfgroat' coin. The harp became an 'official emblem' of Ireland in 1541 when the *'Lordship of Ireland'* became the '*Kingdom of Ireland'* under King Henry VIII of England. Since then different versions of the harp have been used on many flags and emblems throughout the centuries, most notably by the United Irishmen who adopted the harp along with the motto: "*It is new-strung and shall be heard.*" The particular design that was used was the *'Maid of Erin'* harp – a combination of a female personification of Erin (Éire or Ireland) and a harp.

Due to political and social changes in the 19th century, the *'Maid of Erin'* harp became less used on flags and banners and was slowly replaced by a 'plain harp' that was similar to the design of the Trinity College ("Brian Boru") harp – a 15th century Gaelic harp featuring 29 strings that is now on display at Trinity College Dublin. This design was used by various political and revolutionary groups and became the national emblem of Ireland with the founding of the Irish Free State in 1922. Since then, the Trinity College harp has served as the model for all official representations of the harp on State emblems and coinage. However, there are a number of issues surrounding the representation of the harp, including the use of many different versions of the harp.



## Orientation and Number of Strings

In his book *'The Irish Harp Emblem'* (Wolfhound Press, 1998), Séamus Ó Brógáin provides an excellent account of how the harp was adopted officially by the Irish Free State government in December 1923 having been generally used for official purposes since the foundation of the Irish Free State in December 1922. Despite it being customary in heraldry to depict harps with diagonal strings, the particular design that was adopted featured 18 vertical strings. However this design was only used on the State Seal (left) and Irish Pound coinage and the passport of the Irish Free State used a harp with diagonal strings.

In 1945, the design of the national coat of arms of Ireland was registered by the first Chief Herald of Ireland, Dr. Edward MacLysaght, with the authority of the Irish Government. The design featured a vertically-aligned harp with 15 strings.
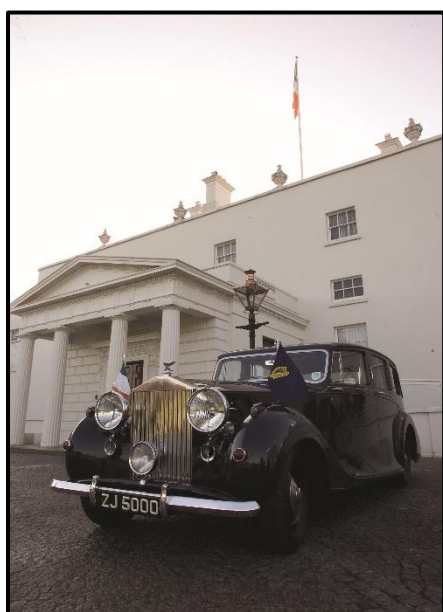


According to Dr. Susan Hood, in her book *'Royal Roots Republican Inheritance – The Survival of the Office of Arms'* (Woodfield Press, 2002) the original draft heraldic drawing had the annotation that *'no more than 15 strings should be shown for heraldic purposes'*. A change in the number of strings seems to act as milestones in Irish harp iconography. For example, in 1937, the *Seal of the President of Ireland* replaced the Irish title *'Saorstát Éireann'* with '*Éire*' and reduced the number of strings from 18 to 15. Since 1928, the *Irish Pound* ("Punt") coins featured a 16-stringed harp, but with the introduction of the Euro currency in 2002, the harp changed to having just 14 strings.

## Colours of Field and Strings

In addition to the number, the colour of the strings is also not consistent. The Office of the President of Ireland (Uachtarán na hÉireann) was established in 1937, however, the Presidential Standard was only adopted in 1945. The flag uses a less detailed version of the national coat of arms that has notably 12 vertical yellow (gold) strings. According to Séamus Ó Brógáin (*'The Irish Harp Emblem'* p. 51) "this flag was approved by the Government on 13 February 1945. A number of technical decisions were made at the same time, including the decision that... the strings of the harp be yellow (in settlement of the question raised by Edward MacLysaght, who had insisted that the strings should be white)".

The Presidential Standard was introduced prior to the inauguration of Ireland's second President Seán T. O'Kelly and therefore, it was raised at Áras an Uachtaráin in the presence of President Douglas Hyde on May 24th 1945, a month before the inauguration of his successor on June 25th 1945.



The colour of the field of the Presidential Standard has been described as *'St. Patrick's Blue'*, although, some vexilologists have raised doubts about the shade of blue employed. This is clearly seen in the Arms depicted over the entrance hall in Áras an Uachtaráin). The national coat of arms features a gold harp with white (silver) strings and is blazoned as "*Azure a harp Or, stringed Argent*". The Arms depicted above apparently evolved from the design of the Presidential Standard agreed in February 1945 and not from the description provided by the Chief Herald. Therefore, we have in reality a *'de jure'* (heraldic register) and a *'de facto'* version of the Presidential Arms.



The 'harp debate' is on-going, for example, after the enactment of the *Ireland Act, 1949* by the UK Parliament, the British Royal Arms has been a cause of some controversy over the years as this legislation effectively brought to an end the *'Kingdom of Ireland'* that was established in 1541.

It has been argued that the removal from the British Royal Arms of the *Arms of France* in 1800 and those of the *Kingdom of Hanover* in 1837 provide significant precedents for a possible change to the British Royal Arms which could more accurately reflect the current composition of the United Kingdom.

## Harp Direction

In heraldry the harp has mainly been depicted 'left-facing' and most Irish harp emblems have obeyed this rule over the centuries. Guinness is the only notable example where a 'right-facing' harp is used. Despite heraldic traditions showing otherwise, the company states that: "*As Guinness had trademarked the harp symbol in 1876, the Irish Free State Government of 1922, had to turn the official government harp the other way to differentiate between the trademarked Guinness harp and the official State emblem*".

Due to this earlier use of the harp emblem by Guinness, the Irish Government had issues registering the harp emblem. Nevertheless, in 1984, a left-facing 9-stringed 'generic harp' was registered with the *World Intellectual Property Organisation* (WIPO). This particular harp is used on government notepaper and on the Irish passport. The Office of the Chief Herald states that: "Exemplification of the State harp need not show the full complement of thirty strings provided that the number does not fall below nine".

It must also be noted that the Government prohibits the registration of trademarks consisting or resembling the national harp and under, *Section 9(1) of the Trademarks Act 1996*.



## Deconstructing the Irish Harp Emblem

In 2013, Mary Louise O'Donnell published the paper *'Death of an Icon: Deconstructing the Irish Harp Emblem in the Celtic Tiger Years (Journal of the Society for Musicology in Ireland, Vol. 8 2012-13, p 21-39)'* which looked at the changes in the representation of the Irish harp emblem since the mid-1990's, especially in different government departments. Unlike the national flag, the national coat of arms is not protected by the Constitution and therefore, its depiction has become increasingly vulnerable to the whims of some very adventurous graphic designers.

In 2008, the Genealogical Society of Ireland (GSI) published an article on the adoption of a logo for the Houses of the Oireachtas (Irish Parliament) which it described as an "*insidious mania of corporate logoism*" and argued that: *"The Arms of Ireland represent our nation, its people and its democracy and therefore, under no circumstances whatsoever should any government department, state agency or indeed, the Houses of the Oireachtas be permitted to replace these Arms with a mere "corporate logo*". (*'Ireland's Genealogical Gazette'*, 2008, Vol. 3. No. 3)

# 9. Flags in Dublin City

*Ed Bowden is officially the Senior District Parks Officer for Dublin City Council, unofficially he is responsible for the flying of flags in Dublin City Centre. This is what he has to say:*



*Dublin, Ireland and EU flags fly above City Hall in Dublin*

For the last 15 years I have been looking after the flags within Dublin City. This ranges from our outdoor flag poles to indoor events that require flags. Our main buildings in the city - City Hall, the Mansion House and the Civic Offices, permanently fly three flags - the Irish National, Dublin Municipal and the European Union flag.

We provide flags at indoor events and functions i.e. State visits, the E.U. Presidency etc. This can involve hotels, convention centres and some of our civic buildings. Flags and bunting are also provided for summer festivals, sports competitions and many other events that take place in the community. We have 150 flag poles along the River Liffey which we use to fly flags that promote events in the city, i.e. Liffey Swim, Gay Pride and Chinese New Year etc.

The three main bridges - Butt, Grattan (Capel Street) and O'Connell Bridges have flag poles that permanently fly the same flags. Butt and Grattan Bridges have always flown 12 x 4 vertical Dublin and Leinster flags, while O'Connell Bridge now flies the four provincial flags. This is something new and it is intended to continue into the future.

Government guidelines can be quite restrictive in flying our National Flag as they state does not allow for the flag to be flown during the night. In the case of our civic buildings the National flag is flown permanently but is always in floodlight during the night. This is something we arranged with the Taoiseach's Office so as to facilitate the daily flying of our national flag. In the future I would like to see our national flag flown on more of our government and local authority buildings. I would also like to see our four provincial flags flown more in our country.



*Stan with Ed Bowden outside his office at Blessington Street Basin in Dublin City.*

# 10.    Flags in Ireland

*Flags are very important to Ireland and Irish people. We are very much an island of 'flag wavers' and the examples can be found all over.*


*Flags being sold outside Croke Park, Dublin before a GAA match*

Despite the abundance of flags and colours, there are very few 'official flags' on the island. For example, Ireland does not have any official County flags, only official *County Colours*. These County Colours act as de-facto flags for each county on the island. Still, apart from the Colours, there is no one specific flag for each county as there are many flag variations that are produced by different people and companies. The various crested, striped and chequered flags that are sold represent more the *commercialization* rather than *history* and *heritage* of Irish counties. The standardization of County flags takes the uniqueness away from each county and fails to represent them in a real and meaningful way.

Ireland is unique in the world, in that the 'county flags' are based on the colours worn by each GAA team and not on a specific political or social movement.  However, in light of the history of the Gaelic Athletic Association: *Cumann Lúthchleas Gael* this is understandable. The GAA has been one of the most important socio-cultural movements in the history of Ireland and although not everyone embraces Gaelic football and hurling, the GAA is nevertheless an integral part of the Irish consciousness and has played a single role in ascribing identities to each county in the form of colours and flags.

It is no surprise that the biggest displays of flags and emblems in Ireland always surrounds the GAA. Many towns and villages fly their County Colours at some point in the year. The



real enthusiasts leave their flags hanging for the whole year, while others simply put up their flags if their team is playing. County flags and bunting can be found everywhere from people's houses, farms, pubs and even schools. During GAA games Palestinian, Canadian, US and other flags can also be seen, including the contentious *Confederate flag*.

In the six counties that are part of Northern Ireland, the County Colours are only used by nationalists and republicans and generally not supported by loyalists and unionists.

*Dublin flags and bunting on show*

# 11.    Flags in Northern Ireland

*Flags are arguably the most divisive issue in Northern Ireland. The history and modern use of flags in the area is complex and controversial and requires caution from all sides.*



*Flags in Northern Ireland during marching season*

Flags and emblems have long been a controversial issue in Northern Ireland. The continuing 'flag issue' is reflective of the deep divisions that still exist between Catholic and Protestant communities – the '*peace walls'* only serve as a testament to this divide. The flying and painting of different flags and colours serve to reinforce national identities and affiliations. Their displays on murals, kerbstones, lampposts and many other places act as territorial markings for both Republicans and Loyalists.

Flags by nature are expressions of both cultural and political identities that help people to unite under common ideals and beliefs. When certain ideals and beliefs clash, then so do the flags that represent them. Northern Ireland provides the perfect example of where flags and emblems are a source of both unity and division.

## Flag of Northern Ireland



The flag of Northern Ireland is a heraldic banner and features the Red Hand of Ulster, a six-pointed star for the six counties and the British Crown on a St. George's Cross. The flag was adopted in 1953 in honour of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II and was based on the arms that were granted to the Government of Northern Ireland in 1924 by the Ulster King of Arms based in Dublin Castle.
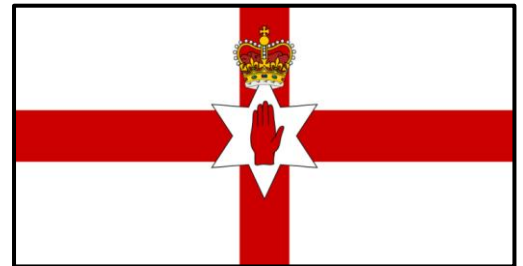
The flag lost its official status in 1972 when the Parliament of Northern Ireland was abolished by the British government and since then there has been no 'official flag' for Northern Ireland. However, internationally, the flag is still used officially for sporting fixtures and events, such as the Commonwealth Games and by Northern Ireland's soccer teams. Internally, the flag continues to be used by a number of local authorities and remains a divisive issue as it is mainly used by the loyalist and unionist communities.

## St. Patrick's Saltire

Since Northern Ireland has not had an 'official flag' since 1972, many groups have tried to adopt the St. Patrick's Saltire as a neutral and unifying symbol but this initiative has had mixed results. The flag has not had much success in Belfast, however it has been successful in Downpatrick (Dún Phádraig) in County Down, the reputed burial place of St. Patrick.  For

almost 30 years, the local authorities have used the flag for St. Patrick's Day. In addition, Church of Ireland flies this flag on special religious days throughout the island.

The St. Patrick's Saltire flag represents '*Ireland*' in the flag of the United Kingdom. However, many Irish nationalists see it as a 'unionist symbol', since it forms part of the Union Jack. The Saltire became an established Irish symbol in 1783 with the founding of the *Order of Saint Patrick* by King George III to mark the legislative independence of the Kingdom of Ireland which lasted from 1783 to 1801.

The *Saltire* is believed to derive from the arms of the FitzGeralds who were the Earls of Kildare and later Dukes of Leinster. Incidentally, *Kildare County Council* uses the Saltire on its coat of arms, as do *Cork City* and *Trinity College Dublin*, that both feature two flags – St. George's Cross and St. Patrick's Saltire. The flags of Queen's University Belfast and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland use the symbol and it can also be found on the badge of the *Police Service of Northern Ireland* (PSNI).

## Flag Studies

Flags are perhaps the most controversial issue in Northern Ireland and it is for this reason that there have been numerous studies done on the public displays of flags and emblems.

Dr. Bryan from Queen's University, Belfast, has conducted a number of studies, most notably a four-year project (2006-2009) that was commissioned by the Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister, to examine the '*Public Displays of Flags and Emblems in Northern Ireland*'. Some of the broad conclusions that were made from the report were:

- The flags put up over the summer months are predominantly associated with the unionist/loyalist tradition and are most frequently put on lampposts and telegraph poles.
- There has been a reduction of paramilitary flags flying in July from 161 in 2006 to 73 in 2009. Those of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and Young Citizen Volunteers (YCV) make up over 50% of the paramilitary flags still flying.

Today the flags are bigger and more numerous than ever before. The fact that flags can easily be made and cheaply produced is a great factor in this. Every year in July, around 4,000 flags are displayed on main roads alone. The *NI Life and Times Survey* has found that the majority of people (around 80%) on both sides do not want to see flags go up on lampposts. Many people believe (around 60%) that the flags that do go up, are put there by loyalist and republican paramilitaries. Studies have shown that the flying of flags has also a negative financial as well as social impact, as people are less inclined to shop in areas where flags are flying.

*Ulster Banner and a UDA flag flying from a lamppost*

## New Flag for Northern Ireland

A considerable amount of people in Northern Ireland and indeed many vexillologists and flag enthusiasts around the world, are supportive of the idea of designing a new official flag for Northern Ireland.

Dr. Bryan of QUB believes that the 'Red Hand of Ulster' could be used as a central symbol as it has been used consistently by both communities. However, this is problematic as the historic province of Ulster has nine counties, six in Northern Ireland and three in the Republic. Each of the three counties in the Republic, Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan, has an equally strong association with the 'Red Hand of Ulster' which was originally the banner of the Uí Néill kings of Ulster and occasionally (possibly nominally) of Ireland. Many clans and septs claiming association with the Uí Néill use the symbol on their coats of arms as do many towns north and south of the border.



The symbolism employed in the badge of the *PSNI* and that used by the *Northern Ireland Assembly* could also offer a number of very interesting possibilities for the design of a cross-community flag for Northern Ireland. The successful PSNI badge was adopted in 2001 and features the St. Patrick's Saltire along with a harp, shamrock, crown, torch, laurel leaf and scales of justice in order to represent "*diversity, inclusiveness and parity*". In 1998, with the Good Friday Agreement, the flax plant was adopted as a neutral symbol for the Northern Ireland Assembly. The six flax flowers represent the six counties of Northern Ireland and stand for the history and importance of linen in the area - linen being the material that is made from the fibers of the flax plant. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Belfast was the linen capital of the world and was even nicknamed 'Linenopolis'.



## Mutual respect for flags



Vexillology Ireland promotes peace and reconciliation between both sides and advocates for mutual respect for flags and emblems. Whether the two communities in Northern Ireland can find a vexilological symbol which unites them while simultaneously recognising their respective cultural identities and political allegiances remains to be seen. Nevertheless, such an initiative must come from the communities themselves in order to be widely accepted with common ownership.

*Stan Zamyatin on a tour in Shankill Road, Belfast during marching season*

## 12.  How to Design a Great Flag
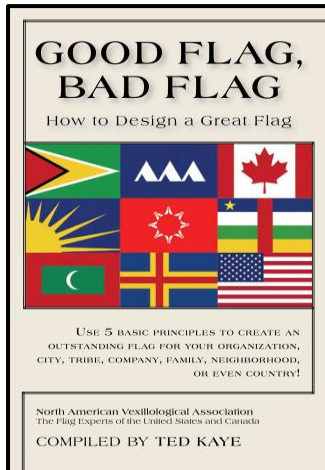


Ted Kaye is one of the leading flag experts in the world. He has compiled the book *'Good Flag, Bad Flag: How to Design a Great Flag'* which was a great inspiration for Flagging Ireland and Ted has kindly written a short piece especially for this guide:

"The basic principles of flag design, which follow here, derive from the observations and wisdom of dozens of vexillologists and vexillographers (flag designers), validated by empirical testing through large-scale public surveys.  They reflect universal principles which apply to all graphic design, as well as the unique challenges posed by the many uses and functions of a flag.  A pattern on a piece of fabric—seen from a distance, often moving, and from both sides—must respond to these constraints.

While effective flag design is universal, it can also reflect the visual style, culture, and history of a specific people—such as that of Ireland.  This guide should help encourage adoption of flags that are both successful designs and identifiably Irish.

Beauty may well be in the eye of the beholder, and it certainly cannot be distilled into rules. So consider attractiveness as an addition to these principles—and assure that resulting designs are balanced and aesthetically pleasing. Perhaps the best single piece of flag-design advice is to create the design within a rectangle just 5 cm long.  If you work with that size, you will effectively replicate what the flag will look like from a distance and avoid unnecessary detail and complexity".



*Ted Kaye with the flag of Portland, Oregon (USA) behind him*

## Why Design a Flag?

Despite the abundance of flags, there are very few 'official flags' on the island, but there is much potential to build on. Flags are needed in cities, towns, villages and in many organizations across many spheres. It can be said: 'Ireland is a colouring book waiting to be coloured in'. So what are you waiting for? Go out and design a flag! Just make sure that when you do, you stick to the '*5 Basic Principles of Flag Design*'.

## 12.1 Keep it simple!

*Keep the design of a flag simple and do not over complicate it, as that will defeat its purpose. A flag should be so simple that a child can draw it from memory.*

The simpler and more stylized the design - the better. Detailed flags are harder and more expensive to reproduce and are less likely to be remembered by people. Colouring books tend to use simple and well-known international flags which says a lot.



### Single device

This is a proposed *County Sligo* design which is based on the well-known Canadian national flag. The Irish name for Sligo is *Sligeach*, which means 'shelly place'.

The shell is a traditional symbol of Sligo and appears on many local emblems such as *Sligo GAA*, *Sligo Rovers FC* and *Sligo Rugby FC*. When an area has such an established emblem, there is no need to include anything else and a single device is enough. Simplicity and emphasis is the key to any flag and in order to give more space and importance to the shell, a *Canadian pale* is used. This is the name given to a central band in a *triband design*, that is half the length of the flag. It is called 'Canadian' because Canada was the first country to use this particular design. The shell here simply replaces the Canadian red 'Maple leaf'.

### Simple Design

The Starry Plough flag (*An Camchéachta*) is an example of a simple and effective design that works well. It depicts a stylized agricultural plough with a representation of the constellation Ursa Major, commonly known as 'the Plough'. The original Starry Plough flag was a banner and made its first appearance at a Citizen Army meeting in 1914. It was flown on O'Connell Street above the Imperial Hotel (Clery's) during the 1916 Easter Rising. In 1934 the Republican Congress decided to create a new version of the Starry Plough Banner.
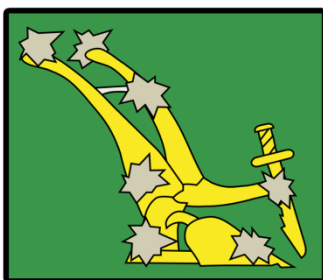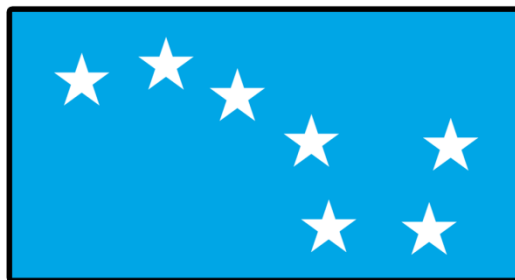


| Starry Plough Banner | Starry Plough Flag | Alaska (U.S.A.) |

This change to a new design is a good example of how a flag works better when it is less detailed and more stylized. In addition, the simpler design also made it cheaper and more easy to reproduced. It is interesting to note, that this flag is very similar to the flag of the U.S. state of Alaska which was adopted in 1927. The flag depicts the Plough or as it as known in America 'the Big Dipper' along with the North star, that symbolises Alaska which is the most northerly state. In 2001 it was voted the 5th best North American subnational flag in a survey carried out by *NAVA* - the North American Vexillological Association.

## Effective Design

The Sunburst flag (*An Gal Gréine)* is another example of an effective design that employs a 'sun device' and was one of two types of flag that were used by the Fenians. The sun is a popular motif used around the world, notably by the *Republic of Macedonia* and the U.S. state of *Arizona*, whose flag was voted the 6th best in the NAVA survey. The stylized orange sun on a blue field creates  a strong single device that can be identified from all sides.
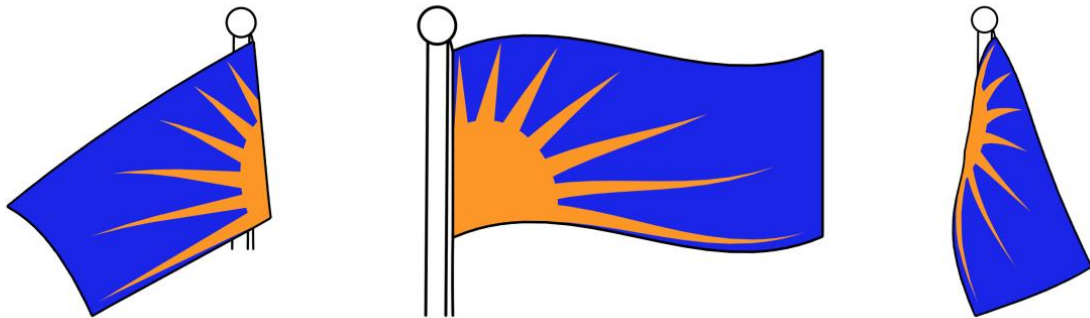


By having the image of the sun placed on the left-hand side (hoist), the flag is still recognizable when hanging at rest, either indoors or when there is no wind outside. It is best to avoid placing symbols on the right-hand side (fly) as they can become hidden. Most flags tend to have the design in the middle which creates balance and it us up to you to decide where to place the device to ensure that it will be seen in flight or rest.

## Lapel Pin Test

A good way to design a flag is to create it in the size of a lapel pin. As Ted Kaye mentioned in the last chapter, a flag drawing around 5cm in length is enough for you to imagine how the flag will look like from a distance and allow you to avoid unnecessary detail and



complexity. The Norwegian flag is a great example of a simple flag that can still be identified either at a distance or at a small size, like on a lapel pin. The design is very distinct and can easily be remembered, recognized and reproduced.
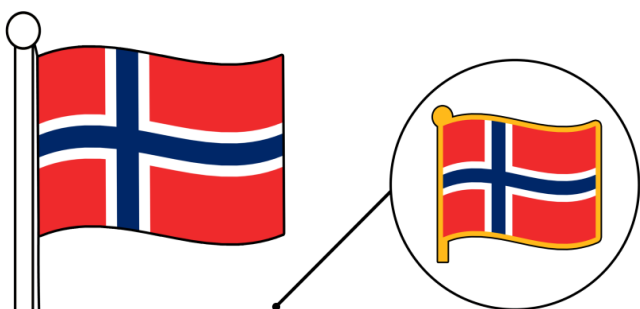
## 12.2  Use symbols with a meaning

*A flag should use symbols that relate to what it is trying to symbolize. Try to avoid using symbols that are not unique or relevant to their purpose.*

When designing a flag for an area you should consider the *local names*, *colours*, *symbols*, *historical figures* and the *events* that have taken place there. Ireland is full symbols, so you will never be short of something to depict on a flag. Just make sure to do your research.



### Local Symbol

Many Irish towns and villages have traditional symbols and it is important that they are used in local flag designs. For example, the name *Leixlip* comes from the Old Norse *Lax Hlaup*, meaning 'salmon leap', the Irish name *Léim an Bhradáin* is a direct translation of this. The salmon is a very established symbol in the town and many of the local organizations depict it on their emblems, such as the local schools, GAA, Tennis and Football club. The design for a Leixlip flag should definitely feature a salmon, especially one leaping over water, since the town lies on the River Liffey and the depiction of a river will carry even more importance and symbolism.



### Local Place Name

Many local Irish names throughout the island derive from  trees, especially the oak (dair) which is frequently found in place names. Derry (*Doire*, meaning 'oak wood'), Kildare (*Cill Dara*, meaning 'church of the oak') and Adare (*Áth Dara*, meaning 'ford of the oak') are but a few examples. The oak is depicted on various flags of the *Derry GAA* team and on the flag of the *Defence Forces Training Centre* which is located in the Curragh, Co.Kildare. The flag for the village of Adare in Co. Limerick could depict an oak leaf with acorns, waves to represent a 'ford' (shallow place in a river) and use the Limerick GAA colours of 'green and white'.

It is no surprise that the National Tree of Ireland is the *Sessile Oak* (Quercus petraea). The word 'sessile' means 'sitting' and refers to the way the acorn sits directly on the twig without a stalk. In Irish it is called *Dair ghaelach* (Gaelic oak) and is the most frequently found species of Oak in Ireland. It is almost fully resistant to damp and has been used for

barrel, house and ship construction for centuries. This tree only became the official tree of Ireland in 1990, with the first official tree planting taking place in Ardagh, County Longford.
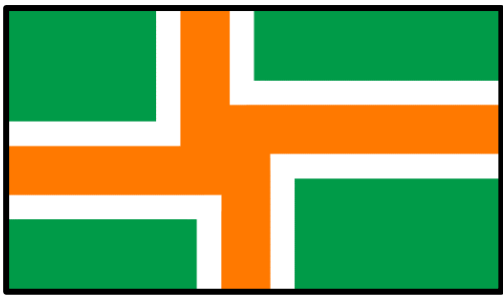
## St. Brigid's Cross



St. Brigid's cross is a symbol that we are all familiar with. Many children every year undertake the traditional Irish craft of making the cross out of rushes for the feast day of St. Brigid on 1st February. The cross can be found in many Irish homes but is almost non-existent on flags. The only notably example is the flag of the city of *Portland* in the U.S. state of Oregon which unintentionally uses a St. Brigid's Cross. In the 5th century, St. Brigid found a monastery on the site where Kildare town now sits. In honour of her, Kildare town could adopt a flag that depicts a stylized St. Brigid's cross and uses the three Irish national colours as a reflection of the fact that St. Brigid is one of the three patron saints of Ireland.
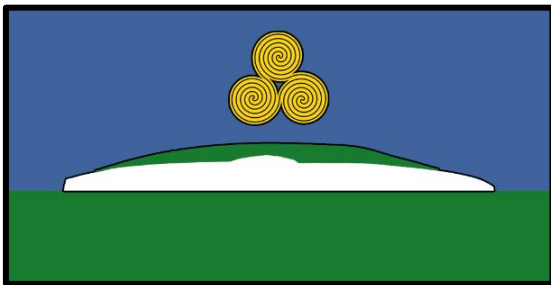
## Triskelion



The triskelion is a motif that is made of three interlocked spirals. Although this symbol can be found in many places throughout history, it is most notably found in Celtic art during the La Tène culture. Our closest Celtic neighbour, the Isle of Man uses the triskelion on its flag, as do many other places such as Sicily and the German town of Füssen. We in Ireland, on the other hand, have only come to use this symbol in the roundel of the Irish Air Corps. There is a lot of potential in using this beautiful and ancient motif on Irish flags. For example, the famous prehistoric monument of *Newgrange* contains many triskelion carvings. By combining the motif with a recognizable stylized depiction of Newgrange, a striking flag can be created that honours Irish heritage.

## Landscape Symbol



Landscapes are an integral part of people's identity. Both flags and landscapes play a significant role in encouraging a sense of pride amongst local people as they provide a real and tangible sense of identity. Perhaps the best example of this is the Ukrainian national flag which depicts *'blue skies over golden wheat fields'* and reflects the boundless Ukrainian *steppe* or fertile plains that form most of the national landscape. Our 'Emerald Isle' is covered in beautiful landscapes that all mean something to everyone. By associating a flag with a particular landscape you create a deeper symbolism.

## 12.3  Use fewer colours

*Try to use basic colours that contrast well and are limited to three, as this keeps the design simple and bold. More colours make the flag complicated and more expensive.*

For flag design it is best to use the basic colours: red, yellow, green, blue, black and white. These colours are the most frequently used ones on national flags, with red being the most common and black the least. Just remember that colours can have different meanings in different places, so you should be aware of the associations before using them.
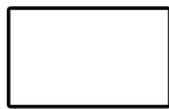
| RED | WHITE | YELLOW | GREEN | BLUE | BLACK |
|-----|-------|--------|-------|------|-------|

- **Red** symbolizes blood, revolution, courage and strength, as in the flag of *Albania*
- **White** symbolizes peace, innocence, purity, virtue and snow, as in the flag of *Finland*
- **Yellow** symbolizes the sun, wealth, crops and fertile soil, as in the flag of *Ecuador*
- **Green** symbolizes the earth, agriculture, fertility and hope, as in the flag of *Cameroon*
- **Blue** symbolizes freedom, peace, prosperity and water, as in the flag of *Botswana*
- **Black** symbolizes strength, heritage, willpower and fertile soil, as in the flag of *Estonia*

Other colours that can also be used include: *orange* - as in the case of the *Armagh* GAA team, *maroon* as in the cases of the *Galway* and *Westmeath* GAA teams and *purple* – as in the case of the *Wexford* GAA team. The abundance of bicolours and tricolours in the world is a testament to the fact that two and three colours work best.  Since the GAA County flags have no more than three colours, it should not be a problem to keep to the limits when designing county and other related flags.

## Using Local County Colours

It is a good idea to use traditional local colours for a local flag. Each county on the island of Ireland has its own official GAA colours and they can be incorporated with another colour to create a new and interesting design. For example, the County Colours of Wexford are 'purple and gold'. The two can be combined with white to form a flag for Wexford town. The three ships have been used as a symbol of Wexford since earliest times in order to highlight its maritime importance. The town sits at the mouth of the River Slaney, on the sea coast and the waves on the flag can illustrate this.
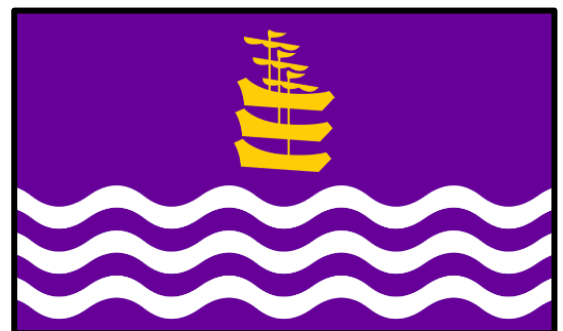
## Using More than 3 Colours

Using more than three colours on a flag only really works when the extra colours are either black, white or both, as in the national flag of Guyana. It was designed by *Whitney Smith*, a very important figure in the field of flag studies who coined the term 'vexillology'. The black and white lines (fimbriations) were added later by the *College of Arms* in the UK in order to create a greater contrast between the colours. Fimbriations are useful when you cannot avoid using non-contrasting colours and they help to make the design more vivid and bold. The South African flag uses six colours and is another example of where a flag works.

## Greyscale Test

Contrast is very important in flags, you should make sure that dark colours are separated with light colours and vice-versa. If this is not done, it can create a blurred design that is hard to recognize from a distance. Well designed flags have clear and distinct elements that stand out from one another and this can determined using something known as the 'greyscale test'. This test allows you see the level of contrast between colours and a good flag will always reproduce well in greyscale. A great example of this is the flag of Ulster:
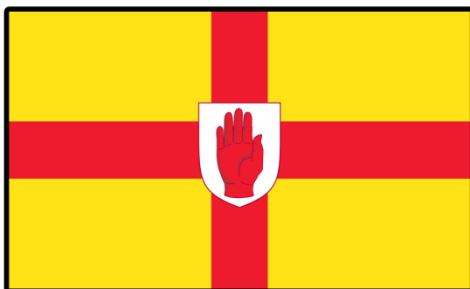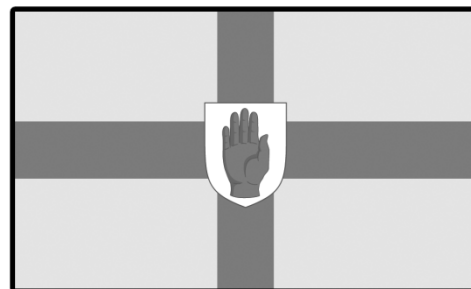


**Colour**                                    **Greyscale**

The red and yellow colours contrast very well and are highly effective, as they are on the Spanish national flag. In heraldry, the combination of white and yellow is discouraged and the black outline (fimbriation) around the shield keeps the white from mixing with the yellow. In addition, both the cross and the 'Red Hand of Ulster' (*Lámh Dhearg Uladh*) make for a distinctive design that can be easily identified from a distance.

## Using Pantone Colours

Many flags use the *Pantone Matching System® (PMS)* which is an international standardized colour reproduction system that allows for colour indication. By choosing specific Pantone colours you allow different manufacturers to correctly reproduce your flag. It might also be helpful to match your colours to those already being used in national or regional flags.  For example, the green in the Irish tricolour is *347*, while the orange is *151*.

## 12.4  No text or coat of arms

*A flag is not a document and should not contain any text, arms or seals. It is well known that a picture is worth a thousand words, therefore a good design should speak for itself.*

A flag by definition is a *graphic symbol*, so by putting words on it you defeat its purpose. If writing was made to go on flags, would we not have just written 'Ireland' on a flag? Well, in fact something like that has already been done before. A flag with the inscription 'Irish Republic' was flown alongside the Irish tricolour over the General Post Office in Dublin during the 1916 Easter Rising. Although it was a beautiful flag, the tricolour prevailed because flags by nature are graphic symbols and that is where their strength lies.



The trick is to design a flag using symbols, rather than letters, that will be immediately recognisable from a distance. Writing is generally difficult to read on a flag, either from far away, when the flag is flapping in the wind or when it is simply hanging down. From a financial point of view, text is not reversible and so this forces double or even triple thickness of fabric which only brings up the costs of production.

### Emblems on Flags

There are many flag variations for each GAA county team that are produced by different companies and people. Each county has their own emblem (crest) which is generally made to look like a coat of arms. Counties such as *Donegal*, *Mayo*, *Offaly* and *Roscommon* use emblems that are similar to their respective official County Council arms. Normally the flags that get produced contain both the name and 'crest' of the county team, thereby breaking both parts of the rule.

Ireland is not alone in breaking this rule and many U.S. state flags also place their local emblems (state seals) on their flags. The issue is that both seals and coat of arms are designed in such a way as to be appreciated from up close. By using either of the two, you create a very detailed design that loses its effectiveness and consequently its purpose. The best flags only use elements from a seal or arms and it is not very difficult to do this.



## From Arms to Flag

The Irish name for Roscommon is *Ros Comáin*, which means 'St. Coman's Wood', after the man who built a monastery there in the 5th century. The coat of arms of the county were granted in 1961 and feature a green triangle which symbolizes *Ros* (wood) and a golden cross that represents *Comáin* (St. Coman). These symbols, combined with the County Colours of 'primrose and blue', are enough to create an effective flag. The triangle is a common pattern that is used on flags and works well as it is usually placed at the hoist.

## Banners and Military Colours

Writing is only acceptable on *Military Colours* and *Banners* as they serve a different purpose and are displayed differently. These flags tend to be used on the ground rather than on high flag poles and are carried firmly - allowing observers to see and read parts of the text.

**Military Colours** are flags of military units such as regiments, brigades and battalions. The 'Colours' to the right are that of 2nd Brigade and were part of a set of six unit Colours and were designed in 1964. The flag of the 2nd Brigade was the first to be displayed and was used during the celebrations in the parade in Dublin to mark the 50th anniversary of the Easter Rising in 1966.
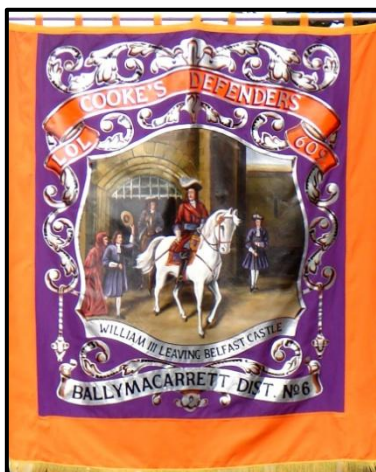




**Banners** tend to be flags that have writing and elaborate designs which are attached to crossbars. They are usually used at parades and marches and are carried in front of marching bands. Northern Ireland has a long history of banners and there are many examples to be found (like the one on the left), especially with the parading traditions of the Orange Order. *'The Twelfth'* is the main marching day of the year which marks the victory of the Protestant King William III of Orange over the Catholic King James II at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690.

## 12.5  Be original and creative

*Try to create an original design that is not too similar to another flag, otherwise it will then get mixed up. This is probably the most difficult of tasks, but it is also the most important.*

Many good designs have already been taken, however there is always room for creativity. It is a good idea to check the flags of neighbours to see what designs and colours they use. Unfortunately, there are a number of GAA county teams that share the same colours and in turn cause confusion and misrepresentation. For example: *Donegal*, *Leitrim*, *Meath* and *Kerry* all share the same 'green and gold' bi-colours.
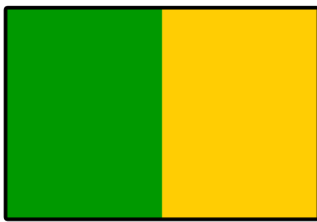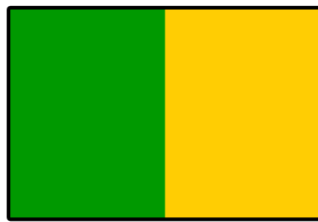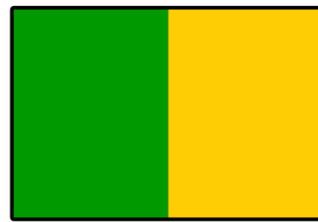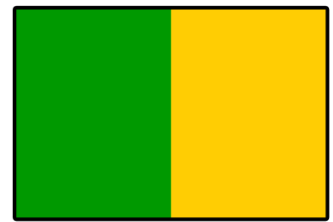


| Donegal | Leitrim | Meath | Kerry |

Ireland suffers the same problem that Austria does, in that some neighbouring counties (states for Austria) have the same coloured flags. In the case of Austria, the states of *Tyrol* and *Upper Austria* have the same flag and it is only when the arms of the respective states are placed on the flag, that one can differentiate between the two. Ireland is no different and places the emblems of GAA teams on the flags. However, this does not suffice since this breaks the previous rule. Try to stand out from your neighbours and be original.
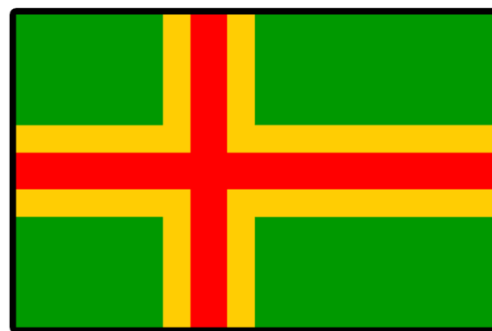


### Original Design

For example, an *official County Donegal* flag can simply use elements from its GAA County crest which is based on the official County arms. There is no need to incorporate all the parts of the emblem. The County Colours of 'green and gold' combined with the *red cross* is sufficient enough to symbolize Donegal. By turning the cross onto its side, a *Scandinavian cross* is created. There are many flags that employ this popular design, but no well-known flags that use this particular colour combination. The closest similarity would be with the flag of the Finnish islands of *Åland* that uses blue instead of green. This an instance of when a simple alteration to another flag can create something original. Therefore Donegal could easily adopt this flag without the fear of being mixed up with another place.

Another group of GAA teams that use similar county colours are *Cavan*, *Laois*, *Monaghan* and *Waterford*, all of whom use a bicolour of 'White and Blue' in different ways.
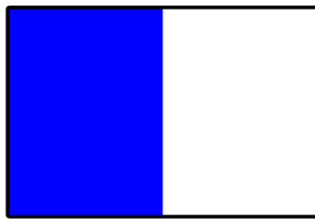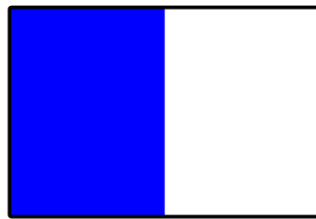


| **Cavan** | **Laois** | **Monaghan** | **Waterford** |

When so many places have almost identical flags, a flag loses its originality and consequently its purpose. The best way to design a flag is to firstly look at what it is setting out to represent. The fla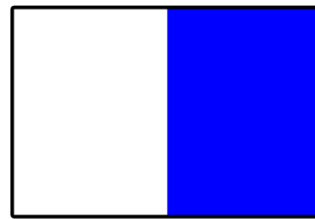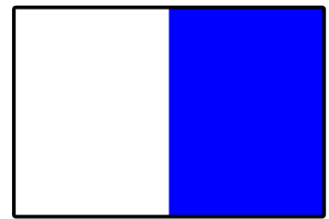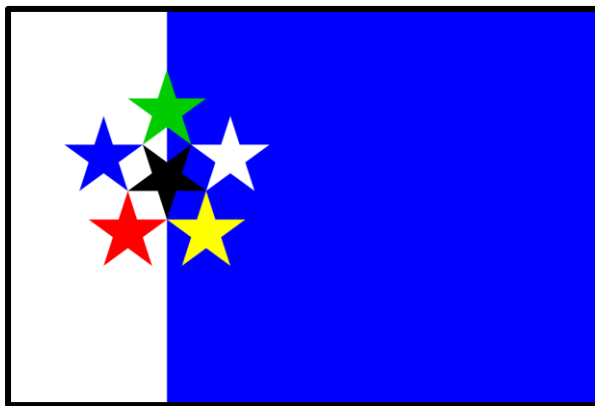g of *FOTW* is a great example where a simple bicolour of white and blue can be made into something original and representative.



## Creative Design

*Flags of the World* (FOTW) is an internet-based vexillological association that was set up in 1993. Its main component is the internet's largest website devoted to vexillology and contains short histories and colour illustrations of flags and banners of various countries, cities, towns and provinces, both historical and still in use today.

You can find out more information by going onto: http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/.

The flag of FOTW was designed in 1995 by *Mark Sensen* who describes it as follows:

"*White on the hoist stands for peace, blue on the fly for progress. The six colours of the stars are the main colours used in flags. The stars help to make one bigger symbol. The way the stars are all connected to each other represents the Internet.*"

Although the flag contains six colours, it works well just like the *Olympic flag* and manages to show the universality and the 'meeting' of different flag experts and enthusiasts around the world. The six colours not only represent the countries of world, they also represent the main colours employed on the national flags of countries , something the



Olympic flag does also. The star pattern is offset to the left-hand side (hoist) which means that the flag is still recognizable when hanging at rest, either indoors or when there is no wind outside.
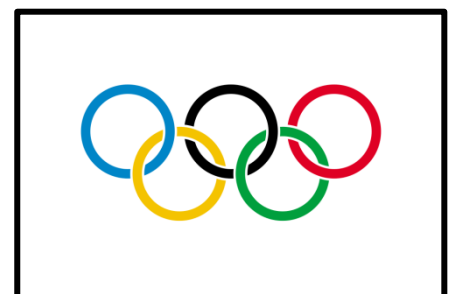
## 13.  Flag Design Competition



*Flags should be chosen and embraced by the people they try to represent. The best way to do this is to run a flag design competition. The Flag Institute in London provides some guidelines in doing this.*

In 2013, the Flag Institute launched the inspirational *'Creating Local & Community Flags'*, a guide to assist communities in designing flags and organising flag competitions. *Philip Tibbetts* is the 'Community Vexillologist' for the organization and works with regional and local communities who are trying to design flags. Here are his guidelines to help people run a flag competition:
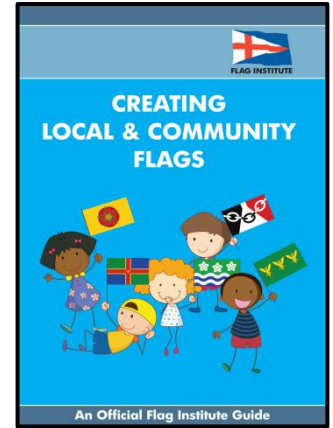
"Flags are strangely transcendental things. Each flag distils the very essence of a particular place into a graphic and symbolic expression unique to the community it serves. Yet despite this direct bond between flags and specific places the basis of flags themselves is universal - functional objects that have certain requirements and achieve particular goals. So as the principles of flag design found in this guide are common across borders so too are the benefits that drive the adoption and use of community flags.

The benefits of a 'community flag' can be seen in and around the place or community that they seek to represent. The first benefit is internal to a community, giving a common symbol for all to rally around. Wider than this is the visibility that the community is afforded by the outside world when they come into contact with the flag. And finally, by preserving the heritage and identity of one of the patchwork pieces that make up higher levels of identity, we are preserving part of the foundation of that identity too.



*St. Piran's Flag/Flag of Cornwall (Moontour.ie)*

In Great Britain, Cornwall is a fantastic example of all three of these principles working in concert. Flags are flown there as the people are quite rightly proud of their unique identity. The ancient heritage of Cornwall as a Celtic nation - *Kernow*, with its own language - *Kernewek*, is very much to the fore in shaping its modern identity. These Cornish flags are seen by visitors in the county and their ubiquity on car bumper stickers, sports team emblems and pasty packaging raises the visibility of Cornwall right across the country. In turn by bolstering this one piece of the Great Britain and Ireland patchwork we are all enriched. Furthermore that very ubiquity of the Cornish flag, along with other popular emblems such as the Lancashire & Yorkshire roses, has helped drive an increasing desire.

*Philip Tibbetts with the Black Country flag*

A desire for other communities – whether village, county or province – right across the country to emulate this success such as in the case of Caithness county following Orkney and Shetland's example. Some places have had specific benefits in mind, such as historic counties like Flintshire in Wales eager to preserve their identity in the face of administrative changes. Similarly the village of Finchfield held a competition for their flag focussed their efforts on getting a flag to help preserve a village identity struggling across administrative borders which even eventually went on to be a successfully rallying point symbol against their local library closure. The Black Country regional flag competition has finally given an area with a strong identity a symbol with which it can be recognised. The provincial flags of England are ancient symbols that themselves are important parts of the nation's history and important to record and celebrate.

All of Europe, and Britain and Ireland especially, is made up of layer upon layer of different identities. By celebrating this each of these layers and their components we celebrate part of what it is to be from our parts of the world in local and regional senses. To me the Irish understanding of identity from village, through county and province and beyond has been of particular use in managing the growth in the number and types of flags inducted into the UK registry. Ireland has a fantastic, understood and celebrated framework of traditional identities and I very much hope this guide sees it flagged, as it fully deserves to be!"


*The village of Flore in Northamptonshire (UK), celebrating all of its 'layers' of identity*

## Stages of a Flag Competition

A normal competition would have around 7 stages: preparation, launch, competition entries, shortlisting, voting, registration and unveiling. Philip outlines each stage:

### 1. Preparation

Unsurprisingly the most important section as it is here that the stakeholders should be identified and then bought in to a plan by which the competition is run is agreed. A competition should be a locally driven thing and as such the stakeholders should cover off various scopes of local community life – political, social, historical, media such as councils, societies, museums and papers. One body in particular should take the lead to front the

competition, with the support of the others, and one person identified as the central point to manage the competition is wise. With the support of vexillological bodies this person can help together the likely timescales and requirements of the competition for other partners to agree.

## 2. Launch

The launch itself is a simple phase focussed on an event, like the switch that brings the competition to life. Once the plan is agreed in the preparation phase then competition information for entrants, the mechanism for receiving entries and an initial press release should be worked up. Template documents provided by supporting vexillological bodies can be of help here particularly around design advice and conditions for entry. The lead organisation and/or local media can then use the press release to launch the story and get people designing.

## 3. Entries

This phase should mostly be concerned with simply receiving the entries in accordance with the requirements laid out in the competition information made available at the launch. From the organisers point of view the phase is mostly about making sure that entries are submitted in media that the competition runners are comfortable with, includes adequate rationale behind the proposal and a confirmation that the design is released into the public domain. A month is a good amount of time to allow people to imagine, realise and submit ideas. This phase is a good time to think ahead and arrange some of the logistics of necessary for future phases, particularly the shortlisting and unveiling. Finally another press release towards the end of the entries phase may be useful in spurring a final flurry of submissions.



## 4. Shortlisting

Once, and ideally soon after, the deadline for entries is over a shortlisting panel should be convened in person preferably. A representative of the appropriate vexillological bodies should be there to ensure any finalist meets registration standards and the other competition

*Ted Kaye helping with the Fiji flag selection process in July 2015*

stakeholders should also have a representative, other bodies can be included at the discretion of the organisers. A shortlisting panel should avoid being too large (6-8 has been a good upper limit in the past) in order to remain focussed. It may be useful for the vexillological bodies to brief the other representatives more fully on registration standards.

It is also crucial to remember that the panel has a duty of care to select the best flags possible so should be empowered to edit, modify or merge entries where doing so would improve the graphical or symbolic properties of the flag.

## 5. Voting

Once the shortlisting has been completed the finalists must each have artwork created to the standards required by the vexillological bodies that will register them, this ensures that the public can have confidence that the winner will be unaltered from what has been voted on. The stakeholders should have agreed in the initial plan what method will be used to conduct the vote, which should be held by the fronting organisation and announced with a press release. Voting can be done online, in the press, physically or if necessary a combination of these things as best suits the need of the community in question. There is no way of making a failsafe vote short of a full blown referendum so taking reasonable precautions and the needs of the community in mind are the best guiding principles. The voting itself is advised to take 2-4 weeks, if 4 weeks or longer a press release in the last week calling for final votes may be useful.

## 6. Registration

From a competition point of view once the voting is closed and the results have been confirmed by the vexillological bodies then the design can be considered to be registered, and will be duly inducted into the records. The appearance online of the subsequent registry entry can be held back to coincide with an unveiling at the discretion of the organisers.

## 7. Unveiling

Unveiling is strictly just the start of usage for the flag, but a good unveiling can get things off with a bang. This should be done fairly soon after the close of the voting, allowing time for the winner to be manufactured. The type of ceremony is obviously dependant on the needs and resources of the community in question – from a simple gathering to raise the flag for the first time to something grander and formal. But whatever the scale happy people with a colourful flag make for great publicity photos to be reported in the media. It is worth remembering that the flag should be promoted and used after its unveiling. Constant and creative usage will help the flag connect with the community it represents.



*Birmingham flag unveiling with 11-year old designer Thomas Keogh on 24 July 2015*

## 14.  Ireland Flag Registry

*Vexillology Ireland has taken the initiative to create and maintain a flag registry in Ireland.*



*Vexillology Ireland* is developing an on-line registration system for flags and emblems, including 'assumed arms' and hopefully, this new registration facility will be enable individuals, groups and organisations in Ireland to have their newly designed flags and coats-of-arms recorded as a new cultural heritage resource which would be publicly accessible on-line. Models such as that operated in the State of Oregon and supported by the Portland Flag Association are being considered as easy to manage and use on-line registration facilities.

The *Ireland Flag Registry* (IFR) is a <u>voluntary registration</u> facility for flags and emblems in Ireland. The objective of the registry is to maintain a definitive record of flags and related symbols—national, regional, and local.  *Vexillology Ireland* welcomes applications for the registration of flags and emblems representing any Club, Society, Association, School, College, Company, Town, Village or Parish, Clan/Sept or Family Association and others, including individuals.

## Registering a Flag

Before registering a new flag, *Vexillology Ireland* will have to make sure that the design:

- Meets certain graphical standards of design
- Has been selected in an appropriate manner by the applicants
- Has been through a public consultation process where appropriate
- It is public and available to everyone for use
- Is not offensive, abusive or racist in intent, imagery or symbolism
- Is not easily confused with an existing flag or emblem

For further information see the society's website: https://flagsireland.wordpress.com/

## Coats of Arms and Flags in Ireland

Heraldry and genealogy have been inextricably linked for the best part of a millennium. Heraldry, as we know it today, arrived in Ireland with the Cambro-Normans in the late twelfth-century. Some academics contend that a form of native Gaelic heraldry existed in Ireland prior to the introduction of mainstream European heraldry and, indeed, a native (Gaelic/Celtic) symbolism is very evident in Irish heraldry today.

*Micheál Ó Comáin in the tabard of the Chief Herald of Ireland*

The conventions surrounding mainstream European heraldry, including that of England and Scotland, place the right to bear arms as hereditary and therefore, based on the genealogy of the armiger. This convention forms a part of a wider body of rules governing heraldry which is referred to as the *'Law of Arms'* which were largely observed by the Chief Heralds of Ireland from 1943 when the contents of the Office of Arms in Dublin Castle were transferred to Irish control. This heraldic officer known as the *Ulster King of Arms* operated in Dublin by Letters Patent from the Crown from February 1552 to March 31$^{st}$ 1943. The contents of the Office of Arms, renamed the Genealogical Office in 1943, include genealogical records and heraldic material dating back to its establishment in 1552.

According to Susan Hood in *'Royal Roots Republican Inheritance – The Survival of the Office of Arms'* (Dublin 2002), MacLysaght introduced a number of 'innovative practices' aimed at reviving an interest in Gaelic heraldry "recognising the traditional arms used by Gaelic families of antiquity before the foundation of the Office of Ulster King of Arms in 1552". His 'innovative practices' were to introduce heraldry to a much wider public by the 'invention' of the Irish concept of sept or clan arms. This was designed to allow anybody of a particular surname to display 'without impropriety' the arms associated with that clan or sept.

These clan/sept arms provided an instantly recognisable tentative visual link to a wider kinship group and to an ancient Irish ancestry identity. According to Hood, 'thousands of such illustrations were executed by the heraldic artists during the later 1940s and 1950s, and purchased in large quantities by visitors to the Heraldic Museum'. A new heraldic industry was born which now spans the globe with its heraldic products displayed in homes, on businesses and in Irish pubs everywhere. Undoubtedly, the industry founded by MacLysaght created important symbols of Irish identity for many of Irish ancestry across the world. These clan/sept arms are also displayed on flags and banners in the same way as versions of the County Arms are displayed on GAA flags and banners – this is the vexillological aspect of the heraldic product.

Heraldic symbolism is widely used in Ireland from school and college crests to sporting clubs and other organisations to municipal or civic heraldry. Indeed, these coats-of-arms are also displayed on flags and banners at sporting events throughout Ireland promoting pride in locality, an awareness of tradition and a respect for heritage. Recording this unique heritage which, in Ireland more than anywhere else, unites heraldry and vexillology – coats of arms and flags, is the main objective of the Ireland Flag Registry.

# 15. Flag Proposal Example

*This is a flag proposal for an official County Dublin flag that would represent the whole Dublin region and not a specific local authority. It would be a symbol of the historic, cultural and social parts of Dublin that would serve the people of Dublin for the future to come.*

In Dublin, like in other counties throughout Ireland, the GAA is of a great cultural and social importance to Dubliners of all backgrounds and the County Colours are enshrined in everyone's minds. Dublin city has an ancient Hiberno-Norse or 'Viking' heritage that is of great historical importance to the county and country as a whole. Historically, these Vikings that came mainly from present-day Norway via the Outer Hebrides to found Dublin in the late eight century and its special position was recognised in 988 AD by the King of Tara.
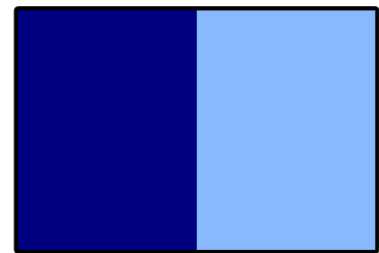
This flag proposal combines the Dublin County Colours of '*Navy and Sky Blue*' with the flag of Norway in order to create a historic, cultural and social fusion that would symbolise Dublin as whole.
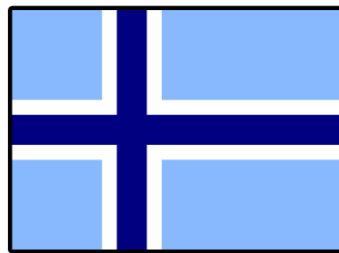


**Norway**  **Official Dublin**  **Dublin GAA**

By combining the cultural, social and historical aspects of Dublin, a flag is created that truly represents Dublin in all aspects. Dublin would not be an isolated case in adopting a Scandinavian Cross flag since both the *Orkney* and *Shetland Islands* in Scotland use it. Both sets of islands have a strong Scandinavian history that has been represented in their respective flags. Shetland honours its Scottish and Scandinavian heritage by using Scottish colours, but employing a Scandinavian cross in place of St. Andrew's. Orkney is perhaps the best example, as it uses the same ratio and almost the same design as that of Norway – the only exception being that the white stripes are yellow.
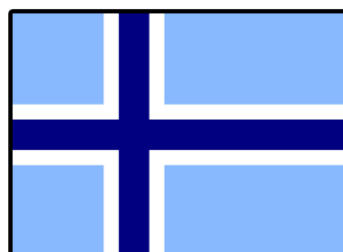


**Orkney**  **Official Dublin**  **Shetland**

## 16. Modern Flag Success Story – *the "Mountains to the Sea" flag*

*The 'Mountains to the Sea' flag was the official flag of 'Bratacha' - Ireland's first ever 'Festival of Flags and Emblems' which was hosted in Dún Laoghaire in 2013.*



The flag was designed by Australian and long-time Dún Laoghaire resident Andrew Gerard Ball. With graphic assistance from Frank Lee Cooper, Andrew was able to design a simple yet elegant flag.

The design concept was based on a combination of the Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council emblem, the coat of arms and on a loose translation of the County motto: *Ó Chuan go Sliabh*, meaning 'from harbour to mountain'. The green stroke represents the mountains while the blue one stands for the sea.



Although the flag was originally designed for the *Bratacha 2013* festival, the growth in popularity of the flag has made it the 'unofficial flag' of Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County. In August 2014, the flag began flying over the Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Hall in at weekends thanks to an initiative of An Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Marie Baker. Today the flag still flies every weekend when the official flags are not flown and, without doubt, its bright yellow background definitely adds colour to the elegant façade of the Victorian Town Hall which dates from 1880.



*'Mountains to the Sea' flag, Town Hall in Dún Laoghaire*

This design is a very contemporary interpretation of the elements depicted on the coat of arms of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council which were granted by the Chief Herald of Ireland in 1994 on the establishment of the County Council. They contain elements from the arms of the previous local authority, Dún Laoghaire Borough Corporation, which was established in 1930. The 'Letters Patent' granting both of these Arms are displayed in the Cathaoileach's (Council Chairperson) parlour at the County Hall in Dún Laoghaire. The 'Mountains to the Sea' flag's design makes its suitable for all occasions where the use of the County Heraldic Banner may not be appropriate. This is truly a flag success story!

## 17.   Development of a 'Community Flag' – *case study over ten years*

*The designing of a flag takes time, thought, research and dialogue to come up with a flag that meets the expectations and captures the aspirations of the community. Here is a very brief account of the development of the 'Dún Laoghaire Peoples' Heritage Flag'.*
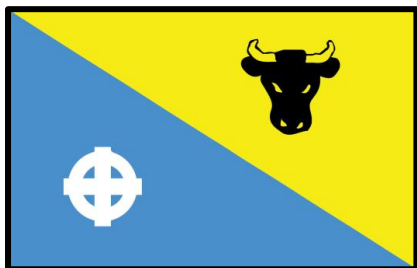


The *'Dún Laoghaire Peoples' Heritage Flag'* is a diagonal of gold over St. Patrick's blue with a black bull's head on the gold and a white Celtic Cross on the blue. The *Gold* stands for for the High Kingship of Ireland – the land of the Celtic Sun God Lugh – in the 5th century the twilight years of pagan Celtic Ireland. Black Bull for High King Laoghaire Mac Niall the eponymous founder of Dún Laoghaire in the fifth century AD – Laoghaire from the Irish for "calf-herder" – the bull or *tarbh* was sacred to the Celts. Blue commonly called St Patrick's blue, representing the Ancient Kingdom of Ireland and the sea - representing the area's rich maritime heritage. White Celtic Cross signifies the arrival of Christianity to Ireland during the reign of High King Laoghaire with the mission of St. Patrick and the dawn of Irish recorded history.

The original flag was designed in 2003 by the renowned local artist, Veronica Heywood, from a historical concept suggested by Michael Merrigan for use by Dún Laoghaire Town Football Club *(pictured right),* Dún Laoghaire Community Association and other community organisations.



*Dún Laoghaire Town Football Club with the original flag*

The flag was first flown in Holyhead (*Caergybi*), north Wales during a soccer match between Dún Laoghaire Town Football Club and Holyhead Hotspurs in May 2004 and has been used ever since in community parades in Dún Laoghaire.
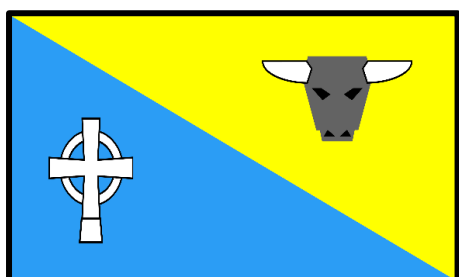


In 2013 the Dún Laoghaire Community Association commissioned a more modern contemporary variation on the original design of the flag from the artist and graphic designer, Frank Lee Cooper, and this new flag was flown during *'Bratacha 2013'* Ireland's first 'Festival of Flags and Emblems' held in May 2013. This clearly shows that flag designs actually evolve to meet the needs of their communities, however, a more traditional approach is sometimes preferred. In reality it is up to the communities to decide.

# 18. First Festival of Flags and Emblems in Ireland



*Eamon Gilmore, Richard Shakespeare and Graham Bartram at the launch of Bratacha 2013*

*In 2013 the Genealogical Society of Ireland jointly hosted Ireland's first ever 'Festival of Flags and Emblems' entitled 'Bratacha' which is the Irish word for 'flags'.*

*Bratacha* was officially launched on **Europe Day**, 9th May 2013, by Tánaiste, Mr. Eamon Gilmore and the world-renowned vexillologist, Mr. Graham Bartram, FFI, MGSI of the Flag Institute in London. The festival was organized as part of the nationwide festival *'The Gathering'* which aimed to encourage the Irish Diaspora to 'gather' in Ireland during 2013. Bratacha hosted a number of lectures, seminars, a flag parade and a very successful flag exhibition.

## Exhibition of Flags and Emblems

The *'Exhibition of Flags and Emblems'* was held at the National Maritime Museum of Ireland in Dún Laoghaire. This major exhibition was assembled with the assistance of Garda John Paul Durkan of the Museum and curated by Stan Zamyatin, CEO of *Vexillology Ireland*. The display included many maritime flags, along with Irish, Celtic and European flags. The main focus of the exhibition was the 'Conflict Area' – a provocative display of flags from past and current conflicts. This unique educational and cultural exhibition attracted some controversy over the display of certain flags and aspects of the symbolism employed in these very imaginative and informative



*Launch of the 'Exhibition of Flags and Emblems' at the Maritime Museum*

displays. By all reports the exhibition was an enormous success with very positive and hugely constructive feedback from home and oversees.



*The front of the Bratacha 'Parade of Flags'*

## Parade of Flags

The highlight of the festival was the *'Parade of Flags'* that took place on 11th May 2013 through the town of Dún Laoghaire. It featured many groups, bands and organizations including the Irish Air Corps Pipe Band, Scouting Ireland and many more. Check out 'Parade of Flags, Dún Laoghaire, Ireland' on YouYube.

## 19.  Vexillology, Heraldry and Genealogy
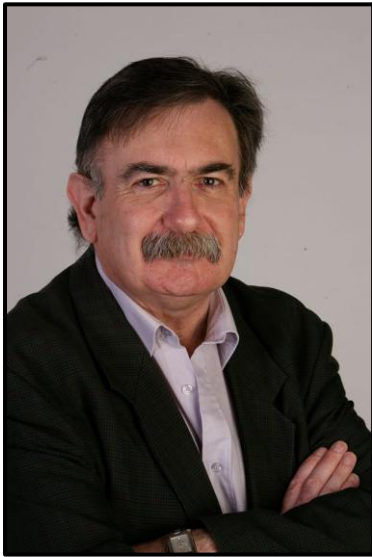
*"Fun with Flags"* as every fan of the hit US comedy series *'The Big Bang Theory'* knows, is the weekly podcast hosted by Dr. Sheldon Cooper (Jim Parsons) where he shares some of the most obscure vexillological factoids with a much bemused world, including the fact that he has his own apartment flag.  Yes, Sheldon and his ever loyal roommate, the long-suffering and infinitely patient Dr.

Leonard Hofstadter (Johnny Galecki), have their own 'apartment flag' which is described in Section 9 of the oft quoted 'roommate agreement' as a *'golden lion rampant on a field of azure'* which 'should never fly upside down, unless the apartment is in distress'.
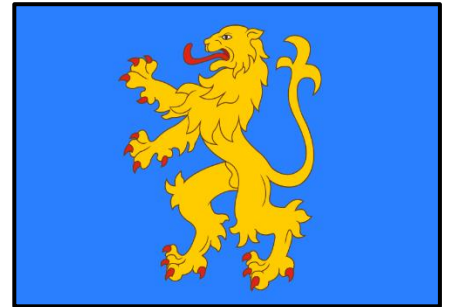
Undoubtedly the antics of the socially challenged and yet, brilliantly quirky, Sheldon, introduced the word 'vexillology' to an ever growing international fan base for *'The Big Bang Theory'.*  In their choice of 'vexillology' as an obscure nerdish pastime for the socially awkward and geeky Sheldon, the creators of this sitcom, Chuck Lorre and Bill Prady, have unwittingly freed the discipline from a stuffy esoteric world of "vexi-anoraks" to where, at long last, we can all have "fun with flags".

On a serious note, in Ireland and elsewhere flags and emblems can be seen as a source of conflict and peace, a source of unity and division and, yet their powerful symbolism endures to reinforce and sustain a feeling of connectivity with our cultural, linguistic, national, ethnic, religious or political heritage. Promoting an understanding of this symbolism is at the core of vexillology.

Nevertheless, Vexillology is still viewed by many, rightly or wrongly, as a branch or 'sub-discipline' of heraldry and that, is its essential link to genealogy and how the Genealogical Society of Ireland became involved in vexillology.  Indeed, the development of Clan/Sept Arms over the past fifty years or so and, more recently, Clan Banners and Flags, has shown that this association has never been stronger in Ireland. The 'family crest' is proudly displayed in homes, businesses and on stationery and company vehicles.  The attachment to this aspect of our heraldic heritage runs deep in Ireland and amongst our diaspora.

The 'Letters Patent' granting Arms to the Genealogical Society of Ireland, shown here, has three elements i.e. the Arms, Heraldic Banner and the Heraldic Badge. This is the work of Ireland's premier Consulting Herald, Mícheál Ó Comáin, and based on longstanding heraldic conventions. Although anyone of Irish ancestry or with an association with Ireland may apply to the Chief Herald for a 'grant of arms' but at a cost of circa €4,000 it is hardly an option for most. Therefore, designing and using our own coat-of-arms is probably a very cost-effective way of acquiring an authentic heraldic product, inasmuch as, it meets our own requirements by representing personality, family connections, locality and possibly interests or achievements. Contrary to many who view heraldry through a prism of anachronistic exclusivity, there is absolutely no legal impediment in Ireland to the use of arms designed by oneself or by a heraldic artist. Nevertheless, unlike the many hundreds of schools and clubs in Ireland, very few individuals actually design and use their own coats-of-arms and even fewer still have ever created their own 'family flag'.

When it comes to the promotion of vexillology in Ireland, the Genealogical Society of Ireland wasn't the first Irish organisation to have this as an objective. The first and original flag society in Ireland was the *Vexillological Society of Ireland / Cumann Vexilleolaíoch na hÉireann.* It was founded back in March 1984 by Doug Keag (Bangor, Co. Down), David Kerr (Newtownabbey, Co. Antrim), Deirdre and Séamus Ó Brógáin (Blackrock, Co. Dublin). This society was a member of FIAV from 1985 until 1992 when it apparently ceased operations. It published a number of issues of the *'Irish Vexillology Newsletter'* (ISSN 0790-2441) from September 1984 to 1987.
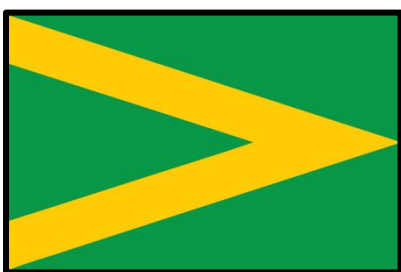


These pioneers of Irish vexillology rightly deserve recognition for promoting an interest in the subject in Ireland at a time when political circumstances made such cross-border initiatives difficult and even more so, when dealing with the extremely divisive issue of flags. Their aim of internationalising the study of Irish vexillology is evident in the design of their flag which featured a green field with a gold chevron forming a sideways 'V' that stood for 'vexillology'. Undoubtedly, the establishment of *Vexillology Ireland* in 2013 and its election to membership of FIAV as Ireland's representative can be viewed as an enduring legacy of these pioneers of Irish vexillology. Their mission lives on in *Vexillology Ireland.*

- *Michael Merrigan is the General Secretary of the Genealogical Society of Ireland*

# 20. Genealogical Society of Ireland (GSI)

*"Ireland's most active genealogical organisation" – see www.familyhistory.ie*
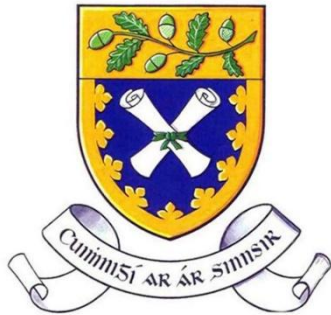


The Society was established in 1990 to promote the study of genealogy and related subjects as educational leisure pursuits available to all in the community irrespective of age, prior-learning, background or socio-economic circumstances. The Society promotes an interest in genealogy in Ireland by organising Open Meetings, lectures, workshops, publishing genealogical material and exhibiting at major relevant events in the country.

Some may be a bit surprised that a genealogical organisation is involved with vexillology, however, as vexillology (*defined as the scientific study of the history, symbolism and usage of flags*) is closely related to heraldry and it to genealogy—it's a very natural fit indeed. As genealogists and social historians we are primarily concerned with the narratives attached to the history and use of flags and emblems and, especially, the lives and times of the people concerned.



Although *Vexillology Ireland* is a newly established branch of the Genealogical Society of Ireland, the society has an unsurpassed record in Ireland for the promotion of an awareness, appreciation and knowledge of vexillology and heraldry. In this promotion, the society drafted the *Genealogy & Heraldry Bill, 2006* and advised on the drafting of the *National Cultural Institutions (Amendment) Bill, 2008*. Both of these legislative measures sought to strengthen the State's involvement in the provision of heraldic and vexillological services. The society continues to advocate the inclusion of vexillology in primary legislation in Ireland.
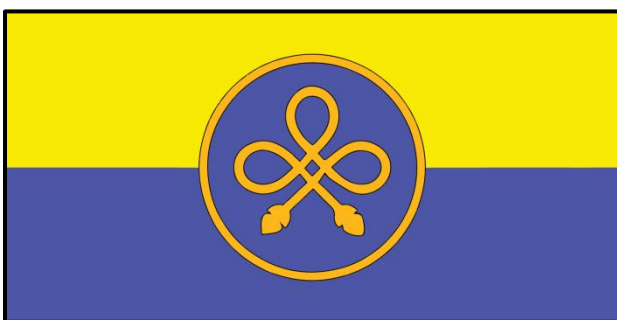


The Society also has its own 'livery flag' which represents the Company as the Society is an incorporated body since 2000 and its governance is subject to the *Companies Act, 2014*, and as a registered educational charity, to the *Charities Act, 2009*. The 'livery flag' consists of the Society's primary colours, blue and gold, taken from the Society's coat of arms which it received from the Chief Herald of Ireland in 2001. The other element is the Society's Heraldic Badge which is shown on the letters patent granted by the Chief Herald.

## 21. Vexillology Ireland

*Vexillology Ireland is the only non-governmental organisation in Ireland promoting vexillology and heraldry and only the second flag society in Irish history.*


*Stan Zamyatin at the ICV in Rotterdam*

*Vexillology Ireland* or in the Irish language, *Brateolaíocht Éireann*, is a branch of the Genealogical Society of Ireland (GSI) that is dedicated to the promotion of an awareness, appreciation and knowledge of Ireland's vexillological heritage and of vexillology in general.

*Vexillology Ireland* is a registered 'business name' of the Genealogical Society of Ireland and is a sister organisation of *'Heraldry Ireland'* – both branches of the Society. These specialist branches of the Society have their own constitutions, however, they operate in accordance with the overall governance and policy structures of the Society. *'VIBE'* is the occasional newsletter published by *Vexillology Ireland* aimed at promoting both the popular and academic study of vexillology in Ireland and overseas amongst her diaspora.

Currently *Vexillology Ireland* is Ireland's only 'flag organisation' and only the second one established in the history of the State. Therefore, *Vexillology Ireland* is proud and honoured to represent Ireland internationally at various major vexillological events and as a member of FIAV the *International Federation of Vexillological Associations*. It has represented Ireland:

- In 2013 at the 25th International Congress of Vexillology in Rotterdam, Netherlands
- In 2014 at the II IHW Congress on Heraldry and Vexillology in Cieszyn, Poland
- In 2015 at the 26th International Congress of Vexillology in Sydney, Australia

*Vexillology Ireland* hopes to bring the 29th ICV Congress to Ireland in 2021.



## Further Contact

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## 22.  Bibliography and Further Reading

**The World Encyclopedia of Flags and Heraldry** (Annes Publishing Ltd. 2007) written by Alfred Znamierowski and Stephen Slater, both leading figures in vexillology and heraldry respectively. The book is an excellent guide to the flags and arms of the world and contains many photographs and illustrations of flags and emblems.

**Complete Flags of the World** (DK Publishing, 2014) is a wonderfully detailed reference book on the flags of every country in the world and more. It is fully illustrated with many colourful images with up-to-date information on the history, design and significance of colours, symbols, and arms of countries throughout the world.

**A History of Irish Flags from Earliest Times** (Academy Press, 1979) written by Professor Gerard A. Hayes-McCoy. This is the only definitive book ever produced on Irish flags. It is an excellent and comprehensive work that examines the history of the use of flags and emblems in Ireland and is abundantly illustrated with many drawings and photographs.

**Ireland's Harp: The Shaping of Irish Identity c. 1770-1880** (UCD Press, 2014) is an excellent book about the role played by the harp in forming the Irish cultural and national identity. It deals with the social, political and cultural changes that took place in Ireland during what was mainly the Romantic period – an era of national awakening throughout Europe.

**An Bhratach Náisiúnta/ The National Flag** - Department of the Taoiseach

http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/upload/publications/1104.pdf

**The Guiding Principles of Flag Design**—NAVA and UK's Flag Institute flag guidelines

http://www.flaginstitute.org/pdfs/Flag_Design_Commission_Report.pdf

**Creating Local & Community Flags** - An Official Flag Institute Guide

http://www.flaginstitute.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Creating_Local_and_Community_Flags.pdf

**Good Flag, Bad Flag: How to Design a Great Flag** – compiled by Ted Kaye

http://www.ausflag.com.au/assets/images/Good-Flag-Bad-Flag.pdf

**The Flag Dispute: Anatomy of a Protest** – Report by Queens University Belfast

http://www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/isctsj/filestore/Filetoupload,481119,en.pdf

**Public Displays of Flags and Emblems in Northern Ireland -** Report by QUB

http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/images/symbols/bryan0510.pdf

**Chief Herald of Ireland (National Library of Ireland)**

http://www.nli.ie/en/history-of-the-office-of-the-chief-herald.aspx

# Flagging Ireland

This is Ireland's first guidebook on the design, manufacture and use of flags. It explores the cultural meaning and heritage associated with flags and emblems in Ireland. The widespread use of flags by civic bodies, sports clubs, companies, schools and community groups across the country has given us some excellent examples of 'good flags' and this guidebook endeavours to encourage greater creativity in the design of new flags.

'Flagscapes' is a beautiful concept created by the editor of this publication that helps us understand the deep cultural and historical connection flags have with the landscape. 'Flagging Ireland' is an essential guidebook to this wonderfully vibrant national, local and community cultural and social heritage.

"The meaning and relevance of flags is open to diverse interpretations. Most aspects of our lives are influenced and even based on natural phenomena. Flags are not foreign to this, for they are means of expressing human attachment to a familiar and natural setting – creating a sense of home, homeland, nationality, and even nationalism, a symbolism sometimes reflected literally in the abstract design of flags – hence the title Flagscapes". (Tony Burton, Secretary of the Flag Society of Australia and Editor of *Crux Australis*)

## Stan Zamyatin, Vexillologist

The editor of 'Flagging Ireland', Stan Zamyatin, is originally from Russia and has been living in Ireland for the last 20 years. He was raised in Dublin by his Russian mother Lyuba and his American step-father Thom Moore, the legendry songwriter of classic Irish songs like *Cavan Girl*, *Carolina Rua*, *The Scholar*, *Saw You Running* and others. Stan has a lifelong interest in flags and began collecting them while studying architecture in Dublin in 2008. He began to work professionally with flags in 2013 with the organisation of Bratacha 2013 - Ireland's first ever festival of flags and emblems and was the curator of the flag exhibition at the National Maritime Museum of Ireland.

As the CEO of Vexillology Ireland he has represented Ireland at the International Congress of Vexillology in Rotterdam (2013) and at the European Congress on Heraldry and Vexillology in Cieszyn (2014). Stan has travelled to over fifty countries on five continents and speaks five languages. His interest in travel, languages, history, psychology, art and the environment all combine in his passion for flags and vexillology. Currently, Stan is pursuing a degree course in Trinity College Dublin.

Price: €10

Cumann Geinealais na hÉireann
**Genealogical Society of Ireland**

Brateolaíocht Éireann
**Vexillology Ireland**