

A Better Late Than Never (Too?) Long Book Review

by Charles J. G. Verge

James A. Mackay, *Irish Slogan Postmarks, 1918-1986*, Published by the author at 11, Newall Terrace, Dumfries, DG1 1LN, Scotland, 1987, ill., 69pp. ISBN 0 906440 42 4.

I cannot find anywhere in *The Revealer*, where either of the editions (1984, 1987) of James Mackay excellent study: *Irish Slogan Postmarks* has been reviewed. I would like to take this opportunity, though belated, to do so.

For those readers who may not have seen this book, or do not know any of Mr. Mackay's other books, research studies, catalogues and monographs, let me give you some details. Mr. Mackay is a prolific writer and researcher on British Isles postal history and postmarks. He has produced and published, at an affordable price, many books on areas of postal history and postmarks which should form the backbone of any British Isles postal historian's philatelic library. In addition to his generic studies, such as: *Registered mail of the British Isles* or *Official mail of the British Isles* and his many works on Scottish postal history, he has produced at least 5 books on Ireland: *Ireland and Her Postage Stamps*, the encyclopedic *Irish Postmarks since 1840*, *Sub-office Rubber Datestamps of Ireland*, *Datstampai Rubair na bhFo-Oifigi An Phoist in Eirinn*, and the subject of this review: *Irish Slogan Postmarks: 1918-1986*. As well, every year since 1979, James Mackay, has updated his various works by publishing *The Postal History Annual*.

All students of Irish postal history, be they slogan collectors or not, are grateful to Mr. Mackay for his work on their behalf. Without it we would be farther behind in an area of modern postal history that is at least, if not important historically - the Learn Irish slogans of the early 1920s and the Grow more Wheat and Save Bread and Flour of WWII are examples, a challenging area of collecting. Some slogans are



scarce: Mackay's #1 Feed the Guns with War Bonds used in Cork in 1918, of which only two examples have been recorded, or Mackay's #274 Sept 26th-Oct 4th Cork Film Festival, used only in Cork at the 8 PM collection in September 1986 and then, only on larger pieces and envelopes. Try to find one or both of these if you can. There are other examples of difficult to obtain slogans found throughout the book.

There is another challenge in collecting Irish slogans - Mr. Mackay mentions it in his book - that is the discovery of new slogans, new dater dies, new towns in which they were put to use and additional years of use. In fact he credits the "biggest improvement in the" second edition of the "catalogue" to "the listing of the towns and dies which used slogans every year."

To many EPA members, Irish slogan collectors and Mr. Mackay's wife, who found a completely new slogan (#45A), we owe a debt of gratitude. Without their findings, and transmittal of them, to Mr. Mackay we wouldn't have a second edition. In fact, of Mr. Mackay's more than 40 publications, the *Irish Slogan Postmarks* is only the second to have gone into a second edition. (My additions to the book, copies of which I have sent to Mr. Mackay, are listed below.)

Improvements to the second edition include grouping all the illustrations together at the end of the book. In the first edition you had to flip through the pages to find the appropriate slogan unless you knew in what year it was first put to use and then you could find it illustrated in the book. I would debate with Mr. Mackay the fact that the more compact print size is more readable and therefore an improvement. I like his chronological approach to listing the slogans. Any other combination would be nightmarish, particularly for future additions. Nor will I debate his pricing structure. For what its worth, I do not envy him the task. However, I would like him to explain to readers why he doesn't price slogans which reoccur. I am sure that identical slogan markings are not worth the same from year to year. As well, is a slogan marking used in every town for which there is a listing worth the same as the next? Is slogan #120, Prevent Forest Fires worth 1 pound if used in Wexford as well as 1 pound used in Dublin.

Another great feature of the book is the Key to Gaelic Inscriptions in dater and slogans dies found on pp. 9 and 10. Although after using the book awhile one quickly gets to know that, for example, Port Lairge is Waterford and that Labair Gaedhlige is Speak Irish.

Now on to my pet peeves about the book. The most irritating one is the ubiquitous (2) after the Dublin dater die indication in the listing. Nowhere in the book do I find an explanation for this. I figure, rightly or wrongly, by going through my collection of slogans, that it probably means that the dater die takes two different formats - single and double rings being the most frequent difference. Mr. Mackay should take a page out of Fred Dixon's *Official Slogans* and describe the different dater dies. You will see below (Figure 1) that for slogan #9, Invest in Post Office Savings Bank, I have found two different hubs for Cork as separate from dies. These could also be explained. At the same time he could explain that slogans can be found on the right or the left of the dater die and why this happens. (Could the same slogan be available in the two formats. Are they worth the same?)

My second major problem with the book is that slogans #23, 37, 41, 44, 47, 51, 53, 57, 69, 72, 74, 91, 105, 217, 225, 227 and 228 are not only not illustrated but no explanation is given for this omission. I might understand not illustrating slogans 23 through 105, as they are Krag machine slogans replicating the ones that precede them (22 and 23, 36 and 37, etc) if Mr. Mackay did not illustrate other Krags following the regular illustrated slogan such as: 9 and 10, 19 and 20, etc. However, if this is the reason, he should tell the reader that this is what he is doing. There is no excuse for the remaining four slogans. Slogans #217, 225 and 227 were used to promote the Navan Trade Fair in 1975, 1977 and 1978 and are not illustrated. However, the Navan Trade Fair slogans of 1973, 1974, 1976, 1981 and 1982 are. Slogan #228 promotes the Galway Industrial Exhibition in 1978. Again Mr. Mackay does not give any explanations of why he omitted these four illustrations.

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| Shades of | Wittreich from | till | Moxter from | till | Total from | till |
|-----------|-------------------|-------|----------------|------|---------------|------|
| GREEN | 3/41 | 7/43 | 2/42 | 4/43 | 3/41 | 7/43 |
| RED | 8/43 | 10/44 | 3/43 | 2/45 | 3/43 | 2/45 |
| BLACK | 10/44 | 2/45 | 12/44 | 4/45 | 10/44 | 4/45 |

But there are also exceptions possible e.g. a letter of March 1942 with a clean black impression. If you consider that between 50 and 100 censors may have worked in one shift and that the rubberstamping of the "surplus-letters" that were not opened may well have been delegated to auxiliary staff with only perhaps one censor supervising, it is not surprising to find so much variety. In an institution like the foreign mail censorship office there must have been an office boy circulating almost constantly to re-ink all ink pads. If he got a new supply of black ink, he might make his tour and put black on all formerly red inked pads thus creating nice shades of brownish or greyish depending on the components mixed.

A few days ago Heinz-Jürgen Kumpf (EPA and FAI-president) sent me Xerox copies of two British field post letters from FPO 856 dated 7 MY 45 (he thought it was 46) and from FPO 497 dated 22 JA 46 (?). The year in the latter datestamp is not clear and I tend to read it as 45, because otherwise it would just not be possible according to what I know so far.

Your commentary is invited.



relevant to slogan dies in one book. I can understand as well, Mr. Mackay's reluctance to include Bulk Mail Slogan data. However, I would like him to include as much information as he could on them so that other students of slogans can at least have an indication of what is available and what they are looking for. In this way it might help in the discovery of new information relating to these dies and help in making Mr. Mackay's book a better tool for the researcher. It is my hope that James Mackay will reconsider and include these in a further edition of his excellent book *Irish Slogan Postmarks*.

(Editor's Note: Mr. MacKay has reviewed this article prior to publication and has indicated that although he agrees to much of the recommendations contained herein. Due to poor interest in his 1987 efforts he has lost interest in devoting the time necessary to continue. This is accordingly an open area whereby one could pick up the gauntlet or, perhaps, as a result of this article Mr. MacKay might possibly be encouraged to reconsider his decision.)



SECRETARY'S REPORT

New Members

New members are accepted subject to no objections received within 45 days of publication.

- #2253 Joseph H. Coleman, 140 Bourne Ave., Apt 13, East Providence, RI 02916
- #2254 George F. Vogel, 616 Rock Road, Glen Rock, NJ 07452
- #2255 Thomas R. Norton, 1842 Port Wheeler Place, Newport Beach, CA 92660
- #2256 Jeffrey T. Walsh, PO Box 155, East Earl, PA 17519
- #2257 Robert Gleeson, 462-A, W. Huntington Dr., Arcadia, CA 91007
- #2258 Dr. Richard C. Carlton, 350 W 5th St., San Bernardino, CA 92401
- #2259 Maurice Barrett, R. R. 1, Box 172, Pacific Junction, IA 51561

Reinstatements

- #0260 Frank M. Schorn, 78-53 82 St., Glendale, NY 11385
- #0676 Finbarr Collins, 15 Tea Place, Tappan, NY 10983
- #1063 William E. Brewer, 1515 Avenida Selva, Fullerton, CA 92633
- #1108 Richard A. Lauster, 21355 Eton, Dearborn Heights, MI 48125
- #1884 Padraig F O'Shea, 16 Bridge St., Cork, Ireland
- #2076 John Pedneault, 800 Blair St., Bohemia, NY 11716
- #2145 Cartha L. O'Maonaigh, 28 Green Fort Estates, Cairns Rd., Sligo, Ireland

New Members Honor Roll

Richard McBride, 3 members; Michael Giffney, 1 member; Mike Ryan, 1 member; SESCAL Committee, 1 member; Michael Conway, 1 member.

Resignations - none

Deceased - Malcolm G. O'Reilly

Membership Status

Membership as of August 25, 1990

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| | |
|----------------|---|
| New Members | 7 |
| Reinstatements | 7 |
| Resignations | 0 |
| Deceased | 1 |

Membership as of November 15, 1990

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Another area that should be covered in this book would be a short treatise on the machines used to imprint these slogans. In addition to the Krags and the Hey-Dolphin machines there were other machines used and it would be interesting to read how these machines work. This could be combined with the study of the dater dies.

Finally, I would like to see more information about periods of use. There exists printed references for some of the slogans for some of the years. One can find contemporary information in Brian Warren's *That Was The Year That Was* annually in *The Revealer*, in Ian Whyte's *Irish Stamp News* or in articles such as: J. S. Preston's *Letter to the Editor: Dublin Slogan cancellations* in Vol. XIX (1952-53) of *The Philatelist* in which Mr. Preston gives precise periods of use (Day/Month/Year) for Dublin slogans from September 1940 to December 1944. If the information is available it should be added to the listings to help Mr. Mackay's work become more and more of a precise tool for future users and for collectors of Irish slogans.

As one final suggestion, I would like him to reconsider the inclusion of Official Paid Slogan Dies and Bulk Mail Slogan Dies - Mr. Mackay, in his Foreword, does explain why he does not include them. With the untimely death of Mr. Dixon it would be a credit to his research on Official Paid Slogan Dies if the student of Irish slogans could find all information