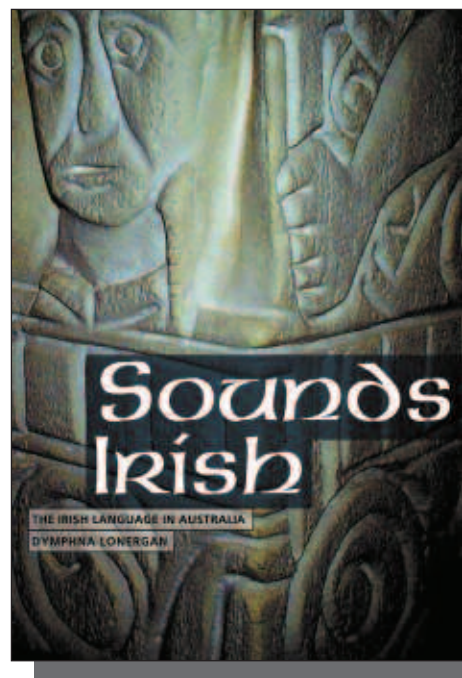


SOUNDS IRISH

THE IRISH LANGUAGE IN AUSTRALIA

Dymphna Lonergan

The Irish language ('Gaelic', as it is often called) has had a greater influence on Australian English than is usually credited. It is a curious fact that in Australia there has been an assumption that Irish-speaking migrants managed to lose their language on their way over on the boat, or that when they reached Australia they ceased to speak Irish. We know how long it takes to learn a second language. We take it for granted that migrants to Australia will continue to use their native languages within their family group and with friends and acquaintances, even if they acquire fluency in English. The Irish speaker in Australia was no different. While there may not be many native Irish speakers in Australia today, that was not the case in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. (During the peak periods when the Irish populated Australia the majority of the Irish people spoke Irish.) This book sets out to capture that sound in order to better appreciate the world view of the Irish speaker in Australia, and to bring to the fore a neglected part of Irish Australian heritage.



Sounds Irish traces Irish language words, phrases and references in Australian newspapers, poetry, novels, and in Australian English. It begins with a discussion of the written evidence we have of Irish speakers in Australia, from convicts to priests. Readers will be surprised to learn how some of the most iconic Australian words, such as 'sheila' and 'brumby', are revealed to be Irish words in disguise. A detailed glossary of Irish words in Australian writing shows just how important this contribution to Australian English has been.

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