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# Ogham alphabet

<https://ogham.co/ogham-alphabet/>

“Ogham is an ancient alphabet that appeared in Ireland at least 1,600 years ago. It was used to inscribe Irish onto stone monuments.

The word *ogham* refers only to the form of the letters, while the letters themselves are known collectively as the *Beith-luis-nin*, these are the first three names of the letters in the ogham alphabet, in the same manner as the word *alphabet* derives from the first two names of the letter’s *alpha* and *beta*.

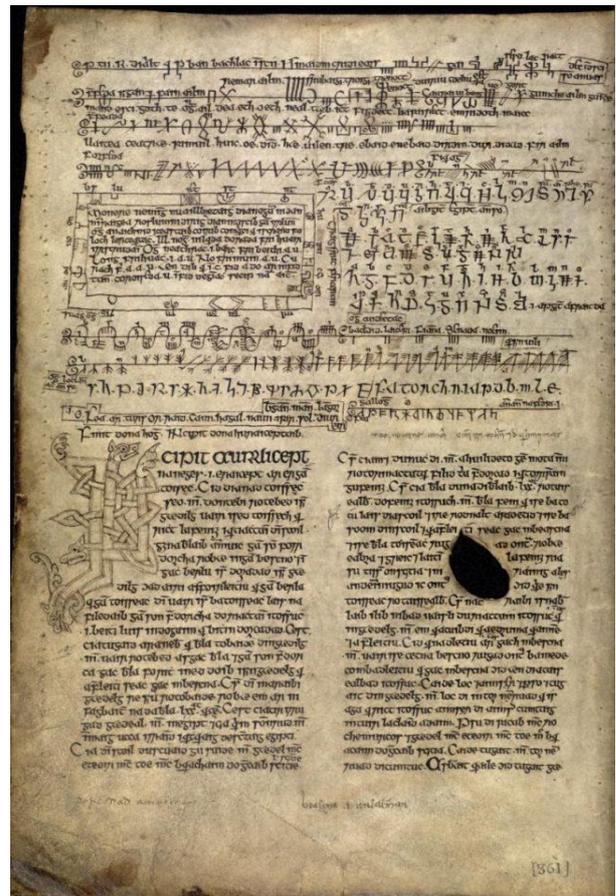
The ogham alphabet originally consisted of twenty distinct characters called *fedá* “trees” and arranged into four groups called *aicme* “families”. The different groups correlate the direction of the strokes.

**Some of the letters were corresponding to trees and others were not.**

A Key to the ogham alphabet was found in the book of Ballymonee

(Leabhar Bhaile an Mhóta) co sligo, (currently housed in the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin)

The principal scribes were Solam Ó Droma, Robertus Mac Sithigh and Magnus Ó Duibgennain, all of whom were pupils of the great Brehon McEgan family.



<https://www.ria.ie/library/catalogues/special-collections/medieval-and-early-modern-manuscripts/book-ballymote-leabhar>



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### **B Group – Right side strokes – *Aicme Beithe***

Ogham	Letter	Name	Meaning
┆	B	<i>beith</i>	birch
┆┆	L	<i>luis</i>	flame/blaze or plant/herb
┆┆┆	V/F	<i>fearn</i>	alder
┆┆┆┆	S	<i>sail</i>	willow
┆┆┆┆┆	N	<i>níon</i>	branch-fork

### **H Group – Left side strokes – *Aicme hÚatha***

Ogham	Letter	Name	Meaning
┆	H	<i>uath</i>	white-thorn
┆┆	D	<i>dair</i>	oak
┆┆┆	T	<i>tinne</i>	metal bar, ingot
┆┆┆┆	C	<i>coll</i>	hazel
┆┆┆┆┆	K	<i>ceirt</i>	bush



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### M Group – Across strokes – *Aicme Muine*

Ogham	Letter	Name	Meaning
+	M	<i>muin</i>	neck, upper back
⚡	G	<i>gort</i>	field
⚡⚡	NG	<i>nGéadal</i>	slaying/killing
⚡⚡⚡	Z	<i>straif</i>	sulphur
⚡⚡⚡⚡	R	<i>ruis</i>	red

### A Group – Notches (vowels) – *Aicme Ailme*

Ogham	Letter	Name	Meaning
+	A	<i>ailm</i>	unknown, pine?
⚡	O	<i>onn</i>	ash
⚡⚡	U	<i>úr</i>	earth, soil
⚡⚡⚡	E	<i>eadhadh</i>	unknown
⚡⚡⚡⚡	I	<i>iodhadh</i>	unknown



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### Supplementary Group – *Forfeda*

Five additional letters called *forfeda* were introduced mainly in the manuscript tradition several centuries after the peak of ogham usage. They appear to have represented sounds felt to be missing from the original alphabet

Ogham	Letter	Name	Meaning
✱	X/EA	<i>éabhadh</i>	unknown
◁▷	OI	<i>óir</i>	gold
└	UI	<i>uilleann</i>	elbow
⚡	P, later IO	<i>pín, later iphín</i>	spine/thorn
≡	CH/X, later AE	<i>eamhancholl</i>	twin-of-hazel
ı	P	<i>peith</i>	birch

### Miscellaneous

Here we have two decorative symbols often used at the start and end of inscriptions, and also a space symbol to separate words.

Ogham	Letter	Name	Meaning
Y	-	<i>tús</i>	begin
		<i>spás</i>	space
^	-	<i>críoch</i>	end