

Over the past one hundred and fifty years, the Irish High Crosses have been the subject of a large body of scholarship which has focused primarily on their insular art, iconography, evolution and design. During my twenty-five years as a Senior Conservation Architect with the National Monuments Service I have been involved in moving, recording and assessing the condition of many of the most well-known Irish high crosses which were in my care. It is my view that there are large gaps in our understanding of the way that changing cultural, political and religious values have affected the survival and condition of the crosses. As a collection of artefacts, they are inadequately documented, their post Reformation history poorly understood and their survival is unexamined. My thesis seeks to address the question of how and why the high crosses retained their cultural significance into modern times and to provide insights into their survival and current physical condition. This research is undertaken with a view to providing additional clarity around the difficult question of their future conservation and protection.

