

Proceedings of the Thurneysen Fanclub: issue 9

Records of the discussions in the seminar room on 14-12-2016

In attendance: David Stifter (chair), Aaron Griffith (the honourable guest), Deborah Hayden, Elizabeth Boyle, Chantal Kobel, Siobhán Barrett, Bernhard Bauer, Elliott Lash, Fangzhe Qiu, Romanas Bulatovas, Lars Nooij (scribe)

Practicalities

The meeting started late on account of a fun-run for charity, which was hosted by the university. David came in right after the event. Asked how it was he replied: “It was humid.”¹ Deborah, who joined us later, also participated in this event. Aaron Griffith (Universiteit Utrecht) was warmly welcomed to our meeting.

We helped ourselves to a couple of cookies which we took from the kitchen and David brought gin-and-tonic, which certainly raised our spirits.

Etymological dictionaries continued (§21)

Since the *GOI* was published another Breton etymological dictionary, Albert Deshayes’ *Dictionnaire étymologique du Breton* (2003) has appeared. It is not great either.

Falileyev’s *Etymological Glossary of Old Welsh* (2000), which was already mentioned last week, is limited chiefly by the size of the Old Welsh corpus, but does not include a lot of discussion either. More usually, it lists options and gives references. We might still wish to list it for the sake of completeness, as it does include references to OIr. etymologies.

In the same vein one might consider Enrico Campanile’s *Profilo etimologico del Cornico antico* (1974), Xavier Delamarre’s *Dictionnaire de la langue gauloise* (2003) and Dagmar Wodtko’s Celtiberian etymological dictionary (*Monumenta Linguarum Hispanicarum V.1. Wörterbuch der keltiberischen Inschriften*, 2000). However, none of these are particularly helpful as etymological dictionaries for OIr. either.

Continuing this, we would also include more general Indo-European works, such as Pokorny’s *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (1959), Mallory and Adam’s *The Oxford Introduction to Proto-Indo-European and the Proto-Indo-European World* (2006) and the *Lexicon der indogermanischen Verben* (*LIV*, 1998-2001) and *Nomina im indogermanischen Lexicon* (*NIL*, 2008). *LIV* is mainly useful for the primary verbs. *NIL* aimed to replace Pokorny’s dictionary, but was not finished; it is good when the relevant word is covered in it. *LIPP* can be. To these we would add Schumacher’s *Die keltischen Primärverben* (2004), which is solid, but not comprehensive either (e.g. it does not treat the causatives).

Again in a more Indo-Europeanist vein there is the *Lexicon der indogermanischen Partikeln und Pronominalstämme* (*LIPP*, 2014), which is to be used with care, as it is idiosyncratic at times. Within the Celtic sphere, there is Schrijver’s *Studies in the history of Celtic pronouns and particles* (1997), which has not found full acceptance either.

¹ As if by design, it was a truly miserably wet day, the worst in months. If anyone should be curious, here’s what David and Deborah looked like *before* the run: <https://twitter.com/EarlyIrishMU/status/809127617030922242>.

Karin Stüber's book on verbal nouns, *Die Verbalabstrakta des Altirischen*, 2015 should be mentioned in that section of the grammar where verbal nouns are treated. Similarly, her work on *The historical morphology of n-stems in Celtic* (1998) ought rather be cited for the n-stems in particular.

Uhlich's publications on compound nouns need not be mentioned here either; it is not comprehensive, nor consistently etymological; but it is a great resource for various sections of the grammar.

Many of the aforementioned works are highly specialist and focused. Perhaps we should split them up into two lists, keeping the existing paragraph in *GOI* for works that are in the main etymological dictionaries and listing the others under a more specialist section. The obvious difficulty remains that we simply lack a good, comprehensive etymological dictionary for OIr.

Principal journals (§22)

This section of *GOI* is extremely limited, as it contains but three journals, and it should be greatly expanded. The journals mentioned in the grammar are *Revue Celtique* (*RC*, 1870-1934), which has been continued as *Études Celtiques* (*ÉC*, 1936-), *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* (*ZCP*, 1897-), and *Ériu* (1904-). They are listed in chronological order.

A great many journals were suggested by the members of the fanclub. It was decided that the focus should be on journals that regularly treat OIr. and Celtic linguistics. An attempt was made to maintain the chronological order during the discussion and this has been enforced in these minutes:

- *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* (1836-).
- *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* (1922-1993) and *Studia Celtica* (1966-1993), which were continued as *Studia Celtica: Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* (1993-).
- *Lia Fáil* (1923-1932), which was continued as *Éigse* (1939-).
- *Celtica* (1946-).
- *Journal of Celtic Studies* (1949-).
- *Studia Hibernica* (1961-).
- *Studia Celtica Japonica* (1984/90?-).
- *Ollodagos* (1988-).
- *Journal of Celtic Linguistics* (1992-).
- *Keltische Forschungen* (2005-).
- *Kelten: Mededelingen van de Stichting A.G. van Hamel voor Keltische Studies* (1999-).
- *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* (1981-1992), continued as *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* (1993-).
- *Studi Celtici* (2002-).
- *Studia Celtica Fennica* (2004-).

Undoubtedly, many more journals could be mentioned. It was also discussed whether we should include (regularly published) conference proceedings. It was decided that this is a difficult matter, as one could in a sense go on *ad infinitum*. We might want to talk with Alex Guilarte (bibliographer at DIAS) to ask what criteria are used for the inclusion of journals in the *Bibliography of Irish Linguistics and Literature* (*BILL*).

Additional types of ‘Works of Reference’: introductory textbooks

Along with the more specialist works, we should also make note of the introductory textbooks, aimed at the learner of Old Irish.²

There is some discussion on whether we should aim for completeness – as we intended for the etymological dictionary-section – or not. In this case, it is decided that this section should be seen as advice to the learner and that we are therefore free to give priority to a limited selection of learner’s aids, perhaps referring to the lesser-used works in a footnote.

Amongst the earlier introductory pieces were Strachan’s *Old Irish Paradigms & Glosses* (1909, as a single volume) and Quin’s *Old Irish Workbook* (1974) (to which Green’s *Old Irish Verbs and Vocabulary* (1995) forms an aid). The former is still used as a reference work, but is now rarely used to begin to learn the language, the latter is essentially superseded. Lehmann’s *An Introduction to Old Irish* (1975) is considered to be flawed. Ó Fiannachta’s *Sean-Ghaeilge gan Dua*³ (1981) is brief and expects previous fluency in Modern Irish.

McCone’s *A First Old Irish Grammar and Reader: Including an Introduction to Middle Irish* (2005) is out of print and therefore hard to access. It is mainly used for its introduction to Middle Irish. Tigges’ *An Old Irish Primer* (2006) is not often used to learn the language. Ahlqvist’s *Grammatical Tables for Old Irish* (2013) largely cover the same material as Strachan’s *Paradigms*, but suffers from a less fortunate lay-out.

The more commonly used books are David Stifter’s *Sengoidelc* (2006) and, as an introductory reference grammar, Ranke de Vries’ *A student’s companion to Old Irish grammar* (2013).

Additional types of ‘Works of Reference’: online resources

Online resources are particularly difficult to add to a grammar, as these sources are particularly prone to rapid change (including the links themselves). We should therefore not aim to be comprehensive, but list main hubs, which are themselves maintained and provide access to the various websites.

- Codecs / Van Hamel (<http://www.vanhamel.nl/codecs/Home>)
- The Celtic Digital Initiative (<http://sulis.ucc.ie/cdi/>)
- CELT (<https://www.ucc.ie/celt/>)
- BILL (<https://bill.celt.dias.ie>)
- DIAS (<https://www.dias.ie/celt/>)
- ISOS (<https://www.isos.dias.ie>)

One resource which was specifically mentioned, apart from the hubs, was:

- Russell’s glossaries project (<http://www.asnc.cam.ac.uk/irishglossaries/>)

It is noted that it would also be useful if someone were to compile a list of all the Celtic sources found on *archive* (www.archive.org).

² Others: “Go ahead David, we know where you are going.” David: “I think it is relevant.” Others: “Suuuùre.” David: “I am not saying anything anymore.”

³ Undoubtedly an ironic name, hatched from the same womb like names such as Greenland or Orwell’s Ministry of Truth.

Additional types of ‘Works of Reference’: online learner’s resources

We now turn to the matter of online resources specifically suited to the learner of OIr. Back in the day “the Old Irish list” (an email-list) was used as a significant place for learners of OIr. for discussions of the language, but – although still in existence – the list is rather quiet nowadays. As such, there is no ready answer to where a beginner, not enrolled in a course of OIr., might turn to ask questions. There are, of course, facebook-groups, but these are fundamentally unsuitable for the purpose (due to the lack of a proper search function) and tend to die out rather quickly.

It is suggested that it might be worthwhile to consider applying for a project to set up an e-learning platform for OIr. at some point in the future. It is argued that this would coincide well with the expertise of Maynooth University.

If such a platform were to appear, it should perhaps not take the form of an open forum,⁴ however it should certainly include pronunciation-soundbytes to aid the learner. Some recordings are already in existence (at Cambridge’s *ASNC*, and some by Dennis King; and some by David from a long time ago, well hidden away), but they could be improved upon. David mentioned plans he had for such recordings with Daniel Prohaska, an opera singer he knew from Vienna, who is also an excellent phonetician and would merely need some guidance as to the exact pronunciation of the language. Daniel also happens to be a fluent speaker of Cornish. He might be especially gifted at ‘speaking’ OIr. without a strong, foreign accent (the Irish tend to have a strong tendency to pronounce OIr. as if it were Modern Irish).

Orthography (§23)

In the German *Handbuch* this chapter is called “Zur Schreibung”, which essentially corresponds with “Orthography”. The *GOI* title is fine. However, the opening paragraph is not.

“The source of Old Irish...”; ‘Early Irish’ may be preferable, even in a grammar of OIr. “...are written in the Roman alphabet...”; true, but in specific scripts. “...the characters have in general their Latin values...”; which Latin values? This is unspecific. And what does “in general” mean? “The letters *k*, *y*, *z* occur only in isolated loan-words...”; true, but why mention this right at the start of the section on orthography? Surely, this places undue stress on the matter?

In a revised grammar, we would prefer to open with something like the following: ‘Early Irish has the letters *a*, *b*, *c*, ... (of these, *k*, *y*, and *z* are vanishingly rare; see §-). The phonemic values of the letters are difficult to describe briefly, as they are dependent on position within the word.’ We would then mention that the values of the letters were transmitted through the British pronunciation of Latin and say something about the process of transmission. Then we would go on to discuss the actual values of the letters.

Towards the end of the chapter we would add a few paragraphs on the script and the wide-spread use of abbreviations in the writing of Old Irish. It is considered important to stress here that although the script is peculiar to the Insular world, it is nonetheless a Latin script; one should not think that Insular (or Irish) script refers to a separate alphabet.

⁴ “You need someone to devote her-/himself to answer stupid questions 24 hours a day.” A convincing salespitch if ever I heard one!

Ó Cróinín's article 'The Earliest Old Irish Glosses' (in *Mittelalterliche volkssprachige Glossen*, 1999) is suggested as providing a good introduction to Early Irish orthography and might be drawn upon in rewriting the grammar. Other articles mentioned are Sharpe's 'Books from Ireland' (*Peritia* 21, 2010) and Schauman's 'Early Irish Manuscripts: the Art of the Scribe' (*Expedition* 21/3, 1979).

We now turn to the remainder of §23 to see whether this can stand on its own, albeit in a new place. It is more or less alright. *K* is common in the annals (due to the *Kl.*-abbreviation for the calends; but this could, arguably, be Latin). A tiny number of examples of *z* can be found through eDIL to supplement those given by Thurneysen. *Y* is indeed extremely rare. *Q* is rare, but is occasionally used outside of loan-words to write *cu*. The division of the rare letters into *k*, *z*, *y*, which are not found outside of loan-words, and *q*, which is sometimes found in native words therefore seems right.

“**uisq(ue)** ‘water’ ... for normal **uisce**, influenced by Lat. *usque*”; this is a rather strange argument.

X is also rare, but not quite as rare as any of the other four. It is found especially often in numerals, and to write *-chs-*.

V is briefly discussed. In OIr. *v* is never more than a variant for *u* and has the value of a vowel, it should not be treated in this section. It should rather be mentioned in the aforementioned discussion of the script towards the end of this chapter.

Christmas break and second semester

The Thurneysen fanclub will take a break until late January, or early February. David will send out a form to the members so as to select a new time-slot (presumably either on Mondays, or Tuesdays).

Merry Christmas / Vrolijk Kerstfeest / Nadolig Llawen / Nollaigh Shona ~ everyone!