Proceedings of the Thurneysen Fanclub: issue 8

Records of the discussions at the conference room on 07-12-2016

In attendance: David Stifter (chair), Deborah Hayden, Gearóid Úa Conchubhair, Chantal Kobel, Siobhán Barrett, Bernhard Bauer, Elliott Lash, Fangzhe Qiu, Romanas Bulatovas, Lars Nooij (scribe)

Apologies: Elizabeth Boyle, Anne Harrington, Lára Ní Mhaoláin.

Practicalities
Ellen Ganly has kindly provided us with tea and coffee, to accompany David's biscuits.

The proceedings of last week's meeting have not been sent out yet, the scribe claims chief responsibility for the delay. David hopes to send them out later today.

In future, we shall discuss mail and other outside feedback towards the end of our meetings, so that those who can only attend during the first hour can take part in more of the actual discussion of the grammar. Comments pertaining to matters of grammar may of course still come at the start.

Matters arising
Elliot has looked into the issue of the origins of the Würzburg glosses. Padraig Ó Néill ('The Latin and Old Irish glosses in Würzburg M.p.th.f.12: unity in diversity' in *Mittelalterliche volkssprachige Glossen* (Heidelberg 2001), 33-46) has remarked that the scribe of this manuscript, which contains the Gospel of Matthew, is the same as the main hand of the Würzburg glosses (W2). In this particular manuscript, a colophon is found, concerning the late 7th-century abbot of Bangor, Mo Ṡinnu moccu Min. The leaves of the manuscript are not bound together and the colophon is found on a slip inserted towards the end, rendering its original place within the manuscript somewhat uncertain. Dáibhí Ó Cróinín also mentions this (in *Peritia* 1 (1982), 281-295). This implies that the main scribe of the Würzburg glosses was at least aware of this abbot, suggesting a tentative link between the Würzburg glosses and Bangor. The evidence is inconclusive, but this would speak against regarding the differences between Würzburg and the other gloss corpora as the result of regional and dialectal differences.

Principal works of reference (pre-§17)[1]
These are short references to Celtic and Irish in general, rather than to specifically OIr. matters. Tourneur (1906) and Thurneysen (1916) can be scrapped for being outdated. The *Bibliography of Irish Philology and of Printed Irish Literature* may still be referenced, updated to its current form (BILL).

Grammars of all the Celtic languages, incl. OIr. (§17)
The *Handbuch* mentions O'Donovan, but this has rightly been left out of the *GOI*. Most of the references concern Zeuss' grammar and the various indices made to it by other scholars (it originally lacked an index). We need not mention such indices. Pedersen and Lewis & Pedersen are mentioned here. Since we already discussed these works before (Proceedings 1), we feel that there is no need to go into any great detail here. This also goes for much of what follows.

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[1] In the *Handbuch* this section is headed *Wichtigere Hilfsmittel*; David proceeds to discuss the use of the comparative in German.

Grammars of Early Irish (§18)

Thurneysen gives interesting comments on the merits of the various grammars listed here in the *Handbuch*. These are left out in the *GOI*, although here we find significant praise for Strachan's *Paradigms and Glosses*; did the translators add this because of the fact that the cited edition of said work was edited by Bergin?[2]

Romanas notes that it is stated in the introduction to O'Connell's grammar (1912) that it follows Thurneysen's *Handbuch*; as such it should not be regarded as an original source. This may well also be the case for Melville's *Llawlyfr* (1935).

The mention of Ó Máille's *The Language of the Annals of Ulster* (1910) is out of place here. It is not a grammar. It is nonetheless a useful source and should be included in a section on linguistic analysis (along with, e.g., McCone's *Towards a relative chronology*). Pedersen's grammar should also be moved there.

Dictionaries (§19)

"There is as yet no complete dictionary of Early Irish"; this statement is too negative nowadays. eDIL is mostly comprehensive (going up to the 17th-century). We might do best to refer to eDIL as the continuation of the Royal Irish Academy's printed *Dictionary of the Irish Language*[3] and its revised continuation *Contributions to a Dictionary of the Irish Language*, thus acknowledging both its printed origins and the fact that it has since been superseded by eDIL.

Ascoli's *Glossario* (1907) is now essentially unused. It is not available online (unless one has a Harvard account). In the *Handbuch* it is stated that the *Glossario* is ordered on the basis of the roots of the words, rendering it relatively impractical to use. It is not known to us whether eDIL has incorporated all of the material found in Ascoli, but given that it is claimed in the *Handbuch* to have been a complete glossary for all the words found in the OIr. glosses (for the letters covered) there may well be some useful material in there.

Windisch' *Irische Texte mit Wörterbuch* (1880) was generally used before DIL was completed, but its dictionary section has now been entirely superseded. Kuno Meyer's *Contributions* (1906) contain some very good entries, not all of which are included in eDIL. It is good to be retained as a reference. Hessen's *Irish Lexicon* was discontinued following the outbreak of the Second World War. We are not familiar with this source, should we retain it?

The lack of a comprehensive dictionary rendered this topic decidedly messy when the *Handbuch* and *GOI* were written. With DIL and eDIL, the situation has since improved, although complications are starting to arise once more with the advent of new, specialized dictionaries of specific corpora.[4] The latter have the advantage of being both highly detailed and clearly linked to a specific source (whereas the editorial practices of DIL often make it difficult to ascertain where a particular example comes from, given that citations are often to journal articles, rather than to dated texts). Moreover, these dictionaries often diverge from eDIL. As such, they should also be cited.

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[2] Clearly, we should also praise our own work in any new grammar.

[3] The remarks in GOI actually coincide quite well with what is found on dil.ie in the first paragraph of the 'about' section

[4] For which a good number of the people present are culpable.

In the *Handbuch*, Dinneen's Modern Irish dictionary is also cited here; in the *GOI* it is found on page 16, at the very end of the next paragraph. This is still a useful source, both for figuring out the meaning of words not found in eDIL and because it offers meanings not found in eDIL. It is certainly the most useful dictionary of the modern language for the study of the earlier matter, as it is both very extensive and uses the unreformed spelling.

We should also mention Edward Dwelly's *Illustrated Gaelic to English Dictionary* (*Faclair Gàidhlig gu Beurla le dealbhan*, 1911 (faclair.ac.uk)) as a Scottish-Gaelic counterpart to Dinneen.

Glossaries (§20)
This paragraph can be left out entirely, at this stage. All these glossaries are superseded by eDIL and the editions mentioned are in many cases superseded by later editions. Moreover, these glossaries generally only give meanings relevant to the particular textual context of any given word. Also, the sources mentioned in GOI are largely Middle Irish, rather than OIr. Meyer's *Zur keltischen Wortkunde* merits no mention here either. It is completely unsystematic and the relevant sections are at any rate cited in eDIL.

It is suggested that we might want to mention the medieval glossaries and linguistic scholarship, e.g. *Sanas Cormaic*. Amongst other things, these sources shed light on the views held by speakers of the language on the meaning and usage of particular words.

Etymological dictionaries (§21)
Stokes' etymological dictionary (1894) is practically unusable as it is arranged according to the Indo-European roots of the words, as it was understood in the 1860's. Moreover, it uses the Sanskrit order of the letters. And most of the etymologies are not all that great.[5]

Alexander Macbain's *Etymological Dictionary of the [Scottish] Gaelic Language* (1911) is still often used (especially outside of academia). This may be due to the fact that it was digitized very early on (during the 90's). It contains terribly flawed etymologies and is useful primarily for its listing of Manx cognates.[6]

Henry's *Lexique étymologique des termes les plus usuels du breton moderne* (1900) seems a decidedly odd fit for this list. Brugmann's work on Proto-Indo-European (1897-1916) is still formidable, but not a suitable general reference work.

Essentially, this paragraph needs to be scrapped and entirely rewritten. Joseph Vendryes' *Lexique étymologique de l'irlandais ancien* (*LEIA,* 1959-present) is the main etymological dictionary devoted solely to the Irish language. Its etymologies are not brilliant – its core is still Vendryes' (d. 1960) notes and it is therefore severely out of date.[7] The last volume of *LEIA* to be published appeared about 20

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[5] For unknown reasons, the book is somehow still in print. David wonders who would buy such a book? Apart from David himself, obviously. He has it at home.

[6] At some point during this discussion the following, memorable words were uttered: "We are not talking about ducks, or chariots. We are talking about Macbain and I still think its bollocks."

[7] Later editors, such as Lambert, usually restricted themselves to adding brief notes towards the end of entries when new views on a particular etymology had arisen by that time. David adds a side-note on Lambert, who – although he was the only, and the last, professor of Celtic Studies in France – apparently did not even have an office to call his own.

years ago; this dictionary remains incomplete to date (fascicles A, B, C, D, MNOP, RS and TU have appeared).

Ranko Matasović' *Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Celtic* (2009) is not without its share of problems. It is certainly useful for its lists of cognates, but there are flaws to almost every entry. The cause of this is to be found chiefly in the remarkably short time allowed for it: it had to be written from scratch within the space of merely two years! A limited supplement with *Addenda and Corrigenda* can be found online (http://mudrac.ffzg.unizg.hr/~rmatasov/EDPC-Addenda%20et%20corrigenda.pdf).

As such, no good etymological dictionary of the Irish language exists as yet. David has always dreamed of writing such a dictionary and one may say that his facebook posts (and perhaps also his tweets, after a fashion) are his 'Contributions to an etymological dictionary of the Irish language'.[8]

Brief mention is made of Sasha Falileyev's *Etymological glossary of Old Welsh* (Tübingen 2000). Where Irish cognates exist it offers useful etymologies. However, given the limited scope of the Old Welsh corpus, this does not lead far.

Next week
Next week's meeting is likely to start somewhat later, as David wishes to take part in a fun-run held at the university, which starts at 13.00 o'clock.

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[8] Upon the question 'Is there a good etymological dictionary for Irish?' being raised, David instantly answered: "Mine!", referring to the future.