## *Conrad Bladey Irish Culture*

## *Pronunciation of Irish Gaelic*

### It is important not to let the pronunciation of words written in Irish Gaelic get in the way of your enjoyment of the literature and of the sounds of poetry. While one Can become lost in the study of grammar more immediate progress can be made by observing the following rules and general trends. Bear in mind that the Irish language is not designed for use with the Latin alphabet. It' is a code system imposed upon an essentially oral language. But with just a little attention to pronunciation you can unlock the sounds of the Middle Ages if not those of the Bronze Age.

## *Vowels*

### *May be short*:

A E I 0 U

a-cat (cat) as the letter o in the English cot,lot

 e-abhaile (home) as the letter e in the English met,let

 i-litir (letter) as the letter i in the English fit,sit

 o- gol ( crying) as the letter u in the English smut.smug u=dul (going) as the letter u in the English pull   
 

### *May be Long*

a-cá (where?) as the letter a in the English call

 e-cé ( wh o?) as the letter a in the English came.same

 i-cailín ( girl) as the letter ee in the English see

 o-ól (drinking) as the letter o in the English so

 u=úilll (apple) as the letter oo in the English too

Vowels may be *Broad* = a-o-u =á ó ú, or *Slender*= e-i or é -í   
 

## *Consonants*

There are 13 consonants in Gaelic:B,C,D,F,G,H,L,M,N,P,R,S,T.

They may be either *broad* or *slender*.

 Consonants are broad (have a velar quality) when they are preceded or followed by a broad vowel (A,O,U,).

Consonants are *Slender* (with a palatal quality) when they are preceded or followed by a slender vowel- (E,I).

 bo=cow is broad b as in English - big

 beo=alive is slender b as in beau in English- beautiful

 I.If a consonant is followed by ae,ao,ui insert a fleeting 'w' sound asin the French word

 bois- buid`eal- bottle or Gael-Irishman

 2.When a consonant is followed by - each. eag, eann, eat, eo or - iu insert a fleeting Y sound as in the word beautiful as in beo-alive or ceol=music.

## *Aspiration*

-Sometimes consonants are aspirated that is suffer an alteration of sound. This is indicated by adding the letter “h" after the aspirated letter.

 Aspiratable consonants are: B,C,D,F,G,M,P,S,T.

 B-bh (slender)= v as in an bhean -the woman

 bh (broad) = w as in sa bhád-in the boat   
C-ch (slender) = k as in sa chistin -in the kitchen

 ch (broad) = ca as in sa charr-in the car   
D-dh (slender) = Y as in ni dherna me -I didn't do

dh (broad) = wah as in a dhaidi   
f- fh (slender) as in don fhear- to the man

 g - gh(slender) = Y as in an ghealach-(the moon)

 m- mh (slender) as in ca mhéad=(how much)

 mh (Broad) "W" mo mahc (my son)

 P -ph “F” mo phíopa (my pi pe)

 S- sh (slender) “H+Y” shiúil mé (I walked)

 sh (broad) "H” mo shac (my sack)

 T- th “H” thuas. (up)   
Note: bh and mh as well as dh and gh have the same sound when aspirated   
 

## *Eclipsis*

Another change which may occur is eclipsis. When this occurs it results in the suppression of certain consonants by other consonants which are written in front of the eclipsed consonant

 B becomes mb and is pronounced “ m “ as in i mbád (in a boat)

 C becomes gc and is pronounced g as in i gcarr (in a car)

 D becomes nd and is pronounced n as in i ndán (in a poem)

 F becomes bhf and is pronounced v as in i bhféar (in grass)

w as in an bhfuil me (am I)

 G becomes ng and is pronounced g as in i ngrá (in love)

 P becomes bp and is pronounced b as in bpl ata (their plate)

 T becomes dt and is pronounced d as in dtram (in a tram)   
There are three dialects in Irish: Ulster, Munster,Connaught.

 There is an official dialect reflected in the text: Buntus Cainte

## *Tip: Use this guide beside your book while reading. Each time you encounter a Gaelic spelling use the guide to pronounce the word correctly. Soon it will simply grow on you!--Good Luck!*