

An Fhuinneóg Ghaelach

Cumann Gaeilge na h'Astráile teo

Melbourne

Lúnasa 2003

August 2003

Fáilte Welcome

Ábhair Mhachnaimh
Fáilte mhór chuig léitheoirí an chéad eagrán don bhliain 2003-2004. A warm welcome to readers of our first issue for the year 2003-2004. There's a brief report on the recent AGM and details of the 2003-2004 Committee Election on P3. We also have a few news items on P2.

After DMCing on methods of promoting Gaelic as a dynamic second language (GSL) within the wider Australian Community, the E-Team have come up with the idea of producing a go hiorónta or informal guideline to the basics of the language. An attempt will be made to "demystify" a few of the grammatical stumbling blocks that puzzle potential Gaelgeoirí. The first instalment covers lenition.

Members! do let us know how we're doing; and/or if we're ag dul chun drabhláis and/or an diabhal (going astray). Tell us what improvements we can make and/or what else you would like "deciphered". Or are we just flogging a capallín marbh? FBader PS. Saorálaithe, Volunteers are needed to help produce An Fhuinneog each quarter.

Cumann Gaeilge na h'Astráile teo

Annual Céilí/Social Saturday 18 Oct Celtic Club

Paddy Fitzgerald & Friends

Group Dances called: \$20.00 p/h: finger food provided
Numbers Limited: Advance Bookings only

Contact Muiris 9720 7735

2004 Daonscoil 2004
First week in January 2004
Lady Northcote Camp/Bacchus: Bacchus Marsh

LÁITHREÁIN SUIMIÚIL

Ranganna Gaeilge
Irish Language Classes
school term Tues 8.00pm
St John's School E.Melb
E:saoirse181@hotmail.com
Web: www.gaeilgesanastrail.com

Amhránaíocht/Singing
school term Tues 7.00pm
St John's Sch E Melb
E:saoirse181@hotmail.com

Cómhrá/Conversation
Irish Welfare Bureau 440A
High St Northcote Thurs-
days 7.30pm

TÁIN Magazine/Bi-mthly
The Australian Irish Network
newsagents/subscription
Ph 61-3- 9670 5066
E: info@tain.net.au
Web: www.tain.net.au

Celtic Club
Queen & La Trobe Sts
Melbourne
Ph 9670 6472

Fáinne Stair na hÉireann
Irish History Circle
2nd Flr Celtic Club
3rd Mon ea/mth 7.45pm

san eagrán seo in this issue

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CRAOBHSCA OILEADH

Glór na nGael/Voice of
the Irish 3ZZZ 92.3FM
Sat 11.00am, Sun
6.00pm.
Ist Sun ea mth as
Gaeilge, 6.00pm

Axed Gaelic Languages
SBS Radio AM1224
Irish>Somali
Wed 10.00pm
Scottish>Amharic
Thur 10.00pm
Welsh>Malay
Sat 10.00pm

Celtic Folk Show
3CR AM855
Tues 1.00pm

Connolly Assoc
3CR AM855
Sat 9.30am.

SCOIL GHEIMHRIDH

J Moloney

Ar an 6ú-9ú de Mheithimh tháinig 80 Gaeilgeoirí ó gach aird den tír le chéile i Sydney le haghaidh Scoil Gheimhridh - Gaeltacht Sydney a tugadh ar an áit. Is iad Marcas de Faoite agus an tAthair Micheál Ó Súilleabháin a d'eagraigh cúrsaí na deireadh seachtaine agus tá buíochas mór tuillte acu.

Bhí ranganna Gaeilge ar siúl agus imeachtaí éagsúla a bhain le teanga agus cultúr na hÉireann. Bhaineamar sult as "Smaointí of a born-again Gaeilgeoir" ó Deasún Ó Máille, as Tráth na gCeist- leis an an tAthair Micheál ag cur na ceisteanna agus Seán Ó Scanláin ag coimeád an scór, as an ceol-choirm agus go háirithe as an gcairdeas a bhí againn i dtiannta a chéile agus sinn ag iarraidh feabhas a cur ar ár gcuid Gaeilge. Molaimid muintir Sydney.

An Leabharlann

Má tá tuairim ag éinne faoi leabhair nó foclóir nó áis foghlama eile gur chóir a bheith sa leabharlann, cuir é sin in iúl dúinn agus déanfaimid iarracht iad a fháil. Tá catalóga againn nó is féidir teacht ar liosta ar an idirlíon ag www.litríocht.com.

Library

If anyone has any requests regarding books, dictionaries, learning aids and the like for the library, don't hesitate to let us know and we'll do our utmost to track them down. Catalogues are available in the library and also on the internet at www.litríocht.com.

Buíochas

Ba mhaith linn ár mbuíochas a ghabháil leis an gCoiste 2002-2003 as ucht a gcuid saothair ar son an Chumainn i rith na mbliana. Tréaslaímid ár gCoiste nua, 2003-04 agus guímid rath ar a gcuid oibre.

Term 3 ends 23 September

Term Four begins 14 October

Cumann Céili
Sat 18 October
Celtic Club

*Fógra Ghealltanais
Comhghairdeas
do Emma agus a Fiancé
atá geallta chun pósadh
Congratulations to
Emma and her Fiancé
on their recent engagement*



Céilí

Scríobh síos an dáta tabhachtach seo i do dhialann - 18ú Deireadh Fomhair. Beidh ár gCéilí Mór bliantiúl ag tárú an oíche sin ag Club na gCeilteach. Tá a ndóthain ama tugtha ag Muiris Ó Mórdha (ár stiúrthóir suntasach) dúinn chun ár ngnóthaí a rialú ionas go mbeimid saor an oíche sin.

Costas na dticéidí: \$20 an duine. Ceol beo agus rince níos beomhar atá geallta dúinn. Beidh greimín bia le fáil freisin. *Bí ann nó bí aiféalach!*

Teagmháil: *Muiris 9720 7735*

Oíche Trivia

Bhain baill an Chumainn, a d'fhreastail ar oíche "Táin Trivia", sult agus spraoi as sár-oíche ag Club na gCeilteach le déanaí. Comhghairdeas d'ár gcáirde ar an mbord "*The Children of Lir*" a raibh lámh acu ag cumadh an luimneach a thóg an bua.

Beidh ionadh oraibhse nach raibh ann gur thug scata eile den Chumainn "*The SP Bookies*" an chéad duais leo. Barr mholadh do mhac Eibhlin agus Paddy (bun rang). D'fhág Paddy an cuid eile againn in ár dtost agus í ag cumadh an luimneach seo bunaithe ar an tainm ar an mbord:

Alibi for Sat 18 Oct

Here's your alibi for Saturday 18 October. That's the date of our Annual Céilí (kaye-lee) at the Celtic Club (see ad front page). Put it in your diary right now. Morris, our Major Events Manager, is giving us plenty of notice to make sure we're all present at the social event of the year.

Tickets will cost \$20.00 per person. Finger food and live music will be provided. All group dances will be called and there will be surprise guest entertainer(s). There may even be door prizes and/or a raffle! Be there! Contact Muiris.

Táin Trivia Night

An enjoyable night was had by several Cumann members at Táin Magazine's Trivia Night, held recently in the Celtic Club. Congratulations to *The Children of Lir* table who composed the winning limerick.

Those who were unable to attend on the night will be amazed to hear that a group of Cumann members, family and friends, at the *SP Bookies* table, came in **first** overall among a field of strong competitors, and took out the major prize. *Paddy* (bun-rang) co-ordinated the composition of the following limerick based on the name of the table:-

*There was an SP Bookie named Wren,
Who grew rich on the wages of men,
His odds were atrocious,
His clients, they were stocious,
But they came back again and again.*

Help Needed
with translating & publishing
An Fhuinneog Ghaelach
our quarterly newsletter
contact the editors

*Irish History Circle
Annual Dinner
Celtic Club, Friday 19 December
Bookings in Advance:
Nell 9419 6882
Dan 5978 6326*

AGM

At the AGM, votes of thanks were extended to our dedicated language tutors; the outgoing committee; and various members of the Irish Language Association for all the time and effort they put in, and the work they undertook on behalf of the Cumann during 2002-2003. In particular, the organisers of the Victorian Summer and Sydney Winter Schools were congratulated on their sterling efforts.

Our new Committee (names opposite) was elected and the following items were discussed (not necessarily in the following order): future directions for the Cumann — aims, objectives, specific goals; centralisation; current legal status and obligations; constitutional review; clarification of donations and fund-raising criteria; membership; current premises and amenities.

Sub-Committees

The following items are to be examined in more detail by sub-committees who will report back to a general membership meeting to be held no later than Nov 2003:

- feasibility/otherwise of a premises relocation
- future fundraising and donation criteria
- constitution review
- centralization of the Cumann as a national body.

Seanfhocal an lae
Ni hiad na cainteoirí mhóra
a bhaineas an fómhar

Cumann Gaeilge na hAstráile

The following people were elected at the recent AGM
as Committee Members for 2003-2004

Executive

Uachtarán/President: Càit Ní Mhúdaigh; Mean Rang

Leas-Uachtaráin: Gavan Duffy; Mean Rang

Runai/Secretary: Eileen Savedra; Bun Rang

Cisteoir/Treasurer: Marc O'Cléireach; Meán Rang

Ordinary Members

Membership: Mary Haldun; Meán Rang

Newsletter: Joan Moloney; Ard Rang

Newsletter: Fran Bader, Bun Rang

Operations: Muiris Moore; Meán Rang

Library: Joan Moloney; Ard Rang

Una de Neefe; Ard Rang

Committee Meetings

During 2003-04 all committee meetings will be held on the second Tuesday of each month at St John's School starting at 6.30pm.

All financial members of Cumann Gaeilge na h'Astráile are welcome to attend the monthly Committee meetings. The Sec. must be notified in advance if you wish to include a particular item on the Agenda. Next meeting will be held 12 Aug.

Cruinnithe an Choiste

I rith na bliana 2003-2004 beidh na cruinnithe ar an dara Máirt de gach mhí ag Scoil Naomh Eoin ag tosnú ar 6.30 i. n. (roimh ranganna)

Beidh fáilte roimh gach ball iníochta. Má theastaíonn uait aon ábhar a phlé, cuir é in iúl don Rúnaí roimh ré.

Dearcaidh/Viewpoints

This Newsletter is produced entirely by volunteers. The *E-Team* is grateful to everyone who helped put the LUNASA Edition together.

If, due to spatial constrictions, any item has been interpreted, abstracted or formatted unsatisfactorily; or any unintentional factual, spelling, grammatical, or other mistakes have been made, do let us know.

All viewpoints expressed in this newsletter are the personal opinion(s) of each individual scribe and, unless specified, are not to be construed as having the Cumann's *imprimatur*.

The First Gaelic Language Mystery

Irish Gaelic has a rather unique feature. It inserts a *séimhiú* or the letter “H/h” before or after the first letter of nouns, pronouns and adjectives beginning with particular letters. This operation is called *Lenition*. And, if there’s anything guaranteed to bring about altered states of *chomhfhíos* or consciousness in the *meabhair* or minds of beginning and indeed more advanced Gaeilgeoíri, it’s the • *débhriochta agus castachtaí* • ambiguities and complexities surrounding this *séimhiú* (shave-yew/you) of initial letters.

Indeed, some of us find this grammatical mutation very puzzling and/or frustrating. Others find it impenetrable and are put off the language — forever. And, we hesitate to bring this up, but one of us (FB) has only recently discovered that lenition is/was also known as *aspiration*; and there’s a device called *an urú* (on-you-rue/urooh) or *eclipse*, as well as *an chopial* or the *copula*. Doesn’t that sound a bit risqué? Has anyone noticed the connection between *you* and *rue* sounds?

Mutations

The *E Team* has set about tracking down this glossarial beast on all our *be-halves*. In the process we trace a bit of leniting history and pursue it’s etymology. We unearth some clues, and even find a few basic guidelines to help us figure out when, where, what, and who to “lenite”. (See over the page)

Teanga Lingua

Basically, languages are both code-bearers of culture and works of art. They’re standardized methods of expressing and writing similar sounds and symbols to facilitate communication and feedback **between** particular groups of people, and we must emphasise, to **exclude** others.

Before writing, and the invention of the printing press, groups communicated by sign language; orally; by visual expression; ogham, runes, and some say by telepathy! It’s when they started writing stuff down and substituting roman letters for sounds that the fun began. Amazingly, the “alphabetic principle” was invented only once, in Western Asia.

Horse Whisperers

Irish, *An Gaeilge* and *An-Gallge*, English belong to the original family of linked languages. Irish & Scots Gaelic belong to the Q Celtic Branch, Cymri to the P-Branch, and English to the Gothic Branch. Their branches’ reflect their values, experiences, reactions and responses• to different environments and changing boundaries• while spearheading their various migratory routes westwards through Europe. While some tribes are said to be island-hopping their way southwards to Australia, the Celts are heading across the steppes on horseback. Other climb over various mountain ranges. A number punctuate their journey along the riverlands while others make their way by ship. And each group invent, borrow, adapt, and refine sounds and words to describe their experiences and emotions when monosyllables or swearing won’t do. By the time our ancestral *Sluaghanna* or Q-Group reach *hIbernia* their *comhrá* or conversations must have been awesome!

Etymology

The time has come for us to grasp the etymology nettle by the glottals. *Séimhiú* translates as *lenition*, some call it *aspiration*, the *h-sound*, or breathing out sound, while others use the term, *mutation*. To “aspirate” is also to apply cardiopulmonary resuscitation! A rather apt term for a language — forced into an underground time-warp, by a long-line of self-promoting feuding aristos for a couple of centuries, before re-emerging to reclaim its linguistic and cultural rights.

Leithleachais/Idiosyncrasies

Apart from the above Ps and Qs interpreted as, *pen>cwen>queen>ceann>khan>*head, there are two particular *leithleachais* we want to mention. (1) Gaelic has eighteen (18) letters in its alphabet. (2) *Séimhiús* are added to the beginning of words to create extra sounds corresponding to some of the other (8+) “missing” consonants, as well as to vary form and function.

Ponc Gaeilge

Prior to BCE (Before Computer Era) the *séimhiú* appeared as a mere dot, a *ponc* (point) or a *buailte* (a hit, or strike out) over and above and even sometimes beyond particular consonants such as *b, c, d, f, g, m, p, s*, (exceptions *j, q, x, z* and *l, n, r*)

The use of the dot takes us back to the days of the Latin scribes or *schríobhnóiri*. They’d be toiling away at their copperplate manuscripts in their scriptoria, when, *hot damn*, as gossellers were wont to say, they’d make a character error. Instead of putting rude *graffito* on their papyrus and having to start all over again, they came up with a solution—a “dot” was inserted over the offending letter (superscript). Over time it became a *signal* to the reader to ignore, silence, cancel, strike out or delete that particular letter. Later Gaelic orthographers, borrowed the *dot-over-the-consonant* convention to alleviate their own particular insular *cruachása*, dilemma. How to extend their eighteen letter alphabet to differentiate between new sounds as well as indicating grammatical changes.

H-Incorporated

Nowadays, H/h, the eight letter of the Roman Alphabet, seems to be taking over. Everywhere we look, we see it placed or “embedded” after and between consonants at the beginning, middle, and ends of words, and often before and between words beginning with an initial vowel. Interestingly, the H/h sound is quite common in English while “H/h” is rarely used in the Gaelic vocabulary, similar to “X” or “Z” in English.

H/h is derived from the Phoenician consonant *heth*, ancestor of the Greek letter H (*eta*) which the Romans adopted to represent the aspirate sound, “H”. In Gaelic vocabulary, “H/h” generally only appears before a vowel at the beginning of a word as in *hIbernia*, and in words borrowed from other languages such as *histéire*, hysteria, hysterical!

More recent orthographers came up with the solution of utilising the ubiquitous letter “H/h” instead of the superscripted “dot” to *lenite* initial letters and *aspirate* others in the beginning, middle and ends of words. Words, especially those beginning with a vowel, are easier to say, ie *Avon, Abhann*, river. “H/h” may also add to; alter; or silence the original consonant, ie *who dunnit?*

The Word Whisperers

Try and find a definition for *séimhiú* in the *foclóir*, dictionary. Look over there at *séme-antaics*, and where's *semiotics*—the branch of linguistics concerned with signs and symbols. Aha! There's *séimh*, suave, gentle, mild, smooth, mellow/*meala*, The E-Team used to be mellow before we got involved with lenition! Maybe *séimhiú* means smoothing the sound. The Irish Gaels must have been *word whisperers*!

Lenition

"Lenition" doesn't make an appearance in my *An-Gallge* dictionary. There's lenient (tolerant, gentle) Leninism; lenitive (soothing), lenity (mercifulness) and lentils. Some of these words may prove useful while we're unravelling the mysteries of lenition! Let's try it by the syllable.

Aha! maybe len-it-ion comes under the Old Gothic, *len-gte*, *len-githo*, to lengthen or make longer. We may be onto something here! Back to our trusty pocket Gaelic dictionary for the word, to lengthen = *cuir fad le*. Oh no! Is it possible that the *séimhiú* is secretly masquerading as a *fada* when no one is looking? *Tarrháil*, Help!

Lenition

- Seriously, the word *Lenis* comes from the Greek, word meaning, *soft*.
- Firstly *Lenition* is a pronunciation phenomenon caused by the addition of the letter H/h to certain initial consonants. It has to do with things like (genomes!) phonemes, velars, sibilants, and *Dia ár Sábháil!* fricatives, glides, plosions, tension and stress levels. In the process it mutates labial, dental, guttural, or nasal sounds, as in say, **b+h** sound = v.
- The addition of the letter H/h to initial consonants • after certain adjectives and prepositions • helps soften the pronunciation of the sound which also depends on whether the consonant is bordered by a broad or slender vowel eg slim, I, E, or broad A,O,U. eg, *mo bhaile*, my home.
- The presence or absence of lenition may also indicate structural changes in noun function and circumstances. It can make a difference to the meaning of groups of words and usually indicates a grammatical case and in some instances, number and gender.
 - No! it's not peculiar to Gaelic, just look at "*chutzpah*"!

"Punc Gaeilge"

Lenition Cryptogram

vowels

a,e,i,o,u (5)
a, o, u, = broad (3)
i, e, = slender (2)

consonants

b, c, d, f, g, h, l, m, n, p, r, s, t, (13)

lenited consonant cluusters

add h

bh, ch, dh, fh, gh, mh, ph, sh, th
bh = v + slender = w + broad
ch = h + slender = kh + broad
dh = y + slender = gh + broad
fh = silent
gh = y + slender = gh + broad
mh = v + slender = w + broad
ph = f + slender or + broad
sh = h + slender or + broad
th = h + slender or + broad

(gives us (9+5) extra sounds)

unlenited consonants
l,n,r, (3)

"missing"
consonant sounds
j, q, x, z, (4)

Treoirínte: Guidelines

- **Vocative Case:** lenition happens at the beginning of words when addressing a person ie *a bhean álainn*, (a van awe-lyn) oh awesome woman!
- **Genitive:** apparently, only masculine nouns in the genitive case are lenited. The genitive indicates source, possession, rank, quantity, value, use, measure, material, etc. of the subject in a sentence, *hata an fhir*, the man's hat.
- **Possessive Adjectives:** lenition occurs after singular p/a's—my, your, his, ie *mo bhrón!*
- **Prepositions:** Lenition occurs after certain prepositions. The word "pre-position" is cipher for words that precede nouns and personal pronouns.
Prepositions before nouns express the latter's relation to other nouns in the same sentence—*about, above, according to, below, between, through, under, in front of, for, on, at, in, to by, with, without*, at Easter, *um Cháisc*.
- **Numbers:** we think lenition occurs after the following numbers—two to six; *cúig bhád*, five boats.
- **Pronunciation:** The insertion of the letter "h" after the first consonant or before an initial vowel creates a different sound depending on whether the consonant is bordered by the broad vowels A,O,U or the slender vowels I, E.
- **Caution:** When we see an "h" occurring in feminine nouns after the definite article, *an bhean*, the woman — that's aspiration. When it's *mo bhean* it's possessive and lenited—with exceptions.
- **Example:** "my part", (sing.) after the personal pronoun, my, becomes *mo chuid*, with an "h" added. However, "our part" (plural) becomes *ár gcuid*, with no "h" but a "g" instead. We must be either eclipsing or aspirating ourselves here!
- It's going to take us till the next "instalment" to figure out that last bit. Maybe someone out there can throw more light on the subject!

Cumann Gaeilge na hAstráile teo

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www.gaeilgesanastrail.com*

IRISH LANGUAGE ASSOC OF AUST *IVC*
PO BOX 2078 EAST BRUNSWICK MELB VIC 3057

Cumann Gaeilge na h'Astráile, the Irish Language Association of Australia is a non-profit organisation run entirely by volunteer tutors and a voluntary committee of management.

The Cumann's aim is to promote the Gaelic language as a second language within the Australian community, and to form networks with other cultural, heritage and Gaelic-speaking groups.

Formally established eleven years ago, the ILAA offers structured weekly language classes to students of all ages, nationalities, and walks of life across a range of levels – absolute beginners, basic, intermediate, advanced – as well as the opportunity to practice and converse together in a supportive environment.

Members receive a quarterly newsletter; access to the library; and also enjoy weekly singing and informal conversation sessions; as well as participation in occasional social events and residential language schools.

IRISH LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION OF AUST PO BOX 2078 EAST BRUNSWICK MELBOURNE VICTORIA 3057



Cumann Gaeilge na hAstráile teo P.O.Box 2078 East Brunswick Victoria 3057

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