

Language Learning, and I can only hope that, now that my doctoral quest has concluded, I can devote more time to learning the language. In this, then, I am optimistic that gaining a better grasp of the language will help me deal more effectively with *An Béal Bocht*, the study of which will in turn improve my proficiency in *an Ghaeilge*. All of this is aimed at enhancing my Irish-language ability both for my own edification and to make me a better teacher. That is the plan, anyway.

Ken McIndoe

I was certainly quite nervous about joining the Irish reading group at Princeton. My knowledge of the language was a shaky acquaintance with about seven chapters of *Teach Yourself Irish* and Part I of *Buntús Cainte* from attending classes at the Princeton Adult School. I did have a keen interest in learning more, fueled by several visits to Ireland, where I had heard this mysterious language spoken in Connemara. So with some exterior bravado I joined the group. Thank goodness for the English-language version of the chosen book to help me through the hard parts, as well as for the kindly assistance from the other members in the group. Each week's preparation took several hours but after a while it became somewhat easier—though I cannot say as much for my reading ability, which needs more practice.

The experience of learning in this manner has been wonderful, the pressure was not as great as I feared, and the story line kept my interest. I am looking forward to the group continuing to get together.

Book Review

Gruffudd, Heini. 2000. *Cymraeg Da: A Welsh Grammar for Learners*. Talybont: Y Lolfa. 312 pp. ISBN 0-86243-503-X.

Gruffudd, Heini. 2000. *Ymarferion Cymraeg Da. Talybont: Y Lolfa*. ISBN 0-86243-533-1. (Companion booklet).

"Mae'r Gymraeg bellach yn dibynnu ar y rhai sy'n ei dysgu yn ail iaith yn ein hysgolion. Bydded i'r fyddin honno amlhau a chryfhau." ("Welsh depends now on those who are learning it as a second language in our schools. May that army increase and strengthen.") With these words (Foreword, page 5), Heini Gruffudd dedicates his new grammar and exercise manual for the Welsh learner and reaffirms his unflagging zeal for the language. Gruffudd has been an ardent promoter of the Welsh language and Welsh social causes, and he has authored a number of successful books including *Welsh is Fun*, *Welcome to Welsh*, and *Welsh Learner's Dictionary*.

While most of his previous books have targeted beginners, *Cymraeg Da* aims at learners of intermediate or even advanced proficiency. Gruffudd indicates in his foreword that the units can be covered sequentially, by the intermediate student for whom much of the material may be new, or thematically, by the advanced student who wishes to review a particular topic. The very detailed table of contents will prove essential in locating the various places in the book where a given topic is treated. *Cymraeg Da* would undoubtedly work well in an intermediate classroom setting, and a number of oral exercises are designed for small-group or pair work on topics such as pollution or drugs. On the other hand, the intermediate student working without a teacher might find the book somewhat difficult to use, in part because all grammatical explanations are in Welsh; the use of English is limited to translating idioms and glossing example sentences.

The advanced learner will find the volume to be an excellent review grammar which is rich in Welsh idioms. Fifty pages are devoted to prepositions, a welcome study of a difficult topic in which even advanced learners often need more work. In its own words (p. 7), the text teaches "ffurfiau ffurfiol ysgrifenedig yn bennaf" ("mainly formal written forms"), although it also introduces colloquial and regional variants as well as very literary forms. These are always clearly marked so that the user of the manual should have no difficulty keeping them separate, and generally only the middle-of-the-road forms are practiced in exercises. All in all this is a very sensible way of handling the fairly broad spectrum of forms that the Welsh speaker of today needs to be able to recognize. Some readers may be dismayed that the book teaches forms of the verb bod 'to be' associated with the Cymraeg Byw movement which are rarely used by native speakers (e.g. rydw i 'I am'), and which tend to be thought of as learners' language.

User-friendly features of the book include an index of idioms, a glossary of grammatical terminology, and a general index of Welsh words, phrases, or constructions discussed in the book. The text is made lively with numerous pen-and-ink cartoon drawings and humorous captions, as well as black and white photographs of some well-known Welsh figures (the singer Dafydd Iwan figures in several) and an old photo or two of Heini himself. The volume is packaged with a floppy disk containing supplementary exercises (for which an answer key is provided) that can be used on a Macintosh or a PC-compatible computer, and there is also a companion booklet called Ymarferion Cymraeg Da, sold separately. The booklet is a necessary component for those using Gruffudd's book on their own, as it contains the answer key for the exercises in the main text.

Cymraeg Da will be a welcome addition to the pedagogical materials of any student or teacher of Welsh.

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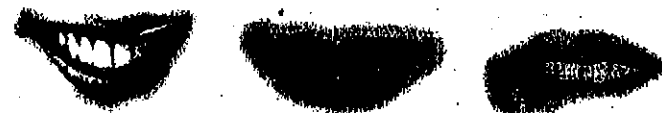
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