

Reviews

***The Encyclopedia of the Irish in America*, ed. Michael Glazier. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1999. 988+xxi pp. ISBN 0268027552. \$89.95.**

(Reprinted with slight revisions from the July 2001 issue of the Irish Edition, Philadelphia, Pa., with the kind permission of its editors.)

It's hard to stop reading *The Encyclopedia of the Irish in America*. Entries range from "America's First Irish Visitor" (Richard Butler in 1584) to contemporary figures such as Pierce Brosnan, Michael Flatley, Anjelica Huston, and Liam Neeson. Entries include both the American-born and the Irish-born. For those born in Ireland, their inclusion here is determined by their involvement with American life – some brought over as children and remaining and others whose connections with America were briefer but highly significant.

For example, it is interesting to note the inclusion of John Butler Yeats, father of the poet. John was born in Co. Down in 1839, came to New York in 1907 and remained there till his death in 1922. He became involved with a group of young artists and writers in the French Section of 29th Street, between 8th and 9th Avenues. Yeats sketched scenes at the famous murder trial of Harry K. Thaw, accused of killing architect Stanford White who had designed the first Madison Square Garden and the Washington Memorial Arch. The current location of these sketches remains a mystery. John Butler Yeats is buried in Chesterton, New York.

Ken Nilsen, past president of NAACLT, has written an informative entry on "The Irish Language in America," highlighting an oft-overlooked aspect of Irish emigration to America. He notes the tantalizing existence of Irish language publications in the 19th century. One example is "Our Gaelic Department," published in the New York newspaper *Irish-American* from July 1857 to 1915, with some breaks. In 1881 Michael Logan founded a bilingual monthly, *The Gael (An Gaodhal)*, in Brooklyn. It is significant that both of these Irish-American efforts triggered similar movements in Ireland. The Dublin publication, *Nation*, started an Irish language column in March of 1858, which was duly noted by the pioneering American publication. A year after *An Gaodhal's* appearance, in 1882, the

Gaelic Union started the first such bilingual publication in Ireland, *The Gaelic Journal (Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge)*. And as *Irish Edition* readers know, the tradition continues in the column *Buille Súil ar an Nuacht*.

It is good to see NAACLT mentioned in Nilsen's article, together with a commendation of Daltai na Gaeilge's Irish immersion weekends, Barra Ó Donnabháin's monthly column in the New York *Irish Echo*, and Dr. Séamus Blake's bilingual radio program, *Míle Fáilte*, sponsored by Fordham University.

Nilsen also describes the activities of Archbishop John Neumann (1811-1860) of Philadelphia, noted for his ability in languages, who is said to have learned Irish in order to be able to hear the confessions of monoglot Irish speakers on his missions across the length and breadth of Pennsylvania. This suggests a new slant on the widely held assumption that the Irish language had barely survived the Famine Emigration, and, as the Great Hunger gains a greater role in American high school history curricula, perhaps increasing attention will be paid to the language aspect.

Every imaginable topic seems to be covered in the *Encyclopedia*, including those that might not seem initially to have an Irish connection. Gregory Peck, the Foodland supermarket chain in Hawaii, the history of baseball, the exponential law of error, and the floodlighting of the Statue of Liberty are just a few.

Such a comprehensive tome is by necessity large and heavy and, hard-bound bibliophile that I am, I wonder if a CD-ROM or electronic version is forthcoming. It would also be helpful if there was an index alphabetized by general topics such as "Sports Figures" (Jack Dempsey, Connie Mack), "Religious Figures" (Archbishop Carroll, Cardinal Spellman), "Film Producers" (Walt Disney, John Huston), as well as Writers, Politicians, Actors, and even Outlaws (Jesse James, "Machine Gun" Kelly). All 50 states are covered and about a dozen cities, but again it would be helpful to have an easily accessible list of the cities covered. One would assume entries for Boston, Philadelphia, and New York, but one might not necessarily look for Dayton, Ohio, or St. Augustine, Florida. Having been 2001-02 NAACLT president, I would be pleased to see this organization added to the section on "Voluntary Organizations" if a future edition of the *Encyclopedia* is ever produced.

The University of Notre Dame Press's website (www.undpress.nd.edu) offers a few excerpts from the volume (and, at the time of printing, a discount price!)

Reviewed by Roslyn Blyn-LaDrew
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***The Gaelic-English Dictionary / Am Faclair Gàidhlig-Beurla.* by Mark, Colin. London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2004. ISBN 0-415-29761-3. 736 pp. Price varies, see below.**

In his preface to this *Gaelic-English Dictionary*, author Colin Mark says part of his goal was "not simply to supply the bare meaning of the words and phrases, but to put flesh upon the bones, so to speak." The result is "sultmhor" in all senses of the word, past and present, Scottish and Irish (fleshy, plump, in good condition, comely, joyful).

Attractive features of the book include a spelling and pronunciation guide, a guide on using the dictionary, a system of abbreviations for context (agriculture, metaphorical, typography, etc.), and 12 appendices covering parts of speech such as verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, pronouns, prepositions, lenition, as well as proper nouns. The text also includes numerous boxed-in sections for complex words such as "abair, ràidh," covering active and passive voice, imperative mood, and the verbal noun, or the cluster of words based on "breac" (spot, speckle), which includes "to sprinkle," cirro-cumulus, smallpox, the fish trout and loach, and the Battle of Falkirk! At times the dictionary almost approaches a user-friendly textbook in organization and outline.

Additional useful notes appear with certain entries. For examples, under "boireannach" (woman), the reader is advised to "note that this is the only *masc noun* in Gaelic with a fem meaning." Irish-speaking readers will recognize the scenario from examples such as "cailín, masc., girl" and the dilemma of "aintín," which is considered masculine in some older dictionaries and textbooks (Dineen, "An Seabhac," Dillon and Ó Cróinín), but feminine in the *Caighdeán Oifigiúil* and most modern dictionaries. One recent Irish textbook treats the word "aintín" as masculine and feminine within one chapter! A further complication for the word "aintín" in Irish is that, in real life, it would rarely be used with the definite article, which typi-

cally would show the gender (an t-aintín vs. an aintín); more likely one refers to "my aunt" or "Jane's aunt," not "the aunt;" this makes it harder to determine what gender native speakers consider such a word to be.

It is good to see the abundance of modern terminology (*Comisean an Telebhisein Neo-eisimeilich*, Independent Television Commission; *flataichean cuibhreann-ùine*, time-share apartments; *modam*, masc., modem; *ailearan*, for "aileron") while the traditional richness of the language is also maintained with proverbs and with terms such as "gèadh" for a "tailor's goose" and "murag" for "anything cast up by the sea." American readers will be intrigued by occasional references which Mark notes to Scots (Lowland English) in definitions such as "sharger" for "seargair" (puny person) and "rickle o' banes" for "riochdal" (skeleton).

All in all, this volume is a most welcome addition for learners and teachers, and no doubt a good reference tool for native speakers as well. While enjoying my search for interesting and representative examples, I did spot one apparent typo where "ceithir mìosan" (four months) is translated as "three months." But most reference books these days seem to have many more such problems in proportion to their size, so this can be considered an anomaly. There are a few new words that which I would like to see defined, particularly for the determination of their gender. Key among these is the thorny issue of the hermaphroditic noun "euro," which in practical usage these days seems to be feminine in the nominative (no "t-") and masculine in the genitive (no "h," retention of "an" as the definite article). If it is treated in this dictionary, I could not find the entry. All the more reason, however, for a supplement, or an eventual reprint with additions. Or better yet, an English to Gaelic version of the same dictionary, with additional entries.

The one baffling issue concerning this book is the price and the availability of the paperback edition. Most users will probably prefer the paperback, which appears to list at \$28.95. However I mostly find this offered online, new, at about \$50.00. A further issue is that several of the American online distributors don't seem to list the paperback edition at all, and as the hardback ranges in price, new, from about \$200 to \$260, this could make a considerable difference. Since I recall people waiting eagerly for the paperback, based on bits of "gobaireachd" online, it would seem apropos for distributors to offer both choices.

Whichever version you select, *gabh tlachd ann*, or to return full-

circle to the first word discussed above, here in its Irish context, *bain sult as* (strike enjoyment out of it!).

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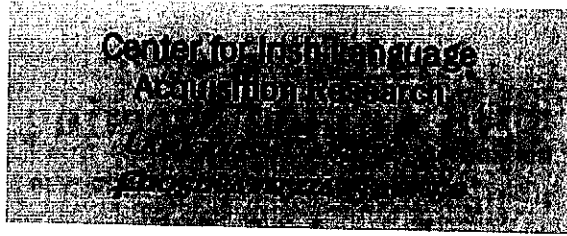
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