Northern Dialects of Scottish Gaelic, with sections on other Celtic languages and upon indigenous American languages

By Linden Alexander Pentecost, I was born in the UK and am a UK resident. Published on the 10th of September 2022, published originally on my website www.bookofdunbarra.co.uk. This is the second book I have published on the 10th of September 2022 on this website, the other book published on this date is titled: *A wee guide to Trøndersk, Faroese, and*
some other North-Germanic languages

This book contains 33 internal pages, this is page one and also one of the contents pages. The main content appears on page three.

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This book aims to provide an introduction to Northern Dialects of Scottish Gaelic, particularly the Torridon dialect, and to the Medieval Cornish language, the common Brittonic language, various Ulster Irish dialects and a small number of Indigenous American languages. There are also sections on Old Welsh and on Cumbric. The contents is below:

The Gaelic dialect of Assynt

By Linden Alexander Pentecost

The photo below shows the wild and beautiful landscape of Assynt on the northwestern Scottish mainland, a peninsula between MacKay County to the north and Coigeach to the south.

The Gaelic dialect spoken in Assynt does in many ways seem to share things in common with the MacKay dialects to the north, and with the Wester Ross dialects to the south. But in other respects it is less typically 'northern', and this may I think be due to oceanic contact between Assynt and other coastal areas, meaning that Assynt Gaelic is perhaps less broad a dialect than say MacKay Gaelic or Loch Broom Gaelic, or Little Loch Broom Gaelic. In other senses, Assynt Gaelic is more or less identical in many words to the dialects slightly further south. Àdhamh ó Broin has done some field-research in Assynt quite recently from what I understand

In the *Survey of the Gaelic dialects of Scotland*, edited by Cathair Ó Dochartaigh, informant number 130 is from Assynt. The observations below are based on the phonetic information given for informant 130.

In the word **samhradh –** 'summer', the language of informant 130 is given as having a [g] or [k]-like sound as the final consonant, this contrasts with the [k] further south and with the lack of any consonant in MacKay dialects to the north, which generally have the **-adh** in this word represented as [u]. Another feature of the language of informant 130 shown in *Survey of the Gaelic dialects of Scotland*, edited by Cathair Ó Dochartaigh, is that the word **sabhal –** 'barn' is given in the book *Survey of the Gaelic dialects of Scotland*, edited by Cathair Ó Dochartaigh with the vowel sounds [o̞] followed by a small version of [ï], this latter vowel seems unique to Assynt in this word. This bi-syllabic structure with the second vowel being smaller is common in this area, but in other dialects it is shown as being a small schwa.

East Sutherland Gaelic

Photo above: Loch Fleet close to Embo in the traditional Gaelic speaking area of East Sutherland, showing a firth in a typical northeast coast landscape. When visiting this region I was very fortunate to meet the only two speakers of the dialect in Embo. I am grateful for this and remember it in my heart. Wilma has sadly passed away, god bless her and I thank her for her beautiful kindness. Amen

One difference of east Sutherland Gaelic which is recorded in the Survey of the Gaelic dialects of Scotland (1), is that initial broad **g** is pronounced [x] when under lenition. For example *A' Ghàidhlig* could be spelt something like **a' Chàilig**. The differences are too numerous to include here, but, some of the features of this dialect are generic things associated with Northern Gaelic dialects, for example n frequently becomes r. This is not limited to Northern Scotland but it occurs arguably in a much larger number of words in Northern Scotland.

For example *ainm* – 'name' becomes **airm** for some speakers in East Sutherland Gaelic (2), interestingly the Irish dialect of Rathlin island has *airm* too. Rathlin Irish is an Ulster Irish dialect and it shows continuity with Scottish Gaelic, but it cannot simply be described using these two things, Rathlin Irish has its own, apparently 'oceanic' features going on that are for example shared with Northern Scotland in the case of this example. On my website www.bookofdunbarra.co.uk I also discuss on my St Kilda page some of these 'oceanic' Gaelic features that can arguably be found in insular Irish and Scottish Gaelic dialects, and in continuation here, in Northern Scotland. Below is an example of East Sutherland Gaelic:

Cron nach ail a dul dhan baile? - why is he not going to the town, standard Gaelic spelling:
carson nach eil e a' dol dhan baile?

All the vocabulary of the above sentence/sentence on the previous page is based upon the phonetic information for these particular words as mentioned in East Sutherland Gaelic: the dialect of the Brora, Golspie, and Embo fishing communities, by Nancy. C. Dorian (2).

Photo below: another part of the East Sutherland coastline, close to Golspie.

A change from [a] to [o] or [ɔ] is relatively common across Scottish Gaelic, this change is very common in certain words, in dialectal areas around the country. But in Northern Scotland one could argue that this change is somewhat more common, and the phoneme [ɒ] also occurs in East Sutherland. This I write as å, for example informants 142 and 143 in (1) have this sound in *falamh* – 'empty', which could be written here as **fålaí**, the final vowel being pronounced close to [i] presumably but I am not certain on the exact pronunciation from the dialect survey. Another example is *fairrge* – 'sea', which, in the language of informants 142 and 143 (1) could be written as **fårig**. Note that the [g] in this word is likely close to the English [g]. The verb *dh'fhalbhadh* – 'would go' might be written as **ch'fhålu** in the language of informants 142 and 143 (1).

Other East Sutherland Gaelic phrases spelled according to/based on phonetic informantion in (2). I have created some spelling forms for the sentences below:

dae an t-airm a th'ort? - who is your name

dae – what, *an t-airm* – the name, *a th'ort* – that there is on you

cweas a tha u? - where are you (singular) from?

cweas – East Sutherland form of *có ás* – interrogative + out of, *a tha* – that is or are, *u* – you singular

(1) – Survey of the Gaelic dialects of Scotland, edited by Cathair Ó Dochartaigh

(2) - East Sutherland Gaelic: the dialect of the Brora, Golspie, and Embo fishing communities, by Nancy. C. Dorian

The Gaelic spoken around Little Loch Broom

By Linden Alexander Pentecost, photo also by Linden Alexander Pentecost

Photo above: Little Loch Broom on the Northern Scottish mainland, a 'fjordic' sea loch.

According to the Survey of the Gaelic dialects of Scotland, edited by Cathair Ó Dochartaigh (1), the Gaelic spoken around Little Loch Broom appears to be much the same as other dialects along this section of the coastline. This is not surprising considering that this landscape is quite vast, and for centuries people have travelled up and down this coastline, communicating their language and culture along the sea. Informant 125 is from close to Loch Broom in the Survey of the Gaelic dialects of Scotland, edited by Cathair Ó Dochartaigh. The word **stiùir –** 'steer' is given with a long vowel written in the survey as [ü]. I am not sure quite what this sound represents, but it can also be found in this word in some Lewis dialects, and in other dialects close to Little Loch Broom. Interestingly informant 125 does not have a 'sh' sound for the initial s, instead the s seems close to the English s, whilst the t is palatal [t']. This is also something I have noticed in Survey of the Gaelic dialects of Scotland, edited by Cathair Ó Dochartaigh, (1).

An interesting thing about the Little Loch Broom dialect shown from informant 125 (1), is that the broad velarised l is given as followed by a v (1), in the word **slat** – twig, for example, also recorded in the word **sealladh –** 'view'.

(1) Survey of the Gaelic dialects of Scotland, edited by Cathair Ó Dochartaigh

Middle Welsh pronunciation

By Linden Alexander Pentecost

Photo below: looking towards mount Snowdon, Yr Wyddfa on an early winter morning. This is a landscape which is deeply connected to the Modern Welsh language, and mythologically speaking and within the landscape to Middle Welsh.

This is a short guide to the pronunciation Welsh language before the 1500s, the language which was used to write some of the earliest poetry in Britain and which was the way we got many of our Welsh stories and legends today. This writing was based on what I know of Middle Welsh.

Orthography and pronunciation
Old and Middle Welsh orthography is different to the spelling of modern Welsh, and has a fair amount of variation. In particular, Old Welsh spelling doesn't use **w** and **y**. Lenition wasn't marked in Old Welsh and usually isn't in Middle Welsh either. Some of the words below include some things I have added to the spelling here, in order to distinguish words.

diphthongs:

ae [aə]
aw [au]
ei [ɛi]
eu [ɛʉ]

ew [ɛu]
iw [iu]
oe [oɨ]
oy [oɨ]
wy [uɨ]
yw [ɨu]

<u>consonants</u>

b [b]
c [k], [g] in medial/final position
ch [χ]
d [d], but [ð] in medial and final position
f [f]
g [g]
h [h]
i [j] sometimes
k [k]
l [l]
ll [ɬ]
m [m]

<u>Examples</u>

dyd – day, [dɨð], **achaws –** because [aχaus], **kyny –** though, although [kənɨ]
eur – gold [ɛʉr], **kyvarch –** message, address [kəvarχ], **y veird –** the bards [ə
vɛirð], **mynyd –** [mənɨð], **coet –** forest [koɨd], **yn, yg –** in, **mawr –** big [maur],
Myrdin – Merlin [mərðin], **ysgwyt –** shield [əsguɨd], **kateir –** chair, seat
[kadɛir],**ỳ –** his, her [ə], **gwrt –** against [gʉrθ], **kynhorawc –** leader
[kənhɔraug], **map –** son [ma:b], **pop –** every [pɔb], **y, yr –** the [ə]
eclwys – church [ɛgluɨs], **gwr –** man [gʉ:r]

Medieval Welsh literature is essentially the oldest literary tradition in Britain, it
is the web of cultural and spiritual heritage where the original gods of Arthur,
Merlin and others are in their own lands. Over time many of these stories
were transformed and adapted, but from my own understanding, Arthur and
Merlin are deity figures attached to certain ancient tribal communities in parts
of Britain, especially North Wales. These gods in their human aspects were
also connected to the natural landscape itself in a more metaphysical way,
hence why Arthur is very connected to Mount Snowdon, and Merlin is very
connected to the area around Beddgelert, and for example the sacred
mountain of Dinas Emrys. Snowdon itself was likely considered as a sacred
mountain. In Welsh it is named *Yr Wyddfa*, which can be interpreted as 'the
seeing-place' or 'the wisdom place', at least from my understanding.

The Gaelic dialect spoken close to Eilean Donan castle

By Linden Alexander Pentecost, originally written in 2021, finished in September 2022.

Photo above: the famous Scottish castle at Eilean Donan. Note that this article is a brief description of the phonology of the Gaelic in this area, as recorded in the *Survey of the Gaelic dialects of Scotland*, edited by Cathair Ó Dochartaigh.

The examples of phonetic/IPA spelling are not as accurate or exact to how they are given in the *Survey of the Gaelic dialects of Scotland*, my own phonetic rendering is a simplification of this, incorporating important phonetic information which I have learned from the *Survey of the Gaelic dialects of Scotland*, edited by Cathair Ó Dochartaigh.

All of the phonetic examples below/on the following page are based on the pronunciation of informant 102. This is indicated after each word.

One of the defining features of the dialects in this area are the aspirated consonants at the end of words.

For example, they would say [sãũrɤkʰ] (*based on the language of informant 102*) for **samhradh** 'summer', more often [sãũrəɣ] in other dialects.

And [ʃol̪ɤrkʰ] (*based on the language of informant 102*) for **sealladh** 'view', more commonly [ʃal̪ɤəɣ] in other dialects.

This sound also comes from **-gh** in the language of informant 201 for example [l̥ɤɯːkʰ] *(based on language of informant 102)* for **laogh** 'calf', more commonly [l̥ɤɯːɣ] in other dialects.

In Gaelic dialects, it is unusual to have aspirated consonants in these positions. It also happens with orthographic **t** and **p** too, for example [pʰaːhpʰ] *(based on the language of informant 102)* for **pàpa** 'pope'.

Some other unusual phonemes in the dialect, are **bh** and **mh** being sometimes pronounced as [β], like the Castillian Spanish b. For example **taobh** 'side' is [t̪ʰɯːβ] *(based on the language of informant 102)*

talamh 'ground' is [t̪ʰal̪ɤuβ] *(based on the language of informant 102)*.

Sometimes the vowels in the Lochalsh dialects may also be different, for example pronouncing [o] where it wouldn't normally appear, **grian** is pronounced [krĩõn] for instance *(based on the language of informant 102)*.

As in other parts of Wester Ross, the final **mh** in words like **seasamh** 'stand', and **falamh** 'empty', is [i] (a general observation about Gaelic in this whole area).

The prosodic elements of these dialects are also unusual, they have very stark changes in pitch, and long emphasis on vowels, I have learned this from recordings I have listened to on the website Tobar an Dualchais.

I have also written a bit about the nearby Duirinish dialect, and the Duirinish dialect also has these interesting prosodic features, albeit slightly different in how they have manifested.

It is interesting I think that these aspirated final consonants do not seem to occur for example near Loch Torridon or Loch Broom to the north, they seem to be localised to this area and to a couple of other areas across Scotland, according to what I understand from the information presented in *Survey of the Gaelic dialects of Scotland*, edited by Cathair Ó Dochartaigh.

Gaelic on the Mull of Galloway

Photo above: Loch Ryan with the Mull of Galloway on the left

The Mull of Galloway is the most south-western part of the Scottish mainland. Gaelic has not been widely spoken in Galloway for a few hundred years, but evidence of the language is visible throughout the region.

Not surprisingly, Gaelic names are very numerous on the Mull of Galloway, which is not far from Ulster in Ireland, nor from Kintyre in Scotland, and the Isle of Man to the south.

The main settlement in the area is Stranraer, Gaelic **Srón Ramhair**, literally fat, or wide nose, in reference to the peninsula. There is some question as to what Galloway Gaelic actually was. Not everyone seems to agree upon it being a 'dialect of Scottish Gaelic'.

Whilst it certainly was a group of dialects, connected to those in Scotland, it may also have shared connections with Ulster Irish and with Manx that make it fundimentally different in some ways from 'Scottish Gaelic' as a whole.

If *Òran Bagraidh* is indeed a genuine example of the dialect, then it would seem to support this idea in some way. The song contains **muid** for 'we', common in the Irish language, but very unusual for Scotland. Other parts of the song seem to be quite incomprehensible.

To complicate things further, the relationship between Galloway Gaelic and Norse is somewhat of a confusing one, as it seems that in certain instances, Norse vocabulary is arranged in an order more similar to that of Gaelic, as in the name Kirklauchline

In more 'classical Gaelic' spelling this could be spelled as: **Circ Lochlainn**. Another possibility is that somehow, Gaelic and Norse are related in this context, and are sharing or inheriting vocabulary from some earlier time.

To complicate matters further, many of the 'Celtic' names from this part of Scotland, are what would be considered to be the Cumbric language, a P-Celtic language.

The precise relationship between Cumbric and Gaelic in this context is also somewhat of a mystery. Below are some examples of place-names from the region.

Ardwall – **Árd Bhaile** 'high town', (local meaning of **baile** may be slightly distinct)

Drumdow – **Drum Dubh** 'black ridge'

Dinduff – **Dún Dubh**, a more Cumbric looking name meaning Dark Fort, readable in Cumbric as *Dyn Dýv*

Leswalt – **Lios Fhalt**, the phonology of this name more closely matches Goidelic I think, but the semantics of **falt –** 'hair' do not quite fit.

The semantics of the Brythonic term *gweld- for 'grass' do work. This place-name perhaps demonstrates that the original language may have been neither Brythonic nor Goidelic, but something between the two.

Slouchnawen Bay – **Sloc an Abhainn** 'hollow of the river'

The name above demonstrates that at least on the Mull of Galloway, the medial broad **bh** was likely pronounced [w] in this world

<u>The Cornish language, medieval Cornish, standard written form</u>

I have previously discussed more about the Late Cornish or West Cornish language, for example on my website www.bookofdunbarra.co.uk, on this page: https://www.bookofdunbarra.co.uk/the-west-cornish-language-kernowek
Archived link: https://web.archive.org/web/20220228095026/https://www.bookofdunbarra.co.uk/the-west-cornish-language-kernowek

The following section is a hopefully, interesting introduction to Cornish, with some interesting sentences.

<u>Sample sentences in Cornish (medieval, standard written form)</u>

Linden ov vy – I am Linden
Piw os ta? - who are you? (singular)
Piw owgh whi? - who are you? (plural)
fatla genes? - how are you? (singular)
fatla genowgh whi? - how are you? (plural)
da, meur ras – good, thank you
yn poynt da – very well
peth yw dha hanow? - what is your name?
ow hanow yw... - my name is...
dedh/dydh da – good day
mettin da – good morning
nos da – good night

<u>some grammar</u>

Cornish (standard) uses **yma** in the present continuous tense. This is used to roughly mean 'there is/are'.

yma den war an treth – there is a man on the beach
yma cath war an pons – there is a cat on the bridge
yma keus yn an bussys – there is cheese in the buses
yma gofen yn an lever – there is a question in the book
yma lever dan an men – there is a book under the stone

yma can also be used as an auxiliary verb:

yma den ow nejya – a man is swimming
yma tas ow mos dha'n treth – (a) father is going to the beach
yma hi ow queles an venyn – she's seeing/looking at the woman
yma hi ow tonsya gans an den – she's dancing with the man

For the first person, **yth esov (vy)** is used.

Yth esov vy ow mos dha'n fordh – I am going to the road
Yth evov vy ow kerdhes dha'n burow – I am walking to the office

ymons i ow mos – they are going, etc.

<u>Pronouns:</u>

vy – I
ty – you (singular)
ev – he
hi – she
ni – we
whi – you (plural)
i – they

ov vy – I am
os ta – you are (singular)

yw ev/hi – he/she is

peskador yw ev – he is a fisherman
benyn yw hi – she is a woman

A sentances in Cornish:

Linden ov vy, ha trigav yn Kernow lemmyn gans ow hath
I am called Linden, and I live in Cornwall now with my cat

pyth yw hanow an chi ema?
What is the name of this house?

Yma'n gwyns ow whetha der an logh
 the wind is flowing through the pond

An gwyns yw avel Dew
The wind is like God

Yth ysov vi ow neyja yn an mor hedhyw
I am swimming in the sea today

Porth Ya yw ogas dhe Cambron
St Ives is near to Camborne

Pes imajys eus a'n mor?
How many images are there of the sea?

Yw an chi-na hir bo cul?
Is that house long or narrow?

peur owgh whi ow mos?
When are you going?

A leveris Juan, a prennen an cath?
Did John say that I might buy the cat?

A-mes yw an pesk
the fish is away

Bydhav vy a mos a-wosa
I will be going afterwards

Pyth yw hanow an wraigh?
What is the name of the witch?

An den a vydh war an mordardh
The man will be on the surf

Yma natur theg yn Falmouth
There is pretty nature in Falmouth

Meur ras rag an boos!
Thank you for the food!

Hemm yw an city moyha glyb!
This is the wettest city!

My a skrifa adro Kernow ha Kembra
I am writing about Cornwall and Wales

An universyta yw y'n Soth West, ogas dhe Falmouth
The University is in the South-West, near Falmouth

Da yw genev Kernow ha da yw genev mordardha yn Kernow. My a vynn mordardha yn Pensans hedhyw mes yma ow thas ow tybri lemmyn.
I like Cornwall and I like surfing in Cornwall. I want to go surfing today in Penzance but my dad is eating now.

Pyth eur whelsys jy'n men?
When did you see the stone?

"to be" in Cornish

ov vy – I am
os ta – you are (singular)
yw ev/he he/she is
om ni – we are
owgh whi – you lot are
yns i – they are

Example of another verb,'to know':
gonn, godhes, goor, godhon, godhowgh, godhons - present
godhyen, godhyes, godhya, godhyen, godhyewgh, godhyens – imperfect tense
 goghvev, godhves, godhva, godhven, godhvewgh, godhvons – perfect tense
godhvydhav, godhvydhydh, godhvydh, godhvydhyn, godhvydhowgh, godhvydhons – future

More sample sentences:

bydhav vy yn mesk miwlow an mor – I will be amongst the fogs of the sea
bydhav vi – I will be
yn mesk – amongst
miwlow – fogs
an mor – the sea

an godhanes yns war an jynn ebron – the moths are on the aeroplane
an godhanes – the moths
yns – are
jynn ebron – aeroplane

ple yma an tavernyow? - where are the pubs?
ple? - where?
an tavernyow – the pubs

my a vynn cowsel kernowek ha sowsnek – I will speak Cornish and English
my a vynn – I will/intend to
cowsel - speak

the verb 'to do':

gwrug – I do
gwrussys – you (s) do
gwrug ev/hy – he/she does
gwrussyn – we do
gwrussowgh – you lot do
gwrussons – they do

The Reconstructed Common-Brittonic or Ancient British Language, with thoughts on the culture and beliefs (Iethou Issue Two) – written by Linden Pentecost, photos by Linden Pentecost. Assistance and updates with language by Edward Hatfield, Edward's work is what made me interested in and which taught me Brittonic. This article was written mostly in 2015, published May 26th 2020, republished after error checking on June 18th and 19th 2020 (time-zone dependent). A few years ago, Edward Hatfield updated much of the original draft of text that had been written in around 2010. As mentioned below, spelling changes, and noun declinations were changed for instance, this is in contrast to older examples of the language which you may see me using, which would use circumflex accents.

Above: **abona tecca** – pretty river. I believe that to the Iron Age Britons, water and trees were a part of the sacred world they inhabited. The sacred and the material, rather than being separate, were perhaps seen as one, with the sacred realm existing both outside of this world, and inside it. Especially important to the ancient Celts may have been the 'thin times', such as dusk and dawn, when it was neither light nor day, and when the landscape was neither this world nor the other.

This document is about what the Ancient British language may have looked like. Ancient British, or Brittonic was the Iron Age Celtic language, known through toponyms and reconstructable using evidence from the related Gaulish language in France, and from the three later Brythonic languages which evolved from Proto-Brittonic: Welsh, Cornish, Breton. Proto-Brittonic is a reconstructed language, the reconstructed language in this document is reconstructed Brittonic, and not the actual, spoken Brittonic of the Iron Age, which was sadly unrecorded. However Edward's reconstructions are as accurate as possible.

Common-Brittonic, aptly named Ancient British by Edward Hatfield. Alongside the Welsh, Cornish and Breton languages there was once a widely spoken Brittonic language during the Iron Age. It later gave rise to the modern Brythonic languages from around 600 AD. This was when the original territory of Common-Brittonic began to shrink. Common-Brittonic was influenced by Latin, that lead to the appearance of the early Brythonic Languages of which Welsh, Cornish and Breton are members. Common-Brittonic didn't become recognizably like Welsh until this time. Prior to the formation of Brythonic, Common-Brittonic like other ancient Celtic Languages hadn't developed the traits that came to define Modern Celtic.

Common-Brittonic was very close to Gaulish, but unlike Gaulish there are no written examples of Common-Brittonic. The language has to be painstakingly reconstructed using Gaulish, Welsh and other Celtic Languages. But evidence is plenty, Common-Brittonic was the language of England for some time and left plenty of words and toponyms. Unlike Modern Celtic Languages, Common Brittonic had three genders and noun declinations like

Latin and Greek, making it more like other early Indo-European languages of the classical world. It was still a Celtic Language, from the Celtic Branch of Indo-European. Brittonic probably had a SVO word order like English and French, unlike the VSO order of Modern Celtic languages. There have been some successful attempts to recreate Ancient Celtic languages, but Edward Hatfield was the first person to really focus on reviving the Common-Brittonic or Ancient British Language. Previous reconstructions were not focused on Britain but rather on Gaulish or Ancient P-Celtic in general. For well over a decade Edward has studied and used Brittonic, it was from his videos, posts and resources that I came to learn and use the language.

I originally wrote articles using the Common-Brittonic that Edward Hatfield had been teaching some years ago, but I sent him this article to check over as Common-Brittonic has since been updated by Edward. These updates included changing the way that possession and the future tenses are marked and the 'he' and 'they' pronouns, and the verb 'to come to know'. Edward also updated the spelling system replacing k with c, dropping the use of đ and vowels with circumflexes.

Pronouns

mi - I
tū - you (singular)
eis, ei, es - he
si - she
id, idā - it
snīs - we
swīs - you lot
eioi, eis – they

'to be'

emmi – I am
esi – you are (singular)
esti – he/she/it is
emmos – we are
este(**s**) – you lot are
senti – they are

Declination of **wiros** 'man' in the singular

nominative	**wiros**
accusative	**wiron**
vocative	**wire**
genitive	**wirī**
dative	**wirūi**
instrumental	**wirū**
locative	**wirei**

Declination of **bena** 'woman' in the singular

nominative	**bena**
accusative	**benan**
vocative	**bena**
genitive	**bnās**
dative	**bnai**
instrumental	**bnai**
locative	**bnā**

Common-Brittonic had relatively few sounds and so has few letters

a, b, c, d, e, g, i, l, m, n, o, p, r, s, t, u, w, x

Long vowels are marked with a bar: **ā, ī, ū**

There are also the dipthongs **au**, **ai**, **ei, oi, ou** which are pronounced like **a** followed by **u**, **e** followed by **i** etc.

The vowels are easy to pronounce but some of the consonants were slightly different.

g was like a voiced 'ch' in 'loch' when it came between two vowels, like in **dagos** – good. Identical to the broad dh/gh of Scottish Gaelic. The **x** was pronounced like 'ch' in 'loch'.

Double consonants like **mm** are pronounced doubly long

The **i** sounded like English 'y' like in 'yes' at the start of a word
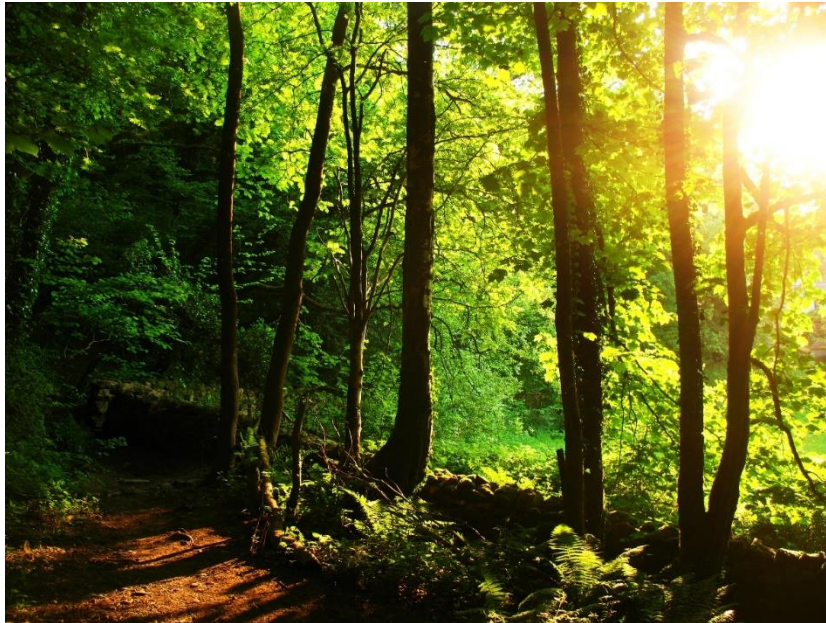
Above: **caitos** – forest, Welsh **coed**, my reconstructed Cumbric: **keað**, I think, forests were like temples to the ancient Celts of Gaul and Britain.

Basic sentences in Ancient British

Maybe not quite the Ancient British of the Iron Age. But they would probably be understandable if we had a time machine to go back there. I have tried to avoid attempting to say anything too complex, as you will see. Edward edited a lot of the Brittonic bits in this article, including many of the pronouns, declinations and spellings. I wanted this to be as accurate as possible, and he is the guy. I have added bits to this since then and hopefully it's as accurate as can be.

diios dagos – good day

diios – day, *dagos* – good (masculine o- stems)

bowa wer abonan – I was beside the river

bowa – I was, *wer* – at/on, *abonan* from *abonā/abona* - river

robowa in caitei – I have been in the forest

ro – prefix, *bowa* – I was, *in* – in, *caitei* – locative of *caitos* – forest.

biiū in caitei – I will be in the forest

biiū – I will be, *in caitei* – in (the) forest, Ancient British had no word for 'the'.

dagowiros esti in bitou ansrei – the good man is in our World

dagowiros – combined noun of *dagos* – good, *wiros* – man, *bitou* is from *bitus* – world, *ansrei* - our

emmi wiros, emmi bena – I am a man, I am a woman

emmi – I am

si esti bena nertī – she is a woman of strength

si – she, *esti* – is, *bena* – woman (f noun), *nertī* -genitive of *nertom* – 'strength' (neuter)

rowindūr pritanīcan – I learn Brittonic

rowindūr – I come to learn, *pritanīcan*, from *pritanīca* – 'Brittonic'

rowindūr iextin carantos imī – I learn the language of my friend

rowindūr – I come to know, *iextin* – language from *iextis* – language, culture, *carantos* genitive of *carants* – friend, *imī* – my

buwū mapos rīgos – I would be the son of the king

buwū – I would be, *mapos* – son, *rīgos* – king (genitive)

pid esti anwan cunos? – what is the name of the dog?

pid – what, *esti* – is, *anwan* – name, *cunos* – of the dog, *cū* - dog

pid esti anwan abonos? – what is the name of the river?

pid – what, *esti* – is, *anwan* – name, *abonos* – of the river, *abona* - river

tū esi druwis - you are a druid!

tū – you (singular), *tū esi* – you are, *druwis* – a druid

pid esti anwan wirī? **-** what is the name of the man?

pid – what, *esti* – is, *anwan* – name, *wirī* – man (genitive) from *wiros*

bleidos esti canta te! – You have a wolf!

bleidos – wolf, *esti* – is, *canta* – with, *canta te* – with you

The Torridon dialect of Gaelic and the Torridon landscape

By Linden Alexander Pentecost, photos also by Linden Alexander Pentecost
This article makes great use of the *Survey of the Gaelic dialects of Scotland*, edited by Cathair Ó Dochartaigh.

All examples or information marked with (1) indicate a reference to the *Survey of the Gaelic dialects of Scotland* edited by Cathair Ó Dochartaigh, and in this article all of these references are specific to the language of informant 118 from Torridon. Note that in some cases the phonetic spelling in (1) or simplification thereof is not given, and in these cases a reference to (1) may indicate that I have spelled Gaelic orthography for Torridon slightly differently according to some of the phonetic information in a word from (1), this includes for example spelling *snaim* - 'knott' as **snaimb**.

Photo above: **Òb Mheallaidh**, a shallow lagoon-like bay just to the south of the main Loch Torridon, Gaelic: **Loch Thoirbheartan**. I hope that this photo helps to give some idea of the majesty of this landscape. In my opinion this small area of the Scottish mainland has some of the best preserved natural environments in Scotland, both in terms of the indigenous Scots pine forests and in terms of the marine diversity. In this lagoon, I walked out some way

into the water (only just over a metre in some places), and found a harbour crab (*Liocarcinus depurator*).

The name Torridon, Gaelic **Toirbheartan**, is likely connected to the *Tarbert* names around Scotland, Gaelic **tairbeart** which means an isthmus or a place where boats are moved from one side of an isthmus to another. Why the word Torridon contains internal lenition aka **tairbeart – toirbheart** I am less sure of; as far as I know this has not yet been looked into. When I have heard **Toirbheartan** pronounced by locals in Gaelic, the **bh** is silent.

 I have not been able to find out much about the Gaelic spoken in Torridon, but I have listened to a couple of examples from the website Tobar an Dualchais. From what I can gather, the speaker Captain Donald MacDonald is a speaker of Torridon Gaelic.

 The speaker William (Willie) MacDonald is from Diabaig, and his language in some ways sounds similar to for example, Skye Gaelic, but the intonation or pitch accent is quite noticeably different. Stewart Alpin from Torridon is another contributor at Tobar an Dualchais. All examples from this speaker are sung, but his voice is incredibly beautiful, and it makes me feel that Torridon Gaelic is beautifully musical, and rising up and down in pitch, just like the dramatic high mountains around.

Captain Donald MacDonald is from Alligin near Torridon, I am not entirely sure to what extent his Gaelic is Torridon Gaelic, and to what extent it may be influenced by other dialects, but from the recordings of this speaker, the prosody is more typical to that of Northern Scotland than Skye, similar even in a sense to the prosody of the most northern dialects.

The language of this speaker is also noticeably Nordic sounding, also with the Caithness and West Jutlandic rhotic 'r' sound. What is also noticeable in the language of this speaker is how Gaelic words in Torridon often sound very 'clear' to me, but the intonation and positioning of stress is quite different to say, Skye. For example this speaker says more individual vowel sounds in certain words, for example **leughadh** is pronounced a little like [ʎiauk].

Photo on the following page/below: a misty July morning close to **Loch Thoirbheartan**, Loch Torridon, taken at around 4:30 AM

In Torridon Gaelic, as in several other parts of Wester Ross, the final sound spelled as broad **-dh** is pronounced [k], for example in **samhradh** – 'summer', **sealladh –** 'view'.

The word **sealladh** is given with [ʃò] on the first syllable in (1), another example of orthographic **a** being pronounced as something like [o] in this dialect. This is also common in Wester Ross and to some degree elsewhere.

In the resource (1), the word **saoghal –** 'world' is given with two vowels, [ï] followed by [ʊ], with a line between the two vowels. The first vowel in this word seems unique to Torridon. I am not sure of its exact pronunciation.

Another interesting feature of Torridon Gaelic is that, according to (1), certain words ending in **-m** take a [p] or [b] like sound, for example *snaim* – 'knott' may be written as **snaimb**.

A similar thing sometimes occurs after **-nn** which has an extra [d] or [t] like sound, so for example *teann* – 'tight', could be written as **teannd** in the language of informant 118. In several dialects this also is shown in (1) for the word *fàinne* – 'a ring', this is also so in Torridon, where it could perhaps be spelled as **fàinnde**

Standard Scottish Gaelic *imlich* – 'to lick' may have a quite different form in Torridon according to (1), this could perhaps be spelled as **iliomachd** note

that the 'i' in this spelling merely indicates that the previous l is slender. Having said this I am not even sure if these two are the same word, and if the Torridon word means 'navel' instead.

According to (1), the word **gnè –** 'kind or type of' is given with a final [v], this could be spelled in Torridon Gaelic as **gnèmh**. This appears to be a rare pronunciation, the only other example from (1) with a final [v] in this word is in the language of informant 61 from close to Loch Awe.

This word has its etymology in Old Irish *gné* which ultimately is meant to be from Proto-Indo-European *gen-, related to the word 'genus' in English. This is a very Indo-European word and I find it interesting that in Torridon Gaelic specifically it is quite different.

The final vowel/vowel-consonant in words like **seasamh –** 'stand' is invariably something like [i] across this region of Wester Ross, hence this word sounds something like 'shesee'. The word **feitheamh –** 'waiting, staying', has a similar vowel ending according to (1)

Ionnsachadh may be spelt as **ionnsachdainn** according to the pronunciation in (1), variants of this verb-noun with a nasal ending are common in eastern and in Northern Scotland.

When looking at the *Survey of the Gaelic Dialects of Scotland*, by Cathair Ó Dochartaigh, I have noticed that it is quite common in Torridon to have a long vowel followed by a short vowel in certain words, for example in the word **thill** – 'returned' in the language of informant 118 from (1). This differing vowel quality of Torridon Gaelic is presumably connected to the prosodic/pitch-accent within the dialect. Another example of this is the word **seinn –** 'to sing', which is given as [ʃɪːˈn̪] in (1).

Torridon Gaelic sometimes has different forms of words in standard Gaelic, for example the Survey of the Gaelic dialects of Scotland (1) has an interesting Torridon form of the word *teanga* – 'tongue', which might be spelt as **teaghainn**, with a medial [ɣ].

 In Torridon Gaelic as in many other parts of the Northern Mainland, the medial **bh** and **mh** can sometimes be silent, hence the Torridon variant of **sàmhach –** 'quiet' is given as [sã̄ːȯx] in (1), my phonetic rendering here is a simplification because I cannot find a way of typing the vowel division character in (1). It is also common in Wester Ross to pronounce the ending **-ach** as something like [ox]. Another example is **siobhag** - 'hay' which is given as close to [ʃɪːäk] in (1), my phonetic rendering is a simplification as I do not know how to type the character between the vowels in (1).

The word *nàbaidh* – 'neighbour' is given as though **ban-nàbaidh** in (1) for Torridon informant 118. I think that the meaning here is 'female neighbour'.

A further interesting thing which I noticed from (1) is that **craobh** has different vowels in the genitive and dative cases, which could perhaps be spelled as **criubh**.

The photo above shows a misty July morning looking towards Shieldaig, **Sìldeag**, from close to Loch Torridon. There are a number of curious place-names in this region which may require further research, in some ways I feel that the place-names around Torridon show a different kind of substrate language to that that might be visible in other parts of Scotland. An example of this is the word **òb** which in my opinion seems to be quite specific to certain places and landscape features. It is also found in the name Oban for example, Gaelic: *An t-Òban*, and on the Isle of Barra, i.e. *Loch Òb.*

All references marked (1) and the subsequent spelling of Gaelic words based on the pronunciation in (1), are based specifically on the pronunciation of speaker 118 from Torridon in the *Survey of the Gaelic dialects of Scotland*, edited by Cathair Ó Dochartaigh

The Navajo language

Written by Linden Alexander Pentecost, September 2022

The photo above does not show the Navajo region, but this is the only photograph I have of a similar looking landscape, at least from my limited understanding.
 The photo above shows a more central part of Arizona which is in a sense connected to the closely related Apache languages. I am grateful for the kindness and hospitality of those I met in the USA, I will never forget and am grateful.

Navajo is an Athabaskan language, and is closely related to the nearby Apache languages, and to the wider Athabaskan language family in Western North America.

 This family of languages extends from Alaska all the way down to Mexico, and despite the great distances, one can easily see similarities.

One of the Athabaskan languages spoken in the Arctic is called Dene Suline, the word **dene** is cognate to the Navajo **diné** which means 'man'. The Navajo word for their language is **Diné Bizaad** 'man his-words/language'.

Athabaskan languages like Navajo, are known for having incredibly complex and descriptive verbs. A Navajo-speaking friend, told me that there are perhaps only a few hundred nouns in Navajo, most of the information is conveyed by verbs.

In this sense, the Navajo world can be seen as more focused upon actions and processes within nature, than it is focused on things as un-moving, solid concepts.

 I don't know much about this topic, but I find it fascinating how Navajo uses verbs to convey what might be seen as 'nouns' to speakers of many other languages. Perhaps in a way, it is telling of the Navajo's connection to the natural world, where things are both 'spiritual' and 'physical', where physical objects, and the landscape, are spiritual, moving entities, as well as appearing to us as solid objects.

My knowledge of Navajo is tiny, and the verbs I find incredibly difficult and complex. But I can say for example, **Linden yinishyé, Diné bizaad bíhoosh'aah** - I am called Linden, I am learning Navajo, literally 'man his-language I am learning it'. The words **diné bizaad** mean 'man his-language/his-words'.

Navajo doesn't make a distinction between singular and plural nouns, so **diné** can mean 'person' or 'persons'. The second word comes from **zaad**, which means 'word' or 'language', because of there being no distinction between singular and plural, **zaad** can also mean 'words'. The prefix attached to **zaad**, is **bi-**, which means 'his or her'.

With the verb yinishyé – I am named/called, one could also say **shí éí** (your name) **yinishyé**.

The word **éí** is a kind of specifying filler-word, it can also translate perhaps to something like 'it is'.

Navajo verbs can be very complex and often the different conjugated forms of a verb may bare little obvious similarity to each other, meaning that I think it would take a very long time for me to learn how to conjugate Navajo verbs in my head.

A common third person singular verb is **yá'át'ééh –** 'hello', which more literally means 'it is good'.

To ask 'where do you live' (you singular) in Navajo, it would be **háádi nighan?** - literally where your-place. One would reply with … (name of place) **-di shighan**.

Below are some common words in Navajo:

tsékooh – canyon, **tsé** – rock, **séí** – sand, **tsin** – wood (perhaps distantly related to Nuxalk *stn* – tree), **tsintah –** forest, **mą'iitsoh –** wolf, **tééh –** valley, linked to **tó** - water, **tooh** – lake, **dził –** mountain, **sǫ'** – star.

The Hul'q'umi'num' language

By Linden Alexander Pentecost

I would first like to acknowledge that the Hul'q'umi'num' speaking peoples are the indigenous people of their respective lands since thousands of years ago, and I acknolwedge them as the rightful owners and protectors of their culture and language, and I acknowledge them as the rightful and original protectors and caretakers of their land.

Halkomelem is the name given in English to a group of closely related languages or dialects belonging to the Coast Salishan branch of Salishan languages, which also includes for example Squamish, *Sḵwx̱wú7mesh sníchim*, Sechelt *Sashshalhem* and the Saanich dialect or language, *SENĆOŦEN*. **Hul'q'umi'num'** is the spelling of a coastal Halkomelem dialect, found on websites such as *ta'ulthun sqwal,* this is where I have been learning Halkomelem, as well as from the *Hul'q'umi'num' to English Dictionary* (based on research projects carried out by Tom Hukari, Ruby Peter, and variousElders, transliterated into practical orthography and re-formatted by Donna Gerdts in May 2013)

Nature words:

tumuhw – land, ground, earth   **smeent –** mountain

kwasun – star   **tsetsuw' –** shore

sta'luw' – river   **sil** - cloth

These can be given articles of a sort, e.g. **tthu sta'luw' –** the river, **tthu smeent –** the mountain.
Hul'q'umi'num' like many Salishan languages often has a verb-subject-object word order, the pronouns here are not attached to the verb.

nem' tsun – I go
nem' tsun tse' – I will go
nem' ch – you singular go
nem' tst – we go
nem' tseep – you lot go

The Halkomelem speakers had fish traps on rivers, much like the peoples of Western Mesolithic Scotland. Some words I have discovered related to this are **tqep –** a fish trap by the sea, **shxetl' –** weir, **p'ilum –** to overflow, compare perhaps Gaelic *poll* – a pool.

An introduction to Yucatec Maya

Linden A. Pentecost written July 2011, with a few edits in September 2022

 Yucatec Maya is a Mayan language spoken by over 1 million people, mostly on Mexico's eastern Yucatán peninsula. The Mayan languages represent a large and widely spoken family of meso-american languages, also including K'iche', Tzotzil, Ch'orti and many others. Mayan languages are very distinct from their neighbouring Aztecan languages such as Nahuatl, Mayan languages are often described asallowing for many meanings using a very limited number of words, for example certain locational words.

Mayan languages have a word order which is hard to classify as it varies upon the type of verb, this determines where the subject of the sentence lies. The Mayan word order is nevertheless a lot easier for the English speaker to understand than that of most of Native American languages. Mayan has no grammatical cases, and no tense system.

Instead Mayan employs different catagories as to how complete an action is aka 'completed' verbs and 'incomplete' verbs. Completed verbs could be used to describe an action which stopped at that moment, or at any point in the past, or which will have stopped by a certain time. Verbs also greatly differ depending on whether they are transitive (with an object) or intransitive (without an object). E.g. I make as opposed to I make it.

Mayan is still almost entirely a spoken language thus the pronunciation is easy: Most letters are pronounced as expected, **ch** is as in English 'cheese' whilst **x** is like the English 'sh' in 'shine'. the vowels **a e i o u** can be made long by doubling them into: **aa ee ii oo uu**. The **'** represents a glottal stop, rather like the pause in English 'uh-oh'. The vowels also have different tones, like Chinese. The Mayan pronouns can also be used as possessive pronouns: **in** - my **a** - your **u** – his/her/its. Below are some phrases in Yucatec Mayan, which I can remember from 2011.

¿Bix yanikech? - how are you?

Ma'alob – good, well

¿Teeche a tsiikbal Maaya? - do you speak Mayan?

¿Ba'ax ka wa'alik? - informal greeting, question, or 'hello'

Falcarragh and the Irish language around Falcarragh/**An Fál Carrach**

By Linden Alexander Pentecost
The photo above shows the beautiful Atlantic coastal landscape close to Falcarragh in County Donegal. I did not have much chance to speak Irish here, but I did meet a lady on the beach, who told me the names of the different islands which we could see. At least to my ears, it sounded as though the first [I] in **inis** (island) sounded somewhat closer to [ɛ], but I may indeed be completely wrong.

Other information about the local Irish I have learned from the book *Linguistic Atlas and Survey of Irish dialects, Vol. IV. The dialects of Ulster and the Isle of Man. Specimens of Scottish Gaelic dialects. Phonetic texts of East Ulster Irish* by Heinrich Wagner and Colm O Baoill, Ph. D. Below I am referring specifically to the language of Point 74 from near Fál Carrach.

.Words such as **siúl** 'walk' in the Caighdeán may contain two syllables in this dialect, hence the older spelling **siubhal**, the vowels are given as [û:ə] according to Point 74 from the above reference.

.The word **saol –** life, also spelled as **saoghal** in Ulster, is given in one place in the comments on Point 74 as having [y:] as the vowel.

The Irish of the Inishowen Peninsula

Photo above: the sacred ancient site of Grianán Ailigh with a view over towards the Inishowen Peninsula on the right of the image. From what I understand and from the examples which I have heard, Inishowen Irish can sound somewhat like other Northeast Donegal dialects and Tyrone dialects, but it also shows a closeness to the more eastern dialects and to those in County Derry, Condaidh Dhoire. Other information about the local Irish I have learned from the book *Linguistic Atlas and Survey of Irish dialects, Vol. IV. The dialects of Ulster and the Isle of Man. Specimens of Scottish Gaelic dialects. Phonetic texts of East Ulster Irish* by Heinrich Wagner and Colm O Baoill, Ph. D. Below I am referring specifically to the language of Point 68 from Inishowen.

According to the above book, the vowel of **é** for point 68 is a pure vowel [eː] in the word **mé** – 'I', in other nearby dialects this vowel is often short. A sound like [y] is also given, e.g. in the word **fraoch**, according to the reference above for point 68. According to point 68 in this reference, [y] in the Irish dialect phonetic orthography in this resource, is also the first vowel in **cumhang** - narrow. There appears to be much less w-rounding in this dialect, from what I have learned, e.g. in the word **maith –** good. The broad consonant [x] seems preserved in **bocht** for example, where it occurs before a -t, but is often dropped elsewhere. A glottal-stop or stød-like sound is shown at the end of the word **luibh –** 'herb', and with other examples of this sound elsewhere, in the language of point 68.

The Irish language on the Rosguill Peninsula

Photo above: a horse, in Irish **each** on the Rosguill Peninsula in County Donegal. When I first heard Rosguill Irish, it reminded me of a 'broader' version of some of the dialects in Tyrone and slightly to the west near for example Dunfanaghy/**Dún Fionnachaidh**. But nevertheless Rosguill Irish sounded unique to me, and I noticed the stød-like sound which can be heard often at the ends of certain words. I have also learned about Rosguill Irish from the book *Linguistic Atlas and Survey of Irish dialects, Vol. IV. The dialects of Ulster and the Isle of Man. Specimens of Scottish Gaelic dialects. Phonetic texts of East Ulster Irish* by Heinrich Wagner and Colm O Baoill, Ph. D. Below I am referring specifically to the language of Point 71 (Rosguill) from the above reference.

According to the reference above, the Irish of point 71 contains w-glides in for example the word **fuar –** cold, which is given as [fʷɪːər]. The stød-like sound is also quite frequent, for example at the end of the word coileán - puppy, this sound occurs according to the reference above. I find the presence of this sound very interesting here, particularly as the ancient shell middens near **Trá Mór** were built by the 'Danes' according to Elizabeth Andrews in her book *Ulster Folklore.* Whilst I do not agree with everything in this book, and whilst I also do not propose a Germanic or Scandinavian substrate in the Irish of Rosguill, I do think that the stød in Danish and the occurance of a similar sound on Rosguill, and the connection to Danes in folklore, are referring to a different group of Danes, but more likely in my opinion the De Danann, as a pre-Indo-European seafaring people whose language was probably more like Celtic than any other Indo-European language, even though I believe it was pre-Indo-European in all likelihood.

The Cumbric heritage of North Yorkshire

Photo above: landscape near Malham in North Yorkshire, a place where there appear to be a large number of medieval and possibly Iron Age Celtic field systems.

For the last article in this book I want to talk briefly about this area. These limestone uplands have been inhabited since the Mesolithic and Neolithic times, and perhaps the 'Cumbric language' is actually connected to those peoples. Even though Cumbric is sometimes described as being more or less identical to Old Welsh, the roots of the language in the landscape, which are often shared with Welsh, often have a quite obscure and possibly non-Indo-European etymology. So Cumbric is definitely connected to Welsh, but does that make the ancient language of this land Celtic necessarily? I am less certain.An example of a Cumbric place-name is Pen-y-Ghent. Even though it looks like Welsh, and the word pen is most definitely connected to Welsh *pen* – head, and the definate article *y* – 'the', 'of the', is the same, the third element, *Ghent* is of unknown etymology, and I do not think that a meaning of 'head of the border' or 'head of the wind' really fits, which I did think in the past, owing to the similarity between Welsh gwynt – wind, and Ghent. I do not think this fits semantically. I hope you enjoyed this book :)