



My wife, Kathleen, suggested a month was too long between newsletters. Following her wise counsel, I'll be sending this to you every two weeks. Thank you for reading this and for being there for me.

Bitesize Irish

This service is my base and my anchor. Study and participation here makes me feel grounded. I log in every day, try to contribute to the Pobal section, and make sure to do a few lessons each week. There is a live conversation opportunity online each week called *Bitesize Beo*. This is available to members of the site at the *Grow* level. It's a Zoom session giving learners a chance to practice based on a predetermined conversation script. I was going to my first one this past week but mixed up the days and so missed it. I'm sure all the time I spent preparing to talk about the weather will not be wasted.

Gaeilge Gan Stró

I am on track with my goal of a unit every two weeks. I completed Unit 3, *The Family*, this fortnight. The book comes with helpful CDs for pronunciation. To augment what I'm learning, though, and to help train my ear, I listen to a lot of different "learn Irish" videos online which cover the same material.

Duolingo

I do at least my minimum learning goal every day. At the moment, I'm finding Duolingo particularly useful in helping to learn conjugation of verbs in the present tense. **Tagann, tugann, tógann** - keeping those three verbs straight has been a little challenge.

Singing

I bought John Spillane's album, *26 Songs We Learned At School*, and have been listening to that. My method for learning songs is to learn the tune first. I listen to it a lot until it's practically running through my head all the time. Then I turn to learning the words. The tune will actually guide me in remembering them. This past fortnight I learned **Báidín Fheilimí**. This is a lovely, happy tune. The verses are about a fisherman and his boat. By the end of the song, the boat wrecks, losing its cargo of fish and it seems the fisherman as well. At first, I thought there was a real disconnect between the happiness of the tune and the ultimate unhappiness of the words. Then I remembered one of the songs I learned (and cheerfully sang) as a child. The lyrics are a fairly explicit description of a woman drowning and her helpless husband unable to save her. (My Darling Clementine) What!?! Moral of the story: Just enjoy the music and don't think

too hard about the lyrics!

Side note: "caol le caol" really hit me in the spelling of "báidín". ("bád" = "boat") In order to properly add the diminutive "-ín" to the end of the word, an additional "i" had to be added in front of the "d" so you would have a slender vowel on either side. (At least, I think I understood that correctly.)

Reading

I finished reading *Shake Hands With The Devil*. It was tragic and sad, even more so for knowing the incidents described were, in large part, based on actual happenings in Ireland nearly 100 years ago. I have two other books which I am dipping into: *Brewer's Dictionary of Irish Phrase & Fable*, edited by Sean McMahon and Jo O'Donoghue – nearly 900 pages of cultural, historical and language entries (Wow!); and *A Treasury of Irish Myth, Legend, and Folklore*, which includes *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* edited by W.B. Yeats, and *Cuchulain of Muirthemne* by Lady Gregory. How can I not read this?

Walking in Ireland and Game Playing

I've continued my walk-alongs to online videos. Lately, I've been walking through Tralee. I play a children's game with myself: "I spy with my little eye". When I see something I know the word(s) for, I say them out loud: "bui", "donn", "Tá beirt fear ann.", "Tá bean agus fear ann.", "siopa", "teach tábhairne", "Tá sé fliuch!", "Tá sciorta dubh aici.", "Tá léine bán aige.", and on and on. I walk around my house all day, too, talking to myself about what I see.

Tá cupán ar an mbord.

Tá tae ann freisin.

Is maith liom tae.

Faoar, ba mhaith liom cupán a ól anois!

This has led me to a tea challenge. I understand there is rivalry in taste between Barry's Tea and Lyons Tea. I just got a box of Barry's Classic Blend and one of Lyons Original Blend. I'll give my own result next time!

In closing for now:

My favorite word at the moment is "**amárach**". Not only do I love the way it sounds but that's when Annie says the sun will come out. I'm choosing to believe her.

Slán!

I mo Shaeleacht bheas phéin

No. 2—15 October 2020—Jim Keenan