



Bhuel, my friend, here we are starting off a New Year. Thank you for joining me. I'm looking forward with hope for the next twelve months. There is light at the end of the tunnel. We must all keep doing our part to get us there. Be wise. Be safe.

### The New Year Starts

I am not good at compartmentalizing. I am all that I am all the time. I don't separate myself into chunks or be a certain "Jim" in different circumstances. Everything I am informs everything I do. I study Irish 3 to 4 hours every day. And the hours I'm not actively studying, I'm typically thinking about Irish or some aspect of Ireland. I might be teaching martial arts and I'm wondering "how would I tell them to do this in Irish?" I might be praying and using Irish the same way I'd use Chinese, Spanish, or Hebrew. One advantage this lack of compartmentalization seems to have for me is I can maintain what seems to be a high level of intensity at whatever I'm doing. This is an illusion. It's not such a high level of intensity; it's a commitment of the Whole of me. Since I'm always being Whole, this intensity doesn't seem unreasonable to me. If it is unreasonable then, in this regard, I am not a reasonable man.

Following this thinking, I had a realization. In conceptualizing my own wee gaeltacht, I've accustomed myself to imagining that I live in an Irish language environment. I realized, though, I still thought of myself as learning Irish and, by doing this, I unconsciously separated myself from the "Irish" environment I created. I made myself "other", as though Irish and I are completely separate things. I must not think of myself as someone who is **learning** Irish but as someone who **speaks** Irish (however badly - **Is fearr Gaeilge briste, ná Béarla clíste**). My study is to **improve** the Irish I speak. This mental adjustment might seem very small but I think it's a critical one.

### My Primary New Year's Resolution

Find better ways to listen to Irish. My experience with the radio stations has been hit and miss. I'll turn on the stations and find only music. I need to hear the talk. I need to work on finding the stations' schedules so I can target my listening to talk programming. Here are the ones I listen to:

**RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta** (RnaG)

**Raidió Rí-Rá** - Dublin

**Raidió Na Life** - Dublin

**Raidió Fáilte** - Belfast

I use Radio Garden - [radio.garden](http://radio.garden) - to tune into these stations online.

### Duolingo

I continue making progress on Duolingo. I'm not in the highest "league" and it seems I'll finish in the #1 spot once again. I think this is the end of the competitive line and, if so, afterwards I will pay no more attention to it. I'm beginning to feel a pinch of limitations here for Irish. Duolingo has utility for vocabulary and a certain kind of practice. The Duolingo game-like approach can help anyone achieve a basic level in Irish. It will likely happen, when I finish the Irish language tree, Duolingo will become a back-burner peripheral to revising my Irish.

In terms of vocabulary, there are a couple of flashcard apps that I'm finding useful for vocabulary: Anki and Flashcards Deluxe. The apps are available for iOS and Android. Anki is also a Windows app and you can make flashcard decks for Flashcard Deluxe on your desktop. Anki has some big Irish vocabulary decks already. (I found a mistake in one deck that was probably just a typo but a new learner might not realize that.) Anki is free. Flashcard Deluxe is US\$3.99.

### Gaeilge gan Stró

I finished both Unit 9: *Food and Drink* and Unit 10: *Health Matters*. Health Matters seemed particularly easy for me. Perhaps my consciousness of COVID-19 and vocabulary I learned around that helped me out. I'm moving on to Unit 11: *Clothes and Shopping*. Duolingo has already covered a lot of the vocabulary in this unit. I may make it into Unit 12: *Requests and Commands* before the end of the month.

### Bitesize Irish

I've completed 10 out of 22 courses now on Bitesize and 178 lessons. I enjoy the community, check Pobal every day, and try to contribute something every week. Overall, my experience is uniformly very positive and I would recommend Bitesize Irish to anyone.

I attended another Bitesize Beo session on January 12. I had prepared the dialogue quite a bit and that all went well. There were two additional free discussion questions which I had neglected to prepare. One which I understood and a second I didn't understand. Naturally, when the free discussion period

came along, Bitesize Siobhán asked me the question I hadn't prepared and didn't understand. I wish I was this lucky picking lottery numbers.

One of the other Bitesizers mentioned she was going to enroll in the **FutureLearn Irish 101** offered by Dublin City University. I, too, have enrolled and class starts Jan. 17. I'll report next time on how it goes.

### Learn Irish

There are a number of Irish language vloggers I like to look in on but one of my favorites is **Learn Irish**.

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIlg5zuS\\_hCjv13ElqCHmDnA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIlg5zuS_hCjv13ElqCHmDnA)

I like it so well I decided to support Dane on Patreon. Dane's world is really on YouTube; he doesn't do too much on Patreon. I think of Patreon support in its pure form: encouragement to creators. \$3.50 a month seems fine to me.

### Reading

I did searches on **archive.org** for Irish language materials hoping to find a few things. More fool me. Before I was finished I had downloaded over 250 old Irish language resources - literature, primers, dictionaries, grammar books, music books and more. If one is ever curious, you can spend a LOT of time on this site mining for gold in Irish history and language. Luckily, I had learned to read the traditional Gaelic script. This proved to be an absolute necessity. Once gotten used to, it's not hard. There are only a few letters which are markedly different: **Δ**, a; **ḃ**, b; **Ċ**, c; **ḉ**, d; **e**, e; **ḟ**, f; **ḡ**, g; **h**, h; **í**, i; **l̃**, l; **m̃**, m; **ñ**, n; **o**, o; **p̃**, p; **r̃**, r; **s̃**, s; **t̃**, t; **u**, u. Letters with a **séimhiú** (added "h") have a dot over them: **ḃ̃**, bh; **ḉ̃**, dh; **ḟ̃**, fh; **m̃̃**, mh; **p̃̃**, ph; **s̃̃**, sh; **t̃̃**, th. The **fada** over letters is clear when it appears. **Ṗṑ Ṗṑṑ ṑṑṑ ṑṑṑ ṑṑṑ ṑṑṑ!** What can be hard sometimes is reading things written before spelling reform. For instance, **Ṗṑṑṑṑṑ** = **gaedhilge** = **gaeilge**. If you search on archive.org using the old spelling, you'll get a somewhat different set of search results than the new spelling.

One thing I now feel convinced of is, no matter how lovely it may be to read **Asarlaí Iontach Oz** in Irish, it's still a book originally written in English. I feel the need to read some things originally written in Irish. To this end, I picked a book I got from archive.org: **Séadna** by **Peadar Ua Laoghaire**. I have been chugging along quite nicely in it and am happy to have chosen it. Here's where I've started

<https://archive.org/details/seadna00oleauoft/page/n5/mode/2up>

and I will read till I feel the sledding has gotten too rough for me. Later, I plan to read other legendary stories.

### Virtual City Walk - Wexford

Since it was not all that far from the Ring gaeltacht, I strolled around Wexford, a city about half the size of where I currently live. Most of my walks took me to the area around Redmond

Square, a stone's throw from the water. I loved seeing all the wonderful downtown stores. In my own town, downtown stores mostly died with the building of malls and shopping centers. (Malls and shopping centers now also are declining here perhaps adversely affected by online sales.) There's an impressive monument to the 1798 Rebellion. There are so many of these to commemorate. In the series "Derry Girls", the gang is studying for a history exam. The one British lad, James, says "Well, I can't tell my rebellions from my risings." One of the girls, Michelle, says "And who's fault's that? If your lot had stopped invading us for five fucking minutes there'd be a lot less to wade through! English prick." I experience a certain feeling of being a ghost as I do these virtual city walks. Wexford felt a bit different, though, because I have an acquaintance whose wife has a small business on Henrietta Street. Looking at the storefront, I felt the "wish I could see you and you could see me" yearning.

### My Imaginary Long Walk

I did what I said I'd do last time and made a virtual trip to Dungarvan to explore a famine graveyard. Dungarvan itself is a lovely place, a growing community and already a center for good things economical and cultural. The effort to look at famine graveyard sites, starting with the **Reilig an tSléibe** Famine Graveyard in Pulla, became a vast winding path in the way that the Internet can afford and led me to many locations, histories, and songs. I listened to the singing of **Níoclás Tóibín** and was transported. (I won't put links. Search his name on YouTube to find plenty.) I learned the name Trevelyan. If you don't know it, search "Trevelyan famine" and one can find all one needs to nourish a lasting aggravation. I saw sculpture in Dublin by Rowan Gillespie - "Famine" - which caused my eyes to burn. I warn you, if you look for any of this, be prepared to cry and also prepare in advance something happy for yourself to enjoy afterward to help pull you out from the darkness. About 8 minutes drive from Ring is a place called Irishtown. I got a good laugh from that. Then I discovered there were other townlands also called Irishtown. There must be some interesting history there. My brother works for the Historical Society of Carnegie in Pennsylvania and is a docent of the Honus Wagner museum there. Irishtown is one of the neighborhoods there, too! **Eoin Ó Conchúir** talks about finding uncommon commonalities. Bhuel, there you have one!

### In Closing for now

I had the thought maybe I should be doing a blog rather than a **nuachtlitir**. For the moment, I've set this idea aside. My previous experience with blogs reminds me how time consuming they can be. If my time is going to be consumed, I would rather it be by working on Irish and not by writing about how I'm working on Irish!

Slán!

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