

1400 BC - Proto Celtic

700 BC Hallstatt
- spread through
half of Spain

700-900 Old Irish = Schrift + Sprache; no dialectal
[650 Book of Dunmore - later] variation

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SOURCES FOR MEDIEVAL CELTIC HISTORY AND LITERATURE--Daniel F. Melia

1. BIBLIOGRAPHIES:

Alan R. Eager, *A Guide to Irish Bibliographical Material*, 2nd ed. (London, 1980).

OK as a starting place. Very general; cannot be trusted to be complete for any of its sub-categories.

Richard Hayes, *Manuscript Sources for the History of Irish Civilisation: Articles in Irish Periodicals*, 11 vols. (Boston, 1965).

Richard Hayes, *Sources for the History of Irish Civilisation: Articles in Irish Periodicals*, 9 vols. (Boston: 1970).

These two bibliographies are so massive and comprehensive that they almost defy use. Better to use a more specialized source unless you are trying to be utterly comprehensive.

Rachel Bromwich, *Medieval Celtic Literature: A Select Bibliography*, (Toronto: U. of T. Press; Toronto Medieval Bibliographies #5).

"Select" is the proper modifier here.

Richard Irvine Best, *Bibliography of Irish Philology and of Printed Irish Literature*, (Dublin: Nat. Lib. of Ire. 1913).

Richard Irvine Best, *Bibliography of Irish Philology and Manuscript Literature: Publications, 1913-41*. (Dublin, 1942).

With the companion piece previously cited, this is the best source to start with on medieval stuff in Irish.

Bibliotheca Celtica: a Register of Publications Relating to Wales and the Celtic Peoples and Languages, (Aberystwyth: National Lib. of Wales)

Issued annually since 1924.

Tom Peete Cross, *Motif-Index of Early Irish Literature*, (Bloomington, 1952). Indiana Univ. Publications: Folklore Series #7.

Not strictly a bibliography, but where else to put it? Often useful as a kind of backwards index.

Celtic Literatures: Widener Library Shelflist (Cambridge, MA 1970). Harvard Univ. Library Shelflists #25.

Listings by number, author/title, and subject of the largest and finest collection of Celtic books in the Americas. (The second best collection is probably the NY Public Library's).

2. SOME FAMOUS BOOKS:

Eugene O'Curry, *Lectures on the Manuscript Materials of Ancient Irish History* (Dublin, 1861). [Known as "MSMat"]

This is the only comprehensive overview of the manuscript tradition by a trained scholar. No one has had the guts to try it since. Obviously wrong in places (much of the material dates from the 1830s) and unaware of future

Nora Chadwick, The Davids - unlikely thesis, but
~~excellent~~ info
good

- 2 -

discoveries of various kinds, this remains a useful book for the beginner. Don't, however, quote it without checking a more modern source.

James F. Kenney, *The Sources for the Early History of Ireland: an Introduction*, Vol. I, Ecclesiastical, (NY, 1929)

A genuine masterpiece; the first place to look for anything about Celtic christianity. The reprint (NY, 1966) contains some corrections and updates by Ludwig Bieler. There will not be a "Vol II, Secular".

John Strachan and Whitley Stokes, *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus* (Cambridge, 1901) 2 vols.

Much of the most striking and interesting stuff from the famous manuscripts. Gives one a feel for the higher points of medieval Celtic miscellaneous literary output. Source of many "famous examples" found in secondary works.

Rudolf Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden-und Koenigsage* (Halle, 1921).

The starting place for all later discussions of the medieval vernacular Irish saga. Still influential, though its view is wholly determined by the viewpoint of Latin manuscript transmission.

Kenneth H. Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain* (Edinburgh, 1953).

A comprehensive study of the phonology and orthography of Latin and British in the early Middle Ages. Although linguistically old-fashioned even in 1953 (the dreaded word "phoneme" is never mentioned), this book was taken as gospel by everyone until the 1982 publication of A.S. Gratwick's "Latinitas Britannica: was British Latin Archaic?" in *Latin and the Vernacular Languages in Early Medieval Britain*, ed. by Nicholas Brooks (Leicester Univ. Press) which demolished much of the argument made by Jackson. Stay tuned.

Rachel Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein: The Welsh Triads*, (U. of Wales Press, 1961)

A good place to start studying Welsh bardic tradition.

T.F. O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology* (Dublin, 1946).

A spectacular and daring work of synthesis by a brilliant scholar carried away with his own theories. The factual citations in this book are correct, and some of the picture of the early divisions between various waves of Celtic invaders must be true. HOWEVER, the overall narrative mix here is ultimately psycho-ceramic and is believed by no one, the author being now deceased.

Edmund Hogan, S.J., *Onomasticon Goedelicum* (Dublin, 1910).

A wonderful, but maddening source. Words beginning with A, B, and C take up the first half of the 700-odd pages of this book, and the rest of the alphabet the rest. The arrangement is apparently owing to Hogan's advancing age and waning enthusiasm and not to the peculiarities of Irish place names.

3. DICTIONARIES:

3.1. IRISH:

Dictionary of the Irish Language, and Contributions to a Dictionary of the Irish Language, (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1913-1982).

Originally published in fascicles, the complete dictionary has been issued as an OED-style "compact" edition. Gives copious citations of examples

E. MacLysaght
Irish Names - 3 -

The Gododdin
(about 600 AD) 601
- narrative poem

from Old and Middle Irish (it covers up to about AD 1400).

Patrick S. Dinneen, *An Irish-English Dictionary* (Dublin: Irish Texts Soc. 1927, rpr. 1965).

Early Modern and Modern Irish in unreformed spelling. The standard work.

3.2. WELSH:

Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru ["Dictionary of the University of Wales"]: *A Dictionary of the Welsh Language* (U. of Wales Press, 1950-doomsday).

Covers the language from Middle Welsh to the present on historical principles. Fascicles appear from time to time.

Y Geiriadur Mawr ["The Great Dictionary"], (Aberystwyth, 1958, 5th ed. rev. 1971)

Dictionary of Modern Welsh but useful for all but the most arcane Middle Welsh once you get used to the orthographic changes.

4. LANGUAGES--GRAMMARS, ETC.:

Henry Lewis and Holger Pedersen, *A Concise Comparative Celtic Grammar* (Goettingen, 1937).

A translation and revision of Pedersen's *Vergleichende Grammatik der Keltischen Sprachen*. The latter should be consulted on individual points because of its copious examples (omitted in the English translation).

4.1. IRISH:

Rudolf Thurneysen, *A Grammar of Old Irish*, (Dublin, 1961; Revised Ed.--accept no substitutes).

At least the first 34 pages should be read by anyone contemplating even looking at Old Irish.

Tomás Ó Maille, *The Language of the Annals of Ulster* [q.v. below] (Manchester, 1910); still the best guide to dating Old and Middle Irish orthography.

4.2. WELSH:

J. Morris-Jones, *A Welsh Grammar: Historical and Comparative* (Oxford, 1913).

D. Simon Evans, *A Grammar of Middle Welsh* (Dublin, 1964).

Best starting point, but lacks an index.

5. GENEALOGY:

5.1. IRISH:

M.A. O'Brian, *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae*, (Dublin, 1962).

A compilation from two of the most important genealogical tracts which survive in manuscript (in Rawlinson B 502 and the Book of Leinster). Not a quick read; once described by John Kelleher as having "all the charm of an out of date telephone directory from some obscure capital." This is not only THE place to start for medieval Irish genealogical lore, but is also now THE ACCEPTED STANDARD FOR SPELLING MEDIEVAL IRISH PERSONAL, FAMILY AND TRIBAL NAMES AND EPITHETS.

5.2. WELSH:

P.C. Bartrum, *Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts* (U. Of Wales Press, 1966).

See *Speculum* 44 (1969), pp. 440-42 for a review by P.K. Ford.

6. HISTORY:

6.1. PRIMARY SOURCES:

(It is important to note that the notion of "history" in the twentieth century sense had developed nowhere in the Celtic world in the Middle Ages. The nearest things to "objective" records of events are annals, but it must be remembered that in the Middle Ages they were largely political documents.)

6.1.1. IRELAND:

Annala rioghachta Eireann: Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters from the earliest period to the year 1616, ed. and trans. by John O'Donovan, 7 vols. (Dublin, 1851; repr. NY, 1966).

When people refer to "The Annals", this edition is generally what is meant. It was the first comprehensive translation of annalistic material by a good scholar (though one deficient in the earlier stages of the language) and owes part of its preeminence to availability. The text itself is a compilation by four of the last traditional scholars in Ireland (members of the O'Clery family) of a variety of annalistic material still available in the 17th cent. USE WITH CARE. The fact that something is recorded as happening in a given year does not mean that it did. Much of what we would call mythological and legendary lore has been incorporated into annal entries for political purposes at various times. The Irish entries should always be checked against the English in AFM as not all are translated. The English index is incomplete and cannot be relied upon.

Annala Uladh, Annals of Ulster; otherwise Annala Senait, Annals of Senat; a Chronicle of Irish Affairs, 431-1131, 1155-1541, ed. and trans. by W.M. Hennessy and B. MacCarthy, 4 vols. (Dublin, 1887-1901).

A new edition has just appeared but I do not have the citation to hand. Well edited. Contains a good deal of the earliest material available. Represents a "northern" tradition as opposed to the "southern" tradition exemplified by the Annals of Clonmacnois. Be aware that even the editor's dates need systematic correction in places in this edition.

Annals of Innisfallen, ed. and trans. by Sean MacAirt (Dublin, 1951).

Annals of Tigernach, ed. by Whitley Stokes, *Revue Celtique* XVI- XVIII (1895-97).

The Annals in Cotton MS. Titus A XXV, [The "Annals of Boyle"] ed. and trans. by A.M. Freeman, (Paris, 1929).

The Annals of Connacht, ed. and trans., by A.M. Freeman, *Revue Celtique* 50 and 51.

Annals of Loch Ce, ed. and trans. by W.M. Hennessy, (London, Rolls Series, 1871).

Fragmentary Annals of Ireland, ed. and trans. by Joan N. Radner (Dublin, 1978).

[There are other surviving annals as well.]

Lebor Gabala Erenn: The Book of the Taking of Ireland, ed. and trans. by R.A.S. Macalister (London: Irish Texts Soc. vols. 34, 35, 39, 41, 44, 1938-56).

The *Lebor Gabala* is a vast, late-medieval compilation, by several groups, of a synthetic, Christianized pseudo-historical account of Irish history. While much truly archaic material is embedded like nuggets in the text, as a

whole, this is pure fantasy--an attempt to give Ireland a "christian" history consonant with the Old Testament, Eusebius, Orosius etc. This is the source (along with the "Ancient laws of Ireland," q.v.) of most of the popular pseudo-history of Ireland which is so firmly embedded in popular consciousness in the 19th and 20th centuries. Modern popular histories which talk of the "Irish Race" and the like are likely to be cribbed from LGE. To further complicate matters, Macalister's edition is a disgrace and cannot be trusted on any particulars. Before using this material, be sure to see the review by Binchy in the journal *Studies*, vol. 29 (1940) 143-5, 472.

Forus Feasa ar Eirinn, ["Elements of the History of Ireland"] by Geoffrey Keating (Seathrun Keitinn, in Irish), ed. by D. Comyn and P.S. Dineen, (London, Irish Texts Soc., vols. 4, 8, 9, 15, 1900-14). Educated on the continent, Keating set out to write a vindication of Ireland through her history. The book was completed in 1634. Although it incorporates a lot of obviously legendary and mythical material, Keating was a good judge of a source by his own contemporary standards and this book stands up pretty well for something produced in the 17th cent. in Ireland. The book contains accounts, paraphrases and references from many sources now lost. Keating became the Irish Dante with this work, as his robust prose style set the standard for written modern Irish.

6.1.2. WALES:

Annales Cambriae, ed. by E. Phillimore, in the journal *Y Cymmrodor*, IX (1888). Sketchy and laconic entries in Latin from the middle of the fifth century to the thirteenth. This or similar annals formed the basis for a series of texts all known as *Brut y Tywysogyon* [The History of the Princes] which were compiled in the twelfth and thirteenth century. Some contain material not surviving in the Ann. Camb. Various versions of the *Brut y Tywysogyon* have been edited by Thomas Jones. Several collections of charters also exist. [See secondary sources below.]

De Excidio Britanniae, attrib. to Gildas, a 6th cent. cleric. ed. by M. Winterbottom (1978).

Prob. a genuine early source, but tough to deal with as a historical document. (See W. Davies and R. Hanning in sec. sources below).

Historia Brittonum, attrib. to Nennius, ed. by T. Mommsen, *Chronica Minora Saec. IV. V. VI. VII*, vol.III (Berlin, 1898), trans. by A.W. Wade-Evans, *Nennius's History of the Britons* (1838).

This work was put together in 829, but David Dumville has recently shown that the attribution to Nennius (whoever he may have been) dates only from the mid eleventh century (*Studia Celtica*, 10-11 [1975-76], 78-95.)

6.2. SECONDARY SOURCES:

[I will confine this section to a few "starting places" which have bibliographies of their own or are otherwise of general interest.]

6.2.1. IRELAND:

J.F. Kenney, *Sources for the Early History of Ireland*, (see above under "Famous Books").

T.W. Moody, F.X. Martin, F.J. Byrne, eds., *A New History of Ireland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982 ff.)

Ten volumes are planned. The second to appear and a very useful one is volume VIII, A Chronology of Irish History to 1978.

of shell guides
- good medieval

A.J. Otway-Ruthven, *A History of Medieval Ireland* (London, 1968)
Kathleen Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland: Introduction to the Sources* (London, 1972).

6.2.2. WALES:

Wendy Davies, *Wales in the Early Middle Ages* (Leicester, 1982).
Kathleen Hughes, *Celtic Britain in the Early Middle Ages* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1980).
Robert Hanning, *The Vision of History in Early Britain* (NY, 1966).
For the twelfth century in Wales and Ireland, see also the works of Gerald of Wales (Giraldus Cambrensis) and Walter Map's "De Nugis Curialium."

6.2.3. BRITTANY:

Nora Chadwick, *Early Brittany* (Cardiff, 1969).

7. LAWS:

7.1. IRELAND:

WARNING. Almost every library in the world has a copy of *Ancient Laws of Ireland*, ed. by J. O'Donovan and a bunch of other people (6 vols.) between 1865-90. Although this work is constantly cited as a source for Irish history, almost none of it can be trusted. Check with a real expert before citing a single word. The language of the law tracts, Archaic Old Irish, is still imperfectly understood and was hardly known at all, even to good scholars, in the 19th century. Some of the editors of these volumes knew no Irish of any period.

Corpus Juris Hibernici, ed. by Daniel A. Binchy, 6 vols. (Dublin, 1978). The first proper diplomatic edition of the law tracts. There is no translation, and, alas, no index (yet). This will set off a relative flood of new translations and studies. An article by Binchy in volume 1 of the *Journal Studia Hibernica*, "The Historical Value of the Old Irish Law Tracts" serves as a kind of introduction to the edition. The first volume has a complete concordance of various editions and manuscripts.

D.A. Binchy, ed. *Studies in Early Irish Law* (Dublin, 1936).

7.2. WELSH:

Aneurin Owen, ed., *Ancient Laws and Institutes of Wales* (London, 1841). There is a large number of manuscripts of collections of Welsh law (in both Latin and Welsh) dating from the 13th century. They appear to reflect a state of affairs not much antecedent to their compilation, but do have many interesting and distinctive "Welsh" features.

J. G. Edwards, "Studies in the Welsh Laws Since 1928," *Welsh History Review*, special volume, 1963, 1-18.

This volume has other articles on Welsh law.

A.W. Wade-Evans, *Welsh Medieval Law* (London, 1909).

8. LITERATURE:

[A vast subject. I will point here to some of the major areas of vernacular literature. See the bibliography section above for more detailed references.]

8.1. IRISH:

The *Táin Bó Cuailnge* ["Cattle-Raid of Cooley"] and the "Ulster Cycle"

The TBC is the largest surviving prose narrative from the medieval world. It concerns an Iliad-like seige of the tribe of the "Ulaid" by their traditional enemies. The texts, as we have them, date from the ninth century (via later mss.) The best modern editions are by Cecile O'Rahilly: *The Stowe Version of the TBC*; *The TBC from the Book of Leinster*; and *The TBC: Recension I*. (all published since 1961 by the Dublin Inst. for Advanced Studies.) The most readable English translation is *The Táin*, by Thomas Kinsella (Oxford UP, 1966), which also contains other related stories from the same tradition.

8.2. OTHER PROSE:

The other major prose narrative "cycle" is that concerning the exploits of Fionn mac Cumhal ["Finn Maccool"]. The best place to begin investigating it is via a book by Joseph F. Nagy, *The Wisdom of the Outlaw* to be published by UC Press in July.

Two series are worth a mention: the *Irish Texts Society*, published in fits and starts from London since 1898, and the *Medieval and Modern Irish Series*, published by the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies since 1945. Many of the standard literary materials have been published in these series.

8.3. POETRY:

Gerard Murphy, ed. and trans., *Early Irish Lyrics* (Oxford, 1956) is a good place to start. Since there was an official "caste" of poets, there is a vast amount of official poetry surviving from the early period (praise, placenames, genealogy, history, charms, religious poems etc.), and an equally vast array of the later "bardic" poetry dating from the 12th century. The two volumes of the Best Bibliography (cited above) are the places to look.

8.4. WELSH:

Prose narrative in medieval Welsh is confined to one collection of tales, generally known as "The Mabinogi" (or Mabinogion) after its rubric, *Pedeir Keinc y Mabinogi*, ["The Four Branches of the Mabinogi"] There are two other "native tales", *Culhwch and Olwen* and *Lluyd and Llefelys*, and several "Arthurian" tales associated with the 4 branches. The standard edition is Ifor Williams, *Pedeir Keinc y Mabinogi* (U. of Wales Press, 2nd ed., 1951) and the best translation, *The Mabinogi*, by Patrick K. Ford (UC Press, 1978?). For individual texts see the editions in the *Medieval and Modern Welsh Series* (Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.)

Other prose includes Welsh versions of Old French chansons de geste, romances and the like.

Poetry comes in three flavors: "Old Poetry" [Hengerdd], (6th???-10th cent.), "Rather Early Bards" [Gogynfeirdd] (the court poetry of the 11th-14th cent.) and "Couplet" [cywydd] poetry (flowering from 1300 on).

The surviving *Hengerdd* or *Cynfeirdd* poetry is embodied in three collections which were probably made in or after the ninth century: *Canu Aneirin* [The Poems of Aneirin], *Canu Taliesin*, and *Canu Llywarch Hen*. All have been edited by Ifor Williams, though the most modern edition and translation of the Llywarch Hen poems is in the edition by Patrick K. Ford, *The Poems of Llywarch Hen* (UC Press, 1974)

Gogynfeirdd poems, which are not much to 20th cent. taste, can be found in Thomas Parry, *The Oxford Book of Welsh Verse* (Oxford, 1962), and in *Revue Celtique*, vols. 47, 49 and 50 (1930, 32-33), and *Etudes Celtique* 1-4 (1936-48). This poetry can also be found in O. Jones, E. Williams, and W.O. Pughe, *The Myvyrian Archaeology of Wales* (London 1801) [still useful], and E. Anwyl, *The Poetry of the Gogynfeirdd* (Denbeigh, 1909).

The master of *cywydd* poetry was Dafydd ap Gwilym ("David Williamson") who was an exact contemporary of Chaucer. The standard edition of his wonderful poems is Thomas Parry, *Gwaith Dafydd ap Gwilym* (U. of Wales Press, 3rd ed., 1979), and a full set of readable English translations can be found in *Dafydd ap Gwilym, the Poems*, by Richard M. Loomis (Binghamton, 1982).

A general, though somewhat dated, overview of Welsh literature is to be had in Thomas Parry, *A History of Welsh Literature* (Oxford, 1955).

9. ARTHURIAN MATERIAL:

This could easily be the subject of another bibliography and, fortunately, it is. See the *Bibliographical Bulletin of the International Arthurian Society*, which has been published annually for about the last 40 years.

10. Journals:

The important journals which deal primarily with Celtic philology and history are (in no particular order):

Celtica (Journal of the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies)

Eriu (Journal of the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin)

Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy (Dublin)

Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland (begun as *Journal of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society*)

Peritia (journal of the Medieval Academy of Ireland)

Studia Hibernica (Dublin)

Eigse (Dublin)

Bealoideas (Dublin--journal of the Folklore of Ireland Society)

Zeitschrift fuer Celtisch Philologie (now published in Ireland)

Etudes Celtiques (Paris)

Revue Celtique (Paris)

Ogam (also, *Celticum*, Paris)

Welsh History Review

Studia Celtica

National Library of Wales Bulletin

Trans. of the Honorable Society of Cymmrodorion

Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies

Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies

Scottish Studies

Scottish Gaelic Studies

Trans. of the Gaelic Society of Inverness

The Journal of Celtic Studies (Vols. 1&2 1949-53; Vol.3- 1981)

A NOTE: This list is intended to be a starting place from which someone unfamiliar with Celtic tradition and history can begin to acquire a general background and bibliographic information on specific subjects. It also contains a few warnings and recommendations regarding some well-known books in the field. It is not intended in any way to be exhaustive. It largely ignores Breton, Gaulish, Scottish Gaelic, Cornish, Manx, etc. It does not deal specifically with pre-Christian materials, archaeology, or pre-history.