

Irish Words and Expressions from Corofin, Co. Clare

PATRICK HENCHY

This collection of words and expressions in Irish, or of Irish origin, is assembled from the memory of colloquial usage in and around Corofin, Co. Clare, in the 1920s and 1930s. Then, as now, the locality was an entirely English-speaking one, but its not very distant Irish-speaking past was evidenced in the pronunciation and vocabulary of ordinary people. There were, still, some older folk who could muster up enough Irish to conduct a conversation in that language so as to hide its subject matter from their younger listeners, and an assiduous folklorist could have garnered verses by Clare poets, or the odd folk-tale, from the lips of an elderly *seanchaí*. But it was a dwindling stock. In the main, Irish had survived only as a residual element in conversation, as stray words or expressions that came spontaneously to mind, lending colour and richness to what might otherwise have been monolingually prosaic and flat.

This compilation of words and phrases is not presented simply for its linguistic interest, but rather as an indication of the extent to which Irish expressions continued to enrich daily speech, and thus to continue to fulfil a social function. Only to that extent may this contribution be deemed worthy of inclusion in a volume in honour of a man whose many-sided career as a scholar is not least distinguished by his researches in the social history of Ireland.

Aindeiseoir: a poor miserable person.
Airitiúl: careful (of a person); fastidious.
Alp (*v.*): Seán alped (bolted) down his food.
Amadán: a fool (male).
Árainneach: an Aran islander.
Bacach: lame, decrepit (person). Used also of a thing, *e.g.* a b. door. As a noun, beggarman.
Baic: a crook; a bend on an object. A person not standing erect would have a b. on him. *See* leath-bhaic.
Baileabhair: a mess, *e.g.* you made a b. of it. Also, you are an awful b.
Bail ó Dhia ar an obair: God bless the work.
Balbh: dumb; incoherent. b. with drink.
Balbhán: a stutterer.
Balcais: rags; an untidy garment. *pl.* balcaisí.
Banbh: a young pig.
Báirneach: a limpet.

Baol: danger. Tá a lán b. ort, you are in great danger (sarcastically).
Barr: a layer of uncut turf in a bog. They got seven barrs out of that bank.
Barrach: tow. It would light like b. He would light like b. (*i.e.* quick-tempered). I will give you b. (a hiding).
Básán: a languid person; a delicate person without much animation.
Bastún: an ignorant, thick fellow.
Beadáí: a person or animal continually looking for food and finicky about it. A fastidious person about food.
Béal bocht, An: the poor mouth.
Béal dúnta: closed mouthed, untalkative, secretive about information.
Béal scaoilte: open mouthed, unable to keep a secret.
Bèarla: command of English. He has great b.

- Bia: food. b.b. a call for poultry.
 Beart: bundle. A b. of hay. A big b. of a woman, *i.e.* a big fat woman (the full of your arms).
 Bladar: Empty boastful talk.
 Bladhman: *see* bladar.
 Bladhmad: *see* bladar; same.
 Bleitheach: a big hefty fellow.
 Bloc Nollag: a Yule log.
 Bodach: a churlish fellow.
 Bodhrán: a deaf, heedless fellow. Also hard cowdung used for fire.
 Bogán: an egg without a hard shell.
 Bóitseach: a dressed up fellow (over dressed), a swank.
 Bonnleach: sore, hardened sole of foot from walking barefoot.
 Boreen: a lane. *Ir.* Bóithrín.
 Bothán: a hovel.
 Bothán a' sraith: a miserable hovel, literally "cabin of scraw".
 Botún: a bad mistake, blunder.
 Brabach: full and plenty and something over, something to spare.
 Bramaire: a big fat strong fellow.
 Bratach: green scum on water in bog-hole.
 Broc (*pron.* bruck): ruck. A few hurlers rooting for the ball were said to be in b.
 Brothal: high spirits, usually of a horse. He is full of b., or there is great b. on him.
 Brúchtail: a belch.
 Brúscar: pulp. He made b. of it.
 Buachail: a boy, fellow (with disrespect). Sean-buachail, an old fellow. Sometimes used when referring to a pain or disease (*e.g.* sciatica).
 Buachalán: ragweed.
 Buailleam sciath: a boaster, hero or warrior (derisive).
 Cabach: talkative. He is very c; he will not keep a secret.
 Cabaire: a talkative person.
 Cabhal: a ruin; shell of a house.
 Cábóg: a stupid person; an old hat.
 Cac: excrement. Cac bó, cowdung.
 Cacamus: haughtiness; nonsense.
 Cáibín: an old hat.
 Cailleach: a hag.
 Caithnín: hayseed; small particle. There is a c. in my eye.
 Cáipéis: a document.
 Cáiteach: a sheet to cover an object. Place a c. over that pile of potatoes.
 Cannrán: a grouse. Cannránaí, a grouser. Cannráinig, grousing.
 Cantalach: cross, contrary, in bad humour.
 Caorán: a small hard sod of turf.
 Carrachán: a small gnarled fellow.
 Carraig: a big stone; a rock.
 Ceach: a dead animal; carrion.
 Cearrbhach: a gambler; a clever card player; a trickster.
 Ceatharnach: an old fellow (derogatory).
 Ceist: question; matter. Sin c. eile, that is another matter.
 Ceolán: a light-headed person (male?).
 Ciaróg: a beetle.
 Ciotóg: a left-handed person; the left hand, *e.g.* he did it with his ciotóg.
 Cippín: a light bit of a stick. *Ir.* Cipín.
 Ciseach: a bridge or pass in a bog.
 Clampar: noise; row. *See* ruaille-buaile.
 Cliotar: a blow of the hand.
 Clochán: a weir; causeway or similar stone construction.
 Cogar-mogar: conspiratorial whispering.
 Comhar: they were working in c., *i.e.* helping each other in turn.
 Coigeal: the yoke that tied two goats together by the neck. Used also as *v.* Coigealed.
 Cóiste bodhar: headless ghost coach.
 Comhráiteach: the two of them were very c., *i.e.* in close conversational mood.
 Conách (*pron.* crawch): dessert. A c. sin ort, more of that to you—said when luck comes the way of a friend. Good for you!
 Craidheal: tragedy; pity; misfortune; loss.
 Cráite: tormented.
 Cráiteachán: a miserable person or animal. Give some milk to that c. of a cat—said when the cat looks miserable and is miaowing.
 Craobh: a branch of a tree.
 Creacáilí: a man without much balance.
 Creach: a broken down animal or thing. *Eng.* crock.
 Croch ard chughat: high hanging to you. The English translation also used.
 Crosach: cross or cross-looking.
 Crosachán: a cross or ill-tempered person.
 Crúb: a big hand (derogatory).
 Crúibín: a pig's trotter. *pl.* crúibeens.
 Cruit: a hump, *e.g.* a cruit on him with the cold.
 Crúst: to pelt (with stones). *Ir.* crústa, a missile.
 Cuairt: a visit. I went on c. to Seán's house.
 Cuirim ort—Tigim leat: I challenge you—I accept. Said by two hurling captains picking their teams to play a match.
 Cuma. Tá droch-chuma air: It has a bad appearance or he looks poorly; the day looks bad.
 Cúnach: verdigris.
 Cúnach liath: green-mould. There was c. on the bread, it was so stale.
 Dailtín: a young cheeky, ill-reared fellow. *Ir.* dálda.
 Dána: bold; stubborn.
 Deatach: He knocked d. out of him (slang), *i.e.* He gave him a beating.
 Deise: get into position—speaking to a cow about to be milked. *Ir.* deisigh.
 Deoch: a drink.
 Deoch a' dorais: final drink before leaving.
 Dia linn: God be with us—said when one sneezes—to which is replied Dia linn is Muire.

Díocas: zeal.
 Díocasach: inquisitive; zealous. He is very d. for the drink.
 Dóbuí: yellow clay from lake or river. *Ir.* Dóib bhuí.
 Doicheall: He had great d. for him, *i.e.* He was very hostile to him.
 Doicheallach: inhospitable or hostile.
 Doighear: feeling, usually ill-feeling. He said it with great d.
 Domhan thoir: Eastern world. You could hear him in the d.
 Drann: grin. He had a d. on him with the cold.
 Drannaíl: grinning. I don't like the d. of Seán.
 Dreas: a turn at work. I took a d. at churning. Give me a d. of your pipe. I fell asleep for a d.
 Dríodar: dregs (of a bottle).
 Droch-chuma: *See* cuma.
 Duidín: a pipe (derogatory—with a broken stem, generally).
 Duine beag: the little one; the young one.
 Mo dhuine: Your man.
 Dulcán: load; heap; amount. A fine d. of money, potatoes, etc.
 Dúr: stupid; thick.
 Dúrhacht: feeling; enthusiasm. He put great d. into his speech, or his work.
 Fadálach: tedious, drawn-out.
 Fáidéans: lots. We got f. of mushrooms. *Ir.* faid, extent of anything.
 Fáilte: welcome, greeting.
 Fairen: small boys asked farmers for a f. on fair days and got a penny or two. *Ir.* feirín (?).
 Famaire: visitor. *pl.* famairí. There are lots of f. in Lisdoonvarna.
 Faoileán: seagull. Also f. bán.
 Fathach: a big awkward fellow, a giant.
 Féar gorta: great hunger in the morning if one is abroad without eating.
 Feirc: a comical appearance. You should see the f. of him.
 Fialtach: a big wild fellow.
 Fíor: true. [Is] fíor duit. The English form—true for you.
 Fiosrach: inquisitive.
 Flaithiúil: generous. Also flaithiúlach.
 Focal bog: The soft word; plausible talk; a promise that cannot be fulfilled.
 Fóir: The outer regular wall of a turf rick. *v.* I was fóiring turf all day.
 Fuar-nimh: pain from extreme cold, or pain experienced when heat is applied to numbed extremities.
 Fústar: fussiness; rush. Also used as *v.*
 Fústaire: a fussy person. Also fústarer.
 Gabháil: He carried it in his g., *i.e.* in his arms; *e.g.* a g. of hay for the cow.
 Gabhlóg: fork of a tree, *e.g.* as would be used to make a catapult.
 Gad: a twisted twig or osier. As tough as a g.
 Gág: cracked skin.

Gaise: a daring exploit.
 Gáirdín: a garden, usually a small garden.
 Gal: a smoke.
 Galore: plenty; enough. *Ir.* go leór. *See* maith go leór.
 Gaolfadamach: a far out relation. He is a g.
 Gaothach. *See* bladar.
 Gas: stalk, *e.g.* a g. of wheat.
 Gasta: *See* glic.
 Geab: chat; talk. He has too much g.
 Geabaire: a person with too much talk.
 Geancach: snubnosed.
 Geaitsí: antics.
 Giobals: rags; poor clothes. *Ir.* giobal.
 Giobalach: untidily dressed.
 Gleacaí: a smart fellow with an element of trickery. Also as an *adj.*—he is very g.
 Gleoite: neat (of a person); a plausible person.
 Glic: smart; cute.
 Glifín: *See* ceolán.
 Glifinteacht: abstract noun (silliness), from above.
 Glincín: *See* ceolán.
 Gliogar: an infertile egg that failed to hatch out.
 Gobadán: a person with mouth sticking out, with a receding chin, or a tight-lipped person.
 Gobán: a poor tradesman (derogatory). From the legendary Gobán Saor.
 Go bhfóire Dia orainn: May God help us.
 Go mbeire muid beo ar an am seo áris: That we may be alive this time next year, *e.g.* on hearing the cuckoo for the first time.
 Go sabháile Dia sinn: May God save us.
 Grá: affection. I have a great g. for him.
 Grá-mo-chroí (*adj.*): g. talk is soft talk. A g. man is a plausible man.
 Greeshcáns: edible innards of a bird. *Ir.* grioscáin.
 Gríosach: hot ashes. He baked the potatoes in the g.
 Grug: hunkers. He was on his g.
 Gúm: plan; stunt; gimmick.
 Gurab amhlaidh duit: The same to you (in reply to Bail ó Dhia ar an obair).
 Imigh leat (anois): off with you (now).
 Lab: a useless thing. What a l. it is.
 Lá crosta na bliana: cross or contrary day of the year, but only the Irish form is used. The day of the week on which 28 Dec. falls is regarded as the unlucky day for the following year. One would be loath to marry on that day, or to launch a new project.
 Ladar: unwanted intervention. He put his l. into the discussion. He put in his l.
 Ladúsach: smug; cheeky.
 Láimhín: a man who had lost one arm usually got this nickname, *e.g.* Láimhín Donohoe. *Ir.* lámh: a hand. Also a natural short hand or arm.
 Lán a' mhála: plenty to eat (*lit.* full of the bag). We got l.

- Lawkee: friendly (of a person). *Ir.* lághach, lághachaf.
- Leacht: a pile of stones. A l. of stones.
- Leadránach: long-winded. A l. fellow.
- Leamh: lukewarm; tasteless.
- Leath-bhaic: He had a l. on him, meaning he was very bent (perhaps with the cold).
- Leath-gháire: cynical smile.
- Leidhb: same as pleidhce.
- Leitheideach: free and easy; conceited. Seán was sitting there as l. as you wish.
- Liobar: an untidy person.
- Liobarnach: untidy.
- Lochán: small lake or pool.
- Locht: fault. You had a l. on me when I told you it would rain—and it did.
- Losset: wooden trough for kneeding dough. *Ir.* losad.
- Lug: pool of water (on the road). *Ir.* log.
- Lúidín: the small finger.
- Luifearnach: remains, the wasted remnants—as of hay.
- Mac: chap; fellow. He's a cool m.
- Magadh: joking. Leath-mhagadh: half joking; sneering.
- Maise: indeed, then.
- Maith go leór (*adj.*): He was m., *i.e.* he had enough drink taken.
- Maith thú!: good for you!
- Mantach: gap-toothed. *Ir.* mant.
- Maol: without horns. A m. cow.
- Mar-a-chéile: alike, all are the same.
- Marbh: A m. person is one without much animation.
- Marbhán: the noun from above.
- Mar eadh: by the way.
- Meas: esteem. He has great m. on Seán.
- Meas-a-mhadra: *lit.* respect of a dog, *i.e.* no respect; *e.g.* I have not m. on him.
- Meig: bleat of a goat. There was not a m. out of Seán, not a word.
- Meigeall: goat's whiskers.
- Meitheal: men in co-operative harvesting; a big number working together.
- Minseach: a year old goat.
- Misneach: courage, guts.
- Mór: big. This *adj.* frequently used of people, *e.g.* Seán mór, Big John.
- Moragraidhin: agrimony.
- Mórtas: boasting; pride.
- Mothal: big head of hair. *See* stollach.
- Mothar: a small sheltered field.
- Mí-ádh: misfortune; ill-luck.
- Nadúir: kindness; feeling. There is no n. in him.
- Náire: shame.
- Náirithe: shamed; embarrassed.
- Namaitheach: without drive. He is n. *Ir.* neamh-maitheach.
- Napar: a big head.
- Nathán: proverb; saying; riddle; pun. Usually in the plural, natháns.
- Nathántacht: punning, etc. I got tired of his n.
- Neúdí-neádf: a person who is backward and has no back-bone.
- Oighear: irritation; skin chafed by cold.
- Óinseach: fool (female).
- Paltair: a fat, petted child.
- Palltóg (*pron.* poltóg): blow. I gave him a p. in the ear.
- Peata: a child who is spoiled.
- Peataireacht: petting, crying attitude. Stop that p. and eat your dinner (to a child).
- Pilibín: a green plover.
- Pioc: chickens sometimes get the p., that is an illness of the throat. The word is onomatopoeic. Used of a person—he would give you the p., *i.e.* he would annoy you. He was piocing and coughing.
- Piseóg: superstition. Also pisreóg, *e.g.* he is full of pisreógs.
- Plámás: flattery.
- Plámásach: flattering (*adj.*).
- Plaips: a fat good-for-nothing youth or child.
- Pleidhce: a half idiot. Often used instead of Christian name for such a person (male), *e.g.* Pleidhc Murphy.
- Plobaire, Plubaire: a person who talks too much without much sense, or a person who talks indistinctly. A child with fat cheeks who cries easily.
- Plobaireacht: Stop that p., uncalled for crying.
- Pluc: cheek. He had two fat plucs on him.
- Plucamas: mumps.
- Priompolán: a beetle that flies; a man who acts socially beyond his station, flies too high and is destined to fall.
- Praiseach: a mess, *e.g.* he made p. of it.
- Praiseach bhuí: ragwort.
- Púca: spirit that roams on All Soul's Night and soils the fruit still on the trees or bushes.
- Púicín: a blindfold.
- Pus: sour face, *e.g.* Seán had a p. on him because I refused to give him a lift. *Adj.* pusach.
- Pus mhada: *See* smig mhada.
- Pusachán: a sulky person.
- Raic: a quarrel; noise in a crowd. Same as rúaille búaille.
- Ráiméis: silly talk; nonsense. Also *v.* ráiméis-ing.
- Raithín: swathe of hay.
- Réiteach: row. Same as rúaille búaille.
- Réiteóg: a pull-through, cleaner for a pipe.
- Riasc: a marsh.
- Righneálaí: a dawdler; a slow worker.
- Ruaille búaille: turmoil.
- Rútálaí: a fumbler; a clumsy fellow.
- Santach: greedy.
- Scaipeach: wasteful; freespending; *e.g.* He is very s. with his money.
- Scailp: crevice or fault in rock.
- Scairt: diaphragm. In a local cure carried out by a blacksmith the words used were: D'ucht a bheith socair is do scairt a bheith ré, in ainm an Athar agus an

- Mhic agus an Spioraid Naoimh". Also a burst of laughter, *e.g.* he let out a s. of a laugh.
- Scallop: osier or hazel rod for thatching; the proverb "Ní hé lá na gaoithe lá na scolb" still used. *Ir.* Scolb.
- Sceach: bush.
- Scearach: soft excrement of bird or animal.
- Sceartán: a tick (in animals).
- Sceilp: blow (of a stick).
- Sceóchaóil: loud strident talk. *v.* Sceóching.
- Scib-sceab: free for all. Seán threw the sweets for s., *i.e.* Seán threw them in the air and let those who wanted them scramble for them.
- Sciolán: a cut seed potato with eye; any cut potato or a small potato.
- Scolb: *See* scallop.
- Scaiste: rascal; lazy fellow. Seán scaiste, old rascal.
- Scraw: piece of earth with grass growing on it. *Ir.* sraith.
- Screain: bad s. to you!, *i.e.* bad luck to you!
- Scrugal: thin neck (of a person).
- Seachrán: lost (of a person). He is on the s., without guidance, loafing about, aimless. Seán is always on the s.
- Seafóid: nonsense.
- Seanacháí: a story teller; one versed in old lore.
- Seán-saor: the travelling salesman who erected his stall on fair days.
- Searbhas (*pron.* searús): sarcasm. *adj.* sear-bhasach.
- Seilmide: snail. "s. s. put out your horn".
- Seóinín: one who apes English manners.
- Slacht: tidiness. There is no s. on (to) him. *adj.* Slachtmhar.
- Sin é: That is it.
- Sin scéal eile: That is another story.
- Sláinte: good health (drinking toast). The response is s. mhór.
- Slam: a pancake. Also a handful. Seán took a s. of flour out of the sack.
- Slán leat: farewell.
- Sleamhnánaí: a slippery customer; one who gads about; a sloucher.
- Slug: a mouthful of liquid. Also used as *v.* He slugged back the pint of stout.
- Slugaire: a hole in the ground where water or a stream disappears.
- Smeadar (*v.*): to smear his face with mud. As *n.*, a blow, *e.g.* I gave him a s. on the pus.
- Smidireens: little pieces. *Ir.* smidirín, a small fragment.
- Sniog: a pointed chin; a chin.
- Smig mhada: a receding chin. Also pus mhada.
- Smuasachán: a silent, dour, unpleasant fellow. Also smuasánaí.
- Smuasaoil: give over that s. and do the job, *i.e.* that dead and alive attitude.
- Smugairle: a snot. Smugairlí, sniffles. Stop that smurgairling (sniffing).
- Smulc: a surly expression.
- Sniog (*v.*): to milk; *e.g.* s. the cow, *i.e.* finish off the milking of a cow, implying that she had not much.
- Socadán: tight-lipped person with a hungry appearance.
- Sodar: hurry (*lit.* trot), *e.g.* there was a great s. on him.
- Sonn: a dig. I gave Seán a s. in the ribs.
- Sonnachair: a good spouse; good s. to you.
- sop: a wisp, as of hay.
- Spág: flat foot; spágs, flat feet or big feet.
- Spaic: stick bent like a hurley.
- Spailpín: travelling labourer (term of derision).
- Spairt: big soft sod of turf.
- Speac: kick.
- Spóirteach: roaring fire, a s. of a fire.
- Spruadar: fragments, such as turf dust.
- Sream: scum in eyes.
- Sreamachán: a sleepy, miserable man (from sream).
- Stailc: strike; sulk, he went into a s., *i.e.* a sulk.
- Staitsplay (*pron.* staursplay): holy show, don't make a s. of yourself. *Ir.* stáits + play, a stageplay.
- Steall (*pron.* steaul): liquid poured out, *e.g.* a s. of tea.
- Stiall: piece, a s. of bread.
- Stiúir nó cuma: head or tail, *e.g.* there isn't s. to him.
- Stócach: a young fellow in his teens, usually overgrown.
- Stollach: a big head of unruly hair.
- Stollaire: a big awkward fellow.
- Stór: treasure (only used in vocative case), astóir.
- Storc: a young bullock.
- Storcán: a small fat pig.
- Strácáilí: a drudge; an untidy worker who is usually pulling the devil by the tail.
- Striall: an untidy woman.
- Stuacach: obstinate (person), applied to one who goes into a huff easily.
- Stuacán; stuacánaí: a thick, stubborn fellow.
- Stuaic: huff. Seán was in a s. *See* stailc.
- Suarach: small and miserable (person).
- Suarachán: a small miserable person.
- Súgach: merry with drink.
- Súgán: straw rope, a s. chair.
- Suim: interest. I have no s. in that.
- Sutach: a beefy young boy.
- Tadhg a' dá thaobh: a two-faced person.
- Tamáilte, *adj.*: half-baked (bread); sticky.
- Taobh: a patch; *e.g.* put a t. on my shoe.
- Taoscán: portion of drink poured out.
- Teallach: better be working than sitting there in the t. (before the fire).
- Thanamonjowel: *Lit.* Your soul from the devil (swearword). *Ir.* d'anam ó'n diabhal.
- Tilly: a little extra measure of liquid. *Ir.* tuille.
- Tíriúil: how t. he walked in looking for a loan, *i.e.* taking it for granted.
- Trostar: noise; commotion.

Tnúthán (*pron.* trúthán): longing, *e.g.* there is a great t. on that cow (anxious to get her feed); I have no t. for that applecake.
Tnuthánaí: person or animal showing longing to get food.
Tnúthántacht: state of longing.
Tóin: bottom, used through sense of delicacy for the more vulgar Anglo-Saxon equivalent.
Tóir: I would not have any great t. on that horse (I would not be keen on him). Also, hasn't he great t. on John (hasn't he a great set on John). t.—a mhadra. *See* meas-amhadra.
Tráinín: *Lit.* a straw or stalk of grass, *e.g.* it is not worth a t. (useless).
Tráthúil: timely. How t. (sarcastically).

Trálach: numbness, *e.g.* I had t. in my wrist from painting.
Trí-na-chéile: upset.
Tromluí: nightmare where one is unable to move.
Truaimhéil: *See* aindeiseoir.
Trú mhuire: Same as above.
Tuatach: Awkward.
Tuatalaí: an awkward fellow.
Tuflais: lazy, untidy woman.
Tuairt: thud, *e.g.* I heard the t. when he fell out of bed.
Tufóg: a fart.
Tulán: a high dry area in a bog. That rick of turf is dry because I built it on a t.
Útamáil: fumbling; *v.* útamáiling.
Útamálaí: fumbler.