

THE
WELSH LANGUAGE

by

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ORIGINS

WELSH is a member of the Celtic branch of the Indo-European family of languages, its closest relations being Cornish and Breton. It is sometimes convenient to divide the Celtic languages geographically into the two broad divisions of Continental Celtic (or Gaulish), which became extinct in the early Christian era, and Insular Celtic, although such a geographical division really obscures fundamental differences of phonology within the insular group. (See below, for example, on Q-Celtic and P-Celtic.)

The term 'Gaulish' is usually used loosely to denote the widely-scattered remains of Celtic speech on the Continent, in Cisalpine and Transalpine Gaul, the Iberian Peninsula, Central Europe to the Black Sea, and Galatia in Asia Minor, as a result of the settlement of the Celtic *Galatae* in Northern Phrygia, subsequent to their incursion into the Balkans. The bulk of the surviving material, however, derives from Gaul, and very little is known of the Celtic dialects spoken farther east.

'Insular Celtic', as the term implies, refers to the two varieties of Celtic speech introduced into Britain and Ireland, namely Goidelic and British (or Brythonic). Goidelic was the parent-language of (a) Irish, (b) Scottish Gaelic (in the Highlands of Scotland and the Western Isles), derived from the Irish speech (or 'Common Gaelic', as it is sometimes called) brought to Scotland about the end of the fifth century by the Dalriadic colonists from north-east Ireland who settled in Argyll, and (c) Manx, derived similarly from the speech of the Irish settlers who came to Man, possibly sometime in the fourth century, although this is far from certain. The latter is now virtually extinct. British (or Brythonic), the other variety of Celtic speech introduced into this island, was the parent-language of (a) Welsh, (b) Cornish, which was in grave danger of becoming extinct even as early as the latter part of the eighteenth century (enthusiastic but somewhat belated attempts have been made to revive it during the present century), and (c) Breton, introduced by British immigrants who, as a result of Anglo-Saxon pressure, fled in successive waves to the Armorican peninsula from the middle of the fifth century to the early seventh. The fact that many of these refugees, particularly during the middle and second half of the sixth century, came from Devon and Cornwall, accounts for the close relationship between Cornish and Breton, and for the various phonological and morphological features which, during successive periods in their development, these two languages shared to the exclusion of Welsh.

These two varieties of insular Celtic speech represent the P and Q branches of Common Celtic, distinguished by the way in which they treated the IE.¹ labio-velar consonant *qʷ*. In Goidelic labio-velar *qʷ* was preserved, but it later lost its labialization in Irish, becoming the velar tenuis *k* (*c*) which, under certain conditions (e.g. when it occurred intervocally in the interior of words), was lenited to *ch*. In British, on the other hand, IE. (and Common Celtic) *qʷ* > *p*, apart from certain instances where the labialization was lost; when subject to the conditions of lenition this *p* > *b*. Thus W. *pedwar* 'four', Co. *peswar*, Br. *pevar* are etymologically related to O Ir. *cethir* from IE. **qʷet̪yōres*; cf. Lat. *quattuor*.

The P branch of Celtic also embraces Gaulish; but compare, for example, the forms *Sequani* and *Sequana* (Seine), or the form *Equos* 'February' in the famous Coligny Calendar. However, the theory postulated by some philologists, on the basis of these forms and other similar examples, that there were some Celtic dialects in Gaul which retained IE. *qʷ* has been vigorously challenged. Whatever truth may be in such a theory, it is abundantly clear from the bulk of the material which has survived from Gaul that the language or related Celtic dialects spoken there derived pre-eminently to the P branch of Celtic, so that the speech of the Gauls, as Tacitus asserts, could not have been greatly dissimilar from that of the Britons. So with W. *pedwar* etc., O Ir. *cethir*, cf. Gaul. *petuar[ios]* 'fourth', *petor-ritum* 'four-wheeled cart', and (with different vowel-grade) *Petru-corri* 'the four hosts'. It is extremely unlikely that the change *qʷ* > *p* occurred independently in British and Gaulish, and some authorities thus find it convenient to use 'Gallo-British' or 'Gallo-Brythonic' as a generic term for the various P-Celtic dialects spoken on the Continent in the pre-Christian era by widely-dispersed Celtic tribes, sections of whom ultimately crossed to Britain and settled there, thus introducing the P variety of Celtic which we know as British (or Brythonic).

The most important of the phonological developments which marked the differentiation of Common Celtic as a clearly-defined sub-group from Indo-European were: IE. *ē* > *i*: Lat. *rēx*, Gaul. *rīgo-*, W. *rhi* 'king', O Ir. *ri*. IE. *ō* > *ā* in non-final syllables: Lat. *nōtus*, Gaul. *Eposognatus* 'familiar with horses', W. *gnawd* (*aw* < *ā*) 'customary', O Ir. *gnáth*. IE. *ō* in final syllables > CC. *ū* (> Brit. *ū* > Late Brit. *ī*), except that IE. *-ōm* > *-ōm* (> *-ōn*) in CC., owing to early shortening of a long vowel before a nasal; cf. IE. **kyā* > W. *ci* 'dog', O Co. *ki*, Mn.Co. *ky*, Br. *ki*, O Ir. *ci*: Skt. *śvā*, Lat. *canis*. IE. *ai* > *ē* (a long close *e*): Gk. *στρέξω* 'I walk', Goth. *steigan* 'to ascend', W. *-tuy* as in *moratuy* 'movement of the sea' > 'sea-voyage' (*wy* < *ē*, cf. Gaul. *Moritex*), O Ir. *téigi* 'thou goest'. IE. *l*, *l̥* > *ri*, *li* before mutes and sonants: Skt. *bhṛti-s* 'a bearing, maintenance', W. *bryd* 'mind', Co. *brys*, Gaul. *vergobretus* (with

¹ The following abbreviations have been used in various places for the names of languages:

Br.	Breton	Ir.	Irish	O Ir.	Old Irish
Brit.	British	Lat.	Latin	ON.	Old Norse
CC.	Common Celtic	Lith.	Lithuanian	OW.	Old Welsh
Co.	Cornish	ME.	Middle English	Osc.	Oscan
Gaul.	Gaulish	Mi.Br.	Medieval Breton	Slav.	Slavonic
Gk.	Greek	Mi.W.	Medieval Welsh	Skt.	Sanskrit
Goth.	Gothic	Mn.W.	Modern Welsh	Umbr.	Umbrian
IE.	Indo-European	OE.	Old English	W.	Welsh

closely-related speech of Cumbria, while South-western British was the ancestor of Cornish and Breton. It was probably not until the fifth to sixth centuries that these dialects began clearly to diverge, although, according to the most recent work on the phonology of the British languages, there are some slight indications of possible dialectal differentiation as early as the first century (Jackson, 1953). It is impossible, however, to pass a confident judgment on any phonological differentiation during this early period, as the direct information for studying British is extremely meagre, our knowledge being largely obtained by inference. Not one sentence of British has survived, nor is there any inscription written entirely in that language. Apart from the information which can be gleaned from the inscriptions on the coins which were occasionally minted by pre-Roman kings and princes, our direct knowledge of early British is confined to place-names, personal and tribal names, and a few common words, which occur in Classical sources. This is hopelessly inadequate. Fortunately, however, there is one source of inestimable importance for understanding the structure and development of British, namely the Latin words which were borrowed by the ancient Britons during the Roman occupation and which have survived in the vocabularies of Welsh, Cornish and Breton. When British decayed and became Welsh, etc., the loan-words underwent the same phonetic developments as the basic Celtic vocabulary. By comparing the Latin words with the forms into which they subsequently developed, the philologist can deduce what were the regular phonetic changes which ultimately transformed the dialects of British into Welsh, Cornish and Breton. With this information at his disposal, and guided further by the overall picture presented by the Celtic remains on the Continent, it is possible for the philologist to trace the various elements in the Welsh, Cornish and Breton vocabularies back to their original forms, and thus reconstruct hypothetically certain features of the parent British language.

According to the picture thus created, British was a synthetic language, in the same stage of development as Latin, to which it bore some striking resemblances in its sound-system and morphology, so that the borrowing of Latin words could have presented no great difficulty for the ancient Britons. (A study of Old Irish, however, provides us with the salutary warning that there must also have been fundamental differences between the two languages). British was, no doubt, a fairly stable language in the first century, and as such it could not have been drastically dissimilar in its phonology from Common Celtic. It was the Roman occupation which probably led in the first instance to its gradual deterioration, a fact which has usually been ascribed to the loss of official status and cultural prestige suffered by the native inflected language during this period, as well as to the removal, as a result of the political degradation of the British upper classes, of any conservative influence which may formerly have been exercised on the native speech, so that greater freedom was given for the increasing percolation of the more 'developed' and corrupt type of British spoken by the lower orders. According to some authorities, the collapse of Roman organization in the early fifth century, and the social upheaval caused by the Anglo-Saxon conquest and settlement, acted as a catalyst on the phonetic developments of the first four centuries, thus leading to a considerable acceleration in the rate of linguistic change, and ultimately to the complete trans-

formation of British into Welsh, Cornish and Breton. Professor Binchy (1958) has recently suggested, albeit tentatively, that the drastic phonetic changes which resulted in the breakdown of Primitive Irish were likewise due to a period of social stress and upheaval, to which there are vague references in some sagas and genealogical tracts, as well as to the more frequent inter-relationship of Goidel and Brython which followed the introduction of Christianity. Similarly, the drastic linguistic changes which marked the transition from Old to Middle Irish can be attributed to the disruption of the old order under the impact of the Norse invasions, while the subsequent change to Modern Irish is usually connected with the advent of the Anglo-Normans. And students of English are familiar with the thesis that the impact of the Norman Conquest was in a large measure responsible for the rapid deterioration of Anglo-Saxon and the change to Middle English.

The various phonetic changes which ultimately transformed a dialect of British into Welsh are clearly reflected in the development of the Latin loan-words in British. Briefly, the most important of these were:

(a) A series of vowel changes, e.g. \bar{e} (a long close e) > wy ; \bar{a} > \bar{o} (a long open o) > aw (au) in monosyllables and final (originally accented) syllables; \bar{o} (a long close o) > \bar{u} , originally a rounded central vowel (later unrounded), which is written u in Welsh from the earliest sources; etc. Cf. $c\bar{e}ra$ > $cwyrr$, $r\bar{e}te$ > $rhuwyd$, $\bar{a}lt\bar{a}re$ > $allawr$ (later $allor$), $p\bar{a}r\bar{a}tus$ > $parawd$ *parod*, $f\bar{u}rma$ > $ffurf$, $\bar{o}rdo$ > $urdd$.

(b) A series of consonant mutations comprising (1) lenition, or the 'soft mutation' as it is called in Welsh, whereby between vowels in the interior of words, or initially when they formed a close speech-liaison with the final vowel of the preceding word, or (with certain exceptions) between vowels and l , r , n , the single voiceless plosives p , t , c were voiced to b , d , g , while the voiced plosives b , d , g became the voiced spirants f ,¹ δ ,² g ,³ and m > \bar{u} .⁴ Cf. $y\bar{u}p\bar{e}ra$ > $gwiber$, $Aprilis$ > $Ebrill$, $ciuitas$ > $ciwed$, $p\bar{a}tris$ > $puadr$, $l\bar{u}rica$ > $llurig$, $b\bar{a}c\bar{u}lus$ > $*b\bar{a}c\bar{u}lus$ > $bagl$, $l\bar{a}b\bar{o}r-em$ > $llafur$, $F\bar{e}b\bar{r}u\bar{a}rius$ > $Chweffraw$ *Chweffror*, $fides$ > $ffydd$, $f\bar{u}ga$ > ffo , $m\bar{a}rg\bar{a}rita$ > $merjerid$ *mererid*, $g\bar{e}m\bar{e}llus$ > $gefell$, $c\bar{o}l\bar{u}mna$ > $colofn$; (2) the nasal mutation, whereby $m\bar{h}$ > $m(m)$, $n\bar{d}$ > $n(n)$, ng^5 > nn , and, later chronologically, mp > $m(m)h$, nt > $n(n)h$, nc > $n(n)h$. Cf. $Ambrosius$ > $Emreis$ *Emrys*, $asc\bar{e}ndo$ > $*\bar{a}sc\bar{e}ndo$ > $esgyn$ (*esgynnaf* 'I ascend, I mount'), $\bar{a}ng\bar{e}lus$ (= $\bar{a}ng\bar{e}lus$) > $angel$ (= *annel*), $imp\bar{e}r\bar{a}tor$ > $y\bar{m}h\bar{e}r\bar{a}w\bar{r}$ *y\bar{m}h\bar{e}r\bar{o}d\bar{r}*, $f\bar{o}nt\bar{a}na$ > $ffynnon$ *ffynnon* (pl. *ffynhonnau*), $c\bar{a}nc\bar{e}ll\bar{a}rius$ > $canghellawr$ *canghellor*; (3) the spirant mutation whereby, for example, the geminates pp , tt , cc became the voiceless spirants ff ⁶ (ph), th ,⁷ ch ,⁸ and rp , rt , rc > rff , rth , rch , while lp , lc > lff , lch . Cf. $cl\bar{o}ppus$ > $cloff$,

¹ A labiodental (originally bilabial) voiced spirant = English v .

² A dental voiced spirant (written dd in Modern Welsh) = English th in *this*, *than*.

³ A velar voiced spirant; generally this disappeared later, or became in certain cases j , i.e. a semi-vowel = English y in emphatically pronounced *yes*.

⁴ A strongly nasal \bar{u} ; the nasality was later lost, thus giving Welsh f = English v .

⁵ \bar{u} represents the ng in English *singing*.

⁶ A labiodental voiceless spirant = English f in *for*, or English ff in *staff*.

⁷ A dental voiceless spirant = th in English *thin*, *thing*.

⁸ A velar voiceless spirant = ch in Scots *loch* or German *nach*; it is articulated with a slight uvular vibration.

sāgitta > saeth, pēccātum > pechawd pechod, cōrpus > corff, pōrta > porth, āra > arch, Alpinus > Elffin, cālc-em > calch.

(c) Vowel affection, a phenomenon analogous in certain respects to Germanic umlaut, whereby a short vowel in British (and in Latin loan-words) was affected by a sound in a succeeding syllable. Thus, to take final *ā*-affection as an example, *i* or *ū* in the penultimate syllable in British were lowered to *e* and *o* respectively when followed by *ā* in the ultimate. Or, as a result of final *i*-affection, *a*, *o*, *u*, and *e* in the penultimate were raised to *e* (> *ei*) or *y*,¹ as the case might be, with palatalisation of intermediate consonants. The Latin borrowings again reflect this change quite clearly. Cf. *mānica* > *maneg*, *grāmātica* > *gramadeg*, *cōlūna* > *colofn*, *būcca* > *boch*, *brācchium* > *breich* (later *braich*), *āngēli* > *engyl*, *ēpiscōpi* > *esgyb*, *cūneus* > **cūnjus* > *cŷn*.

(d) The loss of final and unstressed internal syllables, including the syncope of unstressed composition vowels. Cf. *trinitāt-em* > *trindawd trindod*, *caŷitāt-em* > *ceudawd ceudod*, *ay(c)īōritāt-em* > *awdurdawd awdurdod*.

Without doubt, the most important of all the various phonological changes which characterized the transition of the Western dialect of British into Welsh was the disappearance of final and unstressed internal syllables, a process which resulted in the complete disintegration of the British case-terminations and which inevitably brought about a profound transformation in the whole syntactical and morphological character of the language.² These linguistic changes, it must be emphasized, did not all occur simultaneously, and they were, of course, gradual developments, albeit quickened in some measure, according to some authorities, by the disturbed conditions of the immediate post-Roman period, which brought the various phonological changes to their culmination. The date when the old synthetic British language had so far decayed as to give rise to the new analytic language, Welsh, has been the subject of vigorous discussion and debate. It was once commonly believed that proper names, retaining their final (inflected) syllables or composition vowels intact, which occur in various inscriptions from the mid-fifth to the end of the seventh century, represented forms which were still current in the contemporary living speech, so that the language then spoken could not have been Welsh, as it was still essentially an inflected one. Modern scholarship, however, has decisively refuted this argument, and informed opinion now accepts an earlier date for the emergence of Welsh as a new analytic language from British. Sir John Morris-Jones (1918) demonstrated that the proper names in question were really traditional archaising Latin forms—in much the same way as *Henricus* occurs in modern documents

¹ A clear retracted *i*-sound.

² British became Welsh when the unaccented medial syllables, and the unaccented terminations were dropped; the medial consonants during this process underwent regular changes or mutations, so that *-e* became *g*, *-m* became *n*(*f*), and *-l* became *d* in the word we are studying. Both the dropping of the unaccented vowels and the various mutations of consonants were gradual processes, and several centuries passed away before the orthography was adapted to the changed pronunciation. When, however, these changes had taken place in the living speech, British may be said to have become Welsh.—Sir Ifor Williams, 'When did British become Welsh?', *Transactions of the Anglesey Antiquarian Society and Field Club*, 1939, p. 30.

or inscriptions as a Latinization of *Henry*¹; and the practical identity of Old Welsh and Old Breton proved that the considerable linguistic reconstruction involved in the growth and development of the new linguistic entities had occurred before the effective separation of Welsh and Breton. Sir John Morris-Jones (1918) therefore confidently asserted that 'the new language was already in existence in the first half of the sixth century'.² The major conclusions of Sir John Morris-Jones have been confirmed and amplified by the monumental scholarship of Sir Ifor Williams who, after analysing some fifth- and sixth-century names in various Anglesey inscriptions, concluded that they 'are in favour of the theory that British at this period was not the spoken language of the men who wrote these inscriptions'.³ Sir Ifor was firmly convinced that St. Patrick swore in Welsh in the fifth century!⁴ These conclusions give greater significance to the important references to Welsh poetic tradition made by Nennius (or Nemnius) in his *Historia Brittonum* (c. 800) where, after referring to Ida, king of Northumbria, 547–59, he goes on to say:

[T]unc dutigirn. in illo tempore fortiter dimicabat contra gentem anglorum. Tunc talhaern tat aguen in poemate claruit. et neirin. et taliessin et bluchbard. et cian qui uocatur gueinthe guaut. simul uno tempore in poemate brittanico claruerunt.

Unfortunately, not a single line of the poetry composed by Talhaearn (c. 550) has survived. But the reference to him as *tat aguen*, i.e. *Tad Awen* 'Father of the Muse', is significant. He is probably the first in a long line of Welsh (as distinct from British) poets, so that his standing in Welsh poetic tradition can with some justification be compared with that often assigned in English literature to Chaucer, 'the father of English poetry'. Such a comparison reflects the great chronological differences in the evolution and development of the two languages. It is now generally agreed that the Welsh language had been in existence long enough, and had gathered sufficient tradition behind it, to enable the poems attributed in thirteenth-century manuscripts to Taliesin and Aneirin to be composed by them in the new analytic language in the second half, and towards the end, of the sixth century. These poets are thus appropriately known in Welsh poetic tradition as the *Cynfeirdd*, the 'First (or Original) Poets'; they sang, as Sir John Morris-Jones so aptly phrased it, 'the birth-song of the new speech'.

The loss of the old final syllables resulted in the disappearance of case-inflections in the British dialects. Traces of the British oblique cases survive, however, in a few Welsh forms. Thus in *beunydd* 'daily', a lenited form of *peunydd* < **peu-n dydd*, the form **peu-n* represents the accusative of *pawb*; cf. *beunoeth* 'nightly' and the later

¹ The situation may not have been quite as straightforward as this, according to some authorities; but there is no doubt that Sir John Morris-Jones was correct in his main thesis. Vide J. Morris-Jones, 'Taliesin', *Y Cymmrodor*, XXVIII, pp. 28–31.

² John Morris-Jones, op. cit., p. 31.

³ *An Inventory of the Ancient Monuments in Anglesey*, p. cxvii.

⁴ *Transactions of the Anglesey Antiquarian Society*, 1939, pp. 37–9. But see Jackson, op. cit., p. 633. Professor Jackson has attempted, in a work of monumental scholarship, to date the various sound-changes which took place in the evolution of the British languages. He suggests that the Welsh language had come into existence by the second half of the sixth century. It is impossible to enter here into a detailed discussion of this subject, but it is significant that, in the light of modern scholarship, even the most conservative estimate would not ascribe the evolution of Welsh from Brythonic to a date later than the second half of the sixth century.

formation *beunos*. Again, *erbyn* 'by (a certain time or event), against' is a composite preposition formed from the preposition *er-* (*ar-*) 'before, in front of, opposite', < Brit. **are-* < Celtic **ari-* (cf. Gaul *Aremorici*, O Ir. *air*) and the dative of *pen* 'head, end' < Brit. **pénno-* < Celt. **qʷénno-*; cf. O Ir. *cenn*. The form of the dative singular in Celtic would be **qʷénnū* (cf. O Ir. *ciunn*, dative of *cenn* 'head') > Brit. **pénnū* > Late Brit. **pénni* which, as a result of final *i*-affection, would regularly give W. *byn* as in *erbyn*; cf. O Ir. *ar-chiunn* 'in front', Co. *erbyn*, *er dhe byn*. The adverb *fry* 'up', a mutated form of **bry* (cf. *obry* 'beneath, below') probably derives from the dative of Brit. and Celt. **brigā*, which regularly gave W. *bre* 'hill, brae, highland' (cf. Gaul. *Admageto-briga*, *Litano-briga*). In some instances two distinct forms have survived in Welsh from British personal names, the oblique cases of which differed appreciably from the nominative singular. Thus, for example, the nominative singular **Māglōkū*, a composite personal form from **māglo-*, the stem of the noun **māglo-s* 'prince' (cf. O Ir. *mál* 'prince', 'noble', Ml.W. *mael*, O Br. *Mael*) and **kū* 'dog hound' (cf. O Ir. *cú*, W. *cí*), in the sense of 'warrior, hero, defender', would regularly give *Meilyg* in Welsh. But the stem in the oblique cases **Māglōkūn-* (e.g. Brit. accusative singular **Māglōkūnan*, genitive singular **Māglōkūnos*) would regularly give *Maelgwn* in Welsh. *Tudyr* (> *Tudur*) and *Tudri* are also a related pair in precisely the same way as *Meilyg* and *Maelgwn*. However, apart from a sprinkling of forms such as these, the British case-inflections have completely disappeared in Welsh. The fact that pairs such as those noted above are felt to be different words and are so regarded, and not different cases of the same word in Welsh, shows that the existence and significance of the British case-inflections was rapidly forgotten in the new analytic language.

It is clear, therefore, that the really fundamental changes in the history and development of the Welsh language were those involved in its evolution from the synthetic parent tongue. No changes of comparable magnitude have occurred since. This is not to imply that the language has since ceased to change and develop. Indeed, it is convenient, for purposes of study, to divide the language into the following periods:

- (1) Early Welsh, from the time when the language had developed from British to the end of the eighth century. Mere fragments survive from this period, such as the forms *Car Legion* (for *Caerleon*, Chester), *Ban-cor*, *Brocmall*, *Dinoot* which occur in Bede.
- (2) Old Welsh, from the beginning of the ninth to approximately the end of the eleventh century. The Old Welsh remains consist of a number of glosses (e.g. the glosses in the Liber Commoeni, Bodleian MS. Auct. F. 4. 32, on various Latin notes discussing weights and measures, known as *De Mensuris et Ponderibus*, or the glosses in the Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS. of the *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* by Martianus Capella); some pieces of prose (e.g. the *Suexit*-memorandum and the *Ostenditur hic* entry in the Book of St. Chad, a manuscript containing a Latin text of the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark, and part of that of St. Luke, now in the possession of the Cathedral Church of St. Chad at Lichfield); some fragments of anonymous verse (cf. the two poems, one consisting of three verses, the other of nine, in the Juvenius MS., Cambridge University Library, Ff. 4. 42). In addition, Old Welsh forms have survived in the Genealogies, in the *Historia Brittonum* (Nennius), in the Latin Life of King Alfred written by the Welshman Asser, in the *Liber Landavensis*, a twelfth-century compilation

containing an important collection of Latin charters and various other documents pertaining to the church of Llandaff, with Welsh names, and often land boundaries given in Welsh; etc. The 'Computus Fragment', a passage of prose written in the tenth century as a commentary on one of Bede's astronomical tables, proves conclusively that the language was already a fitting medium for the precise and lucid exposition of the most abstruse subjects.

(3) Medieval Welsh, from approximately the beginning of the twelfth to the end of the fourteenth century and, in some instances, somewhat later. There was considerable variation in the orthography during this period, from which a wealth of material, both prose and poetry, has survived. The best known examples of Medieval Welsh prose are probably the eleven stories traditionally called the Mabinogion, which are preserved in the White Book of Rhydderch (*Llyfr Gwyn Rhydderch*), written down c. 1300-25 and now in the possession of the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, and in the Red Book of Hergest (*Llyfr Coch Hergest*), c. 1375-1425, now preserved in the Library of Jesus College, Oxford. These prose compositions often reflect a technical competence and sense of proportion, or a conscious literary artistry, of the highest order. They have been described as being 'among the finest flowerings of the Celtic genius and, taken together, a masterpiece of our medieval European literature' (Jones, 1949). The Laws, the texts of which survive in a large number of manuscripts, are a model of utilitarian prose; comparatively advanced legal principles are defined clearly and unambiguously, and it is obvious that the language could draw during this period on a great wealth of technical terms and phrases. The great body of panegyric poetry composed in the strict metres during this period, and later, which survives in a great number of miscellaneous manuscripts, reflects a conception of society and of the bard's function therein which is virtually unique in the European literary tradition.

(4) Early Modern Welsh, from the *cywyddau* of Dafydd ap Gwilym (fl. 1340-70) to the sixteenth century.

(5) Late Modern Welsh, from the sixteenth century (the translation of the Bible in 1588) to the present day.

It must be emphasized that the dates suggested for the various divisions outlined above are only approximate, and there must inevitably be some overlap. But they serve as a convenient guide for purposes of study. Nevertheless, whatever differences may divide these periods from one another, they are by no means as drastic or as fundamental as those which divide Old English from Middle English, or both from the language of the modern period. Talhaearn in approximately the mid-sixth century, be it remembered, was the father of the Welsh Muse.

VOCABULARY

The basic vocabulary is Celtic (and Indo-European), and the cognate forms can generally be recognized without any serious difficulty in Cornish and Breton, the sister British languages, but usually with somewhat more difficulty in Irish, owing to important differences in phonological development. During the Roman occupation a considerable number of words were borrowed into British from the living Latin speech of the Romans and, generally speaking, they reflect the impact of a superior civilization. These borrowings, for the reasons already adduced, are a source of inestimable importance for the Celticist. Nor are they devoid of all

interest for Romance scholars. In a detailed analysis of the Latin element in British, Professor Kenneth H. Jackson has demonstrated that the phonology of the Latin spoken in Britain was on the whole conservative and archaic when compared with contemporary Continental standards. The forms into which these Latin loan-words subsequently developed in the three British dialects prove the continuance in Roman Britain of pronunciations which had elsewhere vanished from colloquial use, in some instances as early as the first century. Professor Jackson has argued, on the basis of this evidence, that these borrowings are derived from a somewhat 'stilted' and artificial Latin, which had been acquired as a second language at school, a language in which the rather refined and archaic pronunciations tended, on the whole, to conform not with those current in ordinary Vulgar Latin, but with the more literary or classical standards advocated by the schoolmasters and grammarians. Whatever reservations must be attached to this hypothesis, it is obvious that the Latin loan-words in British are an important source for estimating the degree of the Romanization of the Province. In addition to these early borrowings the Welsh vocabulary also contains a number of 'learned' loans, i.e. words borrowed and adapted during later periods from literary Latin sources. These later 'book' loans can very often be detected by some irregular features in their phonological development when compared with the regular sound-changes which occurred in the early borrowings.

There were intimate contacts between Wales and Ireland from a very early period. Irish immigrants settled in the north-western and south-western extremities of Wales during the Roman occupation, and the presence of Irish elements in the population is attested by the distribution of the Ogam-inscribed stones. The intimate relationship of Welsh and Irish continued into the medieval period, so that it is by no means surprising that a number of Irish words have found their way into the vocabulary. Note, e.g., *brat* 'rag, clout, apron' < O Ir. *brat*; *cochl* 'mantle, cloak, robe' < O Ir. *cochull* (< Lat. *cucullus*); *cadach* 'rag, piece of linen or cloth, handkerchief, etc.' < O Ir. *cadach* 'calico'; *cleir(i)ach* 'aged person, decrepit old man' < Ir. *cléreach* (< O Ir. *clérech*) 'clergyman, cleric'; *croesan* 'jester, jongleur, minstrel' < O Ir. *crossán* 'lewd, ribaldrous rhymist; a mimic, buffoon'; *cnwc* 'hillock, knoll' < O Ir. *cnoc*. Irish elements are also attested in place-names; e.g. Roath (W. *Ŷ Rhath*) from Ir. *ráth* 'fortified enclosure, rampart, mound'.

There are also a few traces, in the vocabulary, of Old Norse relations with Wales. Thus *carl*, diminutive *cerlyn*, 'churl, miser, skinflint' could be a borrowing from ON. *karl*, although the Old English *carl* is not to be ruled out, while *iarll* 'earl' is probably a borrowing from ON. *iarl*. It has also been suggested that *gardd* 'garden' comes from ON. *garðr* 'yard, enclosed space'. As various sections of the Welsh seaboard were subjected to Scandinavian attacks from approximately the mid-ninth century to the end of the eleventh, it is hardly surprising that ON. elements can be attested in Welsh place-names, particularly the islands, creeks, bays and headlands which served as navigational guides along various stretches of the coast. Unfortunately, however, it is often impossible to obtain precise information with regard to the period of borrowing, and some elements which have usually been

regarded as direct loans from Old Norse could just as easily be of Old English provenance. (See the chapter on Place-names.)

The most prolific source of borrowing has undoubtedly been English, from the Anglo-Saxon period right down to the present day. It would be quite impossible to enumerate or to classify here the hundreds of words borrowed in the modern period, especially those which are of a distinctly technical or scientific nature. Some of the very early borrowings retain unmistakable traces of the Old English inflectional system. Thus, for example, *tarian* 'shield', *cupan* 'cup', *sidan* 'silk', *capan* 'cape, cloak, cope, surcoat' and *hasan* 'hose, stocking' reflect quite clearly the OE. -*an* ending of the so-called 'weak-declension', being derived from one of the oblique cases of OE. *targe*, *cuppe*, *side*, *capa* (*cappe*) and *hosa* respectively. Another interesting feature is that the Welsh forms often retain sounds and occasionally preserve meanings which have disappeared or changed in the source-forms. Thus in W. *cnoc* < English *knock*, or *cnaf* < Middle English *knave*, *cnaf*, the (hard) *c* is clearly pronounced. Cf. also *rhonc* 'rank' (adjective), 'out-and-out, stark' < ME. *ronke*, *rank*, and *clep* 'babble, chatter, gossip; bang, clap' < ME. *cleppe* 'clap, noise, chatter'. An interesting example of the way in which the Welsh form has preserved the older meaning while that of the English has changed can be seen in Welsh *sad* 'firm, steady', cf. ME. *sad*, *sadde*. Again, words which have become obsolete in English, or which may now survive only in some dialects, still occur as living forms in Welsh; cf. *barlod* 'apron' < OE. *bearmclāp*, or *llidiart* 'gate' < OE. *hlidgeat* (the intrusive *r* in the Welsh form can be attributed, according to some authorities, to the influence of English *yard* in some form or other).

Some words have also been borrowed from French, particularly from Norman French, while the translation of the Scriptures introduced a sprinkling of Hebrew and Greek words into the language.

ACCENTUATION

The accent falls regularly on the penult in Welsh polysyllables, while there is secondary stress on the first syllable in words of four syllables or more: *cârâf* 'I love', *carêdig* 'kind', *cârêdigrwydd* 'kindness'. The exceptions to this rule represent only a fraction of the entire vocabulary. Words accented irregularly on the ultima are often forms in which the final syllable represents a late contraction, e.g. *Cymraeg* < *Cym-râ-eg*, *paratoi* 'prepare' < *pa-ra-tô-i*. In these forms the accent fell regularly on the penultimate before the contraction. Some forms borrowed from English also retain their original accentuation. So, e.g., the forms *apel* 'appeal', *persuadd* 'persuade' are accented on the ultima, while *testament*, *polisi* 'policy', *melodi* 'melody', and *paragraff* 'paragraph' are accented on the ante-penultimate.

Care should be taken in pronouncing place-names. The Language and Literature Committee of the Board of Celtic Studies of the University of Wales has recently issued *A Gazetteer of Welsh Place-Names* (Davies, 1957) in which it has attempted to establish a standard rational orthography for Welsh place-names. The principle generally adopted was that a hyphen should be used in those forms where the stress, instead of falling regularly on the penult, is thrown forward on to the last

syllable. Hence *Brynáman*, *Llanbádarn*, but *Bryn-glds*, *Pen-y-bónt*. Hyphens have not been used, however, to indicate the stress in some forms which are widely known. Thus *Caerdydd* (Cardiff) and *Pontypridd*, although written as one form, should be pronounced *Caer-dydd* and *Pont-y-pridd* respectively. The *Gazetteer* also provides (pp. xxvii-xxx) a simple but effectively clear guide to the correct pronunciation of Welsh vowels and consonants, a subject into which it is impossible to enter here for considerations of space.

VOWEL AND CONSONANT CHANGES

Few features present greater difficulty for those who are beginning to learn the language than the various vowel- and consonant-changes which can do so much to transform the appearance of words.

Vowel mutation (*gwyrriad*) is a change certain vowels or diphthongs undergo by changing their position in a word, so that vowels or diphthongs occurring in the ultima and in monosyllables are regularly modified when, by the addition of new syllables, they change to non-final positions. Thus *ai* in monosyllables and in the ultima regularly becomes *ei* in other syllables, e.g. *gair* 'word', pl. *geiriau*. A similar alternation according to their position is seen in *au - eu*: *haul* 'sun', *heulog* 'sunny'; *amau* 'to doubt, to suspect', *amheuaeth* 'doubt, suspicion'. *aw - o*: *awr* 'hour', pl. *oriau*. *w - y* (̄): *dwfn* 'deep', *dyfnder* 'depth'. *y² - y* (̄): *dyn* (= *dyn*)² 'man', pl. *dynion* (= *danion*); *mynydd* (= *mynydd*) 'mountain', pl. *mynyddoedd* (= *monsddoedd*). *uw - o*: *buwch* 'cow', pl. *buchod*. These sound-changes can be explained by reference to the accent-shift which took place towards the end of the Old Welsh period, probably in the eleventh century. In British, certainly in Late British, the accent fell regularly on the penultimate, so that after the loss of British final syllables the accent must have fallen in Early Welsh on the new ultimate. This explains, for example, the alternation *aw - o* noted above. For British *ā* (< IE. *ā* and IE. *ō* in non-final syllables) and Lat. *ā* (except for some instances where *ā* > *ā* in Vulgar Latin unstressed syllables) developed in Late British into an open *ē*. In non-final, i.e. pretonic, syllables this Late Brit. *ē* was shortened to *ē̄*, thus giving *ē* in Old, Medieval and Modern Welsh in non-final syllables. But the *ē̄* remained in Early Welsh in final (i.e. stressed) syllables and, of course, in monosyllables, and was later diphthongized to *aw* (*ay*). This diphthong has remained in Welsh monosyllables to the present day. But after the accent had shifted back to the Welsh penultimate, *aw* (*ay*) was reduced to *ō* towards the end of the Old Welsh period in the now unaccented final syllables. Again, British (and Latin) *ū* and *ī* in unaccented syllables were reduced ultimately to *ɛ*, written *y* in Welsh. But in final (originally accented) syllables and in monosyllables *ū* remained, written *w* in Welsh, and *ī* regularly developed into the clear retracted *i*-sound, written *y* in Welsh. The Latin borrowings reflect the difference in development quite clearly. Thus *plūmbum* > *plwm*, *Sātūrnus* > **Sātūrnus* > *Sadwrn*; but *cūllēllus* > **callēll* > *allēll* (written *ylllell*). Compare also *inītiūm* > **ənyd* > *ənyd* (written *ynyd*). Thus the obscure sound of *y* (i.e. *ɛ*), which had developed

¹ An obscure sound like the *r* in English *hammer*, or, when long, like the *u* in English *further*.

² A clear retracted *i*-sound. In ordinary written and printed Welsh the character *y* is used to represent both the clear and obscure sound.

from the reduced varieties of *ū* and *ī* in (originally) pretonic syllables, remained even when, as a result of the accent-shift, they now bore the stress.

The other important change which vowels undergo is vowel affection (*affeithiad*), i.e. a change in a vowel or diphthong due to a sound which follows it, or which once followed it, in the word. Reference has already been made to this change in outlining the major changes involved in the deterioration of British. (See also some of the remarks under *Accidence and Syntax*.)

The initial consonants undergo regular changes or mutations under certain conditions, a feature which is common to all the Celtic languages. There are nine consonants which can be modified by initial mutation, and there are three types of change, namely the soft mutation (lenition), the nasal mutation and the spirant mutation. These mutations can best be illustrated by means of the following table:

Radical	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>c</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>g</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>ll</i>	<i>rh</i>
Soft	<i>b</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>g</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>dd</i>	—	<i>f</i>	<i>l</i>	<i>r</i>
Nasal	<i>mh</i>	<i>nh</i>	<i>ngh</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>ng</i>	No change		
Spirant	<i>ph</i>	<i>th</i>	<i>ch</i>	No change			No change		

For example, *cath* 'cat': *dy gath* 'thy cat', *fy nghath* 'my cat', *ei gath* 'his cat', *ei chath* 'her cat'. The science of comparative grammar has established beyond any reasonable doubt that these initial mutations are in origin phenomena of sandhi. Compare the three systems of initial mutations in Old Irish, generally known as aspiration (or lenition), eclipsis and gemination. The mutations in Welsh have become, however, an essential feature of grammar and syntax. (See some of the remarks under *Accidence and Syntax*.)

ACCIDENCE AND SYNTAX

It is only possible here to refer briefly to some of the more prominent features. Welsh has no indefinite article; the definite article, *yr*, 'r or *y* (OW. *ir*, *-r*), which seldom occurs in the earliest poetry, although it becomes more common from the period of the Old Welsh glosses on, can probably be related etymologically to the forms of the definite article in the other Celtic languages, being based on an old demonstrative **sindo-*, **sindā*. The noun has two numbers, singular and plural; and two genders, masculine and feminine. The plural can be formed from the singular by vowel change, or by the addition of a termination, or by both methods combined. The plurals formed by umlaut are derived from the *-o*-stems; the nominative plural of this class of nouns ended in *-i* (cf. Lat. *domini*, *virti*), and it was this ending which affected the (short) vowel of the preceding syllable. Thus the nominative singular **bārdō-s* > *bardd* 'poet', **mārko-s* > *march* 'horse, stallion', **tārwo-s* (cf. Gaul. *TARVOS*) > *tarw* 'bull'; but, as a result of final *i*-affection, the nominative pl. **bārdi* > *beirdd*, **mārki* > *meirch*, **tārwi* > *teirw*. The affected forms,

however, can also be derived by regular sound-change from some of the other cases, e.g. from the genitive and dative singular of the *-o*-stems. But after the loss of the British case-endings the umlaut came to be regarded as a characteristic feature of the plural formation, and then spread by analogy to nouns which belonged originally to other stems. The plural terminations, on the other hand, can generally be derived from the stem-endings of British imparisyllabic nouns. With the loss of British final syllables these stem-endings did not survive in the form which regularly developed from the old nominative singular, although they were retained in the plural. Thus *-au* (Ml.W. *-eu*, OW. *-ou*), which is the commonest of the various plural terminations in Welsh and Breton, can be derived from the plural endings of *-u*-stems; e.g. Brit. nom. sg. **kātu-s* > *cad* 'battle', nom. pl. **kātou-es* > *cadeu*, *cadau*. This ending later spread by analogy to nouns of other declensions, particularly when, after the loss of the British case-endings, no distinctive form for the plural had survived in Welsh. Again, the plural termination *-ed* can be derived from the *-t*-stems. Thus, e.g., nom. sg. **mērkēt-s* > *merch* 'girl', but the stem **mērkēt-* in the oblique cases (e.g. nom. pl. **mērkētes*) would regularly give *merched*, the plural form in Welsh. Many of the other plural terminations are similarly derived, sometimes from old collectives, cf. Ml.W. *pysscaut* 'fish', Mn.W. *pyssgod* < Lat. *piscātus*. Welsh also makes use of singular terminations, *-yn* (masc.), *-en* (fem.), which can be added to the stem, so that the corresponding plural form derives from the stem, without any plural termination; cf. *adar* 'birds' < Brit. **(p)ātūr-*, sg. *aderyn* (< *adar* + *yn*); Brit. **mīār-* > *myygar* 'blackberries', sg. *myyaren*. Traces of an old dual can be seen, particularly in Medieval Welsh, in the lenition of the initial consonant of an adjective after a noun denoting two of a particular kind, or a pair, a phenomenon originally caused by the old vocalic ending of the nominative dual; cf. also the lenition of the initial consonant of a noun after the numerals *dau*, *deu* (masc.), *duy*, *duy-* (fem.), and of the initial consonant of the numeral after the definite article: *y ddau beth* (*y ddeubeth*) 'the two things', *y ddwy fil* 'the two thousand'. Names of parts of the body which are in pairs are often expressed in Modern Welsh as compounds with the numeral 'two'. Traces of an old British neuter can be seen in some nouns of uncertain or vacillating gender, e.g. *braich* 'arm' < Lat. *brāchium*. Some of the old neuters have different genders in Medieval and Modern Welsh; thus *chwedl* 'story', feminine in Modern Welsh, but masculine in the medieval period, is cognate with O Ir. *scél n-*, a neuter noun belonging to the *-o*-stems < Celtic **skētlo-n*. Again, the non-lenition of certain forms after *dau* 'two' may be a relic of an old neuter formation.

The genitive is conveyed by placing the noun which is in the genitive case and (if such occur) the article or prefixed pronoun immediately after the noun on which it depends, or (if such occur) after the adjective or adjectives which qualify that noun; e.g. *esgid bachgen* 'a boy's boot', *ystafell yr athro* 'the teacher's room', *lliw coch y llyfr* 'the book's red colour'. It will be observed that whereas the dependent noun in this construction can be preceded by its own article, the latter is omitted before the noun on which it depends, e.g. *cadair y tad* 'the father's chair', literally 'chair the father's', *cadair tad y bachgen* 'the boy's father's chair'. The indefinite partitive genitive is conveyed by connecting the nouns with the preposition *o*: *rhan o'r ystafell* '(a) part

of the room', *y trydydd dydd o'r mis* 'the third day of the month'.

The attributive adjective usually follows the noun it qualifies, and if the noun is feminine singular the initial (mutable) consonant of the adjective is lenited, a phenomenon which can be attributed to the fact that a great number of the feminine singular nouns had a vocalic ending in British, usually *-ā* or *-i*. After the loss of the old case-endings, this lenition spread by analogy to adjectives following all feminine singular nouns; the mutation thus became morphemic. (The fact that the old demonstrative **sindo-*, **sindā* was originally inflected for case, gender and number accounts for the rule in Welsh that the initial consonant of a feminine singular noun is lenited after the definite article, *ll-* and *rh-* being exceptions to this rule owing to provection). Adjectives can also be inflected for number, gender and comparison. The plural is formed from the masculine singular by vowel change, or by adding the ending *-(i)on*, in some cases with vowel change. Those plurals formed by umlaut are derived from the British adjectives with *-o*-stems. Thus singular **lītāno-s* > *llydan* 'wide, broad', **iōuānko-s* > *ieuanc* 'young'; nom. pl. **lītāni* > *llydein*, *llydain*, **iōuānki* > *ieuenc*, *ieuainc*. When its plural has been thus formed by vowel affection, the adjective often agrees with the noun in number, although there are exceptions to this rule; agreement is optional in those instances where the plural has been formed by the addition of a plural ending. Some adjectives have no distinctive plural forms. There are no feminine plural forms, nor have the equative and comparative degrees any plural formations. The attributive adjective agrees with the noun in gender, but this is not always true of a predicative adjective; cf. *llym awel* 'keen (is) the wind' where, although *awel* is feminine, we have the masculine form of the adjective *llym* (fem. *llem*). The gender inflection whereby (usually, but not exclusively, in monosyllables) *w* or *y* in the masculine form are changed to *o* or *e* in the feminine is derived from those adjectives which belonged to the British *-o*- and *-ā*-stems. In British, as in Latin, the *-o*-stems were masculine-neuter, with a corresponding feminine in *-ā*-; cf. Lat. *bonus, bonum*, fem. *bona; tener, tenerum, tenera*. Thus Brit. **uindo-s* (masc.), **uindo-n* (neut.) > *gwyn(n)* 'white' by regular sound-change. But the nominative singular of the feminine form, as we have seen, originally ended in *-ā*, and as a result of final *ā*-affection the feminine **uindā* > *guen(n)*. Similarly, **dūbno-s* (masc.), **dūbno-n* (neut.) > *dufn* 'deep', but **dūbnā* (fem.) > *dofn*. This gender inflection then spread to other adjectives, whatever their original declension; cf. *crown*, fem. *cron* 'round', which is cognate with Irish *cruind*, an adjective belonging to the *-i*-stems < Celtic **krund-i*. The equative, comparative and superlative degrees are formed from the positive by the addition of *-(h)ed*, *-ach* and *-(h)af* respectively. Before these endings provection of the final voiced plosives (*b, d, g*) of the positive occurs, even when the positive form ends in one of these mediae plus a liquid or nasal. This provection occurred originally in the equative and superlative, owing to the *-h-* of the suffix, but by the Modern Welsh period it had spread to the comparative. Thus the three degrees of comparison of *teg* 'fair' would be *teced*, *tecach* (Ml.W. *tegach*), *tecaf*, and of *budr* 'dirty': *butred*, *butrach*, *butraf*. Some examples occur, more particularly in Medieval Welsh, where the endings of comparison have been added to the feminine positive; cf. *guenned*, *guennaf*, *tromaf*, *berraf*. But these forms never became general, and in Modern Welsh

there are no distinctive feminine forms for the derived degrees. The adjectives which do not take the various endings of comparison can be compared periphrastically by placing *mor*, *muy* and *muyaf*, respectively, before the positive. The adjectives which are compared irregularly are of particular interest to the Celticist, as many of these reflect quite unmistakably the original IE. formation whereby the suffix of comparison was added to the root of the positive (sometimes with different vowel grade), and not to the stem.

There are a number of interesting features in the numeral system. The numerals can be used adjectivally and are placed before the noun, which is in the singular: *tri dyn* 'three men' (lit. 'three man'). Many examples occur in Medieval Welsh, however, and in the language of the bards, of the regular plural form of the noun after numerals above 'one' (*un*): *teir chworiyd* 'three sisters' (sg. *chwaer*), *pump gwraig* 'five women' (sg. *gwraig*). There are a few traces of this construction in early Biblical Welsh, while the old plural form *diau* (earlier *dieu*) 'days' is still used in *tridiau* 'three days', and the plural form *blynedd* < IE. **blōdnīās* occurs regularly in *tair blynedd* 'three years', etc. Compare also the plural form *saint* (sg. *sant* 'saint') after the numerals *tri* 'three' and *pump* 'five' in the place-names *Llantrisant* (> *Llantrisant* > *Llantrisant*) and *Llanpumsaint* respectively. The general use in the modern period of the singular form of the noun after the cardinals above 'one' probably reflects the influence of the old dual. In the *-o*-stems the British dual, by regular phonological development, ultimately gave the same form in Welsh as the old British nominative singular; but in certain other stems the form which had developed in Welsh from the dual was identical with the plural. It was inevitable, therefore, that there would be some fluctuation in the use of singular and plural after 2, this tendency being further helped by the fact that in some instances (e.g. in the *-o*- and *-ā*-stems) there was no distinction in Welsh between the form which had developed from the British nominative singular, the nominative plural and the nominative dual. The singular form ultimately predominated, so that it became the rule for the singular form of the noun to be used after all adjectival numerals. The cardinals can also be used substantively, followed by the preposition *o* and a plural noun or pronoun: *saith o blant* 'seven children', *pump ohonynt* 'five of them'. The cardinals 'two' (*dau*), 'three' (*tri*) and 'four' (*pedwar*) have separate feminine forms, namely, *duy*, *tair* and *pedair* respectively, and the same is also true of the ordinals. The numerals 11–19 reflect two distinct constructions. Thus *deuddeg* '12' and *ymytheg* '15' are old compounds (now indivisible) formed from the units 2 and 5 respectively plus 10. This construction must formerly have been more widespread, as is shown not only by similar formations in the other British dialects, but also by some 'fossilized' examples in early Welsh texts, e.g. OW. *naunec-* in the form *naunecant* 'a period of 19 years', and ML.W. *undec* 'eleven'; cf. also Mn.W. *pythefnos*, *pythefnos* 'fortnight' (lit. 'fifteen nights'). However, with the exception of the old compounds which are still preserved in 12 and 15, Welsh has adopted another construction in the numerals 11–19. Thus 11, 13 and 14 are conveyed by the construction numeral + the preposition *ar* 'on' + *deg* 'ten': *un ar ddeg* '11', *tri (tair) ar ddeg* '13', etc. The digit is followed by the singular form of the noun: *un bachgen ar ddeg* '11 boys'; or the plural form of the noun follows the composite formation

plus the preposition *o*: *tri ar ddeg o fechgyn* '13 boys'. The numerals 16–19 follow a similar pattern, except that the addition here is to *ymytheg* 'fifteen': *un ar bymytheg* 'sixteen', *dau byfr ar bymytheg* 'seventeen books', etc. In addition to the construction *tri ar bymytheg* 'three on (plus) fifteen', the numeral '18' can also be conveyed by multiplication: *deunaw* '2 × 9'; cf. Breton *triouec'h* '3 × 6'. The general pattern described above is preserved after '20', except that the digit is now added to *ugain* 'twenty': *un ar hugain* '21', *dau ar bymytheg ar hugain* '37', etc. There are clear examples of a Celtic vigesimal system: *deugain* 'forty' (lit. '2 × 20', cf. Ir. *dá fichit*), *trigain* 'sixty' ('3 × 20', Ir. *tri fichit*), *pedwar ugain* 'eighty' ('4 × 20', cf. French *quatre-vingts*), *saith ugain* 'one hundred and forty' ('7 × 20', cf. Ir. *secht fichit*), etc.

One of the most interesting features in the syntax of the personal pronouns, which Welsh shares with the other Celtic languages, is the construction in which the object pronoun precedes the verb, being infixed, for example, after such proclitics as the relative *a*, affirmative particles such as *fe*, the negative, or conjunctions such as *o* 'if', *oni* 'if not', etc. So, in Job X, 18, *O na buaswn farw, ac na'm gwelsai llygad!* ('Oh that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me'), the accusative pronoun 'm (1st. sg.) is infixed between the verb *gwelsai* and the negative *na*. There are also some comparatively early examples of a construction which has not survived in Modern Welsh where the pronoun object is placed immediately after the first element in a compound verbal form in which a preverb has been placed before the verbal root; e.g. ML.W. *dymkyueirch pawb* 'everyone asks me', where the pronoun object *-m-* is infixed between the preverb *dy-* and the compound verbal form *kyueirch*. There is a similar construction in Old Irish. There are also examples in the medieval texts of the infixed pronouns being used in the dative case with the verb 'to be' conveying 'to have': *vn lat a-e bu* 'they had the same father' (lit. 'one father there was to them'). This construction, however, has now been replaced by a prepositional construction: *y mae genyff, y mae imi* 'I have'. Another interesting feature is to be seen in the prepositions which, as in all the Celtic languages, have 'conjugated' personal forms. This feature can be attributed to the early agglutination of the prepositions and the personal pronouns which they governed, so that the compound forms ultimately developed into inflexions. The simple form of the preposition is used when the object is other than a personal pronoun, and many prepositions have also an adverbial form.

The verb has four tenses in the indicative mood, the present (which is frequently future in meaning, and predominantly so in the spoken language), the imperfect, the past (aorist or perfect), and the pluperfect. There are two tenses of the subjunctive mood, present and imperfect, although the distinction between the forms of the imperfect subjunctive and the imperfect indicative can be seen in only a few irregular verbs in Modern Welsh. There is also an imperative. With the exception of the latter, which naturally has no first singular, each of these tenses is inflected for the three persons, singular and plural. Each tense has also an impersonal form which, with its accompanying object, is often translated into English by a passive verbal formation with its subject: *gwelir fi* 'I am seen'. Relics of the deponent survive in the earlier Welsh poetry, these forms being generally characterized by the *r*-ending which is a conspicuous feature of the Latin passive and deponent. But the

only form of the old deponent which now survives in Welsh is possibly *gŷyr* 'knows', cf. Co. *gor*, MLBr. *goar*, O Ir. *-fitir*. Each verb has also a verbal noun, which can sometimes be etymologically different from the finite verb. The verbal noun governs the genitive, not the accusative, and it can generally be used like any ordinary noun. With the preposition *yn* and the various tenses of the verb 'to be' (*bod*) it forms a periphrastic conjugation: *yr wyf yn canu* 'I am singing', *yr oeddun yn canu* 'I was singing', etc. This construction is particularly prevalent in the spoken language. Most verbs have also verbal adjectives, cf. *caeredig* 'kind'; *caru* 'to love'. The preterite forms of the regular verb reflect quite clearly the *-s*-preterite, which is probably derived from a formation going back to the IE. *-s*-aorist. The preterite forms of certain other verbs reflect the *-t*-preterite, which is generally held to be derived from the 3rd singular of the consonantal stems of the IE. aorist, whence it later spread in the Celtic languages to other personal forms. There is also clear evidence of the suffixless preterite (sometimes with reduplication). The *-h*- which originally characterized the subjunctive stem, and which has left its mark in Modern Welsh in certain forms with provection (cf. *maco*, 3rd sg. pres. subj. of *magu* 'to breed, to rear, to nurse'), is derived from the sigmatic subjunctive, which is well attested in three Medieval Welsh forms, *duch* 'may bring', *gwares* 'he may succour', *gumech* 'he may do'.

Normally the verb stands at the beginning of the sentence, as in Irish, followed by the subject (when expressed), the object, and the remainder of the predicate. The position of the adverb or adverbial phrase varies, and it is possible for this to stand at the head of the sentence. The verb can also be preceded by a particle, this being generally the rule in the spoken language. The rule generally observed in Modern Welsh that the subject, when it immediately follows the verb, retains its radical while the initial consonant of the object undergoes lenition is, in addition to the regular word-order of the normal sentence, a further convenient aid for distinguishing subject from object. The subject is itself lenited, however, when separated from the verb (e.g. by an adverbial expression), while the object invariably retains its radical after impersonal forms. A particularly striking feature is the non-agreement in number between verb and subject. For the verb, when followed by an expressed subject other than a personal pronoun, is always in the third person singular; e.g. *Gwel y bechgyn geffylau yn y cae*, lit. 'Sees the boys horses in the field', but *Gwelant (hwy) geffylau yn y cae* 'They see horses in the field'. In the second example, where the verb *gwelant* 'they see' is 3rd pl., the termination *-ant* in the verbal form, with or without the auxiliary affixed pronoun *hwy*, conveys the pronominal subject of the verb. Similarly, *gwelaf* (f) is 'I see' and *gwelwch* (chwi) is 'you see'. There are many examples in Medieval Welsh, however, and in some of the material derived from the Old Welsh period, showing concord in number between verb and subject. For example, in Medieval Welsh we find *doethant y llygot* 'the mice came', or *kychwynnassant yr yniuroed hynny*, 'those hosts set out', where the verb is 3rd plural. Examples of a similar agreement occur in Old Irish. This usage, however, has completely disappeared in Modern Welsh.

Many examples also occur in Medieval Welsh and in the old poetry where the verb in a non-emphasizing construction is preceded by some other part of the

sentence, e.g. by the subject or object. The freer word-order which is evident in the early poetry probably reflects, to some extent, the greater syntactical freedom possessed by words in the synthetic British language, which could convey the various grammatical relationships by means of its inflectional endings, without recourse to an invariable word-order. It was thus possible, as the Gaulish inscriptions indeed confirm, for the subject or object to precede the verb at the head of the non-emphasizing sentence. Note the following example from Old Welsh, where the subject stands at the head of the sentence: *dou nam riceus un guetid*, 'two lords can converse, one speaks'; or the following example where the object comes first: *grefiat guetig nis minn tutbule hai cenell*, 'a title-deed afterwards Tudfwlch and his people will not require'. There are examples in the early poetry, again confirmed by the Gaulish inscriptions, of the order subject + object + verb, e.g. *meiryon eu tretheu dychynnullyn*, 'stewards their taxes gathered'. When the object in sentences of this type happened to be a personal pronoun, the latter could be infixed between the subject and the simple (uncompounded) verb by means of the meaningless particle *a*: *Duw a-m difero* 'may God defend me'. Sentence-patterns of this type could hardly fail to influence those where the order was subject + verb + noun object. The result was that the meaningless particle *a* spread by analogy and was used even in the absence of an infixed pronoun. In this way there arose the so-called 'abnormal sentence', subject (or object) + the meaningless particle *a* + verb, which is extremely common in Medieval Welsh prose, e.g. *Bendigeiduran uab Llyr a oed uenhin coronawc ar yr ynys hon*, 'Bendigeidfran son of Llyr was crowned king over this Island'. The 'abnormal sentence' occurs very frequently in Biblical Welsh. The spread of the meaningless particle *a* to sentences of this type was also materially facilitated by the close interaction there must have been between them and the so-called 'mixed sentence'. For when any word or phrase other than a finite verb is to be emphasized in Welsh, it is placed at the beginning of the sentence (preceded in the earlier periods by the copula, of which it formed the predicate), and is followed in the remainder of the sentence by a proper or improper relative clause. So, for example, in a poem in the twelfth-century Black Book of Carmarthen we find *Oed Maelgun a uelun in imuan*, 'It was Maelgwn whom I saw attacking', where the relative pronoun *a* introduces the proper relative clause. Instances abound in Old Irish of a similar construction with the copula, e.g. *is rann din daocht ad-gén-sa*, 'it is (only) a part of the Godhead which I know'. The copula, however, has long disappeared in Welsh, so that in the modern period the word or phrase which is emphasized stands at the beginning of the sentence, e.g. *Y bachgen a laddodd yr aderyn, nid y gath* 'It was the boy who killed the bird, not the cat'. The same is generally true of Medieval Welsh — although 'mixed sentences' with the copula do occur — and there are a few interesting examples in Old Welsh which show that the copula was beginning to disappear even then, e.g. *Salt emmiguallig hinnith ir bloidin hunnuith*, '(It is) the Saltus which prevents that that year'. Sentences of this type, after the disappearance of the copula, bear a striking resemblance to the 'abnormal sentence' already described. There must inevitably have been a close interaction between the two constructions, a factor which further facilitated the spread of the particle *a* to the non-emphasizing 'abnormal sentence'. The spoken language, however, would make

a clear distinction between the two types of sentence, as the emphasizing or 'mixed sentence' would have a different stress and intonation. The fact that Welsh is particularly sensitive to various and often subtle shades of emphasis probably accounts in some measure for the unusual word-order and intonation of the English spoken by many Welsh people. The relative construction also provides a further example of the non-agreement in number between verb and subject mentioned above, for the verb is always in the 3rd person singular when the relative pronoun is the subject of the affirmative relative clause. But when the negative form of the relative pronoun refers to a plural antecedent the verb in the relative clause will also be plural in form.

Welsh, like Irish, has probably inherited an old Indo-European usage in placing the verb at the head of the normal sentence. The preference which both the insular Celtic languages have shown for such a construction was probably strengthened, according to Professor Vendryes's theory (1911-12)¹, by those constructions where an accusative pronoun was infixed after the first preverb in a compound verbal form, or, when the verb was a simple uncompound form, after the negative or an affirmative particle. Professor Vendryes has argued that constructions of this kind gave rise to a definite pattern for opening a sentence, namely preverb or particle + pronoun object + verb + subject. The pattern thus evolved ultimately influenced those sentences where the object was not a personal pronoun but a noun, thus giving rise to the order preverb + verb + subject + noun object, or, when the verb was a simple uncompound form, verb + subject + noun object.

It should be noted that literary Welsh is remarkably conservative when compared with the colloquial language. For example, final *-ni* in the ending of the 3rd person plural of the verb is regularly mutated to *-nn(h)* in the spoken language. There is no doubt that the mutation had occurred as early as the twelfth century at least, as the 3rd. pl. forms *dygan* 'bring', *deuthan* 'came' and *kynan* 'lament, complain' occur in a poem in the Black Book of Carmarthen where they rhyme with such forms as (*g*)*welugan*, *Elgan*, *tarian* and *kyulauan*. Nevertheless, although it is probable, as the 3rd plural form *treidin* in the Juvenius *englynion* suggests, that this mutation had taken place before the beginning of the medieval period, the standard literary language still adheres religiously to the ending *-ni*, so that the three forms noted above are written *dygant*, *daethant* and *cwyntant* respectively. Again, the diphthongs *ai* and *au* in final (unaccented) syllables are generally levelled with *e* or *a* in the dialects. Thus, in Powys, Dyfed and large areas of Morgannwg the words *perffaith* 'perfect' and *petthau* 'things' are regularly pronounced *perffeth* and *pethe* respectively, while in Gwynedd and Gwent the same forms are pronounced *perffath* and *petha*. These, and other similar dialectal variations, have not been accepted into the standard literary language, which is based on the language of the Bible. In his translation of the latter, which appeared in 1588, Dr. William Morgan (c. 1541-1604), while not by any means rejecting entirely the forms of the living speech, took generally as his medium not the contemporary living language, nor

¹ Compare also the discussion by Professor Henry Lewis (1942), especially pp. 266-9. Professor Lewis's lecture is the best general discussion of the subject.

even the flexible language of poetry composed in the free metres, but rather the majestic language of the classical *cywydd*-writers, the poets who sang in the strict metres. The latter devotedly studied and fostered the language from generation to generation in their bardic schools, and clung tenaciously to its unsullied purity. In the new and revised edition of the Bible which appeared in 1620 — probably the work of Dr. John Davies (c. 1567-1644), incumbent of Mallwyd, and generally regarded as one of the greatest of Welsh scholars — the language was made yet purer, emendations being made to Dr. William Morgan's text whenever the latter had strayed from the exacting standards of the literary language. Hence the translation of the Bible, although it established a standard of correctness in writing which is often extremely conservative when compared with the colloquial tongue, gave the Welsh nation a standard literary language, excelling any dialect, and with centuries of unbroken tradition behind it. The essential continuity of that tradition can perhaps best be illustrated by the fact that a *cywydd* composed today by a poet who sings in the strict metres would, as far as its language is concerned, be remarkably similar to one composed in the fourteenth century by Dafydd ap Gwilym, traditionally regarded as the greatest of Welsh *cywydd*-writers.

Yet this language, with such a wealth of tradition behind it, and which can boast one of the oldest extant literatures in Western Europe, is now struggling for its very existence. The steady decline in the number of people able to speak the language is clearly mirrored in the various census reports. In the census returns for 1951 the figure given for those persons aged three years and over who were able to speak Welsh was 714,686, compared with 909,261 in 1931, the total population aged three years and over being just under two and a half million at both dates. This shows a decline within a period of twenty years of 194,575 or 21.4 per cent. Almost all those persons recorded as being able to speak Welsh were also able to speak English, only 41,155 being recorded as speaking Welsh only. This latter figure showed a sharp decline when compared with the 1931 returns, when 97,932 were recorded as speaking Welsh only, representing a decrease of 56,777 or 58.0 per cent in twenty years. The present century has witnessed a steady and appreciable decrease in the proportion of persons speaking Welsh, from 49.9 per cent in 1901 to 43.5 per cent in 1911, 37.1 per cent in 1921, 36.8 per cent in 1931, and 28.9 per cent in 1951. A particularly depressing feature is the fact that the unremitting decrease in the proportion of persons speaking Welsh only, from 15.1 per cent in 1901 to 8.5 per cent in 1911, 6.3 per cent in 1921, 4.0 per cent in 1931, and 1.7 per cent in 1951, was appreciably greater than the decrease in the proportion able to speak both Welsh and English. The serious reduction in the number of monoglot speakers can only lead to a progressive corruption of idiom, syntax and vocabulary, a feature which is immediately apparent to any observant Welshman who has more than a mere superficial command of his native language. It must, of course, be remembered that there are very many thousands of Welsh-speaking Welshmen in England, the United States of America, Patagonia, etc., and various Welsh societies exist in scores of places in many countries. One of the most moving moments in the National Eisteddfod, which is held every year during the first week in August in North and South Wales in turn, is the ceremony of

extending an official welcome to the 'Cymry Alltud' or 'Cymry ar Wasgar', those Welshmen from overseas who have returned home, sometimes after many years 'in exile', for the great national festival. But the existence of such Welshmen, who still speak their native language in many lands, does not really offset in any way the alarming decrease, as reflected in the successive census reports, in the incidence of Welsh speaking which has taken place over a long period.

Some of the factors which have thus resulted in the progressive anglicization of Wales are not difficult to seek — the tremendous expansion in the power and range of English publicity; the fact that the language, in spite of small concessions, has no official status of any significance, so that English is inevitably regarded as the language of material advancement; the accumulative effects of an English system of elementary education which all too often in the past studiously neglected the Welsh linguistic, cultural and historical tradition; the close economic integration of Wales and England, coupled with successive waves of English immigration into Wales and, during periods of intense industrial depression, of Welsh emigration to England, with the result that the anglicization of the heavily-populated industrial regions of South Wales has proceeded at an alarming pace during the present century; the decline in traditional religious observances, so that the Nonconformist chapel, with its Welsh services and literary meetings, has ceased to act as a social focus in many communities. The picture, however, is not one of unrelieved gloom, for there is some evidence in recent years of a more enlightened outlook and policy in official circles. The language now has a staunch supporter in the Welsh Department of the Ministry of Education, while the University of Wales has recently manifested its desire to recognize the cultural value of the language by deciding to appoint to its staff people who are qualified to teach certain subjects through the medium of Welsh. The Welsh Departments of the four University Colleges have for many years lectured and held their examinations in that language. Moreover, Welsh works on literary and linguistic subjects are published regularly, improved editions of the early poetry, the medieval prose, and of several of the great classical *cywydd*-writers have appeared, the result of many years of painstaking linguistic and textual study, and the classical prose-writers have been made more accessible to the Welsh-reading public. As a result, the Welsh literary tradition has been rediscovered and reinterpreted, a feat which has made a deep impression on the intellectual life of Wales. Linguistic research, as already suggested, has played an indispensable part in opening up the treasures of the past, and the Board of Celtic Studies of the University of Wales is now issuing in parts a standard dictionary of Welsh. Creative literary works of all kinds continue to appear, sometimes of a very high standard. Welsh news bulletins and miscellaneous Welsh programmes are regularly broadcast in the Welsh Home Service of the B.B.C., and Welsh is still the only language of worship for many thousands. In recent years a determined attempt to arrest the steady decline in the number of those able to speak the language has been made by the establishment of schools where the medium of instruction is entirely Welsh. But, important as these measures are, there are many who now feel that, if the Welsh language is to survive, more radical and far-reaching measures are necessary. There is, in brief,

a growing body of opinion which holds that the difficulties which beset the language are basically political, and that therefore they can only be effectively countered by political means.

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