

# Gael-Talk

## Learning Gaelic Year 1 Caibideil 25

*Nas fheàrr a' Ghàidhlig bhriste n' a' Bheurla chliste!*

Better Broken Gaelic than fluent English!

A little reminder –  
We really should pay the piper  
(*mòran taing* to those who have!)



Please send donations for the class to Paypal:  
profmcintyre@yahoo.com  
the amount is up to you, but the suggested donation is \$5

## **Clàr na seachdain (schedule of the week)**

- Fàilte!
- Sean fhacal na seachdain
- Gràmar na Seachdain – the past tense of the regular verb
- Sgeul na Seachdain – historical analogues to the ancient myths
- Òran na seachdain –

**Fàilte!**



**Alasdair Fraser**



fraser.mp4

***Sean fhacal na seachdain***

**Taigh gun chù, gun chat, gun leanabh beag, taigh gun ghean, gun ghàire.**



**A house without a dog, without a cat, or without a child,  
is a house without cheerfulness or laughter.**

**A collector of Gaelic proverbs, Alexander Nicolson, writes this *sean fhacal* appears to be “purely native.”**

# Gràmar na Seachdain

## *The Past Tense - Regular Verbs*

So far, we've expressed actions by the use of the verbal noun, which form has given us something like the *progressive* tense in English. In other words, we've learned to express action as something that

Was being done

- Bha mi a' cluich ball-coise – I was playing football.
- Bha iad a' seinn aig a' chèilidh. – they were singing at the ceilidh.

Is being done

- Tha mi a' draibheadh – I am driving
- Tha i a' dèanamh dìnnear – she is making dinner

Will be 'being' done

- Bidh e ag obair a-màireach – he will be working tomorrow
- Bidh sinn a' dol dhan a' bhùth – we will be going to the store

The limitation of this form is that it expresses action as ongoing (in progress). But what if we don't want to say,

- I was playing football

But rather

- I *played* football.

The latter presents us with the idea as completed not as ongoing, albeit in the past. As in English, there is a way to express a completed action – this is through what is known as the

## *Simple Past Tense*



As we have learned a continuous action in the past is expressed by using the past tense of the verb **To Be** with the **verbal noun**:

Bha e a' cluich anns a' phàirc fad an là an-dè.	He was playing in the park all day yesterday
---	--

Sometimes, however, we wish to express the idea of a completed action –

- NOT > He **was playing**

- BUT rather > He played.

This is a form that is used quite frequently and commonly in Gaelic, so it is important that we learn it. As we go forward, you will find it more appropriate to express an idea in the simple past tense rather than with the past tense / verbal noun format.

But how do we do this? In English, we form the simple past tense by adding an -ed on the end of the root of the verb. For example

Root word / verb	Past tense
Walk	Walked
Talk	Talked
Stop	Stopped
Play	Played
Carry	Carried
Hop	Hopped
Hope	Hoped
Jump	Jumped
Kill	Killed

\*You'll notice that sometimes in English the final letter of the root verb is changed slightly (e.g., stop/stopped; carry/carried).

There is a similar feature in Gaelic by which we form the simple past tense by a simple modification of the root verb/word. But instead of changing the end of the verb, we alter the beginning ... by means of our old friend

### *Lenition to form simple past tense in regular verbs*

First, what we're calling the 'root' of the verb is the word that appears first when we look the word up in the dictionary. For example, if we were to look up the word "grow" in an English-Gaelic dictionary, we would see something like (I've circled the most common of the possibilities):

*grow* *v* fàs, cinn, cinnich,  
meudaich; (*trans*) thoir fàs air

That "fàs" is the **root form** of the verb.

Correspondingly, if we switched over to a Gaelic-English dictionary and looked up "fàs" in that, we'd see the root form:

**fàs** *v* grow, become a' fàs sean  
getting/growing old

That's the form of the verb that we work with to create the simple past tense.

Whenever possible lenite the root of the verb to get the independent form of the past tense. Verbs beginning with a vowel (and lenited **fh** - which is silent) are preceded by an initial **dh'**. The dependent form of the verb = **do** + independent form :

The basic form: lenite first letter of the verb – **where possible** (the verbal noun is given below not because it has anything to do with this lesson but to show you the frequent contrast between the root verb and the verbal noun):

Root verb	English	Simple past tense	Verbal Noun
buail	Hit	bhuail	bualadh - hitting
seas	Stand (up)	sheas	seasamh - standing
tog	Lift / build	thog	togail - lifting / building
coisich	Walk	choisich	coiseachd
breab	Kick	bhreab	breabadh
freagair	answer	fhreagair	freagairt

Some words take what might be called a “modified” lenition. These are words that begin with a **vowel** or with a **f + vowel** (which, as we've seen before, is treated as if it were a **vowel word**). In these, you will note that **dh'** precedes the root, and if an **f+vowel** word, the f is lenited:

Root verb	English	Simple past tense	Verbal Noun
Fàg	leave	Dh'fhàg	Fàgail - leaving
Òl	drink	Dh'òl	Òl - drinking
Ith	eat	Dh'ith	Ìthe - eating
Èist	listen	Dh'èist	Èisteachd - listening
Fàs	grow	Dh'fhàs	Fàs - growing
Fuirich	wait	Dh'Fhuirich	Fuireach - living, waiting

Words that begin with **l, n** or **r** show no change in writing, while **sg, sm, sp** and **st** do not change at all:

Root verb	English	Simple past tense	Verbal Noun
Lean	follow	lean	Leantainn
Nochd	appear	nochd	Nochdadh
Sgàin	burst	sgàin	Sgàineadh
Speal	scythe	speal	Spealadh
Ruith	run	ruith	Ruith
Sguab	sweep	sguab	Sguabadh

Smàil Stamp (stàmp)	extinguish trample	smàil stamp (stàmp)	Smàladh Stampadh (stàmpadh)
------------------------	-----------------------	------------------------	--------------------------------

As with the verb **To Be** you use either **Cha**, **An**, or **Nach** to get the negative and interrogative forms – with this addition: the negative and the question form add the particle **do**, as in

- **Cha do**
- **Nach do**
- **An do**

### Examples :

Bhuail iad - They hit  
 Cha do bhuail iad - They didn't hit  
 An do bhuail iad? - Did they hit?  
 Nach do bhuail iad? - Didn't they hit?

Dh'fhàg iad - They left  
 Cha do dh'fhàg iad - They didn't leave  
 An do dh'fhàg iad? - Did they leave?  
 Nach do dh'fhàg iad? - Didn't they leave?

Leugh iad - They read  
 Cha do leugh iad - They didn't read  
 An do leugh iad? - Did they read?  
 Nach do leugh iad? - Didn't they read?

Ruith iad - They ran  
 Cha do ruith iad - They didn't run  
 An do ruith iad? - Did they run?  
 Nach do ruith iad? - Didn't they run?

Sheas iad - They stood (up)  
 Cha do sheas iad - They didn't stand (up)  
 An do sheas iad? - Did they stand (up)?  
 Nach do sheas iad? - Didn't they stand (up)?

Sgrìobh iad - They wrote  
 Cha do sgrìobh iad - They didn't write  
 An do sgrìobh iad? - Did they write?  
 Nach do sgrìobh iad? - Didn't they write?

Thog iad - They lifted  
 Cha do thog iad - They didn't lift  
 An do thog iad? - Did they lift?  
 Nach do thog iad? - Didn't they lift?

Dh'òl iad - They drank  
 Cha do dh'òl iad - They didn't drink  
 An do dh'òl iad? - Did they drink?  
 Nach do dh'òl iad? - Didn't they drink?

### Saying Yes and No

The pattern is the same for the verb **To Be**. You need to use the positive or negative forms of the verb in the Past Tense:

An do bhuail iad an cù? -	Did they hit the dog?	Bhuail - yes Cha do bhuail - no
Nach do ruith iad anns a' phàirc?	Didn't they run in the park?	Ruith - yes Cha do ruith - no



\*To re-iterate, it is the **verb in use** that is used to convey the 'yes' or 'no' – **not** *tha* or *chan eil*.

It's a common mistake that since we've spent so much time on the verbal noun form, as in –

**Tha** e a' ruith – He is running  
A bheil e a' ruith? Is he running he run  
**Tha - yes**  
**Chan eil - no**

**Bha** e a' ruith – He was running  
An **robh** e a' ruith? Was he running  
**Bha - yes**  
**Cha robh - no**

That we've gotten used to the positive and negative forms of the verb to be as expressing 'yes' and 'no', but remember, these words are used in this way only when the operative verb is to be (*tha* or *bha*, for example), and not in cases where the verb *to be* is not used.

### **New verbs used in these exercises**

bris, - break  
caidil,- sleep  
ceannach - buy  
cluich = play, played  
cuir = put  
èist = listen  
fàg = leave  
freagair, - answer  
fuirich = stay (also, live as in reside/dwell)  
gluais = move  
goil, - boil,  
ionnsaich /- learn, learned  
ith = eat  
pòs, - marry  
saoil, (air) - think (about)sgriobh = write  
till = return  
tuit = fall

# Eacarsaichean

## Eacarsaich 1: Translate into English (with vocabulary aid)

Sentences	Vocabulary
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Dh'fhàg an toit a h-uile rud salach anns an taigh</li> <li>2. An do chuir thu bainne anns a' chopan? Cha do chuir</li> <li>3. Cò bhris an uinneag agam? Bhris Seumas an uinneag agad.</li> <li>4. Cha do dh'fhuirich e fada.</li> <li>5. Nach do cheannaich iad càr ùr? Cheannaich</li> <li>6. Chluich ar leanabh leis an dèideig fad an là</li> <li>7. Chuir mi an t-uisge anns a' choire agus ghoil mi e</li> <li>8. Dh'ionnsaich mi Gàidhlig nuair a bha mi nam bhalach</li> <li>9. Ruith e dhan a' bhùth.</li> <li>10. An do dh'èist thu ris an rèidio? Dh'èist.</li> </ol>	<p>Toit = smoke  Copan = cup</p> <p>Fada = long</p> <p>Dèideag = toy  Coire = pot  Nuair = when</p>
<p><b>EXERCISE 2 Translate into Gàidhlig</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Did you buy anything in the shop? No</li> <li>2. He put his hand on her shoulder</li> <li>3. I fell down the stairs and I broke my leg</li> <li>4. My sister returned from her holiday last night</li> <li>5. Did she answer the question correctly? Yes</li> <li>6. I ate the biscuit and I drank the milk</li> <li>7. Who moved my chair away from the fire? She moved it</li> <li>8. Did you marry that man / woman?</li> <li>9. I returned home and I wrote a long letter</li> <li>10. They played quietly and she slept</li> </ol>	<p>Rud sam bith = anything  Làmh = hand, Gualan = shoulder  Sios = down; An staidhre = stairs, cas=leg  Bho = from, Saor-là = holiday, a-raoir=last night  Ceist = question  Briosgaid = biscuit, bainne = milk  Cathair = chair; teine = fire</p> <p>Litir = letter  Gu samhach = quietly</p>

## Answer Key

### ANSWERS - EXERCISE 1

- 1.The smoke left everything in the house dirty
- 2.Did you put milk in the cup? Yes
- 3.Who broke my window? Seumas broke your window
- 4.He didn't stay long
- 5.Didn't they buy a new car? Yes
- 6.Our baby played with the toy all day
- 7.I put the water in the kettle and I boiled it
- 8.I learned Gàidhlig when I was a boy
9. He ran to the store.
10. Did you listen to the radio?

### ANSWERS - EXERCISE 2

- 1.An do cheannaich sibh càil anns a' bhùth? Cha do cheannaich
- 2.Cuir e a làmh air a giùlain
- 3.Bhris mi mo chas nuair a thuit mi sìos na staidhrichean
- 4.Thill mo phiuthar bhon saor-là aice a-raoir
- 5.An do fhreagair i a' cheist gu ceart? Fhreagair
- 6.Dh'ith mi a' bhriosgaid agus dh'òl mi am bainne
- 7.Cò ghluais a' chathair agam air falbh bhon teine? Ghluais i a' chathair agad.
- 8a.An do phòs thu am fear sin?
- 8b. An do phòs thu an tè sin?
9. Thill mi dhachaigh agus sgrìobh mi litir fhada
- 10.Chluich iad gu sàmhach agus chaidil i

# Sgeul na Seachdain

## Some historical analogues to the Mythology of the Origins of the Gaels

### Mythology has many aspects

One is ancient form of 'history' – though not in modern sense  
Is there any kind of historical "fact" behind the legends and myths?



### The seas were the highways of the ancients

Major Mediterranean trade routes  
Routes of migrations followed convenient sea lanes rather than crossing overland



### The homeland: Scythia

The Gaels traced their origins to ancient Scythia – Several references to Scythia as homeland of the Gaels –

From the ancient myths to the Declaration of Arbroath in 1320

Reath's migrational journey described in Declaration (starting at 'Scythia') on map of modern Europe

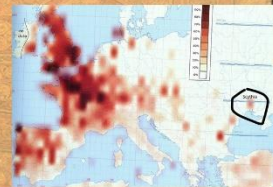


- our nation of Scots has been described ... crossing from Greater Scythia, via the Tyrrhennian Sea and the Pillars of Hercules [Straits of Gibraltar], and living in Spain among the fiercest tribes for many years ... Afterwards, coming from there, one thousand two hundred years from the Israelite people's crossing of the Red Sea, to its home in the west, which it now holds

### Linguistic analysis: The Scythian homeland

Linguists say that place names are the longest-lasting linguistic artifacts

Historic linguistic "relics" of Celtic placenames



## Linguistic analysis to support the middle – eastern link

### In myth:

- Cessair – granddaughter of Noah
- Gaelic – evolved in aftermath of the collapse of the Tower of Babel

### In linguistic fact:

- Many similarities between Semitic languages & Gaelic (relatively rare):
  - No word for 'have' – expressed with preposition
  - Both VSO – verb subject object sentence order
  - Augmented prepositions (agam, agad, etc)

### Strange Similarities between Celtic Languages and Semitic Language



## Who were the Fir Bolg & the Formorians?

- One theory – the dread (and mysterious) “Sea People” documented as invading and destroying the Bronze Age cultures of the Eastern Mediterranean – the Bronze Age Collapse, c. 1200 B.C.
- Attacked the City of Troy, the Hittite Empire, invasions told of in the Old Testament
- Only ancient kingdom to survive = Egypt
- Language hint?
  - Formorian – modern Gaelic, the people *Fo Muir / Mhuir*



Ancient Egyptian depiction of invasion of Egypt by Sea Peoples

## The Cult of the Bull

- Cultural/anthropological link:
- The migration of the *cult of the bull* traces the migration of the peoples from the middle east (Scythia?) to Ireland



## 9000 BC – Çatalhöyük, Turkey



## The Worship of the Golden Calf

One of the religious rivals to ancient Judaism in the Old Testament



## The Minoan Civilization

Traveling West through the Mediterranean – the Bull leaping / worship of the Minoan civilization



## Bulls in Spain – “Celti-Iberia”



Above: ancient Celti-Iberia  
Below: modern Spain



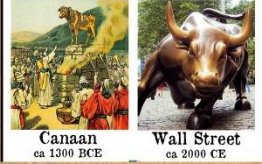
## The bull in the Táin Bó Cúailnge

... in the saga of Cúchulainn  
And on Pictish stone carvings ...



Some would say the British settlers in America brought that "bull worship" with them to the present day!

**THE IDOLS WE WORSHIP**



**Canaan**  
ca 1300 BCE

**Wall Street**  
ca 2000 CE



The DNA science:  
Do we have evidence of successive waves of "invasions"?



Not a succession of genocides ...

But 'layer upon layer' of immigrations – DNA evidence of continuation of genetic lines from 6,000 BC  
Even in myth, the Tuatha de Dana were'n wiped out – they retreated to the *Sithichean* – the fairy mounds  
DNA evidence in present populations of lineage going back thousands of years



Historical Geneticist Bryan Sykes found DNA evidence confirming the "invasion" legends

A line, across the Mediterranean, reached Spain then headed north up the Atlantic coast  
One group shows up from 5500 BC  
others clustered around the 3,000–4,000 B.C.  
Another group around 2,000 B.C.  
Around 500 BC, when the Iron Age Celts – the *Sons of Mil* – were supposed to have arrived.  
Female lines are *older* ... supporting the thesis that 'invasions' did not replace one population with another, but were probably male warrior bands who then intermarried with locals  
All these lines of ancestry exist in Ireland and Scotland today (to various degrees)



**DNA evidence vs. Legends**



- Nothing conclusive – and sometimes the dates from the legends and the DNA record conflict,
- DNA evidence seems to shift everything much earlier than attested in legends
- but ...
- Modern DNA studies show consistency with Irish origin stories

What does the evidence *Internal* to the myths tell us?

The various tribes – the "tuatha" – all appear to be Gaelic  
Repeated accounts of the enemies (the "invaders" and the aborigines) being able to speak to each other  
*Mac Gréine* – the 'son of the sun' – was one of the Tuatha de Danaan warriors, with a *Gaelic name* (remember, they fought against the 'Milesians' – the ancestors of the present-day Gaels)



**The Fomorians**

"Fo Muir" or "Fo Mhuir" in modern Gaelic – people from 'under' the sea  
Are these the same *Sea People* who wreaked havoc across Europe at the end of the Bronze age & were responsible for all these events around 1,000 B.C.:

- The fall of Troy?
- The destruction of the Minoan civilization and the Hittite empire?
- The wars described in the Old Testament?
- The collapse of the Bronze age civilization?
- Allowing in the Eastern Mediterranean only Egypt to survive?



Ancient Egypt commemoration of the Pharaoh's victory over the invading Sea People

**The Fir Bolg**

Confusion – who were they?

- Men of ?Bags? Former slaves from Greece who were made to carry bags "bolg" of soil to fertilize fields of their masters until they escaped?
- Men of ? Bulg? – Gauls from modern Belgium?
- Men of lances – like the Gath Bolga (the swelling dart) of Cúchullain – the mythical spear that expanded upon entering a man's body
- Or men of swords – old Irish use of the word – *caladbolg*, for Excalibur, (the sword of Arthur)

Sometimes conflated with the Fomorians



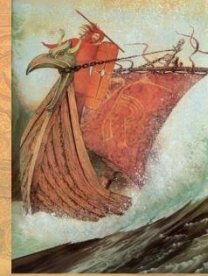
## Fir Bolg



- Unknown origin of name – theories
  - Men (people) of the fiery darts / arrows / spears > perhaps after the Gath bolga mythical spear used by Cu Chulainn (then swayed upon hitting target)
  - Men of bags ? Fir Bolg – (I had been in Greece on poor soil – made it fertile by dropping bags of soil on it)
  - Possibly Celtic people from Gaul (Belgae ? (Belgium))
  - Men fierce in battle? they “swelled” with battle rage (like Cu Chulainn)
  - Irish Celtic root “beag” or “beag” meaning “to swell” (particulate with anger) (battle fury/etc. – word related to bag (bag, to swell))
  - Men of (bags) – people saved from Greece who were made to carry bags “bols” of soil to fertilize fields of their masters until they escaped?
  - Men of ? Bolg? – Gauls from modern Belgium? (but the legends have them coming from Greece / the Mediterranean)
  - Men of sailors – like the Gath bolga (the swelling dart) of Cu Chulainn – the mythical spear that expanded upon hitting a man’s body
  - Or men of swords – old Irish use of the word – colatbody, for Excalibur, (the sword of Arthur)
- Came to Ireland via Spain about the time of Israelite exodus out of Egypt

## The last invasion – the ‘Sons of Mil’

Last major ancestry DNA tracing dates to the transition period of the bronze age > iron age (1000 BC – 500 BC)



## The Milesians = Iron-age invasion

- All the previous tribes had been bronze age iron age late to come to Ireland / Britain
- Started about 1,400 BC in Eastern Med.
  - Brought to Britain by Celts around 700 BC – corresponds to approx. time of Milesian invasion
  - In weaponry: Iron “beats” bronze
    - Iron easier to obtain than bronze
    - Bronze is softer, easier to break & mangle, and harder to repair compared with iron weapons
    - Iron sword could penetrate bronze armor
    - Iron weapon **becomes stronger** the more it is repaired
    - Iron swords can be made **longer** than bronze swords (size does matter in sword fighting!)



## Fairies & Iron

The Tuatha de Dannan were bronze-age culture, had bronze-age weapons

Their defeat by the superior weaponry of the Milesians is remembered in folklore

- Long held myth that fairies – the defeated Tuatha de Dannan – are afraid of iron
- Iron horseshoe = good luck (for people) bec. protects against fairies
  - Iron bed frames – or even an iron knife or nail under the pillow – protects babies from being snatched by the fairies
  - Iron burns fairies



Why this belief?

- A vestigial memory that iron is what defeated the Tuatha (who became the fairies)

## Conclusion

- *Tha adharcan an tairbh nas motha anns a’ cheò.*  
The horns of the bull are larger in the fog.
- While the ancient myths and legends cannot be held to be **historically factual** as we understand the terms today,
- And although these stories are undoubtedly expanded, mythologized, and in parts distorted –
- As the sean fhacal has it ...



Nevertheless, however magnified by the “fog” of time, those “horns” still exist. As they say in Hollywood, the ancient stories do seem to have been ...



*Òran na seachdain*

Let's go back to an old favorite –

# Suas leis a' Ghàidhlig!

[..\presentations\suas leis a ghaidhlig.pptx](#)