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ARTICLE: HISTORY

A glimpse at glossaria

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There are over one hundred manuscripts containing Irish medical texts. Most of these are written in Early Modern Irish and were produced between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries.[1][2] There is a great variety of material preserved in these manuscripts, including theoretical tracts, herbals, collections of remedies, poetry, charms, some important early medico-legal texts and glossaries. A major part of this material is Irish translations of classical and medieval medical texts written by authors such as Dioscorides, Galen, Hippocrates, Avicenna, Macer, Constantine the African and John of Gaddesden, and most of these were current in the program of learning taught in medical teaching centres like Salerno and Montpellier. The type of content found in the Irish medical texts is often an eclectic mix of lengthy theoretical material alongside short fragments of theory, aphorisms, collections of remedies, and various glossaries. Nessa Ní Shéaghdha describes one such manuscript, National Library of Ireland G8, as 'a pocket-size medical encyclopaedia, containing text, in a digested form, on almost every branch of medicine and medico-philosophy. It was perhaps intended as a teacher's note-book written with the collaboration of a whole medical school'.[3]

There is also evidence that, in addition to translating Latin texts, Irish physicians and scribes were reworking and adapting their source material to suit an Irish context, occasionally including original Irish material. The attribution of remedies to mythical figures such as Dían Cécht, the physician of the supernatural race known as the Túatha Dé Danann, whose name appears in many of the remedies in one medical compendium, is but one illustration of this practice.[4] There are some very exotic ingredients included in remedies, but the vast majority of ingredients is derived from plants that would grow in Ireland, pointing to adaptation of remedies and the likely incorporation of native remedies into these remedy collections. In addition to prose there are metrical remedies and charms in many of the manuscripts, and one collection of remedies alone includes at least 43 original Irish verse passages.[5] Additional original material based on the physician's personal observations and experience may be found in texts. For example, Aoibheann Nic Dhonnchadha has identified a method of treatment for humoural disease in the chapter on stretching and yawning that occurs in the *Collectorium* of the Italian physician, Niccolò Bertricco. Its Irish translation by Donnchadh Óg Ó Conchubhair contains a treatment which does not appear in the original Latin text.[6]

Alongside all of these different texts there are various reference lists and the ones under discussion here are the medical glossaries or synonymies, that is, lists of Latin words used in medical texts with their corresponding Irish words. The vast majority of these words are plant names, but minerals, animal

products, names of compound medicines and disease names are also included. Such synonymies are also found in other European vernaculars. This brief introduction to glossaries describes their layout and content, their usefulness alongside other medical texts and the difficulties presented in their interpretation and translation, especially to a contemporary audience whose expectations of the authority of a glossary or dictionary may not be realised.

Previous scholarship on glossaries

The Irish medical glossaries have received very little attention since Whitley Stokes edited a few of them in the nineteenth century. In 1899 he published three medical glossaries, two of which are found in Trinity College Dublin MS 1334 (H 3 15) and one in the manuscript he called 'Lord Crawford's Irish medical manuscript' (Manchester, John Ryland's Library, Irish MS 35).[7] In another article entitled 'On the Irish materia medica', Stokes listed the chapter headings of a tract on materia medica from London, British Library (BL), Add. MS 15,403. In this article he extracted just the Latin and the Irish translation of the headword of each chapter, whereas the full original text gives much more detail, such as the properties of the materials, the diseases against which they are effective and some instructions as to how they are to be prepared for use.[8] Stokes also published a glossary of Welsh plant names.[9] Further scholarship on the subject of plant names followed in 1900 with Edmund Hogan's *Luibhleabhrán: Irish and Scottish Gaelic names of herbs, plants, trees, etc,* his collection of about four thousand Irish and Scottish names of plants with their English translations.[10] Hogan draws from twenty different sources (and names more which he did not have time to draw on) including medical manuscripts, Stokes's publications, eighteenth-century botanical publications, volumes of the *Gaelic Journal* and Hogan's own personal collection. His list of sources is a directory of the collectors and authorities of plant names in Ireland and Scotland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In England, in the nineteenth century, with the aim of preserving the English plant names found in various manuscripts, two medico-botanical glossaries, *Sinonoma Bartholomei* and *Alphita* were published.[11] These glossaries give mainly Latin synonyms for plants and medicinal substances but there are also many English and French synonyms for many of the substances named. In 1989 Tony Hunt published *Plant names of medieval England*. This work is a collection of the vernacular plant names found in over forty glossaries listed by Latin headword and many parallels can be found between this material and the Irish glossaries.[12]

Function and structure

The Irish medical glossaries are practical texts which must have been used for reference and as a companion to Latin texts, acting as a bridge between the Latin and the vernacular. They are found in manuscripts alongside remedies and medical treatises in Irish and their inclusion in manuscripts reflects their importance to the compilers and users of the manuscripts. Their usefulness in conjunction with texts which have already been translated into Irish is hard to understand since they are ordered alphabetically by the Latin name, but they would have been of use to both physicians and scribes while translating Latin texts into Irish or simply while referring to Latin texts. It is very possible that they were a necessary component of the physician's collection of both Irish and Latin reference books in the often

multilingual domain of academic medical texts. A very high level of fluency in Latin would have been required to translate Latin medical texts into Irish but it is very likely that many physicians would have been able to conduct their day-to-day business through the medium of Irish with less competence in Latin.[13]

The layout and presentation of the glossaries usually follows the same pattern. Entries are sorted somewhat alphabetically into groups by the first letter of the Latin headword and usually take the brief format: Latin name .i. Irish name, as can be seen in this example: *Ambrocia .i. iubur sleibhi*.[14] Sometimes more than one Latin synonym is given, like in this example where we get three Latin names and one Irish name: *Arón barba, iarus, pes uituli .i. in gedhar*.[15] Within each group, however, strict alphabetical order is not preserved.[16] See, for example the opening ten entries of the glossary in NLI G 11: *Ambrocia, Accetula, Agrimonia, Atriplex, Arna glósa, Asúra, Atanacia nigra, Atanacia alba, Auripimentum, Atramentum*.[17] Another glossary in TCD 1334 which has been edited by Stokes seems to be randomly ordered. Entries 1-20 are: *Acurus, Angnus castus, Aigrimuinia, Auansia, Arustologia, Anusmusga, Anetum, Allium, Asufedita, Sarcacolla, Uernix, Olibanum, Labdanum, Galbunam Masdix, Antos, Alue, Merta, Pimintaria*.[18] The logic, if there is one, of this arrangement is not obvious, the opening nine all begin with the letter 'A' followed immediately by '*Saracolla*'. The qualities of almost all of these medicinal ingredients are hot and dry, making it possible that they are arranged by property, but this might be coincidental.[19] The following block of entries, 8-14, *Asufedita* as far as *Masdix,* are all gums or resins, and this is indicated in the text by '*.i. gum*' following each of these words. The entries immediately following in this glossary are names of plants.

Some scribes include descriptions and explanations especially for the less well known ingredients, and parallel descriptions can often be found in other vernaculars. This is demonstrated in entries that I have found for the exotic nut *anacardia* 'marking nut/cashew'. It is clear that there was some uncertainty and possibly more than a little cynicism as to what this actually referred to and this is reflected in how scribes have qualified their explanations by using phrases like, 'according to some' and 'which the empirics say'. What is noteworthy here is that all of the descriptions are so similar, suggesting a common original source.

Reference	Text	English translation
National Library of Ireland G11 98b, 42	Anac*ar*di .i. tor*a*d crainn	fruit of a tree
Stokes, 'Three Irish Medical Glossaries' (3IMG), 328 84	Anacardi .i. míla na heilifinnti dor*éir* droingi ann 7 doréir d*r*oingi is tor*ad* he 7 folm*aigi* se lin*n* fin*n*	lice of elephants according to some and according to some it is a fruit and it expels phlegmatic humour
Oxford Corpus Christi College MS 129, 22v 13	Anacardi f*ruc*tus est *nó* mila na helifinti m*ar* a d*eir* im*p*eriaca G*allice* anacardes.	is a fruit or lice of elephants as the *empirics*[20]say, French *anacardes*.

Mowatt, *Alphita*, 9	Ancicardi (leg. Anicardi) fructus cuiusdam arboris in India [quos] imperiti modici testiculos uocant. footnote 7: App. '*Anacardi*, .i. fructus cuiusdam arboris in India, quam imperiti pediculos elephantium dicunt'	fruit of a tree in India which the emperics call little testicles. fruit of a tree in India which the empirics call elephant lice.
Hunt, *Plant names of medieval England*	Anacardia: anachardes þe the lous of an elephant, and summe seyþ þat hit is þe fruyt of a tree.	the louse of an elephant and some say that it is the fruit of a tree.

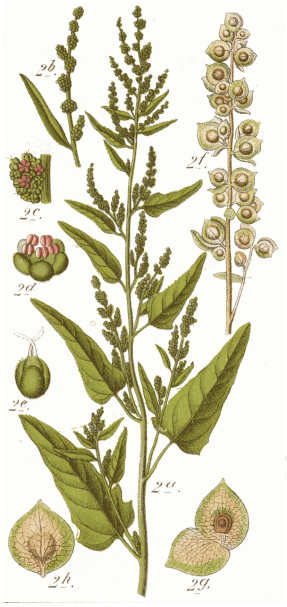
Complexities in the interpretation of the synonyms

While many of the entries are quite straightforward and correspond well with material in other glossaries there are often discrepancies, and a Latin word may have a different Irish synonym, sometimes even within one glossary. The examples below show three different entries for *atriplex,* probably 'orache' or 'saltbush' in English. The Latin word *atriplex* is followed by qualifying adjectives in two of the examples pointing to different varieties of this plant which is reflected in the different Irish names:

> NLI G 11, p. 98b31: At*r*iplex mi*n*or c*r*isalatamia .i. elefleog
>
> Stokes 3IMG, 335 no. 60: At*r*iplex agrestis .i. cael feadh *nó* feithleog
>
> Stokes 3IMG, 335 no. 86: At*r*iplex .i. cu all*aid*

In this case the Irish plant name *rind rusc* is found as a synonym for four different Latin headwords.[21]

> NLI G 11, p. 99a3: Acilia .i. rind ruisc,
>
> NLI G 11, p. 101b40: Ypi mi*n*or .i. ri*n*d r*us*c
>
> Stokes 3IMG, 334 no. 37: Calam*us* Pertinus .i. ri*n*d ruisc .i. l*us* na me*la*.
>
> Stokes 3IMG, 336 no. 120: Aspulegia .i. ri*n*d r*oisc*



Atriplex hortensis, painted by Jacob Sturm, and published in his *Deutschlands Flora in Abbildungen nach der Natur mit Beschreibungen* (first edition: Nürnberg, 1796).

Complexities like these are also a feature of the Latin and Middle English glossaries. Undoubtedly there are scribal errors in the texts, but it is also possible that some of these differences are due to dialectical and regional variations. The absence of plant descriptions or illustrations makes it difficult to absolutely determine the identity of a plant in some cases. Moreover, it cannot be assumed that a vernacular plant name in use now referred to the same plant in the fifteenth century. This is problematic especially when the risks inherent in using the incorrect plant is considered. However, we have to remember that the users of these manuscripts were trained medical practitioners and would have been aware of safe doses of medicinal plants and would have known what plants to avoid. It was not until the eighteenth century that Carl Linnaeus introduced the Linnaen classification system formalising binomial nomenclature, the modern system of naming organisms.

There is a very interesting glossary in Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS. 129, which gives names in Latin, English and French along with qualities of the substances and descriptions in Irish, but very few Irish names.[22] It begins with: *Absinthium amarum, calida in 1° gradu sicca in 2° Gallice aloyne Anglice Mormont*, an entry without any Irish words.[23] There is great variety in the detail found under the different headings. Some also give plant descriptions and attribute the information to different authorities, as in this example which quotes Simon of Genoa:[24]

> Chamhedreos quercula maighiór germandria idem Gallice germandre 7 bi a duille mar duille minntus 7 bláth an dath purpere do réir Symoin Ianuensis.[25]
>
> *Chamhedreos quercula maighiór germandria idem Gallice germander* and its leaves are like mint leaves and the flower is purple according to Simon of Genoa.

This unusual text is a wonderful example of the multilingual environment in which the physicians of medieval Ireland operated and the inclusion of many examples of code-switching merits a close examination of its contents. The entries found at the beginning of this glossary closely resemble the beginning of a glossary found in BL Add. MS 15236. This manuscript contains a number Irish glosses

and even though the CC 129 glossary is more expansive, it seems likely that they could have some connection to each other.[26] Only two Irish plant names have been noted so far in CC 129. One is a gloss in Irish, '.i. *macall*' on the entry over the Latin word '*auancia*'.[27] The second is '*glunech*;' as the Irish word for *pollicaria*.[28]

Lengthier descriptions of ingredients are found in texts called *Materia Medica*, where the entries are also arranged alphabetically by Latin headword and include additional information, such as the quality of the medical ingredient, whether it is hot, cold, wet or dry; a physical description of the ingredient; the diseases for which it is an effective cure; and instructions as to its use. The original source of these types of texts is thought to be Platearius's *Liber de simplici medicina*, commonly called by its opening words *Circa instans*. There are Irish versions of this text in several manuscripts but Tadhg Ó Cuinn is credited with compiling the earliest Irish translation in 1415.[29] The earliest existing copy of this text is found in Dublin, NLI G11, compiled by Donnchadh Ó Bolgaidhe and completed in 1466. That version contains 292 chapters, each one describing one ingredient beginning with *aron barba* (cuckoo-pint) and ending with *ziucra* (sugar).[30] The entries vary in length and detail, but some are quite long. There are also some additional entries in the Irish text that do not appear in the original Latin.

Other lists

As well as glossaries giving corresponding Irish names for Latin items, there are other kinds of lists. There are later texts such as the eighteenth-century manuscript Dublin, King's Inns, MS 20, which is a list of Latin names with corresponding Irish and English names.[31] There are lists of medical materials classified by property and arranged under the headings of seeds, flowers, gums, roots and fruits.[32] There is also at least one wordlist which lists Irish plant names in alphabetical order with no frame of reference, no plant descriptions or Latin names.[33]

Another interesting and understudied genre of text is the one called *Quid pro quo.* These are lists of substitutes for substances that may not be readily available. For example '*Almoint millsi gab cnu cuill arason*', 'instead of sweet almonds choose hazelnut'.[34] Another *Quid pro quo* tells us 'p*ro* bain*n*i almo*n*t .i. bain*n*i na c*n*o ngaoidil*ech*', 'for almond milk i.e. the milk of the Irish nuts (hazelnuts)' and a third one: 'Ar son bande alamont b*ande* na cno coitcenda', 'in place of almond milk, milk of the common nuts (hazelnuts)'. These three texts give us three names for hazelnuts. Hazelnuts are very plentiful in Ireland whereas almonds, if available at all, would have been imported and expensive. These texts are predominantly Irish with a mixture of Latin and Irish headwords. They are also very strong evidence of the way in which scholars were collecting and adapting texts to suit the needs of the Irish practitioners.

In conclusion

These understudied texts are full of clues as to the transmission of texts and ideas. Although at first glance glossaries and wordlists may appear to be uninteresting, they are definitely worth further examination. Recent scholarship on the Irish medical texts has demonstrated that they do not simply contain slavish translations of the material contained in the curriculum of the European medical

universities. The frequent inclusion of the glossaries and *quid pro quo*s within the medical manuscripts demonstrate their importance in the book collections of the medieval Irish physician. Their use was invaluable alongside remedy collections in both Latin and Irish.

Notes

1. † The research for this article was funded by an Irish Research Council postdoctoral award (IRC/GOIPD/2020/341). I am grateful to Deborah Hayden for reading an earlier draft and for her suggestions for improvements and also to the editors of *Kelten*. I alone am responsible for any errors that remain.
2. † For further reading on Irish medical manuscripts: Nic Dhonnchadha, A., 'The Irish medical manuscripts', *Irish Pharmacy Journal* 69/7 (May 1991) 201-2; eadem, 'Medical writing in Irish', *2000 years Irish medicine*, ed. J. B. Lyons (Dublin 1999) 21-6; eadem, 'Irish medical writing, 1400–1600', *The Field Day Anthology of Irish writing*, vol. 4*: Irish women's writings and traditions,* ed. A. Bourke et al. (Cork 2002) 341-57.
3. † Ní Shéaghdha, Nessa, *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the National Library of Ireland,* fasciculus 1 (Dublin 1967) 42.
4. † Hayden, D., 'Attribution and authority in a medieval Irish medical compendium', *Studia Hibernica* 45 (2019) 38-46. For an example the attribution of a historical figure, see Barrett, S., 'The king of Dál nAraidi's salve', *Ériu* 69 (2019) 171-8.
5. † Dublin, Royal Irish Academy (RIA), MS 24 B 3, fol. 33-93. Online at *https://www.isos.dias.ie*.
6. † Nic Dhonnchadha, A., 'The medical school of Aghmacart, Queen's County', *Ossory, Laois and Leinster* 2 (2006) 11-43; see also eadem, '"On stretching and yawning": a text from the medical school at Aghmacart, Queen's County', ibid. 3 (2008) 239-69.
7. † Stokes, W. (ed. and trans.), 'Three Irish medical glossaries', *Archiv für celtische Lexicographie* 3 (1899) 325-47.
8. † Stokes, W. (ed. and trans.), 'On the materia medica of the mediaeval Irish', *Revue celtique* 9 (1888) 224-44.
9. † Stokes, W., 'A list of Welsh plantnames', *Archiv für celtische Lexicographie* 1 (1900) 37-50.
10. † Hogan, E., et al., *Luibhleabhrán: Irish and Scottish Gaelic names of herbs, plants, trees, etc*. (Dublin 1900).
11. † Mowatt, J. L. G., 'Alphita, a medico-botanical glossary from the Bodleian manuscript, Selden B. 35', *Anecdota Oxoniensia*, vol. 1, ii (1887). See also idem, 'Synonyma Bartholomei', *Anecdota Oxeniensia, v*ol. 1, i (1882).
12. † Hunt, T., *Plant names of medieval England* (Cambridge 1989).
13. † For a discussion of the Latin found in Irish medical manuscripts see Harris, Jason, 'Latin learning and Irish physicians, c.1350–c.1610', *Rosa Anglica*: *reassessments,* ed. Liam P. Ó Murchú (London 2016) 1-25.
14. † National Library of Ireland (NLI), G 11, p. 98b29. English plant name, 'mountain sage'.
15. † NLI G 11, p. 98b44. English plant name, 'cuckoo-pint'. eDIL s.v. 1 *gegar*.
16. † Other glossaries are presented in a similar way. For discussion on the layout of O'Mulconry's glossary see Moran, Pádraic, *De origine Scoticae linguae (O'Mulconry's glossary): an Early Irish linguistic tract with a related glossary*, *Irsan*. Lexica Latina Medii Aevi vii (Turnhout 2009) 28-57.
17. † NLI G 11, p. 98b29.
18. † Stokes, 'Three Irish medical glossaries', 325. L*a*bdanum, Galbunam are not included in Stokes's edition, see TCD 1334, p. 47b27-28. Olibanum is hidden by a crease in the vellum and is not visible in the image on ISOS.
19. † According to humoural theory there are four fundamental humours, blood, yellow bile, phlegm and black bile. These humours have properties assigned to them, a combination of heat, moisture, coldness or dryness. These properties are also assigned to foods and medicines. To maintain good health humours needed to be balanced within the body. Any imbalance could result in disease which then was treated by rebalancing the humours, sometimes, by ingesting suitable substances.
20. † The term 'emperic' can be used as a term to describe healers/medics who practiced medicine without formal university training. It is also a term used to describe a medical doctrine which relied upon direct experience, observation and patient history to treat a patient in opposition to Galen's rationalism. See Johnston, Ian, *Galen: on diseases and symptoms* (Cambridge 2009) 11-20. Thanks to Deborah Hayden for the translation of this word.

21. ↑ Hogan et al., *Luibhleabhrán*, s.v. *rindruisg, hippia minor*, chickweed, eyebright. See also Dinneen, P. S., *Foclóir Gaedhilge agus Béarla* (Dublin 1927) s.v. *rinn-* eyebright (*euphrasia*) (*glan-rosc*, *rinn-ruisc*, *id.*).
22. ↑ Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 129 (CC 129), fol. 21v-41r. An acephalous copy of this text beginning with *Omentum* is found in TCD 1334, p. 37-49.
23. ↑ CC 129, fol. 21v10: *Absinthium amarum* hot in the first degree, dry in the second. French *aloyne*. English *mormont*.
24. ↑ This is indeed close to the description of Chamedryos that is found in the thirteenth-century *Clavis sanationis* written by Simon of Genoa, a physician to pope Nicolas IV. He in turn quotes both Dioscorides and Pliny in his text: *Dyascorides cameropa aut camedris, nascitur in locis saxosis et asperis, frutex est illi bipalmis cum foliis minutis mente similibus vel drio .i. quercui et amaris florem habet purpureum et minutum et cetera. Plinius camedris herba est que latine trizaga dicitur, aliqui camacropem, alii teucriam appellavere, folia habet magnitudine mente colore et divisura quercus flore pene purpureo aliqui serratam dicunt: et ab ea serram inventam esse.* 'Dyascorides in his chapter on *cameropa* or *camedris* says, it grows in stony and rough places. It is a bush two *palmi* {"spans"} high with leaves similar to *menta* {"mint"} or *drys* {Greek for "oak"}, in Latin *quercus*, and they are bitter. It has a tiny purple flower. Pliny says: *camedris* is a herb, which is called *trizaga* in Latin; some have called it *camacrope* and some *teucria*. It has leaves the size of *menta* {"mint sc. leaves"} and the colour and indentations of a *quercus* {"oak"} leaf. It has a flower that is near purple; some would call it {i.e. the leaf) serrated {i.e. notched like a saw}; and some people say that the invention of the saw was helped by the design of this leaf margin'. http://www.simonofgenoa.org/index.php?title=Chamedryos, accessed 08-10-2021.
25. ↑ CC 129, fol. 23v23.
26. ↑ Hunt, T., 'The botanical glossaries in MS London B.L. Add. 15236', *Pluteus* 4 (1986) 101-150.
27. ↑ CC 129, fol. 21v16: Auancia (gloss .i. macall) gariofilata peis leporis sanamunda idem calida 7 sicca in 2° gradu.
28. ↑ CC 129, fol. 32r22: Pollicaria culli arabies persicarium idem calida 7 sicca in 4° gradu Gallice culraye híbernice glunech. *Glunech* has been noted already as found in TCD 1334, p. 38b7, by Nic Dhonnchadha, A., 'Michael Casey's medical transcripts in Gilbert MS 147', *Éigse* 40 (2019) 88.
29. ↑ Nic Dhonnchadha, A., 'Medical writing in Irish', *2000 Years Irish Medicine*, ed. J. B. Lyons (Dublin 1999) 21-6.
30. ↑ For an edited online edition of this text see Ó Conchubhair, M., 'An Irish materia medica', *CELT: Corpus of Electronic Texts* (online 2019): *https://celt.ucc.ie/published/G600006/text001.html*.
31. ↑ King's Inns, MS 20, p. 151-168.
32. ↑ An example of this is in NLI G 11, p. 301-304a; TCD 1341, p. 300b-303b.
33. ↑ RIA MS 23 O 6, p. 34-35.
34. ↑ CC 129, fol. 38v14.