

A Brief History of Celtic People and Gaelic Language

Celtic Europe around 400 BCE

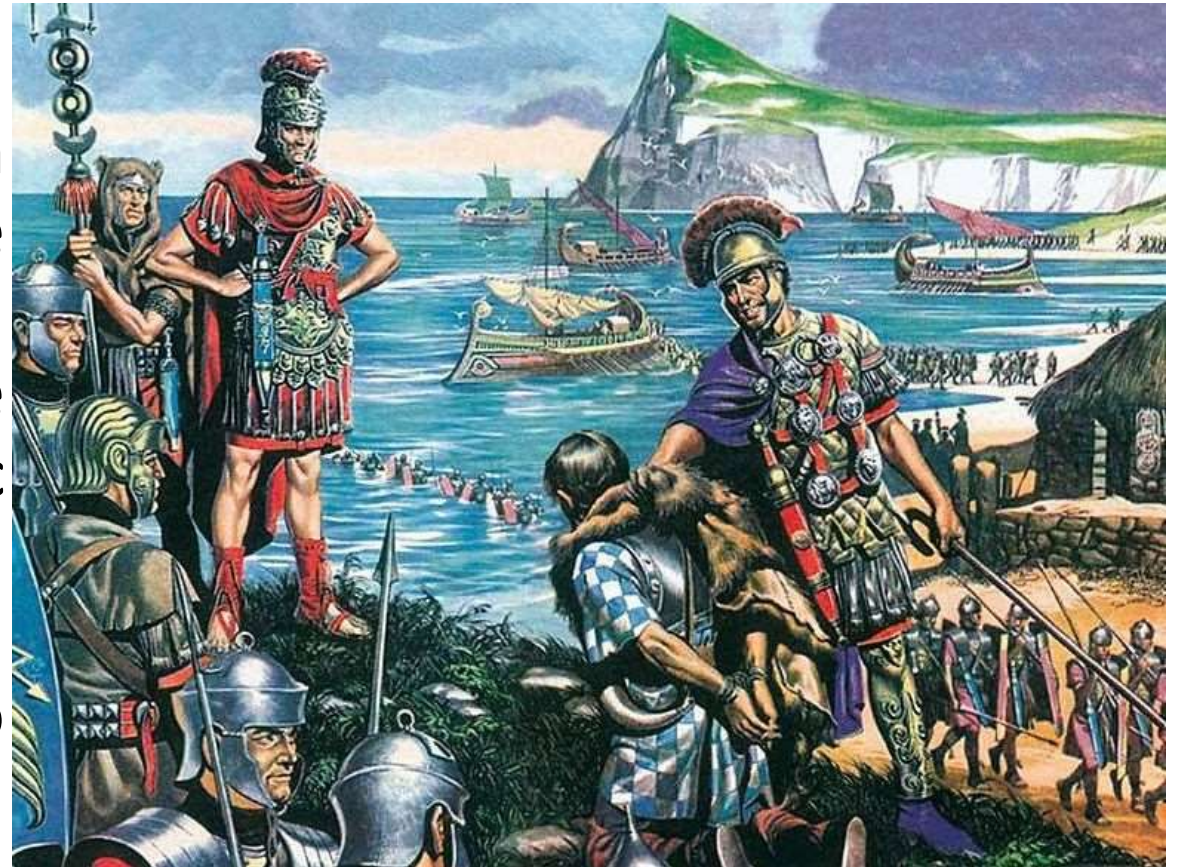
The Gaelic language is derived from the Indo-European family of languages. From the first millennium BCE up to expansion of the Roman Empire, Celtic culture and Gaelic language were widespread over Europe from British Islands, Portugal over to Anatolia and Black Sea. By 200 BCE, and with the expansion of the Roman Empire, the only active native speakers of Gaelic were found in British Isles, protected from the Romans by the English Channel and Irish Sea.



Map produced for The Ireland Story. This map may be used elsewhere provided a link is given to www.irelandstory.com, the site is non-profit and the map is not modified.

Roman Invasion of Britain

The Roman invasion of Britain began 43 AD and ended 410 AD. The Romans introduced new Latin words (Vulgar Latin) into usage which diluted the Gaelic language. But perhaps the biggest influence of Roman Invasion on the Gaelic language was actually to “protect” Gaelic language from northern European tribes who wanted to invade Britain themselves.



Anglo Saxon Invasion of Britain – 6th Century AD

After departure of Romans in 410 AD, tribes from Northern Europe - from such locations now identified as Germany and Scandinavia - invaded England and eastern parts of Scotland in 6th Century AD. These tribes conquered and inter-married with the Celtic people. A new language developed known as Old English.

Usage of the Gaelic language in Britain was pushed westwards and northwards. The Gaelic language however was still the mother tongue in Wales, Ireland and most of Scotland. Gaelic speakers from Wales even crossed to Northern France (Brittany) to escape the Anglo Saxon invasion and Gaelic (Breton) is still spoken in Brittany to this day.



Today – Countries and Locations which still speak Gaelic in 2020

So after the Roman and Anglo Saxon invasions of Britain, and after the Norman conquest (1066 AD when France invaded England), and even after centuries of turmoil, Gaelic is still spoken at several locations in the world (Nova Scotia in Canada as example), but most speakers are from British Isles.

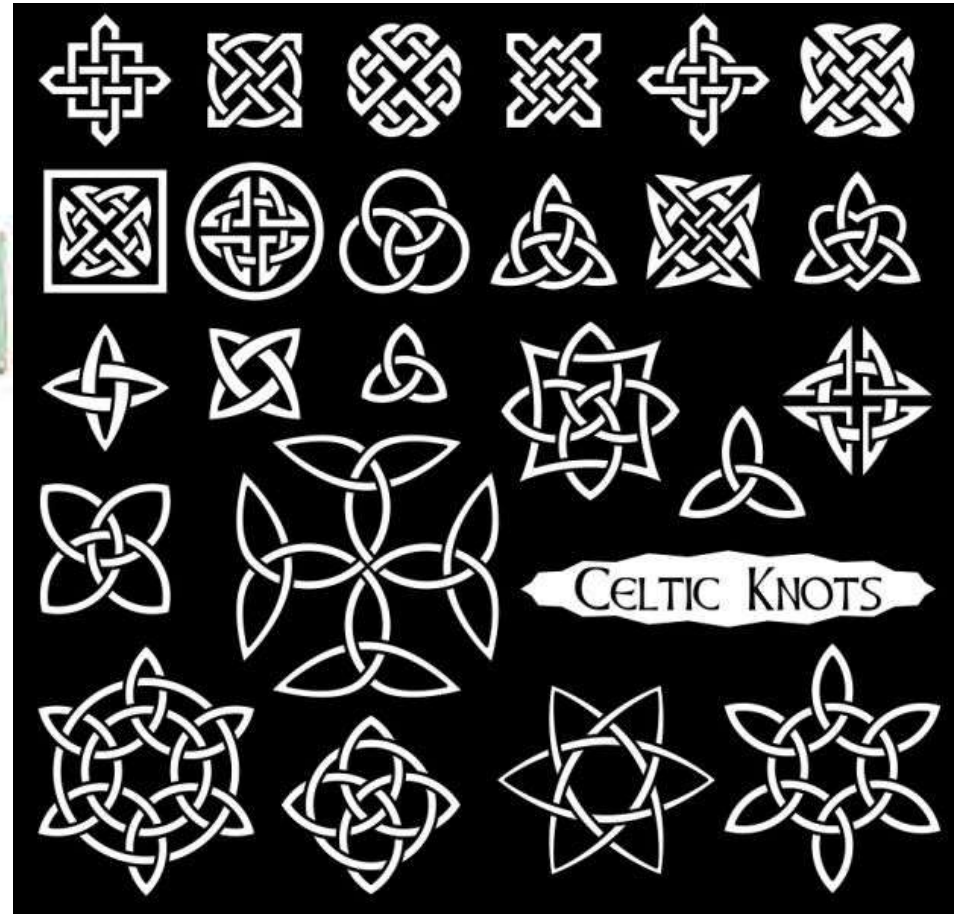
Welsh Gaelic is very strong since it is taught at every school and 30% of population can speak Gaelic. In Scotland and Ireland only 1% of population speak Gaelic and these languages are recognized by UNESCO as “endangered”.

Just over one million people in world still speak Gaelic.



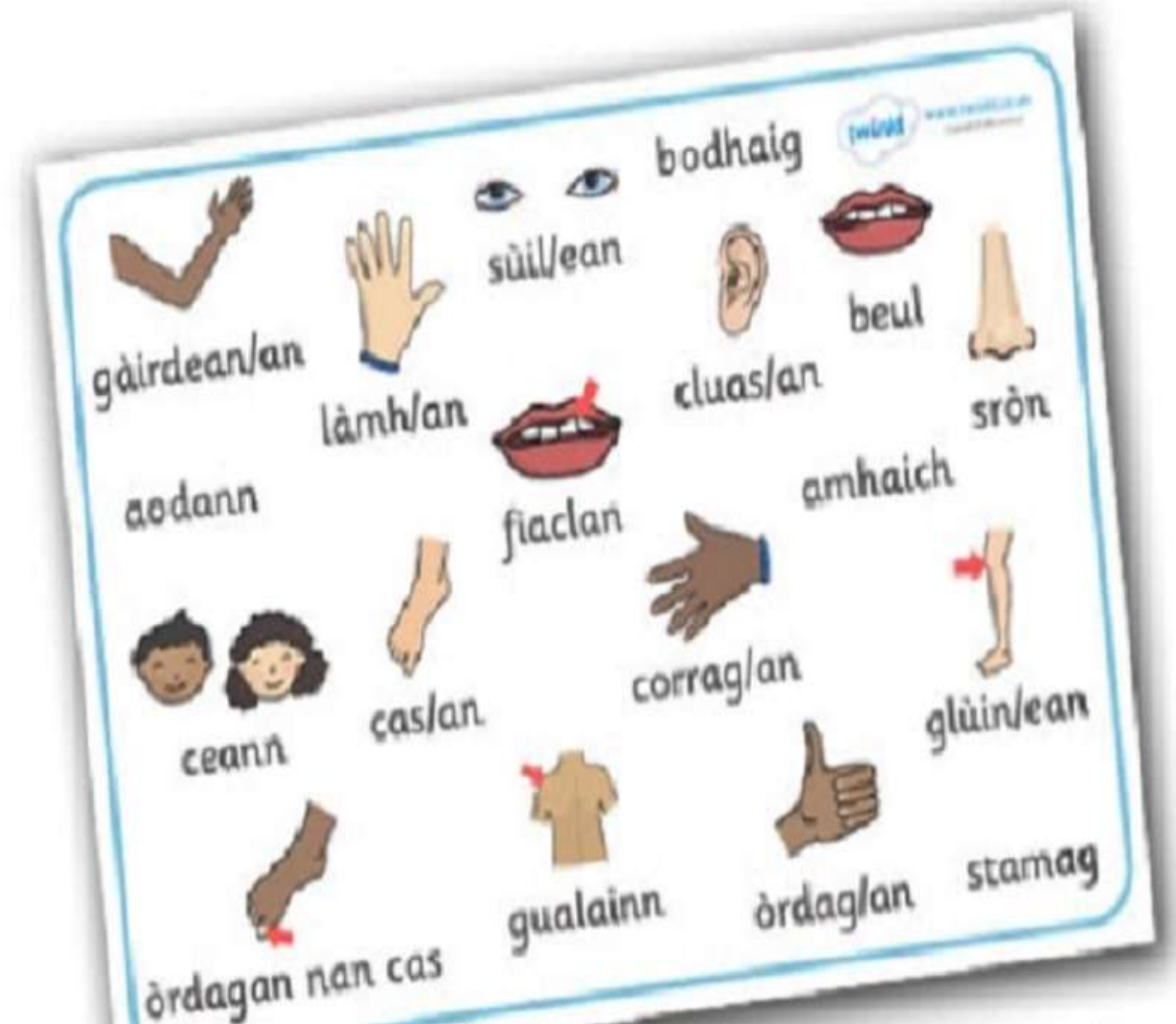
Gaelic Culture Today

Today there is a very strong market for Celtic jewelry, especially made in Ireland and Scotland and very popular throughout the world. Typical motifs are shown and these designs are incorporated into rings, bracelets, earrings, necklaces. Celtic crosses are worn normally on a chain frequently as a symbol of religious conviction. These crosses are also often engraved on head stones especially in Scotland and Ireland.



Examples of Scots Gaelic Language

Shown are the Scots Gaelic names for various body parts. It is noted that these names are entirely different from their English language counterparts. Gaelic is a very old language with no relation to Romantic or Germanic Languages therefore extremely difficult to learn. Only one Russian is known to speak Scots Gaelic – a lady who teaches at Moscow University.



Road Signs in Scotland

In Scotland the Gaelic language is supported and promoted by Scottish government. A typical road sign is shown with the place names given first in Gaelic and then in English. Similar road signs in Gaelic and English will be observed if travelling in Ireland or Wales.



UNESCO short film on Scots Gaelic Endangered Language

<http://www.unesco.org/archives/multimedia/document-1761>