

Leitriú shimplí does what it says on the tin

Thursday, August 04, 2005

I REFER to a letter from Denis Healy (Irish Examiner, July 30) regarding the spelling of my name. The historical background is as follows:

In the preface of the 1904 edition of his dictionary, Fr Pádraig Dinín states: "Many orthographical difficulties present themselves to the lexicographer." It was to alleviate these difficulties that a simplified spelling system by my grandfather Shán Ó Cuív, Dr Risteard Ó Dálaigh, Prof Osbourne Bergin and Tomás Ó Rathaile, entitled Irish Made Easy (An Leitriú Shimplí), was introduced in 1907. Shán Ó Cuív also published several books in the 1920s using the "leitriú shimplí".

My father, Prof Brian Ó Cuív, referred in a lecture he gave at Trinity College, later published in Irish Dialects in Irish Speaking Districts, to the outrage the "leitriú shimplí" provoked. However, he went on to say, "the many critics of the old 'leitriú shimplí' who were scandalised by the spelling Cuív in my name, would have been even more shocked to see for the year 1259, the entry 'Corc mac Fínguni í Kymh d'éc. Beannact era anmin'. The quotation is from the annals of Inishfallen (which were written in Irish)."

Furthermore, in Litriú na Gaeilge: An Caighdeán Oifigiúil, which was introduced by Rannóg an Aistriúcháin, official sanction was given to the use of the letter V at the beginning of a word, for example "vérsa" and "veidhlín".

I hope this clarifies this issue.

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