

WELSH: REVERSED ENGLISH!

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In the February 1984 issue of *Word Ways*, Canadian Jay Ames presented a list of 121 English words which also happen to be Czech words - though their meanings in Czech are unrelated to those in English. Of these 121 words, 54 were words of 2 or 3 letters, too short to be really interesting. That left 67 worthwhile specimens of the genre under consideration.

I have just completed a similar, though somewhat more sophisticated, survey of a language geographically adjacent to English: Welsh or Cymric, one of the Brythonic languages. Instead of reading the Welsh words from left to right, I read them from right to left (I've always been a very backward reader). What I discovered was that numerous Welsh words, spelled in reverse, become English words unrelated to their Cymric progenitors. Since reversals have always been a logological staple, I present my findings below.

I used the Collins-Spurrell Welsh Dictionary, edited by J.B. Foreman and re-edited by Henry Lewis (London: William Collins Sons & Company Ltd., 1960) for my survey. As foreign-language dictionaries go, this one is unusually small: its Welsh-English section consists of only 158 pages, 4½" x 6½" in size. Had I used a more comprehensive dictionary, the resulting list of Welsh words reversed into English ones would have been proportionately longer. Furthermore, had I been familiar with the inflectional forms of Welsh nouns, verbs, and adjectives, I could also have increased the length of my word list - although, perhaps, not very much. Many Welsh noun plurals end in letter combinations such as AU, DD, and WYR. Since there are extremely few English words beginning with the letter combinations UA, DD, and RYW, these Welsh plural forms would not have been particularly helpful in my quest.

A comparison suggests itself. Ames's list includes 67 words of 4 or more letters; mine consists of 69 words - a near coincidence. Ames's list included one 7-letter example, two 6-letter examples, and seventeen 5-letter examples. My list includes one 7-letter example, five 6-letter examples, and nine 5-letter examples. On the whole, the advantage lies with Czech. Whether that advantage is attributable to a greater congruence between Czech and English than between Welsh and English, or to the fact that I chose backward instead of forward Cymric, I don't know. I recommend replication of Ames's and my studies, both prospectively and retrospectively, using many different foreign languages and different sizes of dictionaries, so that meaningful comparisons of the results achieved become possible.

English Word or Name	Reversed Welsh Word	Meaning of Welsh Word
ALEM	MELA	to gather honey
ALIT	TILA	feeble, insignificant
ARAB	BARA	bread
BETA	ATEB	reply, answer
BIAS	SAIB	leisure, pause
CALL	LLAC	loose, slack
CLOT	TOLC	dent, dinge
CRAM	MARC	mark
CRAP	PARC	field, park
DAILIES	SEILIAD	foundation
DAIS	SIAD	pate
DEBRA	ARBED	to save or spare
DELL	LLED	partly, rather
DIANE	ENAIÐ	soul, life
DIDO	ODID	perchance, peradventure
DILL	LLID	wrath, irritation
DINO	ONID	is it not?, not?
EGAN	NAGE	not so, no
FELL	LLEF	voice, cry
FILL	LLIF	current, stream
FLAP	PALF	hand, paw
GARB	BRAG	malt
GENIES	SEINEG	phonetics
GUFF	FFUG	fictitious, false
IDEM	MEDI	September
INFO	OFNI	dread, fear
IRES	SERI	causeway, pavement
LAIÐ	DIAL	vengeance, revenge
LEAH	HAEL	generous, liberal
LOBE	EBOL	colt, foal
LOIS	SIOL	skull, pate
MAGS	SGAM	dodge, scheme
MALL	LLAM	jump, stride
MORT	TROM	heavy
NEATS	STAEN	stain
NELL	LLÊN	literature, learning
NETS	STÊN	pitcher
NEWALL	LLAWEN	joyful, cheerful
NILE	ELIN	angle, bend
NOED	DEON	dean
NORMY	YMRON	almost, nearly
NULL	LLUN	image, picture
OILED	DELIO	to deal
PLAT	TALP	lump, mass
POIS	SIOP	shop
REAM	MAER	mayor
RELET	TELER	condition, term
REWALL	LLAWER	many, much
ROED	DEOR	to incubate or hatch
ROLE	ELOR	bier

SELL	LLES	advantage, profit
SEN-SEN	NESNES	nearer and nearer
SERAC	CARES	female friend, kinswoman
SERE	ERES	wonderful, strange
SEWELL	LLEWES	lioness
SORA	AROS	to await, to tarry
SORT	TROS	instead of, on behalf of
SWAN	NAWS	tincture, essence
SWART	TRAWS	perverse, cross
TIER	REIT	very, quite
URGE	EGRU	to grow stale or acid
WALDO	ODLAW	sleet
WALL	LLAW	hand
WARD	DRAW	yonder, away
WARP	PRAW	trial, probation
WELL	LLEW	lion
WERT	TREW	sneeze
WILDE	EDLIW	reproach, upbraid
WILL	LLIW	color, hue

One three-letter English-Welsh reversal deserves mention because of its extraordinary character: the English word APE, spelled in reverse, turns into the Cymric word EPA - which happens to mean APE or monkey! Also deserving honorable mention is the Welsh word for "leopard": LLEWPART. Spelled backwards, it turns into TRAPWELL, which sounds for all the world like an 8-letter English name of some sort - geographical or biographical, real or fictional. After some searching, however, I was unable to locate such a name. My closest approach was with TRANWELL, a locality in the county of Northumberland, England, listed in the 1965 Times Index-Gazetteer of the World. Note that the N in TRANWELL is only two spaces away from the P in TRAPWELL. Another near-miss was the British surname TRAPNELL, discussed in The Origin of English Surnames by P.H. Reaney (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1967). Perhaps some reader can convert the N in that name into a W, thereby providing the first known 8-letter English-Cymric reversal.