

## ALPHABET

The Irish alphabet is as follows:

a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, l, m, n, o, p, r, s, t, u.

The letters j, q, v, w, x, y, z appear in loan words from other languages, foreign place names, scientific and mathematical terms, etc.

The use of Roman type has become common. Readers who have occasion to use books in Gaelic type should familiarize themselves with the Gaelic forms:

▲ b c d e f g h i l m n o p r s t u

## VOWELS

The vowels are a, e, i, o, u. They are classified as long or short. A long vowel is marked by an acute accent  $\acute{a}$ ,  $\acute{e}$ ,  $\acute{i}$ ,  $\acute{o}$ ,  $\acute{u}$ . If we take as examples the two words *cas* (turn, twist) and *cás* (case, event) we see that the vowel is in the same environment in both words, but short in the first and long in the second.

Many pairs of words are distinguished only by the length mark:

fear (man)	f $\acute{e}$ ar (grass)
ba (cows)	b $\acute{a}$ (bay)
solas (light)	s $\acute{o}$ l $\acute{a}$ s (comfort)

The vowels a, o, u,  $\acute{a}$ ,  $\acute{o}$ ,  $\acute{u}$ , are called broad vowels since they require a broader or greater air-space above the tongue in their formation than do the slender vowels e, i,  $\acute{e}$ ,  $\acute{i}$ . The neutral vowel "ə" (as in the second syllable of the English word "water") is always short and found in unaccented syllables such as the vowel in the second syllable of *capall* (horse) and *eolas* (knowledge) and is not so spelled.

Diphthongs may be described as a combination of two vowels in which the tongue moves from one position towards another. The Irish diphthongs are au, ai, uə, iə.

Irish		English Equivalent
a	cas	lot
$\acute{a}$	m $\acute{a}$ , b $\acute{a}$ d	law
e	te	met
$\acute{e}$	t $\acute{e}$ , c $\acute{e}$ im	say
i	bile, m $\acute{i}$ n	hit
$\acute{i}$	t $\acute{i}$ r, m $\acute{i}$ n	seem
o	clog	son
$\acute{o}$	b $\acute{o}$ , p $\acute{o}$ g	low
u	cuma	put
$\acute{u}$	t $\acute{u}$ , d $\acute{u}$ n	rue
au	leabhar	now, our
ai	aghaidh, leigheas	high, mine
iə	riar	something like dear, pianist
uə	suas	something like Suez, fluent

The following vowel-letter sequences represent long vowels although the length accent is not written:

