A CELTIC ETYMOLOGY FOR
OLD ENGLISH *CLAEDUR* 'CLAPPER'

CLAEDUR is a rare word. It occurs only in the oldest English glossaries, where it figures as *claedur* (Épinal), *cledur* (Erfurt), and *cleadur* (Corpus).[1] Glossing *crepacula* 'clapper', it is itself glossed as a 'board *(tabula)* by which birds are frightened away from cornflelds'.[2]

Although *claedur* is unrecorded elsewhere, it is paralleled by *cladærsticca, cladærstecca, cladærsticca,* and *clederstico* 'clapper stick', which gloss *a-nate,* perhaps a corrupt form of *amite* 'with a rod' (used for bird catching, but taken by the glossator as a bird-scarer).[3] More dubious is a link with *clidernne, clidrinnae.* Pheifer sees these rare glosses of *strepitu* as possible derivatives of *cladær-, claedur,* which he translates as 'clatter'.[4] Yet the fact is that the origins of this whole group have been unclear. Discussing the verb *clatter, The Oxford English Dictionary* notes that *claedur, cledurt* and *cleadur* 'appear to be connected, but are not phonetically identical'. Holthausen in turn relates *cladur-* and *cleadur* to *clidrenn* which he links

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[1] *The Corpus Glossary,* ed. W. M. Lindsay (Cambridge, 1921), 49; T. N. Toller, An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary: Supplement (Oxford, 1921), 127; *Old English Glosses in the Épinal-Erfurt Glossary,* ed. J. D. Pheifer (Oxford, 1974), 13; Henry Sweet, *A Second Anglo-Saxon Reader,* 2nd edn, ed. T. F. Hoad (Oxford, 1978), 20, 29; and cf. *The Épinal. Erfurt, Verden and Corpus Glossaries,* ed. Bernhard Bischoff and others (Copenhagen, 1988). Pheifer was the first to give the correct reading *cledur* for Erfurt.

[2] *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* (London. 1975-), 515; Pheifer, 73.

[3] Lindsay, 15; Toller, 127; Pheifer, 8, 66; Sweet, 9, 10.

[4] Toller, 128; Pheifer, 49, 122; Sweet, 84.

with Gothic *klismo* 'Klingel' (the 'tinkling cymbal' of I Corinthians 13: 1).[1] This suggestion receives no support from Feist.[2]

Since attempts to explain *claedur* as Germanic are unsatisfactory, could it be from Welsh *cledr* or *cledyr* 'stave', which it resembles in form and meaning? The history of *cledr* supports this hypothesis. Welsh *cledr,* defined as 'stave, rod, rafter, beam, post, rail', is cognate with Middle Breton *clezr* 'cross bars under a cart frame', Modern Breton *klerenn* 'latte de bois', Mlddle Irish *clithar* 'shelter, protection'.[3]

Cledr also occurs in early Welsh poetry as 'pillar (of battle)'. Lines written about 800 say of prince Urien, *oed cledyr cat kywlat rwyt* 'he was a prop in war, a snare of the enemy'; in an elegy of the later ninth century, a Powys princess declares her brother was *cledyr kat callon argoetwis* 'the support in battle, the heart of the men of Argoed'.[4] In another context, early Welsh laws in the thirteenth-century Black Book of Chirk value every pole, rod, and rail *(keledderen)* of a house at 'a legal penny'.[5] Another rail or support, the breast bone. is called *cledyr y dwy vron* 'stave of the breast' in the twelfth-century tale of Peredur.[6] Dafydd ap Gwilym (d. 1349?) calls his sword *coethaf cledren adaf* 'the hand's finest handle', showing a context for *cledren* close to that of Old English *claedur* 'clapper, bird-scarer'. Another sense of *cledr* comes in Dafydd's description of a ruin, *heb na chledr na chlwyd* 'without rafter or covering'.[7] William Salesbury's Welsh-English dictionary of 1547 translates *kledyren* as 'a sparre'. In Modern Welsh, *cledr* and *cledren* mean 'stave, pole, pillar, rail'.[8]

[1] Ferdinand Holthausen, *Altenglisches etymologisches Wörterbuch,* (Heidelberg, 1934), 50, 51.

[2] Sigmund Feist, *Vergleichendes Wörterbuch der Gotischen ,* 3rd edn (Leiden, 1939), 313.

[3] *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* (Caerdydd, 1950-), 493; Joseph Vendryes, *Lexique etymologique de l'irlandais anclen: Lettre G* (Paris, 1987), 1201.

[4] *Early Welsh Saga Poetry,* ed. Jenny Rowland (Cambridge, 1990), 421, 478, 435, 487.

[5] *Geiriadur,* 493.

[6] *Geiriadur,* 493; cf. *The Mabinogion,* tr. Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones (London, 1949), 217.

[7] *Gwaith Dafydd ap Gwilym,* ed. Thomas Parry (Caerdydd, 1952), 377, 381; J. P. Clancy, *Medieval Welsh Lyrics* (London, 1965), 90.

[8] H. M. Evans & W. O. Thomas, *Y Geiriadur Mawr,* 5th edn (Llandysul, 1971), 88.

Cledr 'stave' agrees in meaning with Old English *claedur* 'clapper', that would consist of a piece of wood with hinged blocks on each side. Such clappers were used as both toys and bird-scarers in ancient times.[1] They still survive in the liturgy, replacing bells on Good Friday, as with the huge clappers or *matracas* (<Arabic *matraqa* 'hammer') used at Seville that day to create 'a most awful din'.

As regards phonology, Welsh *e,* at times more open than English *e,* was usually taken into Old English as *e,* but also as *æ* (thus *Æsce,* the river Axe, Somerset).[2] If borrowed from *cledr,* English *claedur* and *cledur* would accord with this, *cleadur* in Corpus resulting from later back mutation.[3]

The main difficulty for *claedur* <Welsh *cledr* is *cladærsticca, claderstecca* and *cladersticca* 'clapper stick', where the first *a* is problematic. Yet, if we take *claedur* as a loan from Celtic (and not from Germanic *cladur* with second fronting), *cladær-* could be regarded as showing retraction before a back vowel, which later disappeared through 'suffix ablaut'.[4] The process would be *clædur> *cladur> cladær-*. This coincides with the common sense view that *claedur* 'clapper' represents the original borrowing, *cladær-* representing a later stage, after addition of Germanic *-sticca.*

If these arguments are correct, we can show *claedur* and *cladær-* to be of non-Germanic origin, and thus unrelated to Modern English *clatter* or (?) Old English *clidrenn.* The original meaning of *claedur* was 'stave (with clappers)', not 'rattling noise'. We also reveal a new Celtic loan in Old English. *Claedur* and *cladær-* thus Join *trymide* 'strengthened' (Corpus 577), *sercae* 'tabard' (Épinal-Erfurt 18), *loerge* 'weaver's beams' (Éplnal 1), and *uuannan* 'pallid' (Épinal 576) as Welsh loans in the earliest glossaries. It is curious to see Celtic culture featuring there mainly in military terms and words for tools.

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[1] *The Oxford Classical Dictionary,* 2nd edn, ed. N. G. L. Hammond & H. H. Scullard (Oxford, 1970), 1083.

[2] John Morris-Jones, *A Welsh Grammar* (Oxford, 1913), 12; K. H. Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain* (Edinburgh, 1953), 281-2; E. P. Hamp, The Development of Modern Welsh Syllabic Structure, *The Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies,* xvii (1956~8), 30-6, at 32-3; D. S. Evans, *A Grammar of Middle Welsh* (Dublin, 1964), 1.

[3] Alistair Campbell, *Old English Grammar* (Oxford, 1959), 86.

[4] Campbell, 61; Pheifer, lxiv, lxxix-lxxx.

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