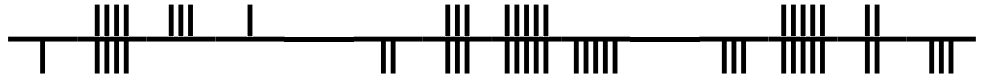
(This file contains characters in the Beth-Luis-Nion font for illustrative purposes. You will be able to read it without installing the font, but you won't see the Ogham characters.)



Beth-Luis-Nion
Celtic Ogham Font

Ogham is a form of writing used by the Celtic peoples of the British Isles prior to the introduction of the Roman alphabet and Christianity. Each letter of the Ogham alphabet has the name of a tree or other plant, and each of these trees had a meaning in the Celtic religion, and possibly in the Goddess-centered religions of the Old Europeans that preceded the Celts. The tree-alphabet was also used by the Celts for divination, but few details were recorded.

The trees and the alphabet are still used by modern Witches (Wiccans), Druids, and other followers of Goddess-spirituality and pagan paths. It is for these that I created this font (although Celtic scholars may also find it useful).

The alphabet consists of twenty letters. Each letter consists of from one to five strokes extending from or crossing a horizontal line. Ancient Ogham inscriptions are generally found cut into the edge of hewn stone, with the edge representing the horizontal line. When the edge is actually horizontal, the letters read from left to right. Vertical edges were usually written from top to bottom, and in the case of a three-edge structure, such as a dolmen arch, the writing began at the lower left, ran up the left side, across the top, and down the right side.

The Beth-Luis-Nion font is named after the first three letters of the alphabet (although there is some disagreement about the sequence, and an alternate alphabet is called beth-luis-fearn). Here is the alphabet, with the corresponding trees:

Ogham	Letter	Key[1]	Name	Pronunciation[2]	Tree	Botanical name[3]
	b	b	beth	BEH	birch	*Betula pendula*
	l	l	luis	LWEESH	rowan	*Sorbus aucuparia*
	n	n	nion	NEE-uhn	ash	*Fraxinus excelsior*
	f	f	fearn	FAIR-n	alder	*Alnus glutinosa*
	s	s	saille	SAHL-yuh	willow	*Salix* sp.
	h	h	huath	OO-ah	hawthorn	*Crataegus* sp.
	d	d	duir	DOO-r	oak	*Quercus robur*
	t	t	tinne	CHIN-yuh	holly oak	*Quercus ilex*

	c	c	coll	CULL	hazel	*Corylus avellana*
	q	q	quert	KWAIRT	apple	*Malus sylvestris*
	m	m	muin	MUHN (like "foot")	vine	*Vitis vinifera*
	g	g	gort	GORT	ivy	*Hedera helix*
	ng	y, p[4]	ngetal	NYEH-tl	reed	
	ss	z	straiff	STRAHF	blackthorn	*Prunus spinosa*
	r	r	ruis	RWEESH	elder	*Sambucus nigra*
	a	a	ailm	AHL-m	silver fir	*Abies alba*
	o	o	onn	UHN	furze	*Ulex europaeus*
	u	u	ura	OO-rah	heather	*Erica* sp.
	e	e	eadha	EH-yuh	poplar	*Populus tremula*
	i	i	idho	EE-yoh	yew	*Taxus baccata*

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1. Keyboard mapping of font
2. Irish pronunciation rendered crudely into English
3. Based on my own research
4. This character was used as "p" in Brythonic languages; the "p" sound does not occur in Goedelic languages except in loan-words, and the "ng" sound supposedly occurs in neither, another piece of evidence that the tree-alphabet, if not the Ogham, is pre-Celtic.

References:

Glass-Koentop, Pattalee. 1991. Year of Moons, Season of Trees. Llewellyn Publications, St. Paul, Mn.

Graves, Robert. 1966. The White Goddess. 2nd, enlarged edition. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York.

The lower-case letters of the font are the alphabet running horizontally, and the upper-case letters are the vertical top-to-bottom forms. If you want bottom-to-top, it's probably easier to create a horizontal string and ask your software to rotate it. Each letter occupies a square space, and there is no intentional leading or inter-character space--this is so that they will run together. The dash character (ANSI 45) is an unadorned horizontal line, and the vertical bar (ANSI 124) is an unadorned vertical line. These can be used for spaces. The actual space character (ANSI 32) is an empty space. Most of the rest of the non-alphabetics (and the letters that don't occur in the Ogham) are mapped to an ivy leaf (gort) modified from a symbol in one of the Corel Draw symbol sets. The font was created in Corel Draw 3.0, and was easy. Someday I hope to do a runic alphabet (futhark), but I think I'll wait until I get Fontmonger.

The Beth-Luis-Nion font, consisting of the True-Type file BLN.TTF and this file, BLN.WRI, is copyright © 1992 by Curtis Clark. It is "freeware"; you are not obliged to pay for it (nor can I imagine any circumstance in which you would). It may not be included in any product that is sold, although it may be included with other fonts in disks provided by users groups or shareware libraries. Both files must always be included, and neither may be modified. That's it for the legal stuff.

If you actually *use* this font, either for religious purposes or for Celtic scholarship, I would like to hear from you. You can reach me on the Internet at jcclark@csupomona.edu. Merry meet!