

# Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

## le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

### Geodha is Geo

*A special programme, in the form of a “letter”, designed for Gaelic learners who already have some knowledge of the language. A short vocabulary and comments on points of grammar and figures of speech are included with the text. If you have comments, Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk). This is Litir 645. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 341 corresponds to Litir 645.*

An cuala sibh riamh an abairt seo? *Tha clab oirre mar Geodh’ na Faing.* Lorg mi e anns an leabhar “Gnàthasan-Cainnt” le Dòmhnall Greumach nach maireann. ’S ann à Leòdhas a bha Dòmhnall agus tha mi an dùil gur e abairt Leòdhasach a th’ innte.

*Tha clab oirre mar Geodh’ na Faing.* Chaidh a h-eadar-theangachadh le Dòmhnall mar “she’s forever gossiping”. Ach gu litreachail, tha e a’ ciallachadh “she’s got a mouth as wide as the geo of the sheep pen”. Dh’fheuch mi ri Geodh’ na Faing a lorg air a’ mhapa ach dh’fhailnich orm, ged a lorg mi Geòdha an Fhaing, le stràc air an “o” agus “fang” na fhacal fireann ann an Uibhist a Tuath, faisg air Baile Mhàrtainn.

Ma tha sibh eòlach air costa Ghallaibh, bidh fios agaibh gu bheil am facal pailt an sin cuideachd. Tha eisimpleir no dhà ann de dh’ainmean Gàidhlig, leithid *Geodha nam Fitheach*, ach tha dreach Albais no Lochlannach air a’ chuid as motha aca. Tha am facal a’ tighinn bhon t-Seann Lochlannais *gjá*. ’S iad eisimpleirean a tha furasta thuigsinn Red Geo, Castle Geo agus Broad Geo. Chan eil leithid Fullie Geo, Selly Geo no Skippie Geo cho soilleir dhuinn. Thàinig iadsan gu dìreach bhon t-Seann Lochlannais. Tha Fullie Geo a’ ciallachadh “geodha nan eun”, tha Selly Geo a’ ciallachadh “geodha nan ròn” agus tha Skippie Geo a’ ciallachadh “geodha nan long”.

Do dhaoine aig a bheil Gàidhlig às na h-eileanan no à ceann a tuath tìr-mòr, cha leig mi leas am facal *geodha* a mhìneachadh, co-dhiù tha dreach Gàidhlig, Albais no Lochlannach air. Seo na chanas Jim Miller anns an leabhar aige *A Caithness Wordbook* – “geo (g-e-o): narrow, usually cliff-bound, inlet of the sea, or chasm in a cliff.” **Cha mhòr gun aithnichear** am facal ann an ceann a deas na h-Alba, agus tha iad gann air cladaichean a chinn a deas co-dhiù, an coimeas ris a’ cheann a tuath, far a bheil iad pailt.

Bha mi ann am bun-sgoiltean Ghallaibh o chionn ghoirid, a’ dèanamh leasanais leis a’ chloinn air ainmean-àite. Cha robh duilgheadas sam bith agam ann a bhith ag iarraidh orra sùil a thoirt air mapaichean na sgìre. Chòrd e riutha gu mòr. Carson nach eilear a’ dèanamh barrachd de a leithid ann an sgoiltean na h-Alba?!

Bha mi a’ faighneachd dhen chloinn ciamar a chanadh iad am facal “g-e-o”. Bha cuid ag ràdh “geo” mar ann an *geology* no *geography*, agus thuirt mi riutha gur e fuaimneachadh ùr a tha sin nach bithinn a’ moladh. Bha cuid eile ag ràdh “gee-o” no “gyo” agus thuirt mi riutha gum b’ fheàrr leam “gyo”, ged a tha an dà chuid ceart gu leòr.

Ach mhothaich mi ann an Inbhir Ùige gum biodh feadhainn ag ràdh “goe”. Agus, ceart gu leòr, chithear sin ann an àiteachan far a bheil sluagh a’ fuireach, leithid Staxigoe is Papigoe. Thuir mi ri clas a bha seo – “An urrainn do dhuine sam bith smaoinichadh air àite faisg air seo a tha a’ crìochnachadh le ‘goe’?” Chuir balach òg a làmh suas, ga crathadh le dealas.

“Yes, yes!” thuir e.

“Seadh?” thuir mise. “Dè an t-àite a th’ agads’ a tha a’ crìochnachadh le “goe”? Bha mi an dùil gun canadh e “Staxigoe” no “Papigoe”.

“Glasgow!” ars esan le gàire. Agus rinn mi fhìn gàire cuideachd!

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**Faclan na Litreach:** Uibhist a Tuath: *North Uist*; duilgheadas: *difficulty*; Inbhir Ùige: *Wick*; gàire: *smile*.

**Abairtean na Litreach:** tha mi an dùil gur e abairt Leòdhasach a th’ innte: *I expect it’s a Lewis phrase*; chaidh a h-eadar-theangachadh: *it [fem] was translated*; gu litreachail: *literally*; costa Ghallaibh: *the coastline of Caithness*; tha dreach Albais no Lochlannach air a’ chuid as motha aca: *most of them have a Scots or Norse form*; às na h-eileanan no à ceann a tuath tìr-mòr: *from the islands or the northern mainland*; cha leig mi leas am facal a mhìneachadh: *I don’t need to explain the word*; tha iad gann air cladaichean a chinn a deas co-dhiù: *they are rare on the shorelines of the south anyway*; an coimeas ris a’ cheann a tuath: *in comparison with the north*; far a bheil iad pailt: *where they are plentiful*; chòrd e riutha gu mòr: *they really enjoyed it*; barrachd de a leithid: *more of the like*; chithear sin ann an àiteachan far a bheil sluagh a’ fuireach: *that can be seen in places where people live*; an urrainn do dhuine sam bith smaoinichadh air àite faisg air seo: *can anybody think of a place near here?*; chuir balach òg a làmh suas, ga crathadh le dealas: *a young lad put his hand up, shaking it eagerly*; dè an t-àite a th’ agads’ a tha a’ crìochnachadh le “goe”? : *what place do you have that ends in “goe”?*

**Puing-chànain na Litreach:** *The word geo/geodha, which originates in the Old Norse gjá, is wonderfully characteristic of northern Scotland, both in the type of landscape feature it represents (an short inlet in the coastline, often surrounded by cliffs) and in the word itself. There are vast numbers derived from Norse or Scots originals in Shetland, Orkney and Caithness but it is also common in the northern Gàidhealtachd. I’ve been able to find 124 examples of place names on the OS 1:50,000 maps which contain geodha in its Gaelic form (it became an active part of the Gaelic language and remains so to this day), and there would be many more than that on more detailed maps. All but a handful are in Highland region and the Western Isles, and the exceptions are all in Argyll and Bute. Are there any in your locality?*

**Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach:** **Cha mhòr gun aithnichear** am facal: *the word is hardly known.*

Tha “Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh” air a maoinichadh le MG ALBA