

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

An Clò Mòr (3)

Each week the West Highland Free Press publishes the text for Ruairidh's "Letter to Gaelic Learners" on BBC Radio nan Gàidheal (103.5-105 FM). Broadcasts are as follows: 2:55pm on Sunday as part of BBC Radio nan Gàidheal's hour-long learning zone, following the Gaelic Learners' programme 'SpeakGaelic Extra', with a repeat at 10.30 pm on Wednesday. This is Litir 1,301. There is also a simpler version – An Litir Bheag – which is broadcast at 2:30pm each Sunday. Litir Bheag 997 corresponds to Litir 1,301. The Litir is also available at www.bbc.co.uk/litir and www.learnghaelic.scot/litir. Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learnghaelic.scot.

Bha sinn a' toirt sùil air seann chunntas mun chlà mòr. Chaidh a sgrìobhadh le Ruairidh Caimbeul à Mionaird air cladach Loch Fìne o chionn faisg air ceud bliadhna. An t-seachdain sa chaidh thug sinn sùil air mar a bhiodh na seann Ghàidheil a' dathadh na clòimhe dubh agus gorm. An-diugh, tha mi a' dol a thoirt sùil air na dathan eile.

Airson donn, bha na daoine a' cleachdadh crotal, duileasg agus duilleag-bhàite. Crotal – 's e sin seòrsa de *lichen* a tha a' fàs air creagan. Duileasg – 's e sin feamainn – *dulse* ann am Beurla. Bidh daoine ga ithe cuideachd. Agus duilleag-bhàite – 's e sin *water-lily*.

Ged a bhathar a' faighinn donn bho sheòrsaichean de chrotal, bha gnèithean eile de chrotal a' dathadh clòimh crò-dhearg no *crimson*. B' iad sin an crotal-geal no *crab's eye lichen* agus corcar no *cudbear lichen*. Tha iad sin **le chèile** geal. Tha Faclair Dwelly ag ràdh seo mun chorcar: *mossy white scurf adhering to large stones, from which the Gael make a pleasing crimson dye*. Tha e a' mìneachadh gun robh an corcar air a thormachadh ann an solas na grèine. Bha e an uair sin air a phronnadh agus air a bhogadh ann am maistir ann an soitheach nach leigeadh èadhar a-steach. Dè th' ann am maistir? Dè ach *stale urine*! An dèidh trì seachdainean, bha e deiseil airson a bhith air a ghoil leis a' chlàimh.

Airson dathadh uaine, a rèir Ruairidh Chaimbeul, bhathar a' cleachdadh conas no conasg '*whin*', ràmh-dhroigheann no *European buckthorn*, fraoch '*heather*' agus bealaidh '*broom*'. Airson purpaidh, bhathar a' cleachdadh feòras '*spindle*', lus na feàrnaich '*round-leaved sundew*' agus crotal-còinnich '*cup lichen*'.

Bhathar a' faighinn dearg bho chrotal eile air an robh crotal-nan-creag, bho rù '*Lady's bedstraw*' agus bho leanartach no cairt-làir (*tormentil* ann am Beurla). Tha an t-ùghdar ag innse dhuinn gun robh e mì-laghail freumhaichean an rù a bhuain. Bha daoine air cus dhen lus seo a bhuain far an robh e pailt roimhe, leithid air machair Bheinn a' Bhaoghla. Bha na freumhaichean a' cumail gainmheach na machrach **na bhàite**. Às an aonais, bhiodh a' ghaoth ga sguabadh air falbh.

Bha na seann daoine a' faighinn buidhe bho thrì craobhan – a' chraobh-ubhail '*apple tree*', a' chraobh-uinnsinn '*ash tree*' agus a' chraobh-leamhain '*elm*'. Bhiodh buidhe a' tighinn cuideachd bho roid '*bog myrtle*', raineach '*bracken*' agus achlasan Chaluum Cille '*slender St John's wort*'.

Airson orains, bha iad a' cur feum air trì lusan dùthchasach – beàrnan-Brìde no *dandelion*, buaghallan-buidhe no *ragwort* agus preas nan smeur no *bramble bush*. Ach tha e inntinneach nach e am facal 'orains' a tha Ruairidh a' cleachdadh. An àite sin, tha e a' cleachdadh seann fhacal airson orainsear – *òr-ubhal*. Gu litreachail, tha e a' ciallachadh '*golden apple*'. Òr-ubhal.

Chaidh mi don fhaclair as sine a th' agam a-staigh airson faighinn a-mach dè th' ann airson *orange*. 'S e sin am faclair le Armstrong a chaidh a dhèanamh ann an ochd ceud deug is còig air fhichead (1825). Tha trì faclan aig Armstrong airson orainsear – 's e sin òraisd, òr-ubhal agus òr-mheas. Saoilidh mi gu bheil e duilich gun do leig sinn seachad na h-ainmean sin.

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Faclan na Litreach: a' mìneachadh: *explaining*; machair Bheinn a' Bhaoghla: *the Benbecula machair*; gu litreachail: *literally*; Òr-ubhal: *golden apple – an old name for an orange*.

Abairtean na Litreach: a' toirt sùil air seann chunntas mun chlà mhòr: *looking at an old account of traditional tweed*; mar a bhiodh na seann Ghàidheil a' dathadh na clòimhe dubh agus gorm le lusan dùthchasach: *how the old Gaels would dye the wool black and blue with native plants*; bidh daoine ga ithe cuideachd: *people also eat it*; ged a bhathar a' faighinn donn bho sheòrsaichean de chrotal: *although brown was obtained from types of lichen*; bha gnèithean eile de chrotal a' dathadh clòimh crò-dhearg: *other species of lichen were dyeing wool crimson*; gun robh an corcar air a thiomachadh ann an solas na grèine: *the cudbear lichen was dried in sunlight*; bha e an uair sin air a phronnadh: *it was then pulverised*; air a bhogadh ann am maistir ann an soitheach nach leigeadh èadhar a-steach: *immersed in stale urine in an airtight vessel*; airson a bhith air a ghoil leis a' chlàimh: *to be boiled with the wool*; tha an t-ùghdar ag innse dhuinn gun robh e mì-laghail freumhaichean an rù a bhuain: *the author tells us that it was illegal to dig up the roots of Lady's bedstraw*; às an aonais, bhiodh a' ghaoth ga sguabadh air falbh: *without them, the wind would be sweeping it away*; tha e a' cleachdadh seann fhacal airson orainsear: *he uses an old word for an orange*; tha 'òr' anns a h-uile fear aca: *there is 'gold' in every one of them*; saoilidh mi gu bheil e duilich gun do leig sinn seachad na h-ainmean sin: *I reckon it is a pity that we [have] abandoned those names*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Bha na freumhaichean a' cumail gainmheach na machrach na h-àite: *the roots were keeping the sand of the machair in its place*. Gainmheach 'sand' is a feminine noun (and singular) and thus we have the feminine construction na h-àite 'in her place'. If gainmheach were masculine I would have said na àite 'in his place'.

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: Tha iad sin le chèile geal: *they are both white*.

Tha "Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh" air a maoineachadh le MG ALBA