

An Litir Bheag le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

An Litir Bheag is a shortened and simplified version of Ruairidh's Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh (also available on the BBC website), designed for those who are at an earlier stage of learning Gaelic. The topic each week is the same as Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh so that, once the Litir Bheag is mastered, a student of the language might wish to try the full Litir. This is Litir Bheag 163 (which corresponds to Litir 467). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

Do you know the names of the fingers in Gaelic? Some [people] call them this: [thumb, first finger, middle finger, ring finger and little finger]. Today I want to look at mac an aba. The ring finger. Why do we call it mac an aba [lit. the son of the abbot]?

I was in Ireland recently. I was in the north, in Antrim. I went to visit a man I know, Brian MacLochlainn. Brian is very familiar with the Gaelic of Antrim. And he knows a lot about the Gaelic that was [spoken] in Rathlin. That island – Rathlin Island in English – is [lies] between the north of Ireland and Scotland.

Brian got information from Alex Morrison in Rathlin. Alex gave four hundred place names which were not on the maps. And he told Brian the names of the fingers in Rathlin Gaelic.

Now, the Gaelic in Rathlin, and on the mainland of Antrim, is somewhat like the Gaelic of Scotland. Mh or bh before a broad

A bheil sibh eòlach air ainmean nan corragan ann an Gàidhlig? Tha cuid a' gabhail seo orra: òrdag, sgealbag, Fionnlagh fada, mac an aba agus lùdag bheag an airgid. An-diugh tha mi ag iarraidh sùil a thoirt air mac an aba. *The ring finger.* Carson a tha sinn a' gabhail *mac an aba* oirre?

Bha mi ann an Èirinn o chionn ghoirid. Bha mi anns a' cheann a tuath, ann an Aontram. Chaidh mi a chèilidh air fear as aithne dhomh, Brian MacLochlainn. Tha eòlas gu leòr aig Brian air Gaeilge Aontraim. Agus tha eòlas gu leòr aige mun Ghaeilge a bh' ann an Eilean Reachrann. Tha an t-eilean sin – Rathlin Island ann am Beurla – eadar ceann a tuath na h-Èireann agus Alba.

Fhuair Brian fiosrachadh bho fhear Alex Morrison ann an Reachrainn. Thug Alex seachad ceithir cheud ainm-àite nach robh air na mapaichean. Agus dh'innis e do Bhrian ainmean nan corragan ann an Gaeilge Reachrann.

Nise, tha a' Ghaeilge ann an Reachrainn, agus air tìr-mòr Aontraim, car coltach ri Gàidhlig na h-Alba. Tha *mh* no *bh* ro fhuaimreag

vowel make a “v” rather than a “w” as in Ballyvaddy or Baile a’ Mhadaidh. The “u” is somewhat like the “u” in Gaelic. They say “cur” rather than “cur” and “rud” instead of “rud”. They say “deas” instead of “deas”. And they say “cha” instead of “ní” in verbs. *Cha robh* rather than *ní raibh*.

Anyway, back to the fingers. Alex Morrison called the longest finger *méar fada*. And the ring finger? *Mac an fhada*. *Mac a’ mhedir fhada*. *Mac an fhada*. Literally, “the son of the long finger” or “the smaller one next to the long finger”. That makes sense, doesn’t it?

Do you reckon *mac an fhada* changed in Scotland to *mac an aba*? Perhaps, but I can’t say for sure. *Cheerio just now*.

leathann a’ dèanamh “v” seach “w” – mar *Ballyvaddy* no *Baile a’ Mhadaidh*. Tha an “u” car coltach ris an “u” ann an Gàidhlig. Tha iad ag ràdh “cur” seach “cur” agus “rud” seach “rud”. Tha iad ag ràdh “deas” an àite “deas”. Agus tha iad ag ràdh “cha” an àite “ní” ann an gnìomhairean. *Cha robh*, an àite *ní raibh*.

Co-dhiù, air ais do na corragan, no na meuran. Bha Alex Morrison ag ràdh *méar fada* ris a’ chorraig as fhaide. Agus air a *ring finger*? *Mac an fhada*. *Mac a’ mhedir fhada*. *Mac an fhada*. Gu litreachail “the son of the long finger” no “the smaller one next to the long finger”. Tha sin a’ dèanamh ciall, nach eil?

Saoil an do dh’atharraich *mac an fhada* ann an Alba gu *mac an aba*? ’S dòcha ach chan urrainn dhomh a ràdh le cinnt. Mar sin leibh an-dràsta.