

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 200 (which corresponds to Litir 504). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleane@bbc.co.uk.

I'm on about Edward Dwelly's Gaelic Dictionary again today. The dictionary is now in electronic format. It is at www.dwelly.info. Dwelly Online. It is very useful.

A guy wrote to me. He said to me – go to that website. Put the word “Caithness” in. I did that. And one hundred and twenty four Gaelic words appeared. Here are four of the words. I chose some which are a little unusual: càl-deanntaig - leaves of the common nettle cooked and eaten as cabbage; criarachan – nest of wild birds before it is lined or finished; geir – pain experienced in the wrist of persons manipulating the pruning hook; agus gnudhadh – the slush from drifting snow in the winter.

Here are another four words. Do you reckon if you know what they mean: marag-geòidh, rùdail, sileadh-sùith and upaig. Well, here is the meaning of those words: marag-geòidh – pudding made in the stomach of a goose, consisting of the blood and fat of the goose with seasoning; rùdail – rumbling noise in the bowels; sileadh-sùith – rain

Tha mi a-mach a-rithist an-diugh air an fhaclair Ghàidhlig aig Eideard Dwelly. Tha am faclair a-nise ann an riochd eileagtronaigeach. Tha e aig www.dwelly.info. Dwelly Air-Loidhne. Tha e uabhasach feumail.

Sgrìobh fear thugam. Thuirt e rium – thalla don làraich-lìn sin. Cuir am faclair “Caithness” a-steach. Rinn mi sin. Agus nochd ceud, fichead 's a ceithir faclan Gàidhlig. Seo ceithir de na faclan. Thagh mi feadhainn a tha rud beag annasach: càl-deanntaig - leaves of the common nettle cooked and eaten as cabbage; criarachan – nest of wild birds before it is lined or finished; geir – pain experienced in the wrist of persons manipulating the pruning hook; agus gnudhadh – the slush from drifting snow in the winter.

Seo ceithir faclan eile. Saoil a bheil fios agaibh dè tha iad a' ciallachadh: marag-geòidh, rùdail, sileadh-sùith agus upaig. Uill, seo ciall nam faclan sin: marag-geòidh – pudding made in the stomach of a goose, consisting of the blood and fat of the goose with seasoning; rùdail – rumbling noise in the bowels; sileadh-sùith – rain percolating

percolating through the sooty thatch of a house and falling in large black drops indelibly staining everything it comes in contact with; agus upaig – old and useless person, one regarded as being in the way. Well, I didn't say that they were PC...

At one time there were three unique dialects in Caithness. Perhaps four if you include the language of the Picts. There was Norse – the language of the Vikings. That language left [died] a long time ago. But there are many Norse place names in Caithness. That's true particularly in the north of the county.

Gaelic was there until recently. People [can] still remember folk in Caithness who spoke the county's Gaelic dialect. Scots is there. That dialect survives. There are many words in that dialect that came from Norse and from Gaelic. And there is also standard English [spoken].

It's a unique – and rich – heritage that the Caithnessians have. And Gaelic is part of it. As we can see in Dwelly Online.

through the sooty thatch of a house and falling in large black drops indelibly staining everything it comes in contact with; agus upaig – old and useless person, one regarded as being in the way. Uill, cha tuirt mi gun robh iad PC...

Uaireigin bha trì dual-chainntean àraidh ann an Gallaibh. 'S dòcha ceithir ma chuireas mi cànan nan Cruithneach ann. Bha Lochlannais ann – cànan nan Lochlannach. Dh'fhalbh an cànan sin o chionn fhada. Ach tha mòran ainmean-àite Lochlannach ann an Gallaibh. Tha sin fìor gu h-àraidh ann an ceann a tuath na siorrachd.

Bha a' Ghàidhlig ann gu o chionn ghoirid. Tha cuimhne aig daoine fhathast air feadhainn à Gallaibh aig an robh Gàidhlig na siorrachd. Tha a' Bheurla Ghallta, no Albais, ann. Tha an dualchainnt sin fhathast beò. Tha mòran fhaclan anns an dualchainnt sin a thàinig bhon Lochlannais agus bhon Ghàidhlig. Agus tha a' Bheurla Shasannach ann a bharrachd.

'S e dualchas àraidh – agus beartach – a tha aig na Gallaich. Agus tha a' Ghàidhlig mar phàirt dheth. Mar a chì sinn ann an Dwelly Air-Loidhne.