

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 275 (which corresponds to Litir 579). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.macleane@bbc.co.uk.

Last week I was talking about the word samh. That's the Gaelic for the common sorrel or sourock, Rumex acetosa. I was saying that perhaps the name came from Polish to Yiddish to English to Gaelic.

People were eating sorrel as vegetables. But how else were they using it? Well, sometimes, they were putting small pieces of the leaf in a salad. They were making a sauce with it. People were of the opinion that it was working against scurvy. There is vitamin C in the leaves, certainly.

When people were harvesting potatoes and they were thirsty, they were sucking the leaf of the sorrel. Sorrel often grows among potatoes. The Romans were also sucking the leaves. The name rumex comes from the Latin rumo. That means [I] suck.

The Skyeman, Martin Martin, went to St Kilda. That was at the end of the 17th Century. He wrote about it in his book A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland. In the account he tells of a man in St Kilda. This man was suffering from leprosy. He had grown corpulent.

An t-seachdain sa chaidh bha mi a' bruidhinn mun fhacal samh. 'S e sin a' Ghàidhlig a tha air the common sorrel no sourock, Rumex acetosa. Bha mi ag ràdh gur dòcha gun tàinig an t-ainm bho Phòlainnis gu Iuidis gu Beurla gu Gàidhlig.

Bha daoine ag ithe samh mar ghlasraich. Ach ciamar eile a bha iad ga chleachdadh? Uill, uaireannan, bha iad a' cur piosan beaga dhen duilleig ann an sailead. Bha iad a' dèanamh sabhs leis. Bha daoine dhen bheachd gun robh e ag obair an aghaidh an tachais-thioraim, no scurvy. Tha beothaman C sna duilleagan, ceart gu leòr.

Nuair a bha daoine a' buain buntàta, agus am pathadh orra, bha iad a' sùgadh duilleag dhen t-samh. Bidh an samh a' fàs gu tric am measg buntàta. Bha na Ròmanaich a' sùgadh nan duilleagan cuideachd. Tha an t-ainm rumex a' tighinn bhon Laidinn rumo. Tha sin a' ciallachadh sùg.

Chaidh an Sgitheanach, Màrtainn MacIlleMhàrtainn, gu Hiort. Bha sin aig deireadh an t-seachdamh linn deug. Sgrìobh e mu dheidhinn anns an leabhar aige A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland. Anns a' chunntas, tha e ag innse mu dhuine ann an Hiort. Bha am fear seo a' fulang leis an luibhre no

His throat had almost closed. Martin advised him about food and exercise. He asked him to take salt with meat. He asked him not to eat too much fat. And he asked him to eat sorrel.

The St Kildan wasn't too willing to eat sorrel. But Martin said to him – look how the fulmar eats it. The man contemplated that. He liked the fulmar. And he took the Skyeman's advice. He ate the sorrel. Within a few days his voice was much stronger. He was getting better.

Now, before you run out, looking for sorrel, here's a warning. Try only a little of it in the first instance. It has a bad effect on some people. Goodbye.

leprosy. Bha e air fàs uabhasach reamhar. Cha mhòr nach robh a sgòrnan air dùnadh. Thug MacIlleMhàrtainn comhairle dha mu bhiadh agus eacars-aich. Dh'iarr e air salann a ghabhail le feòil. Dh'iarr e air gun a bhith a' gabhail cus geire. Agus dh'iarr e air a bhith ag ithe samh.

Cha robh an Hiortach ro dheònach samh ithe. Ach thuirt MacIlleMhàrtainn ris – seall air mar a bhios am fulmair ga ithe. Smaoinich an duine air sin. Bha e measail air an ffulmair. Agus ghabh e comhairle an Sgitheanaich. Dh'ith e samh. Taobh a-staigh beagan làithean bha a ghuth mòran na bu làidire. Bha e a' dol am feabhas.

Nise, mus ruith sibh a-mach, a' sireadh samh, seo rabhadh. Feuchaibh dìreach beagan dheth an toiseach. Bidh e a' toirt droch bhuidh air cuid. Beannachd leibh.