

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 293 (which corresponds to Litir 597). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

<p><i>The Gaelic for Christmas is Nollaig. We say to each other, “Nollaig chridheil dhuibh” for “Merry Christmas to you”. In the old days, there were two Nollaigs – the Nollaig Mhòr and the Nollaig Bheag. The Nollaig Mhòr was Christmas. The Nollaig Bheag was New Year’s Day.</i></p> <p><i>At Christmas people were involved in fun and games. They ate a lot of meat. Here is a rhyme about it:</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">There was never a summer without sun, There was never a winter without snow, Christmas wasn’t without meat, Or a willing young woman without a man.</p> <p><i>Did you get that? Here it is again:</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">There was never a summer without sun, There was never a winter without snow, Christmas wasn’t without meat, Or a willing young woman without a man.</p> <p><i>I won’t say too much about the last line!</i></p> <p><i>Here’s another proverb about</i></p>	<p><i>’S e a’ Ghàidhlig air “Christmas” – Nollaig. Bidh sinn ag ràdh ri chèile, “Nollaig chridheil dhuibh” airson “Merry Christmas to you”. Anns an t-seann aimsir, bha dà Nollaig ann – an Nollaig Mhòr agus an Nollaig Bheag. B’ e an Nollaig Mhòr Christmas. B’ e an Nollaig Bheag Latha na Bliadhn’ Ùire, New Year’s Day.</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Aig an Nollaig bha daoine ri spòrs is dibhearsain. Bha iad ag ithe feòil gu leòr. Seo rann mu dheidhinn:</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;"><i>Cha robh samhradh riamh gun ghrian, Cha robh geamhradh riamh gun sneachd, Cha robh Nollaig Mhòr gun fheòil, No bean òg le dedìn gun fhear.</i></p> <p><i>An do thog sibh sin? Seo e a-rithist:</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;"><i>Cha robh samhradh riamh gun ghrian, Cha robh geamhradh riamh gun sneachd, Cha robh Nollaig Mhòr gun fheòil, No bean òg le dedìn gun fhear.</i></p> <p><i>Cha chan mi cus mun loidhne mu dheireadh!</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Seo seanfhacal eile mun Nollaig.</i></p>
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Christmas. It's very interesting – Nollaig an-diugh 's Bealltainn a-màireach. Christmas today and May Day tomorrow.

The old people were saying – if Christmas were on, say, Monday, that Beltane Day [May Day], that was following it, would be on Tuesday. Christmas today and May Day tomorrow. Is that true? I took a look at the last few years:

2006: Christmas Monday, May Day Tuesday. Very good. The proverb is correct. 2007: Christmas Tuesday, May Day .. mmm .. Thursday. That didn't work. 2008: Christmas Thursday, May Day Friday. Very good. 2009: Christmas Friday, May Day Saturday. Excellent. 2010: Christmas Saturday, May Day Sunday. Great. And 2011: Christmas Sunday, May Day .. mmm .. Tuesday. Well, it works in most years.

There is another pattern. Within the one calendar year, May Day and Christmas Day are on the same day of the week. Between 2006 and 2011 that was true every year. Is there a proverb about that? May Day today and Christmas today as well...?

Anyway, here is a traditional Christmas greeting:

*Let us wish you success and prosperity,
Sleeping and rising healthily,
Your house without a drop of water oozing in,
And your meal chest full.
A Merry Christmas to you all*

Tha e gu math inntinneach – Nollaig an-diugh 's Bealltainn a-màireach. Christmas today and May-day tomorrow.

Bha na seann daoine ag ràdh – nam biodh an Nollaig ann air, can, Diluain, gum biodh Latha na Bealltainn, a bha a' leantainn air, air Dimàirt. Nollaig an-diugh 's Bealltainn a-màireach. A bheil sin fìor? Thug mi sùil air na beagan bhliadhnaichean a dh'fhalbh:

2006: Nollaig Diluain, Bealltainn Dimàirt. Glè mhath. Tha an seanfhacal ceart. 2007: Nollaig Dimàirt, Bealltainn .. mmm .. Diardaoin. Cha do dh'obraich sin. 2008: Nollaig Diardaoin, Bealltainn Dihaoine. Glè mhath. 2009: Nollaig Dihaoine, Bealltainn Disathairne. Math dha-rìribh. 2010: Nollaig Disathairne, Bealltainn Didòmhnaich. Sgoinneil. Agus 2011: Nollaig Didòmhnaich, Bealltainn mmm Dimàirt. Uill, tha e ag obair anns a' chuid as motha de bhliadhnaichean.

Tha pàtran eile ann. Taobh a-staigh na h-aon bhliadhna mìosachain, bidh Latha na Bealltainn agus Latha na Nollaig air an aon latha dhen t-seachdain. Eadar 2006 agus 2011, bha sin fìor a h-uile bliadhna. A bheil seanfhacal ann mu dheidhinn sin? Bealltainn an-diugh is Nollaig an-diugh cuideachd...?

Co-dhiù, seo agaibh dùrachd Nollaig thraidiseanta:

Guidheamaid buaidh is piseach oirbh,

Nur laighe 's èirigh slàn;

Ur taigh gun bhoinne snighe ann,

'S ur ciste-mhine làn.

Nollaig Chridheil dhuibh uile.