

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 307 (which corresponds to Litir 611). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.macleam@bbc.co.uk.

A new book came out recently. It's called "Gnàthasan-Cainnt". That means "idioms". It's a guy from Lewis, Donald Graham, that collected the idioms. He got them from people that belonged to Lewis, Harris, North Uist and Berneray. There's a really good collection [in it]. I'm going to give you an example or two from the book.

Firstly, here are two connected to the sea. Tha coileach air na tuinn. That means "there's foam breaking on top of the waves". Tha coileach air na tuinn. We say "white horses" in English. But "cockerel" in Gaelic. And bha smùid na mara ga mo dhalladh. "The sea spray kept me blinded. You'll know the word smùid, I'm sure". It also means "smoke". Bha smùid na mara ga mo dhalladh.

The best Gaelic-speakers have four things [characteristics]. They have good grammar. They have a good "blas" [accent, pronunciation, sounding of letters]. They have a large vocabulary. And they have plenty of

Thàinig leabhar ùr a-mach o chionn ghoirid. 'S e an t-ainm a tha air "Gnàthasan-Cainnt". Tha sin a' ciallachadh "idioms". 'S e fear à Leòdhas, Dòmhnall Greumach, a chruinnich na gnàthasan-cainnt. Fhuair e iad bho dhaoine à Leòdhas, Na Hearadh, Uibhist a Tuath agus Beàrnaraigh. Tha cruinneachadh air leth math ann. Tha mi a' dol a thoirt dhuibh eisimpleir no dhà bhon leabhar.

An toiseach seo a dhà a tha co-cheangailte ris a' mhuir. Tha coileach air na tuinn. Tha sin a' ciallachadh there's foam breaking on top of the waves. Tha coileach air na tuinn. Canaidh sinn "white horses" ann am Beurla. Ach "coileach" ann an Gàidhlig. Agus bha smùid na mara ga mo dhalladh. The sea spray kept me blinded. Bidh sibh eòlach air an fhacal smùid, tha mi cinnteach. Tha e cuideachd a' ciallachadh smoke. Bha smùid na mara ga mo dhalladh.

Tha ceithir rudan aig na daoine as fheàrr a bhruidhneas Gàidhlig. Tha deagh ghràmar aca. Tha deagh bhlas aca. Tha briathrachas mòr aca. Agus tha gnàthasan-cainnt gu leòr aca. Tha a' Ghàidhlig aca gu math Gàidhealach. Tha beartas anns na

<p>idiom. <i>Their Gaelic is very “Gaelic”. There is richness in the idioms.</i></p> <p><i>Here’s another. Tha e siud a’ fàgail snàithlean fad’ an droch thàilleir. Literally, “he is leaving there the long thread of the tailor”. Tha e siud a’ fàgail snàithlean fad’ an droch thàilleir. Here’s the translation: “he’s not a very neat tradesman”!</i></p> <p><i>And ’s iomadh carraig ris an do shuath am fear sin. “It’s many a rock on which that man rubbed”. ’S iomadh carraig ris an do shuath am fear sin. The translation: “that one’s had a few setbacks in his life”.</i></p> <p><i>Tha i cho faoin ri na h-uisèagan. She’s as silly as the larks. Tha i cho faoin ri na h-uisèagan. The translation: “she’s completely bonkers”!</i></p> <p><i>And there’s another idiom making a connection between women and birds. But this one praises the woman. Thàinig i à nead ghlan. Literally, “she came from a clean nest”. Thàinig i à nead ghlan. The translation: “she came from a respected family”! I hope you all came from a clean nest!</i></p>	<p>gnàthasan-cainnt.</p> <p>Seo fear eile. <i>Tha e siud a’ fàgail snàithlean fad’ an droch thàilleir. Gu litreachail, he is leaving there the long thread of the tailor. Tha e siud a’ fàgail snàithlean fad’ an droch thàilleir. Seo an t-eadar-theangachadh: he’s not a very neat tradesman!</i></p> <p><i>Agus ’s iomadh carraig ris an do shuath am fear sin. It’s many a rock on which that man rubbed. ’S iomadh carraig ris an do shuath am fear sin. An t-eadar-theangachadh: that one’s had a few setbacks in his life.</i></p> <p><i>Tha i cho faoin ri na h-uisèagan. She’s as silly as the larks. Tha i cho faoin ri na h-uisèagan. An t-eadar-theangachadh: she’s completely bonkers!</i></p> <p><i>Agus tha gnàthas-cainnt eile a’ dèanamh ceangal eadar boireannaich is èoin. Ach tha am fear seo a’ moladh a’ bhoireannaich. Thàinig i à nead ghlan. Gu litreachail, she came from a clean nest. Thàinig i à nead ghlan. An t-eadar-theangachadh: she came from a respected family! Tha mi an dòchas gun tàinig sibh uile à nead ghlan!</i></p>
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