

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 318 (which corresponds to Litir 622). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.maclelean@bbc.co.uk.

I was watching a television programme I enjoyed. It was from Denmark. It is called Forbrydelsen. That means "The Killing". It takes place in Copenhagen. It's about murder and the investigation the police make.

The entire conversation is in Danish, with bits of Arabic. I don't speak Danish. So I was following the conversation with English subtitles. But I was listening to the Danish. I was picking up words that are like some I heard in Norway and Sweden. For example, the Danes say tak for thanks, as do other Scandinavians. They say feste for party. That's connected to feast in English and fèis in Gaelic.

And I heard another word a few times, connected to death. It caught my attention because it's like our word for the same thing. That's kiste. You'll understand what it means – a coffin. That's a wooden box in which a person's remains are placed. There's an equivalent word in Scots – kist. The word in English for the same thing

Bha mi a' coimhead prògram telebhisein a chòrd rium. Bha e às an Danmhairg. 'S e Forbrydelsen an t-ainm air. Tha sin a' ciallachadh "Am Marbhadh". Tha e a' gabhail àite ann an Copenhagen. Tha e mu dheidhinn murt agus an rannsachadh a tha na poilis a' dèanamh.

Tha a' chainnt air fad ann an Dànais, le criomagan de dh'Arabais. Chan eil Dànais agam. Mar sin, bha mi a' leantainn a' chòmhradh le fo-thotalan Beurla. Ach bha mi ag èisteachd ris an Dànais. Bha mi a' togail fhaclan a tha coltach ri feadhainn a chuala mi ann an Nirribh-idh agus san t-Suain. Mar eisimpleir, canaidh na Dàn-aich tak airson taing, mar a chanas Loch-lannaich eile. Canaidh iad feste airson pàrtaidh. Tha sin co-cheangailte ri feast ann am Beurla agus fèis ann an Gàidhlig.

Agus chuala mi facal eile grunn tursan co-cheangailte ri bàs. Thog e m' aire oir tha e coltach ris an fhacal againne airson an aon rud. 'S e sin kiste. Tuigidh sibh dè tha sin a' ciallachadh – ciste no ciste-laighe. 'S e sin bogsa fiodha anns am bi dust duine air a chur. Tha facal co-ionann ris ann an Albais – kist. Tha am facal airson an aon rud anns a' Bheurla Shasannaich

is different. Coffin comes from the Old French coffin. Coffin came from the Latin cophinus or "basket".

But how are the words in Danish, Gaelic and Scots so similar to each other? Where did kist or kiste or ciste come from originally? Well, apparently they came from Latin. Cista in Latin means "box".

From the Latin word cista came cisterna, an underground tank in which water is kept. That's the original for cistern in English. And from cista came the Old English cest and the modern English chest. Chest means a wooden box but also the human chest. A chest is like a box containing the heart and lungs.

It's likely enough that the Gaelic word ciste would come from the Latin cista. The word would be often used in olden times in connection with the Church. And Latin was the Church language for a long time.

eadar-dhealaichte. Tha *coffin* a' tighinn bhon t-Seann Fhraingis *coffin*. Thàinig *coffin* bhon Laidinn *cophinus* no "basgaid".

Ach ciamar a tha na faclan ann an Dànais, Gàidhlig is Albais cho coltach ri chèile? Cò às a thàinig *kist* no *kiste* no *ciste* an toiseach? Uill, a rèir choltais, 's ann à Laideann a thàinig iad. Tha *cista* ann an Laideann a' ciallachadh "bogsa".

Às an fhacal Laidinn *cista*, thàinig *cisterna*, amar fon talamh anns am bi uisge. Sin an tùs airson *cistern* ann am Beurla. Agus à *cista* thàinig an t-Seann Bheurla *cest* agus an Nua-Bheurla *chest*. Tha *chest* a' ciallachadh bogsa fiodha ach cuideachd an cliabh ann am mac an duine. Tha cliabh coltach ri bogsa anns a bheil an cridhe agus an sgamhan.

Tha e coltach gu leòr gun tigeadh am facal Gàidhlig *ciste* bhon Laidinn *cista*. Bhiodh am facal air a chleachdadh gu tric o shean ann an co-cheangal ris an Eaglais. Agus b' e Laideann cànan na h-Eaglais airson ùine mhòr.