

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 329 (which corresponds to Litir 633). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.macleane@bbc.co.uk.

I often go to Scandinavia. A short while ago, I went to a Scandinavian country that was new to me – Iceland. I really enjoyed it. And I found something that surprised me. That was how often I saw and heard things with connections to Scotland.

It happened initially on my first morning in Reykjavik. I was sitting near the front door of my hotel. I heard a language I recognised. It wasn't English or Icelandic. It was my own language – Gaelic!

I looked at my son, who was with me. "Gaelic, isn't it?" I whispered to him. "Yes," he replied. I looked at the people who were speaking it. There was a group – a woman and teenagers. They were conversing in Scottish Gaelic.

"Isn't that good," I called to them, "hearing Gaelic in Reykjavik!" I surprised them. They were a group from the Glasgow Gaelic School. They were on a trip to Iceland. We met them again when we were travelling in the south of the island. That was at a tourist centre out in the country. For a few

Bidh mi a' dol a Lochlann gu tric. O chionn ghoirid, chaidh mi gu dùthaich Lochlannach a bha ùr dhomh – Innis Tìle. Chòrd e rium gu mòr. Agus lorg mi rudeigin ann a chuir iongnadh orm. B' e sin cho tric 's a chunnaic is a chuala mi rudan le ceanglaichean do dh'Alba.

Thachair e an toiseach air a' chiad mhadainn agam ann an Reykjavik. Bha mi nam shuidhe faisg air doras mòr an taigh-òsta agam. Chuala mi cànan a b' aithne dhomh. Chan e a' Bheurla a bha ann, no Tìlis. B' e mo chànan fhèin – a' Ghàidhlig!

Choimhead mi air mo mhac, a bha còmhla rium. "A' Ghàidhlig, nach e?" thuirt mi ris ann an cagair. "'S e," fhreagair e. Choimhead mi air an fheadhainn a bha ga bruidhinn. Bha còmhlan ann – boir-eannach agus deugairean. Bha iad a' còmhradh ann an Gàidhlig na h-Alba.

"Nach math sin," dh'èigh mi orra, "a bhith a' cluinntinn na Gàidhlig ann an Reykjavik!" Chuir mi iongnadh orra. 'S e a bha annta buidheann à Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu. Bha iad air turas a dh'Innis Tìle. Choinnich sinn riutha a-rithist nuair a bha sinn air chuairt ann an ceann a deas an eilein. Bha sin aig ionad turasachd a-muigh air an

minutes, there was more Gaelic being spoken there than Icelandic or English.

When we were conversing, I asked them about their trip. They named the Vestmannaeyjar – the Westmann Islands. They had been there the previous day. Their teacher was from Barra. Were the islands like Barra, I asked. “Well, not exactly,” she replied, “but they’re very interesting.” We decided to go there. I like islands. As a Scot it’s natural to be keen on islands. The next day we went to the Westmann Islands. And what a place.

They’re not like Barra. They’re not as beautiful as Barra. There aren’t any white beaches. But they’re wonderful in many ways. And I came across a Gaelic heritage again, as I’ll explain next week.

dùthaich. Airson beagan mhionaidean, bha barrachd Gàidhlig ga bruidhinn ann na bha de Thìlis no Beurla.

Nuair a bha sinn a’ còmhradh, dh’fhaighnich mi dhiubh mun turas aca. Dh’ainmich iad na Vestmannaeyjar – na h-Eileanan Westmann. Bha iad air a bhith ann an latha roimhe. Bha an tidsear aca à Barraigh. An robh na h-eileanan sin coltach ri Barraigh, dh’fhaighnich mi. “Uill, chan eil buileach,” fhreagair i, “ach tha iad gu math inntinneach.” Roghnaich sinn a dhol ann. ’S toigh leam eileanan. Mar Albannach, tha e nàdarrach a bhith measail air eileanan. Air an làrna-mhàireach chaidh sinn do na h-Eileanan Westmann. Agus abair àite.

Chan eil iad coltach ri Barraigh. Chan eil iad cho brèagha ri Barraigh. Chan eil tràighean bàna ann idir. Ach tha iad iongantach ann an iomadh dòigh. Agus thachair mi ri dualchas nan Gàidheal a-rithist, mar a mhìnichas mi an-ath-sheachdain.