

## 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 490 (which corresponds to Litir 794). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk).

*I reckon that English is better than Gaelic if you want to use bad language. We don't have a word like the 'f-word'. But that doesn't mean we don't have bad words in Gaelic. Or bad phrases. They exist, and a small guidebook has come out which is full of them. In addition to swearing, there are chapters about cursing, using tobacco, drinking and sex.*

*The book is called The Naughty Little Book of Gaelic: All the Scottish Gaelic You Need to Curse, Swear, Drink, Smoke and Fool Around. The author, or collector, is Michael Newton. The book was published by Cape Breton University Press in Nova Scotia.*

*Michael Newton is an academic. He is not encouraging bad language or bad behaviour in the Gaelic world – or the learners' community! But he is of the opinion, if people don't have access to language like that, they'll turn to English. Because English is full of the like.*

*People want to have access to bad words and phrases in the*

Saoilidh mi gu bheil a' Bheurla nas fheàrr na a' Ghàidhlig ma tha thu ag iarraidh a bhith ri droch chainnt. Chan eil facal coltach ris an *f-word* againn. Ach chan eil sin a' ciallachadh nach eil droch fhaclan againn ann an Gàidhlig. No droch abairtean. Tha iad ann, agus tha leabhar-iùil beag air tighinn a-mach a tha làn de a leithid. A bharrachd air mionnachadh, tha caibideilean ann mu mhallachadh, cleachdadh tombaca, òl is feise.

'S e an t-ainm air an leabhar *The Naughty Little Book of Gaelic: All the Scottish Gaelic You Need to Curse, Swear, Drink, Smoke and Fool Around*. 'S e an t-ùghdar, no am fear-cruinneachaidh, Mìcheal Newton. Chaidh an leabhar fhoillseachadh le Foillsichearan Oilthigh Cheap Bhreatainn ann an Alba Nuaidh.

'S e acadamaigeach a tha ann am Mìcheal Newton. Chan eil e a' brosnachadh droch chainnt no droch ghiùlan ann an saoghal na Gàidhlig – no saoghal an luchd-ionnsachaidh! Ach tha e dhen bheachd, mura h-eil daoine eòlach air cainnt mar sin, gum bi iad a' tionndadh gu Beurla. Oir tha a' Bheurla làn de a leithid.

Bidh daoine ag iarraidh droch fhaclan is droch abairtean a bhith aca

*language they use daily. That's how it is. But I'll be careful about the examples I give you on the radio!*

*Cursing in Gaelic is connected to death, suffering and damnation, and not to sex, as it is in English. Here are examples: may the Big Man (Devil) take you!; may you die without a priest!; the death of the raven to you! (it was believed that young ravens killed their elders).*

*Here are examples from the chapter about swearing: o son of the Brindled One (Devil)!; o son of Hell (Devil)!; you're a plague!*

*There is also a chapter about tobacco. And there is a poem from Ontario that was written in the nineteenth century.*

*There is no woman, or man,  
Although they were fired up for a  
fight, Who wouldn't turn from  
battle to peace, When they would  
get a smoke from the pipe.*

*We haven't reached drinking  
or sex yet. But we shall – next  
week.*

anns a' chànan a chleachdas iad gu làitheil. Sin mar a tha e. Ach bidh mi faiceallach mu na h-eisimpleirean a bheir mi dhuibh air an rèidio!

Tha cur mallachd ann an Gàidhlig co-cheangailte ri bàs, fulangas agus dìteadh sìorraidh, agus chan ann ri feise, mar a tha e ann am Beurla. Seo eisimpleirean: *gun toir am Fear Mòr leis thu!; bàs gun sagart ort!; bàs an fhithich ort!* (bhathar a' creidsinn gun robh fithich òga a' marbhadh na seann fheadhainn).

Seo eisimpleirean bhon chaibideil mu mhionnachadh: *A mhic an Riabhaich!; A mhic Ifrinn!; 's e plàigh a th' annad!*

Tha caibideil cuideachd mu thombaca. Agus tha dàn ann à Ontario a chaidh a sgrìobhadh anns an naoidheamh linn deug:

*Chan eil cailleach, chan eil bodach,  
Ged bha fiamh is fraoch gu trod orr'  
Nach tionndadh gu sìth bhon chogadh  
Nuair gheibheadh iad toit dhen phìob.*

Cha do ràinig sinn òl no feise fhathast. Ach ruigidh – an-ath-sheachdain.