

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 495 (which corresponds to Litir 799). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

Years ago, I bought a useful little book. The book's title is Gaelic Idioms and Expressions – with Free Translations. It was put together by Duncan MacDonald. He was a schoolmaster at Sandwickhill Primary School in Stornoway. The book came out first in 1927. It's a well from which we can draw examples of good Gaelic.

But there was a difficulty. I wasn't recommending the book to other people because it wasn't available in the shops. But that has changed. A publisher in Nova Scotia has brought the book out anew. He is Trueman Matheson at Siol Cultural Enterprises. He's done well.

The book is not exactly as it was. It has extra things. There are words, phrases and idioms from Nova Scotia. For example, tha e mar a bhiodh ugh air aran 'he is fidgety, unsettled'. Cha dèan seo clò is plaidichean 'this is non-productive work'. And spìonagan 'little snowflakes when a fine, light snow is falling.'

There is a section of short

O chionn bhliadhnaichean cheannaich mi leabhar beag feumail. 'S e *Gaelic Idioms and Expressions – with Free Translations* tiotal an leabhair. Chaidh a chur ri chèile le Donnchadh Dòmhnallach. Bha e na mhaighstir-sgoile ann am Bun-sgoil Sandwickhill ann an Steòrnabhagh. Thàinig an leabhar a-mach an toiseach ann an naoi ceud deug, fichead 's a seachd (1927). Tha e na thobar às an tarraing sinn eisimpleirean de dheagh Ghàidhlig.

Ach bha duilgheadas ann. Cha robh mi a' moladh an leabhair do dhaoine eile oir cha robh e ri fhaighinn anns na bùthan. Ach tha sin air atharrachadh. Tha foillsichear ann an Alba Nuaidh air an leabhar a thoirt a-mach às ùr. 'S esan Trueman MacMhathain aig Siol Cultural Enterprises. Is math a rinn e.

Chan eil an leabhar buileach mar a bha e. Tha rudan a bharrachd ann. Tha faclan, abairtean is gnàthasan-cainnt ann às Alba Nuaidh. Mar eisimpleir, *tha e mar a bhiodh ugh air aran* 'he is fidgety, unsettled'. *Cha dèan seo clò is plaidichean* 'this is non-productive work'. Agus *spìonagan* 'little snowflakes when a fine, light snow is falling.'

Tha earrann ann de sheantansan

sentences and phrases, and another section of idioms. Everything carries an English translation.

In the first section, under ceann, there are phrases like air ceann-turais ‘on business’, air ceann a stocainnean ‘in his stocking feet’ and air a cheann fhèin ‘on his own account’.

In the second section, again looking at ceann, there are idioms like – carson nach eil thu ann an ceann an eich? ‘why are you not leading the horse?’ and thug a’ bhanachag dhuinn gruth agus uachdar na cheann ‘the milkmaid gave us crowdie mixed with cream’. Okay, those examples are a bit old-fashioned!

But there are phrases that are useful to us today. For example, tha e ro fhada na cheann ‘he is too stubborn’, thug e a cheann fodha ‘he disappeared’ and tha iarrtas gun cheann air clò mòr am-bliadhna ‘there is great demand for Harris Tweed this year’ (which is true, I understand!) My thanks to Trueman for publishing this useful book.

goirid agus abairtean, agus earrann eile de ghnàthasan-cainnt. Tha eadar-theangachadh Beurla ann airson gach rud.

Anns a’ chiad earrainn, fo *ceann*, tha abairtean ann mar *air ceann-turais* ‘on business’, *air ceann a stocainnean* ‘in his stocking feet’ agus *air a cheann fhèin* ‘on his own account’.

Anns an dàrna earrainn, a-rithist a’ coimhead air *ceann*, tha gnàthasan-cainnt mar – *carson nach eil thu ann an ceann an eich?* ‘why are you not leading the horse?’ agus *thug a’ bhanachag dhuinn gruth agus uachdar na cheann* ‘the milkmaid gave us crowdie mixed with cream’. Ceart gu leòr, tha na h-eisimpleirean sin car seann-fhasanta!

Ach tha abairtean ann a tha feumail dhuinn an-diugh. Mar eisimpleir, *tha e ro fhada na cheann* ‘he is too stubborn’, *thug e a cheann fodha* ‘he disappeared’ agus *tha iarrtas gun cheann air clò mòr am-bliadhna* ‘there is great demand for Harris Tweed this year’ (rud a tha fìor, tha mi a’ tuigsinn!) Mo bheannachd air Trueman còir airson an leabhar feumail seo a chur an clò.