

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 663 (which corresponds to Litir 967). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk.

Do you know the constellations in Gaelic? That's the constellations. Orion [the great hunter] can be seen throughout the world. In many cultures it's seen as a hunter. In English it's called Orion. Orion was a hunter in the Greek legends.

There are two very bright stars in that constellation. Betelgeuse is in the 'shoulder' of Orion. In Orion's 'foot', there is Rigel. Betelgeuse is the eighth brightest star in the heavens. Rigel is the sixth brightest star in the heavens.

In the middle of Orion, there is a line of three stars close to each other. That's Orion's Belt. In Gaelic – the belt or the hunter's belt. Hanging below the belt, there is a line of three small stars called Orion's Sword in English. To the Gaels, that's the Dirk.

Also below the Belt, next to the dirk, there is a nebula. A nebula is a collection of gases and dust. We call that nebula The Sporrán. The Old Gaels were likening Orion to a Highland warrior wearing the belted plaid.

A bheil sibh eòlach air na reul-bhadan ann an Gàidhlig? Sin na constellations. Chithear an Sealgair Mòr air feadh an t-saoghail. Ann am mòran chultaran, tha e air fhaicinn mar shealgair. Ann am Beurla, 's e Orion a chanar ris. Bha Orion na shealgair ann am faoinsgeulan na Grèige.

Tha dà rionnaig gu math soilleir anns an reul-bhad sin. Tha an Spor Dearg no Betelgeuse ann an 'gualainn' an t-Sealgair. Ann an 'cas' an t-Sealgair, tha an Spor Liath no Rigel. 'S e an Spor Dearg an ochdamh rionnag as soilleire anns an iarmailt. 'S e an Spor Liath an t-siathamh rionnag as soilleire anns an iarmailt.

Ann am meadhan an t-Sealgair Mhòir, tha sreath de thrì rionnagan faisg air a chèile. 'S e sin Orion's Belt. Ann an Gàidhlig – An Crios no Crios an t-Sealgair. Crochte fon Chrios, tha sreath de thrì rionnagan beaga air a bheil Orion's Sword ann am Beurla. Do na Gàidheil, 's e sin A' Bhiodag.

Cuideachd fon Chrios, ri taobh na Biodaig, tha neul-reultan no nebula. 'S e neul-reultan cruinneachadh de ghasaichean is duslach. Canaidh sinn An Sporrán ris an neul-reultan sin. Bha na seann Ghàidheil a' samhlachadh an t-Sealgair air gaisgeach Gàidhealach le fèileadh-mòr air.

Taobh a-muigh an Spuir Dheirg, tha

Outside Betelgeuse, there are stars that are seen, in some cultures, as a weapon raised above Orion. To us, that's the Plaid – part of the belted plaid of the old Highland warrior.

Now, I want to guide you to another constellation. Have a look at Orion's Belt. Follow the line of the belt to the right and keep going. You'll reach a large star called Aldebara. Keep going beyond that in the same line and you'll reach a group of closely-packed stars. That's the Pleiades or An Grioglachan. With the eye, you can see seven stars. Sometimes people call this constellation The Seven Sisters or, in Gaelic, Grioglachan of the seven stars.

If you get binoculars (or a telescope) you can see dozens of stars in it. Astronomers tell us that there are about four hundred of them all told.

rionnagan a th' air am faicinn, ann an cuid de chultaran, mar bhall-airm air a thogail os cionn an t-Sealgair. Dhuinne, 's e sin Am Breacan – pàirt dhen fhèileadh-mhòr aig an t-seann ghaisgeach Ghàidhealach.

Nise, tha mi airson ur stiùireadh gu reul-bhad eile. Thoiribh sùil air Crios an t-Sealgair. Leanaibh loidhne a' Chrios suas gu deas agus cumaibh a dol. Ruigidh sibh rionnag mhòr ris an canar *Aldebaran*. Cumaibh a dol nas fhaide na sin anns an aon loidhne agus ruigidh sibh dlùth-bhuidheann de rionnagan. 'S e sin *Pleiades* no An Grioglachan. Leis an t-sùil, chì thu seachd rionnagan. Uaireannan bidh daoine a' gabhail '*The Seven Sisters*' air an reul-bhad seo no, ann an Gàidhlig, Grioglachan nan Seachd Rionnag.

Ma gheibh sibh prosbaig, chì sibh na ficheadan de rionnagan ann. Tha reultairean ag innse dhuinn gu bheil mu cheithir cheud dhiubh ann uile-gu-lèir.