

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 715 (which corresponds to Litir 1,019). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

Have you ever seen the sunset in a tropical place? The sun sets quickly. And the light of the day doesn't last long after sunset.

But consider Scotland in summer. The sun sets slowly. Light remains in the heavens for a long time before proper darkness comes.

It shouldn't be a surprise, then, that there are many words and phrases in Gaelic connected to the lessening of the light in the sky around sunset.

To begin with – ciaradh. We speak of ciaradh an fheasgair. I reckon ciar is an old Celtic word. But we have another word for 'dusk' that comes from Scots. That is glòmadh.

Camhanach – or camhanaich – stands for twilight. We say camhanach an latha or camhanach na maidne for 'morning twilight', and camhanach na h-oidhche for 'evening twilight'.

There is also the word breac-sholas, and breacarsaich. In Dwelly's dictionary, there is the verb – breac-shoillsich 'glimmer as the twilight'. Breac-shoillsich. Dwelly has eadar-shoillsich for 'glimmer, as

Am faca sibh riamh dol-fodha na grèine ann an àite tropaigeach? Bidh a' ghrian a' dol fodha gu luath. Agus cha mhair solas an latha fada an dèidh dol-fodha na grèine.

Ach smaoinichibh air Alba as t-samhradh. Bidh a' ghrian a' dol fodha gu mall. Mairidh solas anns an iarmailt airson ùine mhòr mus tig dorchadas ceart.

Cha bu chòir dha a bhith na iongnadh, ma-thà, gu bheil tòrr fhaclan is abairtean ann an Gàidhlig co-cheangailte ri lughdachadh an t-solais anns an adhar aig àm dol-fodha na grèine.

An toiseach – ciaradh. Bidh sinn a' bruidhinn air ciaradh an fheasgair. Saoilidh mi gur e seann fhacal Ceilteach a th' ann an ciar. Ach tha facal eile againn airson ciaradh an fheasgair a tha a' tighinn bhon Bheurla Ghallta. 'S e sin glòmadh.

Bidh camhanach – no camhanaich – a' seasamh airson twilight. Canaidh sinn camhanach an latha no camhanach na maidne airson morning twilight, agus camhanach na h-oidhche airson evening twilight.

Tha am facal breac-sholas ann cuideachd, agus breacarsaich. Ann am faclair Dwelly, tha an gnìomhair ann – breac-shoillsich 'glimmer as the twilight'. Breac-shoillsich. Tha eadar-shoillsich aig

in twilight or dawn'. Eadar-shoillsich.

There is also the word iomall-soillse – iomall-soillse. And an fhionnairidh. We have a proverb: Bheir fear na mocheirigh buaidh air fear na fionnairidh 'the early riser beats the evening watcher'. Bheir fear na mocheirigh buaidh air fear na fionnairidh. Get up early, friends!

There is also sgarthanaich for 'dawn' or 'twilight'. Bha e an seo san sgarthanaich 'he was here at dawn'.

For evening twilight, there are two other phrases. Liath-fheasgar – that's meaningful, isn't it? When the evening is turning grey. And iargal. Now, iargal is an interesting word. It's based on iar – the west – where the sun sets. Iar at one time meant 'behind'. Iargal originally meant 'remote district' – from iar and cùl – the behind place. From that, we get the word iargalta – inhospitable, churlish, surly. Isn't it unusual that an ugly word like iargalta is connected to the sunset, that is sometimes so beautiful?

Dwelly cuideachd airson '*glimmer, as in twilight or dawn*'. Eadar-shoillsich.

Tha am facal *iomall-soillse* ann – iomall-soillse. Agus *an fhionnairidh*. Tha seanfhacal againn: *Bheir fear na mocheirigh buaidh air fear na fionnairidh 'the early riser beats the evening watcher'*. Bheir fear na mocheirigh buaidh air fear na fionnairidh. Èirichibh tràth, a chàirdean!

Tha *sgarthanaich* ann cuideachd airson '*dawn*' no '*twilight*'. Bha e an seo san sgarthanaich '*he was here at dawn*'.

Airson *evening twilight*, tha dà abairt eile ann. *Liath-fheasgar* – tha sin ciallach gu leòr, nach eil? Nuair a tha am feasgar a' liathachadh. Agus *iargal*. Nise, 's e facal inntinneach a th' ann an *iargal*. Tha e stèidhichte air *iar* – *the west* – far am bi a' ghrian a' dol fodha. Bha *iar* uaireigin a' ciallachadh '*behind*'. Bha *iargal* o thùs a' ciallachadh '*remote district*' – à *iar* agus *cùl* – *the behind place*. Às a sin, tha sinn a' faighinn an fhacail *iargalta* – *inhospitable, churlish, surly*. Nach annasach e gu bheil facal grànda mar *iargalta* co-cheangailte ri dol-fodha na grèine, a tha uaireannan cho brèagha?