

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 796 (which corresponds to Litir 1,100). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

When would you hear a *sgìùcan*? Well, that's the sound that a [female red] grouse makes. *Sgìùcan*. Welcome to you all. I'm going to look this week at sounds that animals make.

To begin with – *geum*. That's the sound a cow makes. For 'the cattle are lowing', we say *tha an crodh a' dèanamh geum*. Or *tha an crodh a' geumnaich*. A' *geumnaich*.

Last week, I looked at *comhart* 'bark' and *donnal* 'howl' – dog noises. Their is also *tabhann* – a bark or yelp. A' *tabhann* or a' *tabhannaich* 'barking, yelping'.

Do you know the word *mialaich*? That's the sound a cat usually makes. *Tha an cat a' mialaich* 'the cat is miaowing'.

Mèilich is different from *mialaich*. *Mèile* or *mèilich* is the sound a sheep or lamb makes. *Bleat, bleating*. We have a special word for 'the bleating of a goat' – *meig*. *Tha am meann a' meigeallaich* 'the kid goat is bleating'. *Tha am meann a' meigeallaich*.

Cuin a chluinneadh tu *sgìùcan*? Uill, 's e sin am fuaim a bhios cearc-fhraoich a' dèanamh. *Sgìùcan*. Fàilte oirbh uile. *Tha mi a' dol a thoirt sùil an t-seachdain sa air fuaim a bhios ainmhidhean a' dèanamh*.

An toiseach – *geum*. 'S e sin fuaim a nì bò. Airson 'the cattle are lowing', canaidh sinn *tha an crodh a' dèanamh geum*. No *tha an crodh a' geumnaich*. A' *geumnaich*.

An t-seachdain sa chaidh, thug mi sùil air *comhart* 'bark' agus *donnal* 'howl' – fuaim aig coin. *Tha tabhann ann cuideachd – a bark or yelp*. A' *tabhann* no a' *tabhannaich* 'barking, yelping'.

A bheil sibh eòlach air an fhacal *mialaich*? 'S e sin am fuaim as trice a nì cat. *Tha an cat a' mialaich* 'the cat is miaowing'.

Tha mèilich eadar-dhealaichte bho *mialaich*. 'S e *mèile* no *mèilich* a nì caora no uan. *Bleat, bleating*. *Tha facal sònraichte againn airson 'the bleating of a goat' – meig*. *Tha am meann a' meigeallaich* 'the kid goat is bleating'. *Tha am meann a' meigeallaich*.

But back to mèilich. When a sheep bleats, what does it say? In Gaelic, it says, 'Mè mè'. And here is the Gaelic form of a famous verse.

Baa, baa, black sheep, where is your wool? Here it is, here it is, growing on my back. A bag for the master, a bag for the maid, a bag for the little boy who lives up the glen.

That was the first Gaelic song I ever knew. I can still remember my first year in primary school. I was living in Broughty Ferry, near Dundee. The teacher found out that I knew that song. She said to me, 'Roddy, will you stand in front of the class, and sing "Baa Baa Black Sheep" in Gaelic? I was scared, but I sang it.

Baa, baa, black sheep, where is your wool? Here it is, here it is, growing on my back. A bag for the master, a bag for the maid, a bag for the little boy who lives up the glen.

Ach air ais gu mèilich. Nuair a bhios caora a' mèilich, dè chanas i? Ann an Gàidhlig, bidh i ag ràdh, 'Mè mè'. Agus seo agaibh dreach Gàidhlig air rann ainmeil.

Mè mè, chaora dhubh, Càite a bheil do chlàimh? Tha an seo, tha an seo, A' fàs air mo dhruim. Poc' airson a' mhaighstir, poc' airson na maighd', poc' airson a' bhalaich bhig, Tha fuireach suas an gleann.

B' e sin a' chiad òran Gàidhlig a bha agam riamh. Tha cuimhne agam fhathast air a' chiad bliadhna agam sa bhun-sgoil. Bha mi a' fuireach ann am Broughty Ferry, faisg air Dùn Dè. Fhuair an tidsear a-mach gun robh an t-òran sin agam. Thuir i rium, 'A Ruairidh, an seas thu air beulaibh a' chlas, agus an gabh thu "Baa Baa Black Sheep" ann an Gàidhlig? Bha eagal orm, ach ghabh mi e:

Mè mè, chaora dhubh, Càite a bheil do chlàimh? Tha an seo, tha an seo, A' fàs air mo dhruim. Poc' airson a' mhaighstir, poc' airson na maighd', poc' airson a' bhalaich bhig, Tha fuireach suas an gleann.