

## **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 901 (which corresponds to Litir 1,205). Ruairidh can be contacted at [fios@learngaelic.scot](mailto:fios@learngaelic.scot).

*Are you familiar with the word – banachdach – ‘vaccination’. Usually, we say ‘a’ bhanachdach’. Plenty of us received a vaccination against Covid-19.*

*I’m certain you’ve heard of the English physician, Edward Jenner. He developed the vaccine against smallpox. I mean against the disease called ‘the pox’ – or smallpox. That disease was common and caused death.*

*Jenner observed that another disease that was not deadly – cowpox – defended people against smallpox itself. Milkmaids would often contract cowpox. But they wouldn’t suffer from smallpox.*

*In 1796, Jenner took material from a pustule on a woman who had cowpox. He put that in an incision he made on a young boy.*

*Two months later, Jenner did the same thing to the boy. This time, he used material from a pustule on a person who was suffering from smallpox. The boy didn’t contract smallpox. The vaccine was successful.*

A bheil sibh eòlach air an fhacal – banachdach – vaccination? Mar as trice, bidh sinn ag ràdh ‘a’ bhanachdach’. Fhuair gu leòr againn a’ bhanachdach an aghaidh Covid-19.

Tha mi cinnteach gun cuala sibh mun lighiche Shasannach, Eideard Jenner. Leasaich esan a’ bhanachdach an aghaidh na brice. Tha mi a’ ciallachadh an aghaidh a’ ghalair ris an canar ‘a’ bhreac’ – no smallpox. Bha an galar sin cumanta agus marbhtach.

Bha Jenner mothachail gun robh galar eile nach robh marbhtach – breac a’ chruidh – a’ toirt dìon do dhaoine an aghaidh na brice fhèin. Bhiodh banaraich gu tric a’ faighinn breac a’ chruidh. Ach cha robh iad a’ fulang leis a’ bhric.

Ann an seachd ceud deug, naochad ’s a sia (1796), thug Jenner stuth bho bhòc air tè air an robh breac a’ chruidh. Chuir e sin ann an lot a rinn e air gille òg.

Dà mhìos an dèidh sin, rinn Jenner an aon rud air a’ ghille. An turas seo, chleachd e stuth bho bhòc air neach a bha a’ fulang leis a’ bhric. Cha do ghabh an gille a’ bhreac. Bha a’ bhanachdach soirbheachail.

*Why am I thinking about vaccinations? Well, I was reading about the population on a small Scottish island. They received a sort of vaccination against smallpox more than twenty years before Edward Jenner conducted his experiment.*

*The account comes from a journey in the Highlands in 1773. The island was The Isle of Muck. The author wrote that the laird inoculated eighty people. It cost two shillings and sixpence a head. A significant cost at the time, I would say.*

*The account comes from Dr Samuel Johnson, the English lexicographer. He went on a journey in the Highlands with James Boswell. He didn't use the word 'vaccination' – which came from Jenner's work. He wrote 'inoculation'. It was based on material from somebody infected with smallpox rather than cowpox. I'll tell you more about Johnson's book in the next Litir.*

Carson a tha mi a' beachdachadh air a' bhanachdaich? Uill, bha mi a' leughadh mun t-sluagh ann an eilean beag Albannach. Fhuair iad seòrsa de bhanachdach an aghaidh na brice còrr is fichead bliadhna mus do rinn Eideard Jenner an deuchainn aige.

Tha an cunntas a' tighinn bho thuras air a' Ghàidhealtachd ann an seachd ceud deug, seachdad 's a trì (1773). B' e an t-eilean – Eilean nam Muc. Sgrìobh an t-ùghdar gun do chuir an t-uachdaran a' bhanachdach air ochdad duine. Chosg e dà thastan agus sia sgillinn an duine. Cosgais mhòr a bha ann, chanainn.

Tha an cunntas a' tighinn bhon Oll. Somhairle MacIain, no Samuel Johnson, am faclairiche Sasannach. Chaidh e air chuairt air a' Ghàidhealtachd cuide ri Seumas Boswell. Cha do chleachd e am facal *vaccination* – a thàinig bhon obair aig Jenner. Sgrìobh e *inoculation*. Bha e stèidhichte air stuth bho chuideigin air an robh a' bhreac, seach breac a' chruidh. Innsidh mi tuilleadh bhon leabhar aig MacIain anns an ath Litir.