

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 911 (which corresponds to Litir 1,215). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

I'm certain that you are familiar with the word marag 'a savoury pudding'. A black pudding is made of blood. In 2013, Stornoway black puddings received protected status under a European law.

Usually, a black pudding is in the shape of a sausage. But, in olden times, it was made in an intestine. Often, it had a narrow end and a broad end. We'll return to that.

There are different types of marag. For example, there is the marag-gheal 'white pudding' and the marag-choirce 'oatmeal pudding'. And the marag-truisg 'cod pudding'. The cod pudding was made in the fish's stomach. They were putting in a mixture of the cod's liver, oatmeal and seasonings.

There was also the marag-geòidh. That's a 'goose pudding'. Marag-geòidh. It was being made in the goose's stomach. People were putting blood and fat from the goose in it, and additional seasonings.

Marags were important in the life of the Gaels. Thus, the marag often appears in phrases and proverbs. I want to tell you a few.

Tha mi cinnteach gu bheil sibh eòlach air an fhacal marag 'a savoury pudding'. Tha marag-dhubh air a dèanamh de dh'fhuil. Ann an dà mhìle 's a trì-deug (2013), fhuair maragan-dubha Steòrnabhaigh inbhe theàrainte fo lagh Eòrpach.

Mar as trice, bidh marag-dhubh ann an cumadh isbein. Ach, anns an t-seann aimsir, bha i air a dèanamh ann an caolan. Gu tric, bha ceann caol agus ceann reamhar aice. Tillidh sinn gu sin.

Tha diofar sheòrsaichean maraige ann. Mar eisimpleir, tha marag-gheal 'white pudding' ann agus marag-choirce 'oatmeal pudding'. Agus marag-truisg 'cod pudding'. Bhathar a' dèanamh marag-truisg ann an stamag an èisg. Bha iad a' cur measgachadh ann de ghrùthan an truisg, min-choirce agus spìosraidhean.

Bha marag-geòidh ann cuideachd. 'S e sin 'goose pudding'. Marag-geòidh. Bha i air a dèanamh ann an stamag a' gheòidh. Bha daoine a' cur fuil agus geir bhon ghèadh ann, agus spìosraidhean a bharrachd.

Bha maragan cudromach ann am beatha nan Gàidheal. Mar sin, bidh a' mharag a' nochdadh gu tric ann an abairtean is seanfhaclan. Tha mi airson feadhainn aithris dhuibh.

<p>B' e sin marag earbsa ris a' chù dhubh. <i>That was [like] trusting the black dog with a marag. There's a [good] chance that he would keep the marag to himself and that he would eat it. B' e sin marag earbsa ris a' chù dhubh.</i></p> <p><i>As I was saying, a marag would have a broad end and a narrow end. If somebody got more than expected of something, we say he got 'the broad end of the marag'. If he got less than expected, we say that he got 'the narrow end of the marag'.</i></p> <p><i>I'm sure you know the English proverb 'the proof of the pudding is in its eating'. It's good enough to be praising something. But it's by trying it that you find out how good it is. We have a Gaelic proverb a little like that. 'S e moladh na maraige ga feuchainn. The praise of the marag is tasting it. 'S e moladh na maraige ga feuchainn.</i></p>	<p><i>B' e sin marag earbsa ris a' chù dhubh. That was [like] trusting the black dog with a marag. Tha teans ann gun cùmadh e a' mharag dhà fhèin agus gum biodh e ga h-ithe. B' e sin marag earbsa ris a' chù dhubh.</i></p> <p>Mar a bha mi ag ràdh, bhiodh ceann reamhar agus ceann caol aig marag. Ma fhuair cuideigin barrachd na bhiodh dùil de rudeigin, bidh sinn ag ràdh gun d' fhuair e 'ceann reamhar na maraige'. Ma fhuair e na bu lugha na bhiodh dùil, bidh sinn ag ràdh gun d' fhuair e 'ceann caol na maraige'.</p> <p>Tha mi cinnteach gum bi sibh eòlach air an t-seanfhalac Bheurla 'the proof of the pudding is in its eating'. Tha e math gu leòr a bhith a' moladh rudeigin. Ach 's ann le fheuchainn a gheibh thu a-mach cho math 's a tha e. Tha seanfhalac Gàidhlig againn car coltach ri sin. 'S e moladh na maraige ga feuchainn. The praise of the marag is tasting it. 'S e moladh na maraige ga feuchainn.</p>
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