

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 955 (which corresponds to Litir 1,259). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

When does the autumn begin? I mean 'when does autumn begin?' The word foghar, fomhair, foghar [different pronunciations] means 'harvest' as well as 'autumn'. But at the moment I'm thinking of the seasons of the year – spring, summer, autumn and winter.

There was a time when the Gaels called the month of August 'the first month of autumn'. Thus autumn was starting on Lammas Day (1 August). September was 'the middle month of autumn'. And October was 'the final month of autumn'.

The Gaels knew the fifteenth or sixteenth day of September as 'the autumn half-day'. We have a phrase about the weather connected to that day: 'The old people expected, on the autumn half-day, if a stag kept its antlers dry until sunset, that the remainder of the autumn would be dry.'

A few days after that there is the autumnal equinox. That's the autumnal day when the night is as long as the day. In English – the autumnal equinox.

The fisherman and tradition-bearer, George MacLeod – George

Cuin a tha am foghar a' tòiseachadh? Tha mi a' ciallachadh 'when does autumn begin?' Tha am facal foghar, fomhair, foghar a' ciallachadh harvest a bharrachd air autumn. Ach an-dràsta tha mi a' smaoinneachadh air ràithean na bliadhna – an t-earrach, an samhradh, am foghar 's an geamhradh.

Bha uair ann, agus 's e Ciad Mhìos an Fhoghair a bha aig na Gàidheil air mìos an Lùnastail. Mar sin, bha am foghar a' tòiseachadh air Latha Lùnastail. B' e an t-Sultain – September – Mìos Meadhanach an Fhoghair. Agus b' e an Dàmhair – October – Mìos mu Dheireadh an Fhoghair.

Bha na Gàidheil eòlach air a' chòigeamh latha deug no siathamh latha deug dhen t-Sultain mar Lath Leth an Fhoghair. Tha abairt againn mun aimsir co-cheangailte ris an latha sin: 'Bha dùil aig na seann daoine, air Latha Leth an Fhoghair, nan cumadh damh a chabar tioram gus an laigheadh a' ghrian, gum biodh a' chuid eile dhen fhoghair tioram.'

Beagan làithean an dèidh sin tha Co-fhad-thràth an Fhoghair. 'S e sin an latha as t-fhoghar nuair a tha an oidhche cho fada ris an latha. Ann am Beurla – the autumnal equinox.

Bha beachd inntinneach air an fhoghar aig an iasgair agus seanchaidh,

son of Calum son of George had an interesting opinion on autumn. He was from Great Bernera. He wrote the book *Muir ir Tìr*. George reckoned that autumn started on the 23rd of September at 3 pm.

Here are two proverbs connected to autumn. Here is the first: am fear nach cuir sa Mhàrt, cha bhuaib e as t-fhoghar 'he who doesn't sow in March won't reap in autumn'. Am fear nach cuir sa Mhàrt, cha bhuaib e as t-fhoghar. And the second: comharra air foghar math – cuiridh na deargadan a-mach thu 's cuiridh na meanbh-chuileagan a-steach thu! 'the sign of a good autumn – the fleas force you out of the house and the midges force you back in!' Cuiridh na deargadan a-mach thu 's cuiridh na meanbh-chuileagan a-steach thu. I hope you have a good autumn but that the fleas don't put you out of the house!

Seòras MacLeòid – Seòras Chalum Sheòrais. Bha esan à Beàrnaraigh Leòdhais. Sgrìobh e an leabhar *Muir is Tìr*. Bha Seòras dhen bheachd gun robh am foghar a' tòiseachadh air an treas latha fichead dhen t-Sultain aig trì uairean feasgar.

Seo agaibh dà sheanfhacl co-cheangailte ris an fhoghar. Seo a' chiad fhear: *am fear nach cuir sa Mhàrt, cha bhuaib e as t-fhoghar 'he who doesn't sow in March won't reap in autumn'*. Am fear nach cuir sa Mhàrt, cha bhuaib e as t-fhoghar. Agus an dàrna fear: comharra air foghar math – cuiridh na deargadan a-mach thu 's cuiridh na meanbh-chuileagan a-steach thu! 'the sign of a good autumn – the fleas force you out of the house and the midges force you back in!' Cuiridh na deargadan a-mach thu 's cuiridh na meanbh-chuileagan a-steach thu. Tha mi an dòchas gum bi foghar math agaibh ach nach cuir na deargadan a-mach às an taigh sibh!