

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 991 (which corresponds to Litir 1,295). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

<p><i>You'll know the word cathair. Here's what the dictionary Brìgh nam Facal says: Cathair: Suidheachan, mar as trice le cùl; sèithear.</i></p> <p><i>It's thought that the word cathair came into Gaelic from the Latin cathedra. My Latin dictionary tells me this: Cathedra: armchair, sedan chair, teacher's chair. 'Chair' and 'cathedral' came into the English language from cathedra.</i></p> <p><i>This is what is in Dwelly's dictionary: Cathair: chair, seat, bench, throne. The word has another meaning, however. According to Dwelly – town, city, fortified city. Is that a surprise? It shouldn't be. Because there is a connection between cathair and 'city'. Cathair stands for cathedra – the throne on which a bishop would sit. In some countries a 'city' is a town in which a bishop is situated. In English, we call a church of that nature a 'cathedral'. And what is the Gaelic for cathedral? Cathair-eaglais.</i></p> <p><i>Thus, cathair on its own also means 'city'. Cathair or cathair-bhaile. For 'the city centre', we say meadhan a' bhaile, meadhan a'</i></p>	<p><i>Bidh sibh eòlach air an fhacal cathair. Seo na chanas am faclair Brìgh nam Facal: Cathair: Suidheachan, mar as trice le cùl; sèithear.</i></p> <p><i>Thathar a' smaoinichadh gun tàinig am facal cathair a-steach don Ghàidhlig bhon Laidinn cathedra. Tha am faclair Laidinn agam ag innse seo dhomh: Cathedra: armchair, sedan chair, teacher's chair. Thàinig chair agus cathedral a-steach don Bheurla bho cathedra.</i></p> <p><i>Tha seo ann am faclair Dwelly: Cathair: chair, seat, bench, throne. Tha ciall eile air an fhacal, ge-tà. A rèir Dwelly – town, city, fortified city. A bheil sin na iongnadh? Cha bu chòir a bhith. Oir tha ceangal ann eadar cathair agus baile-mòr. Bha cathair a' seasamh airson cathedra – a' chathair mhòr anns am biodh easbaig na shuidhe. Ann an cuid de dhùthchannan, b' e 'baile-mòr' no city baile anns an robh easbaig suidhichte. Ann am Beurla, canaidh sinn cathedral ri eaglais dhen t-seòrsa sin. Agus dè a' Ghàidhlig air cathedral? Tha – cathair-eaglais.</i></p> <p><i>Mar sin, tha cathair leatha fhèin a' ciallachadh 'city' cuideachd. Cathair no cathair-bhaile. Airson 'the city centre', canaidh sinn meadhan a' bhaile, meadhan</i></p>
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<p>chathair-bhaile or meadhan na cathrach.</p> <p><i>The word cadair or cader in Welsh means ‘chair’ but also ‘stronghold, fort or mountain shaped like a chair’. There is a famous mountain in Wales called Cader Idris. That means Cathair Idris. Idris was either a giant in oral tradition or a Welsh prince in the middle ages – Idris ap Gwyddno. Cader or cadair in Welsh is rather like cathair in Gaelic. And both words came from the same root – cathedra in Latin.</i></p> <p><i>But does the word cathair appear in connection with hills or mountains in Gaelic place names as it does in Wales? Well, yes – and we’ll have a look at them next week.</i></p>	<p><i>a’ chathair-bhaile no meadhan na cathrach.</i></p> <p>Tha am facal <i>cadair</i> no <i>cader</i> ann an Cuimris a’ ciallachadh ‘<i>chair</i>’ ach cuideachd ‘<i>stronghold, fort or mountain shaped like a chair</i>’. Tha beinn ainmeil anns a’ Chuimrigh air a bheil Cader Idris. Tha sin a’ ciallachadh Cathair Idris. B’ e Idris an dàrna cuid fahair ann am beul-aithris no prionnsa Cuimreach anns na meadhan-aoisean – Idris ap Gwyddno. Tha <i>cader</i> no <i>cadair</i> ann an Cuimris car coltach ri <i>cathair</i> ann an Gàidhlig. Agus thàinig an dà fhacal bhon aon fhreumh – <i>cathedra</i> ann an Laidinn.</p> <p>Ach a bheil am facal <i>cathair</i> a’ nochdadh ann an co-cheangal ri cnuic no beanntan ann an ainmean-àite Gàidhlig mar a tha sa Chuimrigh? Uill, tha – agus bheir sinn sùil orra an-ath-sheachdain.</p>
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