

## **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 997 (which corresponds to Litir 1,301). Ruairidh can be contacted at [fios@learngaelic.scot](mailto:fios@learngaelic.scot).

*We were looking at an old account about traditional tweed. It was written by Ruairidh Campbell from Minard on the shore of Loch Fyne. Last week we looked at how the old Gaels would be dyeing [the] wool black and blue. Today I'm going to look at the other colours.*

*For brown, the people were using crotal, duileasg and duilleag-bhàite. Crotal – that is a type of lichen that grows on rocks. Some people talk in English about 'crottle'. That word came from Gaelic. Duileasg – that's a seaweed – dulse in English. And duilleag-bhàite – that is water lily.*

*Other species of lichen were dyeing wool crò-dhearg or crimson. That was the crotal-geal or crab's eye lichen and corcar or cudbear lichen.*

*For dyeing green, conasg 'whin' was being used, and ràmh-dhroigheann or European buckthorn, fraoch 'heather' and bealaidh 'broom'. For purple, feòras 'spindle', lus na feàrnaich 'round-leaved sundew' and crotal-còinnich 'cup lichen' were used.*

*Red (dearg) was obtained from another lichen called crotal-nan-*

*Bha sinn a' toirt sùil air seann chunntas mun chlò mhòr. Chaidh a sgrìobhadh le Ruairidh Caimbeul à Mionaird air cladach Loch Fìne. An t-seachdain sa chaidh thug sinn sùil air mar a bhiodh na seann Ghàidheil a' dathadh na clòimhe dubh agus gorm. An-diugh, tha mi a' dol a thoirt sùil air na dathan eile.*

*Airson donn, bha na daoine a' cleachdadh crotal, duileasg agus duilleag-bhàite. Crotal – 's e sin seòrsa de lichen a tha a' fàs air creagan. Bidh cuid a' bruidhinn ann am Beurla mu crottle. Thàinig am facal sin bhon Ghàidhlig. Duileasg – 's e sin feamainn – dulse ann am Beurla. Agus duilleag-bhàite – 's e sin water-lily.*

*Bha gnèithean eile de chrotal a' dathadh clòimh crò-dhearg no crimson. B' iad sin an crotal-geal no crab's eye lichen agus corcar no cudbear lichen.*

*Airson dathadh uaine, bhathar a' cleachdadh conasg 'whin', ràmh-dhroigheann no European buckthorn, fraoch 'heather' agus bealaidh 'broom'. Airson purpaidh, bhathar a' cleachdadh feòras 'spindle', lus na feàrnaich 'round-leaved sundew' agus crotal-còinnich 'cup lichen'.*

*Bhathar a' faighinn dearg bho chrotal eile air an robh crotal-nan-creag,*

creag, from *rù 'Lady's bedstraw' and from cairt-làir (tormentil in English).*

*The old people were obtaining yellow from three trees - a' chraobh-ubhail 'apple tree', a' chraobh-uinnsinn 'ash tree' and a' chraobh-learnhain 'elm'. Yellow would also come from roid 'bog myrtle', raineach 'bracken' and achlasan Chaluim Cille 'slender St John's wort'.*

*For orange, three native plants were used – beàrnan-Brìde or dandelion, buaghallan-buidhe or ragwort and preas nan smeur or bramble bush. But it's interesting that it's not the word 'orains' that Ruairidh uses for that colour. Instead of that, he uses an old word for the orange fruit – that is òr-ubhal. Literally, it means 'golden apple'. Òr-ubhal.*

*I went to Armstrong's dictionary that was produced in 1825. He has three words for an orange – those are òraisd, òr-ubhal and òr-mheas. There is 'gold' in all of them. It's a pity we abandoned those names.*

bho *rù 'Lady's bedstraw' agus bhon chairt-làir (tormentil ann am Beurla).*

Bha na seann daoine a' faighinn buidhe bho trì craobhan – a' chraobh-ubhail 'apple tree', a' chraobh-uinnsinn 'ash tree' agus a' chraobh-learnhain 'elm'. Bhiodh buidhe a' tighinn cuideachd bho roid 'bog myrtle', raineach 'bracken' agus achlasan Chaluim Cille 'slender St John's wort'.

Airson orains, bha iad a' cur feum air trì lus an dùthchasach – beàrnan-Brìde no dandelion, buaghallan-buidhe no ragwort agus preas nan smeur no bramble bush. Ach tha e inntinneach nach e am facal 'orains' a tha Ruairidh a' cleachdadh airson an datha sin. An àite sin, tha e a' cleachdadh seann fhacal airson orainsear – 's e sin òr-ubhal. Gu litreachail, tha e a' ciallachadh 'golden apple'. Òr-ubhal.

Chaidh mi gu faclair Armstrong a chaidh a dhèanamh ann an ochd ceud deug is còig air fhichead (1825). Tha trì faclan aige airson orainsear – 's e sin òraisd, òr-ubhal agus òr-mheas. Tha 'òr' anns a h-uile fear aca. Tha e duilich gun do leig sinn seachad na h-ainmean sin.