

# **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 998 (which corresponds to Litir 1,302). Ruairidh can be contacted at [fios@learngaelic.scot](mailto:fios@learngaelic.scot).*

*I was telling you about an old account of traditional tweed. It was written by Ruairidh Campbell from Minard. After the dyeing there was the almadh or mordanting. The colours were fixed to the wool. For that, the old Gaels would often use cairt-làir 'tormentil' or copag 'docken'.*

*The next thing was the combing and carding. Here's how the author explains the carding: 'The card was two wooden boards ... with narrow iron teeth ... on each board ... The rolags were designed and shaped nicely by rubbing and scraping the wool between the two cards.'*

*The rolags were then spun on a spinning wheel. The spinners were making ceirslean – balls of yarn. Ceirslean. Then there was the weaving. When the loom was ready, the weaver was weaving the tweed.*

*When the tweed was done, there was the waulking. Luadhadh a' chlà. The waulking or fulling of the tweed. Many people were involved. Usually, it's only women that would do the waulking. Those were the 'waulking-women'.*

*The day before the waulking, the tweed would be immersed in*

*Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu sheann chunntas mun chlà mhòr. Chaidh a sgrìobhadh le Ruairidh Caimbeul à Mionaird. An dèidh an dathaidh, bha almadh ann – no mordanting. Bha na dathan air an ceangal gu daingeann ris a' chlàimh. Airson sin, bhiodh na seann Ghàidheil gu tric a' cleachdadh cairt-làir 'tormentil' no copag 'docken'.*

*An ath rud, b' e sin cìreadh agus càrdadh. Seo mar a mhìnicheas an t-ùghdar an càrdadh: 'B' i a' chàrd dà bhòrd fhiodha ... le fiaclan caola iarainn ... air gach bòrd ... Bha na rolagan air an dealbhadh agus air an cumadh gu grinn le bhith a' suathadh agus a' sgrìobadh na clòimhe eadar an dà chàrd.'*

*Bha na rolagan an uair sin air an snìomh air cuibhle-shnìomh. Bha na snìomhadairean a' dèanamh cheirslean – balls of yarn. Ceirslean. An uair sin, bha am fighe ann. Nuair a bha a' bheart deiseil, bha am breabadair a' fighe a' chlà.*

*Nuair a bha an clò dèante, bha an luadhadh ann. Luadhadh a' chlà. The waulking or fulling of the tweed. Bha mòran an sàs ann. Mar bu trice, 's e boireannaich a-mhàin a dhèanadh an luadhadh. B' iad sin na 'mnathan-luadhaidh'.*

*An latha ron luadhadh, bhiodh an clò air a bhogadh anns a' chumlaig. 'S e*

cumlaig. *That is a soap and soda mixture used in tweed making. A' chumlaig.*

*On the day of the waulking, the tweed was squeezed out and put on the cliath-luadhaidh. That's the Gaelic for 'waulking board'. Cliath-luadhaidh. The women would sing a song while they were waulking. Many of those songs are still sung.*

*After the waulking, the tweed was 'air a chur air choinneil' – wound around a large wooden stick. Air a chur air choinneil. Then it was cleaned in a loch or river nearby.*

*Before I leave this article, Ruairidh Campbell gives us an account of the names of the fingers in his own Gaelic. Here they are: the thumb, the first finger, the second finger, the fourth finger and the pinky.*

sin 'a soap and soda mixture used in tweed making'. A' chumlaig.

Air latha an luadhaidh, bha an clò air fhàsgadh agus air a chur air a' chlàith-luadhaidh. 'S e sin a' Ghàidhlig air *waulking board – cliath-luadhaidh*. Bhiodh na boireannaich a' gabhail òrain fhad 's a bha iad ris an luadhaidh. Bidh gu leòr de na h-òrain sin air an seinn fhathast.

An dèidh an luadhaidh, bha an clò air a chur air choinneil – *wound around a large wooden stick*. Air a chur air choinneil. An uair sin bha e air a ghlanadh ann an loch no abhainn faisg air làimh.

Mus fhàg mi an t-alt seo, tha Ruairidh Caimbeul a' toirt cunntas dhuinn de dh'ainmean nan corragan anns a' Ghàidhlig aige fhèin. Seo iad – an òrdag, an sgealbag, an gunna-fada, nic an t-sagairt agus meur bheag an airgid.