

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 1,031 (which corresponds to Litir 1,335). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

<p><i>The word gille is interesting. Dwelly's dictionary tells us that it means 'boy, lad, youth, manservant ...' I would add 'son' to the list. People say, 'here is my lad' for 'here is my son'. We say son of the manse for a minister's son.</i></p> <p><i>Often, gille is added to another element to make a compound word. For example – gille-stàbaill 'a stableboy' or gille-turais 'an errand boy'. In olden times, a gille-airm would keep arms for his master.</i></p> <p><i>There was even a gille cas-fhliuch. That is a young man who would lift a clan chief on his back to carry him over a burn or river. The lad would get his feet wet but his master's feet would be kept dry!</i></p> <p><i>The word gille is also useful in connection with nature. There are animals which have gille in their name. For example – gille-Bride 'oystercatcher'. The bird is connected with Saint Bride. And gille-fionn – that's the 'dogwhelk', a white mollusc that lives on the seashore. I told you about the gille-ruadh – a sort of fish – in Litir Bheag 405.</i></p>	<p>Tha am facal <i>gille</i> inntinneach. Tha Faclair Dwelly ag innse dhuinn gu bheil e a' ciallachadh 'boy, lad, youth, man-servant ...' Chuirinn 'son' ris an liosta. Bidh daoine ag ràdh, 'seo an gille agam' airson 'seo mo mhac'. Canaidh sinn <i>gille a' mhansa</i> ri mac ministreir.</p> <p>Gu tric, bidh <i>gille</i> air a chur ri eileamaid eile airson facal-fillte a dhèanamh. Mar eisimpleir – <i>gille-stàbaill</i> 'a stableboy' no <i>gille-turais</i> 'an errand boy'. Anns an t-seann aimsir, bhiodh <i>gille-airm</i> a' cumail armachd airson a mhaighstir.</p> <p>Bha eadhon <i>gille cas-fhliuch</i> ann. 'S e sin fear a bhiodh a' togail ceann-cinnidh air a dhruim airson a thoirt tarsainn allt no abhainn. Bhiodh an gille a' faighinn a chasan fliuch ach bhiodh casan a mhaighstir air an gleidheadh tioram!</p> <p>Tha am facal <i>gille</i> feumail cuideachd ann an co-cheangal ri nàdar. Tha ainmhidhean ann, agus 'gille' anns an ainm aca. Mar eisimpleir – <i>gille-Bride</i> 'oystercatcher'. Tha an t-eun co-cheangailte ri Naomh Bride. Agus <i>gille-fionn</i> – 's e sin 'dogwhelk', maorach bàn a bhios beò air a' chladach. Dh'inns mi dhuibh mun <i>ghille-ruadh</i> – nàdar de dh'iasg – ann an Litir Bheag ceithir cheud 's a còig (405).</p>
--	---

<p><i>And we have plant names in which there is the word gille. It's gille-gorm or gille-guirmein that we call 'cornflower' in Gaelic. Another name for ròs an t-solais or the 'round-leaved sundew' is gille-driùchd. Literally, gille-driùchd means 'lad or son of [the] dew'. Droplets of liquid on the leaves look like droplets of dew.</i></p> <p><i>The word gille was used so much in the old Gàidhealtachd that English-speakers accepted it as a useful word. It's gone into English as 'gillie' or 'ghillie' – with or without an 'h' after the 'g'. In English, it means 'a man or boy who attends someone on a hunting or fishing expedition' and also, historically, 'a Highland chief's attendant'.</i></p> <p><i>The dictionaries even tell us that gille-cas-fhliuch came into English as 'gilliewetfoot'. Lowlanders used it as a contemptuous term for Gaels who were loyal to a clan chief.</i></p>	<p>Agus tha ainmean lusan againn anns a bheil am facal gille. 'S e gille-gorm no gille-guirmein a tha againn air 'cornflower' ann an Gàidhlig. 'S e ainm eile air ròs an t-solais no an 'round-leaved sundew' – gille-driùchd. Gu litreachail, tha gille-driùchd a' ciallachadh 'lad or son of [the] dew'. Bidh boinneagan lionna air na duilleagan a tha a' coimhead coltach ri boinneagan driùchd.</p> <p>Bha am facal gille air a chleachdadh uiread air an t-seann Ghàidhealtachd 's gun do ghabh muinntir na Beurla ris mar fhacal feumail. Tha e air a dhol a-steach don Bheurla mar 'gillie' no 'ghillie' – le, no às aonais, 'h' an dèidh an 'g'. Ann am Beurla, tha e a' ciallachadh 'a man or boy who attends someone on a hunting or fishing expedition' agus cuideachd, gu h-eachdraidheil, 'a Highland chief's attendant'.</p> <p>Tha na faclairean eadhon ag innse dhuinn gun tàinig gille-cas-fhliuch a-steach don Bheurla mar gilliewetfoot. Bha na Goill ga chleachdadh mar fhacal tàireil airson Gàidheil a bha dìleas do cheann-cinnidh.</p>
---	---