

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 1,074 (which corresponds to Litir 1,378). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

I was reading a poem from Perthshire in which the poet mentions rùrachd – foraging. It's Margaret MacGregor that wrote it. Margaret was alive in the 18th and 19th centuries.

She was raised in Highlands among the Gaels. Her father was from the Braes of Rannoch. When she went to education and a profession in the City of Perth, she was homesick – and she wrote about it. Here are two verses from one poem she wrote. Listen for the words – dearcan 'berries' and meas 'fruit':

Initially I was for a while without dejection or weariness,

Sewing all day and thinking of nothing,

Until I heard about berries being sold for a price,

I suddenly remembered Coire Bhacaidh of the deer.

It's a shame not to be in Leitir Dhubh Lachlainn, that's where I would quench my desire,

Many fruits would be got there, without anybody asking their price;

A beloved corrie where fish and venison are plentiful,

Bha mi a' leughadh dàn à Siorrachd Pheairt anns a bheil am bàrd a' dèanamh iomradh air rùrachd – foraging. 'S i Mairearad Ghriogarach a sgrìobh e. Bha Mairearad beò anns an ochdamh agus naoidheamh linn deug.

Thogadh i ann an Garbh-chrìochan Pheairt am measg nan Gàidheal. Bha a hathair à Braigh Raineach. Nuair a chaidh i gu foghlam agus dreuchd ann am Baile Pheairt, bha an cianalas oirre – agus sgrìobh i mu dheidhinn. Seo dà rann à aon dàn a sgrìobh i. Èistibh airson nam faclan – dearcan 'berries' agus meas 'fruit':

Thug mi tamall an toiseach gun sprochd orm no sgèths,

Rè an latha ri fuaigheal, gun smuaineach' air nì,

Gus an cual' mi na dearcan bhith gan reic airson fiach,

Ghrad-bhuaile am bheachd-sa, Coire Bhacaidh nam fiadh.

'S truagh gun bhith an Leitir Dhubh Lachlainn, 's ann a chaisginn mo mhiann,

Gheibhte iomadach meas ann, gun neach a' farraid am prìs;

Coire gaolach mo chridh' am biodh iasg is sitheann gun dìth,

<p><i>Whey and milk [are] without scarcity rather than drops of tea.</i></p> <p><i>Margaret was obtaining berries free of charge in the Highlands. She was pained that people were paying for them in Perth.</i></p> <p><i>This poem came to my attention when I was reading the book I mentioned in the last Litir – ‘Travels in Another Country: A Guide to Gaelic Scotland’ by Coinneach Maclean. The book is full of information about the heritage of the Gaels. The information will be useful to anybody who is dealing with tourists.</i></p> <p><i>In his account of Perthshire, Coinneach tells us a lot about Gaelic in that area. Margaret MacGregor’s poetry is among that.</i></p> <p><i>The author tells us how he heard a guide telling tourists there was nothing of value between Inverness and Perth. Coinneach puts that right!</i></p> <p><i>When we hear people demonstrating ignorance about Gaelic, we can direct them to this book. It gives us valuable information about the heritage of Gaelic throughout Gaelic Scotland.</i></p>	<p><i>Meug is bainne gun airceas, ’s cha b’ iad na drapagan tì.</i></p> <p>Bha Mairearad a’ faighinn dearcan an-asgaidh sna Garbh-chrìochan. Bha i air a tàmailteachadh gun robh daoine a’ pàigheadh air an son ann am Baile Pheairt.</p> <p>Thàinig an dàn seo gu m’ aire nuair a bha mi a’ leughadh an leabhair a dh’ainmich mi anns an Litir mu dheireadh – <i>Travels in Another Country: A Guide to Gaelic Scotland</i> le Coinneach MacGill-Eain. Tha an leabhar làn fiosrachaidh mu dhualchas nan Gàidheal. Bidh am fiosrachadh feumail do dhuine sam bith a tha a’ frithealadh luchd-turais.</p> <p>Na chunntas mu Shiorrachd Pheairt, tha Coinneach ag innse dhuinn tòrr mun Ghàidhlig anns an sgìre sin. Tha bàrdachd Mairearad Ghriogarach am measg sin.</p> <p>Tha an t-ùghdar ag innse dhuinn mar a chuala e neach-iùil ag innse do luchd-turais nach robh càil a b’ fhiach eadar Inbhir Nis agus Peairt. Tha Coinneach còir a’ cur sin ceart!</p> <p>Nuair a chluinneas sinn daoine a’ dearbhadh aineolas mun Ghàidhlig, faodaidh sinn an stiùireadh chun an leabhair seo. Tha e a’ toirt dhuinn fiosrachadh luachmhor mu dhualchas na Gàidhlig air feadh Alba nan Gàidheal.</p>
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