

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 1,097 (which corresponds to Litir 1,401). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

The Ollamh Muileach was a famous physician who appears in the history and oral tradition of Mull. He belonged to the Peutanaich – the Beatons. That kindred first appears in the historical record of Scotland in the 14th century.

The Lord of the Isles, Angus Òg, married an Irishwoman, Agnes Ó Catháin. Agnes brought with her a squad of Irish folk. They came to live in Scotland. Among them were Beatons. They were already skilled as physicians.

In the 15th century, there were Beaton physicians on Islay. In the 16th century, some were living on Mull. They had land in Pennycross. That is near Pennyghael in the south of the island.

The cross in the place-name is still there. Its name in English is 'Beaton's Cross'. In Gaelic – Crois an Ollaimh. The Ollamh Muileach, indeed.

A year or two back an excellent book appeared in print. That is 'Hebridean Healers: The Beatons of Mull'. In the book,

Bha an t-Ollamh Muileach na lighiche ainmeil a tha a' nochdadh ann an eachdraidh agus beul-aithris Mhuile. Bhuineadh e do na Peutanaich – na Beatons. Tha an cinneadh sin a' nochdadh an toiseach ann an clàr eachdraidh na h-Alba anns a' cheathramh linn deug.

Phòs Triath nan Eilean [*The Lord of the Isles*], Aonghas Òg, tè Èireannach, Agnes Ó Catháin. Thug Agnes leatha squad de dh'Èireannaich. Thàinig iad a dh'fhuireach ann an Alba. Nam measg bha Peutanaich. Bha iad mu-thrath sgileil mar lighichean.

Anns a' chòigeamh linn deug, bha lighichean Peutanach ann an Ìle. Anns an t-siathamh linn deug, bha feadhainn a' fuireach ann am Muile. Bha fearann aca ann am Peighinn na Croise. Tha sin faisg air Peighinn a' Ghàidheil ann an ceann a deas an eilein.

Tha a' chrois anns an ainm-àite fhathast ann. 'S e *Beaton's Cross* an t-ainm oirre ann am Beurla. Ann an Gàidhlig – 'Crois an Ollaimh'. An t-Ollamh Muileach, gu dearbh.

Bliadhna no dhà air ais, nochd leabhar air leth math ann an clò. 'S e sin *Hebridean Healers: The Beatons of Mull*. Anns an leabhar, tha dealbhan

pictures and maps show where the physicians' herb [physic] garden was.

People in Scotland should be more familiar with the Mull physicians. They were top-class medical scholars. The Asian scholar, Avicenna, wrote an important book in the 11th century. That was 'The Book of Healing'. It was written in Arabic. The Beatons had copies of it. But what language were they in? It was Gaelic. That shows that the Mull physicians were using Gaelic in their work and scholarship.

'Hebridean Healers' tells us that Gaelic medical treatment in medieval times was based to a large extent on the old classical texts. They were from other countries and translated into Gaelic.

In time, however, the Gaelic physicians wrote their own documents and booklets – in Gaelic. Some of them today are in museums in Scotland and England. They contain great riches.

agus mapaichean a' sealltainn far an robh leas luibheach nan lighichean.

Bu chòir do dhaoine ann an Alba a bhith nas eòlaiche air na lighichean Muileach.'S e sàr-sgoilearan meidigeach a bha annta. Sgrìobh an sgoilear Àisianach, Avicenna, leabhar cudromach anns an aonamh linn deug. B' e sin *Leabhar an t-Slànachaidh* no *The Book of Healing*. Bha e air a sgrìobhadh ann an Arabais. Bha lethbhreacan dheth aig na Peutanaich. Ach dè an cànan anns an robh iad? Bha – a' Ghàidhlig. Tha sin a' sealltainn gun robh na lighichean Muileach a' cleachdadh na Gàidhlig anns an obair agus sgoilearachd aca.

Tha *Hebridean Healers* ag innse dhuinn gun robh leigheas Gàidhealach anns na meadhan-aoisean stèidhichte gu mòr air na seann teacsaichean clasaigeach. Bha iad à dùthchannan eile, agus air an eadar-theangachadh gu Gàidhlig.

Tro thìde, ge-tà, sgrìobh na lighichean Gàidhealach làmh-sgrìobhainnean agus leabhrannan aca fhèin – ann an Gàidhlig. Tha cuid dhiubh an-diugh ann an taighean-tasgaidh ann an Alba is Sasainn. Tha beartas mòr nam broinn.