

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 1,102 (which corresponds to Litir 1,406). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

When the Winter Olympic Games were happening, I was captivated by the curling. The four Scottish men who were representing [Great] Britain won a silver medal.

In Litrichean Beaga 145 and 146, I told you about a Gaelic song from the nineteenth century that was about curling. It was written by Paul Cameron from Blair Atholl. Curling was strong in the Gaelic-speaking communities in the Central Highlands.

The song's title is An Sguabag Bhealaidh 'the broom brush'. The Gaels were making their curling brushes with broom [the plant]. In the other Litrichean, I told you about the Gaelic vocabulary connected with the sport. I would like, in this Litir, to expand that a little.

Spèil means 'slip, slide, skate'. Bha mi a' spèileadh air an lochan rèite 'I was skating on the frozen lochan'. It's thought that spèil came from the Scots language. In Scots, spiel means 'a game or play'. It is often used in connection with curling. Spiel – a local curling game; bonspiel – a match between parishes or districts.

Nuair a bha Geamannan Oilimpigeach a' Gheamhraidh a' dol, bha mi air mo bheòghlachadh leis a' chròladh. Bhuannaich an ceathrar fhear Albannach a bha a' riochdachadh Bhreatainn bonn airgid.

Ann an Litrichean Beaga ceud, ceathrad 's a còig (145) agus ceud, ceathrad 's a sia (146), dh'inns mi dhuibh mu òran Gàidhlig on naoidheamh linn deug a bha mu chròladh. Bha e air a sgrìobhadh le Pòl Camshron à Blàr Athall. Bha cròladh làidir anns na coimhearsnachdan Gàidhealach ann am meadhan na Gàidhealtachd.

'S e tìotal an òrain *An Sguabag Bhealaidh 'the broom brush'*. Bha na Gàidheil a' dèanamh an sguabagan cròlaidh de bhealaidh. Anns na Litrichean eile, dh'inns mi dhuibh mun bhriathrachas Ghàidhlig co-cheangailte ris an spòrs. Bu mhath leam, ann an Litir seo, sin a leudachadh beagan.

Tha *spèil* a' ciallachadh '*slip, slide, skate*'. Bha mi a' spèileadh air an lochan rèite '*I was skating on the frozen lochan*'. Thathar a' smaoinichadh gun tàinig *spèil* bho Albais. Ann an Albais, tha *spiel* a' ciallachadh '*a game or play*'. Tha e air a chleachdadh gu tric ann an co-cheangal ri cròladh. *Spiel* – a local curling game; *bonspiel* – a match between parishes or districts.

The Gaels were often hearing 'spiel' in connection with curling and ice-sports. It came into Gaelic as spèil, but with a special meaning connected to ice.

Crò means 'a circle' – and a place where cattle or sheep would be kept together. In past times, cròthan were usually round. And, in curling, the stones are gathered together in the 'house' or in the 'rings' which are round.

It's the stone closest to the middle of the house that wins a game. In English the middle of the house is the 'tee' or 'pin'. In Gaelic, the bioraid. When people were playing on a frozen loch, a bottle or bioraid would be there. The curlers would thus see where they were aiming.

Around the tee is the Button, a circle which is a foot in extent. In Gaelic, this is Sùil na Cuirteig 'the eye of the house'. Sùil na Cuirteig.

Bha na Gàidheil a' cluinntinn 'spiel' gu tric ann an co-cheangal ri cròladh agus spòrs-deighe. Thàinig e a-steach don Ghàidhlig mar spèil, ach le ciall shònraichte co-cheangailte ri deigh.

Tha crò a' ciallachadh 'cearcall' – agus àite far am bi crodh no caoraich air an cumail còmhla. Anns an t-seann aimsir, bha cròthan mar bu trice cruinn. Agus, ann an cròladh, bidh na clachan air an cròthadh còmhla anns an 'taigh' no anns a' 'chuirteig', a tha cruinn.

'S e a' chlach as fhaisge air meadhan na cuairteig a bhuannaicheas geama. Ann am Beurla, 's e meadhan na cuairteig 'the tee' no 'pin'. Ann an Gàidhlig, a' bhioraid. Nuair a bha daoine a' cluich air loch reòite bhiodh botal no bioraid an sin. Chitheadh na cròlaichean, mar sin, far an robh iad ag amas.

Timcheall na bioraid, tha 'The Button', cearcall le leud de throigh. Ann an Gàidhlig, 's e sin Sùil na Cuirteig 'the eye of the house'. Sùil na Cuirteig.