

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 1,106 (which corresponds to Litir 1,410). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

<i>I was telling you about the 'spàin de dh'adharc bheò'. Spoon of living horn – spàin de dh'adharc bheò. It was used in a cure. The Rev. Alexander Stewart, 'Nether Lochaber', wrote about it in his column in the Inverness Courier. That was in January 1872.</i> <i>It was thought that it was an old practice that had gone out of existence. But, in his next column, in February, Nether Lochaber wrote about a letter he received from a reader. 'D.R.' was from Croick in [East] Sutherland; He wrote that that practice was still known in his area.</i> <i>One of his neighbours had a spoon of that type. It was made just two years before. The horn came from a cow that was six years old. She was still alive. She had two calves. She lost the horn in an 'accident', when she was fighting with another cow. All of that means that a spoon [made] of her horn was very auspicious.</i> <i>In olden times, the people were believing that a spoon of that type could defeat any disease. But, in Croick, in the 19th century, they</i>	<i>Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mun 'spàin de dh'adharc bheò'. Spoon of living horn – spàin de dh'adharc bheò. Bha i air a cleachdadh ann an leigheas. Sgrìobh an t-Urramach Alasdair Stiùbhart, 'Nether Lochaber', mu a deidhinn anns a' cholbh aige ann an Courier Inbhir Nis. Bha sin anns an Fhaoilleach ann an ochd ceud deug, seachdad 's a dhà (1872).</i> <i>Bha dùil gur e seann chleachdadh a bha ann, a bha air a dhol à bith. Ach, anns an ath cholbh aige, anns a' Ghearran, sgrìobh Nether Lochaber mu litir a fhuair e bho leughadair. Bha 'D.R.' às a' Chròic ann an Cataibh. Sgrìobh e gun robh an cleachdadh sin aithnichte fhathast anns an sgìre aige.</i> <i>Bha spàin dhen t-seòrsa sin aig fear de na nàbaidhean aige. Bha i air a dèanamh dìreach dà bhliadhna roimhe. Thàinig an adharc bho bhò a bha sia bliadhna a dh'aois. Bha i fhathast beò. Bha dà laogh aice. Chaill i an adharc ann an 'tubaist', nuair a bha i a' sabaid le bò eile. Tha a h-uile càil a tha sin a' ciallachadh gum biodh spàin de dh'adharc aicese gu math fàbharach.</i> <i>O shean, bha na daoine a' creidsinn gum faodadh spàin mar sin an gnothach a dhèanamh air galar sam bith. Ach, anns a' Chròic, anns an</i>
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<i>reckoned that it would cure just one disease. That is an triuthach or whooping cough.</i> <i>A person that was suffering from whooping cough would take food with that spoon at every meal. It wouldn't be long before he was fit and healthy once more.</i> <i>D.R. told of another superstition connected with whooping cough. It was believed that a cure would come from water that was gushing forth from a rock. But, to be effective, the patient would have to take the water with a special spoon. The spoon would have to be made of wood from an aspen tree. D.R. reckoned that that was connected with the Christian religion. The old Gaels were believing that the crucifixion cross was made of the same wood.</i>	naoidheamh linn deug, bha iad dhen bheachd gun dèanadh i leigheas air dìreach aon ghalar. 'S e sin an triuthach no <i>whooping cough</i>. Bhiodh duine a' bha a' fulang leis an triuthaich a' gabhail biadh leis an spàin sin aig gach diathad. Chan fhada gum biodh e slàn, fallain a-rithist. Dh'inns D.R. gun robh saobh-chràbhadh eile co-cheangailte ris an triuthaich. Bhathar a' creidsinn gun tigeadh leigheas an cois uisge a bha a' maoimeadh à creag. Ach, airson a bhith èifeachdach, dh'fheumadh an t-euslainteach an t-uisge a ghabhail le spàin shònraichte. Dh'fheumadh an spàin a bhith air a dèanamh de dh'fhiodh à craobh-chrithinn. Bha D.R. dhen bheachd gun robh sin co-cheangailte ris a' chreideamh Chrìosdail. Bha na seann Ghàidheil a' creidsinn gun robh an crann-ceusaidh air a dhèanamh dhen dearbh fhiodh.
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