

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 1,119 (which corresponds to Litir 1,423). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

<i>How do we say in Gaelic, 'I went back to sleep, I slept in'? We might say this: 'Rinn mi an ath-chadal.' Literally, 'I made the second sleep.' Rinn mi an ath-chadal.</i> <i>And how do we say 'reddening of the sky'? Well, we have this expression – rudhadh shuas. Reddening up high. Rudhadh shuas.</i> <i>The two phrases come together in a Gaelic saying. It brings in the great hero, Fionn MacCumhail:</i> <i>Rudhadh shuas an àm laighe, Dh'èireadh Fionn moch sa mhadainn, Rudhadh shuas sa mhoch-mhadainn, Dhèanadh Fionn an ath-chadal.</i> <i>This is a bit like an English language proverb, although that doesn't include Fionn. Do you know which one?</i> <i>Rudhadh shuas an àm laighe: [With a] reddening of the sky at bedtime; Dh'èireadh Fionn moch sa mhadainn: Fionn would rise early in the morning. Rudhadh shuas sa mhoch-mhadainn: [With a] reddening of the sky in the early morning. Dhèanadh Fionn an ath-chadal: Fionn would have a long lie.</i> <i>Why would Fionn rise early if there were a reddening of the sky the</i>	<i>Ciamar a chanas sinn ann an Gàidhlig, 'I went back to sleep, I slept in'? Faodaidh sinn seo a ràdh: 'Rinn mi an ath-chadal.' Gu litreachail, 'I made the second sleep.' Rinn mi an ath-chadal.</i> <i>Agus ciamar a chanas sinn 'reddening of the sky'? Uill, tha an abairt seo againn – rudhadh shuas. Reddening up high. Rudhadh shuas.</i> <i>Tha an dà abairt a' tighinn còmhla ann an seanfhacal Gàidhlig. Tha e a' gabhail a-steach an t-sàr-ghaisgich, Fionn MacCumhail:</i> <i>Rudhadh shuas an àm laighe, Dh'èireadh Fionn moch sa mhadainn, Rudhadh shuas sa mhoch-mhadainn, Dhèanadh Fionn an ath-chadal.</i> <i>Tha seo car coltach ri seanfhacal Beurla, ged nach eil Fionn ann. A bheil e agaibh?</i> <i>Rudhadh shuas an àm laighe: [With a] reddening of the sky at bedtime; Dh'èireadh Fionn moch sa mhadainn: Fionn would rise early in the morning. Rudhadh shuas sa mhoch-mhadainn: [With a] reddening of the sky in the early morning. Dhèanadh Fionn an ath-chadal: Fionn would have a long lie.</i> <i>Carson a dh'èireadh Fionn tràth nam biodh rudhadh san adhar ann an</i>
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<i>night before? Well, he would know that the weather would be good.</i> <i>And why would Fionn have a lie-in if there were a reddening of the sky early in the morning. Well, he would understand that bad weather was on the way.</i> <i>And which English language proverb tells us the same thing? It is – ‘red sky at night, shepherd’s delight; red sky in the morning, sailor’s warning.’</i> <i>The old people were good at foretelling the weather. They did that by looking at the sky. They would also watch and listen to some of the birds.</i> <i>Alasdair MacIlleMhìcheil has a tale about the ptarmigan in Carmina Gadelica. Alasdair and a companion climbed to a mountain summit on Harris. Ptarmigan were living there.</i> <i>The weather was good. But Alasdair’s companion said that they must leave. He saw and heard from the birds that snow was coming. Within two hours, there was a massive snowfall. Fortunately, they were by then at the bottom of the mountain – thanks to the ‘advice’ of the birds.</i>	oidhche roimhe? Uill, bhiodh fios aige gum biodh sìde mhath ann. Agus carson a dhèanadh Fionn an ath-chadal nam biodh rudhadh san adhar tràth sa mhadainn? Uill, thuigeadh e gun robh droch shìde a’ tighinn. Agus dè an seanfhacal Beurla a tha ann, a tha ag innse dhuinn an aon rud? Tha – <i>red sky at night, shepherd’s delight; red sky in the morning, sailor’s warning.</i> Bha na seann daoine math air innse dè an t-sìde a bhiodh romhpa. Rinn iad sin le bhith a’ coimhead air an adhar. Bhiodh iad cuideachd a’ coimhead agus ag èisteachd ri cuid de dh’eòin. Tha sgeul mun tàrmachan aig Alasdair MacIlleMhìcheil ann an <i>Carmina Gadelica</i>. Dhìrich Alasdair agus companach gu mullach beinne anns Na Hearadh. Bha tàrmachain a’ fuireach ann. Bha an t-sìde math. Ach thuirt companach Alasdair ris gu feumadh iad falbh. Chunnaic e agus chuala e bho na h-eòin gun robh sneachd a’ tighinn. Taobh a-staigh dà uair a thìde bha sneachd mòr ann. Gu fortanach, bha iad an uair sin aig bonn na beinne – taing do ‘chomhairle’ nan eun.
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