

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Sglèat agus Leac

Each week the West Highland Free Press publishes the text for Ruairidh's "Letter to Gaelic Learners" on BBC Radio nan Gàidheal (103.5-105 FM). Broadcasts are as follows: 2:55pm on Sunday as part of BBC Radio nan Gàidheal's hour-long learning zone, following the Gaelic Learners' programme 'SpeakGaelic Extra', with a repeat at 10.30 pm on Wednesday. This is Litir 1,372. There is also a simpler version – An Litir Bheag – which is broadcast at 2:30pm each Sunday. Litir Bheag 1,068 corresponds to Litir 1,372. The Litir is also available at www.bbc.co.uk/litir and www.learnghaelic.scot/litir. Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learnghaelic.scot.

Dè a' Ghàidhlig a th' air *slate*? Uill, 's e *sglèat* a chanas a' chuid mhòr. Thàinig an dà fhacal bhon aon fhreumh. Bha e an toiseach anns an t-Seann Fhraingis mar *esclate* 'a split piece or splinter' oir tha e furasta sgoltadh.

Anns a' Bheurla Mheadhanaich, 's e *sclate* a bh' ann. Dh'atharraich sin tro thìde ann am Beurla gu *slate*. Agus thàinig e a-steach don Ghàidhlig mar *sglèat*. Ann an ceann a tuath na Gàidhealtachd, dh'atharraich am fuaimneachadh gu *sglèat*. Bha feadhainn eadhon ga sgrìobhadh mar S-G-L-I-A-T. Thathar a' moladh an-diugh gun sgrìobh sinn am facal mar S-G-L-E fada-A-T.

Tha *sglèat* a' toirt dhuinn fhaclan eile, leithid *sglèatach* 'made of slate', *sglèatair* 'slater' agus *sglèataireachd* 'the work of a slater'.

Nuair a bha mi ann an ceann a tuath na Cuimrigh, far an robh gnìomhachas na *sglèata* gu math mòr uaireigin, mhothaich mi gur e am facal *llech* a bh' aca airson *sglèat* ann an Cuimris. Air a litreachadh L-L-E-C-H. Tha sin càirdeach don fhacal againne *leac*. Tha *leac* a' ciallachadh 'flagstone, flat stone, slab'. *Leac-teine* – *hearthstone*. *Leac* an dorais – *doorstep*. *Leac-uaighe* – *gravestone* – co-dhiù dhen t-seann seòrsa a bha na laighe air an talamh, seach a bhith a' **stobadh an-àirde**.

Ach a bheil *leac* uair sam bith a' ciallachadh 'slate'? Uill, tha. A rèir faclair Dwelly, tha e a' ciallachadh 'slate to write on'. Bidh sibh a' tuigsinn gur e sin a bh' aig clann sgoile aig aon àm. Bhiodh iad a' sgrìobhadh air leac le cailc.

Dè mu dheidhinn nan *sglèat* a tha cho cumanta air mullaichean taighe? An robh daoine riamh a' gabhail 'leac' air a leithid? Uill, chanainn gun robh ann an Gallaibh oir 's e leacan mòra a chithear air cuid de mhullaichean an sin, seach *sglèatan* beaga. Leacan Gallach, gu dearbh.

Ach tha fianais ann gun robhar a' cleachdadh an fhacail *leac* ann an Ros an Iar airson *sglèat* mullaich. Tha sin a' tighinn bhon leabhar *A Hundred Years in the Highlands* le Osgood MacCoinnich.

Tha MacCoinnich, a bha na uachdaran ann an sgìre Gheàrrloch, ag innse dhuinn mun taigh mhòr aca a tha aithnichte an-diugh ann am Beurla mar *Flowerdale House* – ainm a chaidh a chur air le luchd-turais Sasannach o chionn fhada. Bha Gàidhlig gu leòr aig Osgood agus 's e Gàidhlig a bha e a' bruidhinn ri muinntir an àite.

Ann an Gàidhlig 's e an Taigh Dige a chanas daoine ri *Flowerdale House*. Tha an t-ainm a' ciallachadh 'Moat House'. Chan eil dìg timcheall an taigh an-diugh, ach

bha dìg timcheall an t-seann taigh a bh' ann roimhe. Thòisich sinnsear aig Osgood air an taigh a th' ann an-diugh a thogail ann an seachd ceud deug, trithead 's a h-ochd (1738). B' esan an Tighearna Crùbach, Sir Alasdair MacCoinnich. B' e Osgood **am fionn-ogha** aige.

Ghlèidh iad ainm an t-seann togalaich – an Taigh Dìge – eadhon ged nach robh an dìg ann tuilleadh. Ach, airson sgaradh a dhèanamh eadar an seann taigh agus an taigh ùr, chuir iad rudeigin ris an ainm ùr.

An àite mullach tughaidh, bha mullach sglèatach air an taigh ùr – a' chiad togalach dhen t-seòrsa anns an sgìre. Agus b' e ainm an taigh ùir – Taigh Dìge nan Gorm-leac. Feumaidh – aig an àm sin co-dhiù – gur e *gorm-leac* a bh' aca anns an sgìre sin airson sglèat.

* * * * *

Faclan na Litreach: sglèat: *slate [note that the original pronunciation is preserved in Argyll Gaelic – it is only in the north that it became pronounced 'sgliat']*; A' Bheurla Mheadhanach: *Middle English*; Cuimris: *Welsh language*; mullaichean taighe: *house roofs*; Leacan Gallach: *Caithness Flags(tones)*; Ros an Iar: *Wester Ross*; MacCoinnich: *MacKenzie*; An Tighearna Crùbach: *the lame (land)lord*; ghlèidh: *kept, preserved*.

Abairtean na Litreach: Thàinig an dà fhacal bhon aon fhreumh: *the two words came from the same root*; bha e an toiseach anns an t-Seann Fhraingis: *it was originally in Old French*; thathar a' moladh an-diugh: *it is recommended today*; bidh sibh a' tuigsinn gur e sin a bh' aig clann sgoile aig aon àm: *you'll understand that that was what schoolchildren had at one time*; a' sgrìobhadh air leac le cailc: *writing on a slate with chalk*; an robh daoine riamh a' gabhail 'leac' air a leithid?: *were people ever calling the like a 'leac'?*; chanainn gun robh ann an Gallaibh: *I would say they were in Caithness*; 's e leacan mòra a chithear air cuid de mhullaichean an sin, seach sglèatan beaga: *it's large flagstones that are seen on some roofs there, rather than small slates*; bha dìg timcheall an t-seann taigh a bh' ann roimhe: *there was a moat around the old house that was there previously*; chuir iad rudeigin ris an ainm ùr: *they added something to the new name*; an àite mullach tughaidh, bha mullach sglèatach air an taigh ùr: *instead of a thatched roof, there was a slate roof on the new house*; a' chiad togalach dhen t-seòrsa anns an sgìre: *the first building of its type in the area*; b' e ainm an taigh ùir – Taigh Dìge nan Gorm-leac: *the name of the new house was 'the moat house of the slates' (literally 'of the shiny black flat stones')*; feumaidh – aig an àm sin co-dhiù – gur e *gorm-leac* a bh' aca anns an sgìre sin airson sglèat: *it must have been – at that time anyway – that they called a slate a 'gorm-leac' in that area/parish*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: B' e Osgood **am fionn-ogha** aige: *Osgood was his great-great grandchild. The generations work like this: ogha 'grandchild'; iar-ogha 'great-grandchild'; fionn-ogha 'great-great grandchild'; dubh-ogha 'great-great-great-grandchild'. You can also refer to a fionn-ogha as 'iar-iar-ogha'.*

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: na laighe air an talamh, seach a bhith a' stobadh an-àirde: *lying on the ground, rather than sticking up (vertically).*

Tha "Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh" air a maoineachadh le MG ALBA