

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 243 (which corresponds to Litir 547). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleane@bbc.co.uk.

We're still in Caithness this week. We're looking at the Gaelic heritage of that area. Here is advice from Caithness about alcoholic drink. It tells about the influence one glass, two glasses and three glasses have on a person. I mean glasses of whisky.

Before I give you the advice, here is a phrase or two. Is miste mi sin – "I'm the worse for that". Is fheàrrde mi sin – "I'm the better for that". Cha mhiste mi sin – "I'm not the worse for that". Chan fheàrrde mi sin – "I'm not the better for that".

Here is the advice, then. One glass, not the better of it and not the worse of it. Two glasses, the better of it and not the worse of it. Three glasses, the worse of it and not the better of it. Did you understand the advice?

.....
One glass, not the better of it and not the worse of it. Two glasses, the better of it and not the worse of it. Three glasses, the worse of it and not the better of it.

Tha sinn fhathast ann an Gallaibh an t-seachdain sa. Tha sinn a' toirt sùil air dualchas Gàidhlig na sgìre sin. Seo comhairle à Gallaibh air deoch làidir. Tha i ag innse mun bhuidh a bheir aon ghlainne, dà ghlainne agus trì glainneachan air duine. Tha mi a' ciallachadh glainneachan de dh'uisge-beatha.

Mus toir mi a' chomhairle dhuibh, seo agaibh abairt no dhà: Is miste mi sin – "I'm the worse for that". Is fheàrrde mi sin – "I'm the better for that". Cha mhiste mi sin – "I'm not the worse for that". Chan fheàrrde mi sin – "I'm not the better for that".

Seo a' chomhairle, ma-thà: Aon ghlainne, chan fheàrrde 's cha mhiste. Dà ghlainne, 's fheàrrde 's cha mhiste. Trì glainneachan, 's miste 's chan fheàrrde. An do thuig sibh a' chomhairle? *One glass, not the better of it and not the worse of it. Two glasses, the better of it and not the worse of it. Three glasses, the worse of it and not the better of it.* Aon ghlainne, chan fheàrrde 's cha mhiste. Dà ghlainne, 's fheàrrde 's cha mhiste. Trì glainneachan, 's miste 's chan fheàrrde.

I was in Caithness recently. I saw an old well. It's beside the main road between the Ord of Caithness and Berriedale. There is a fence around it. And there is a stone there on which this is [written]: "The Grey Hen's Well. Erected by the Duke of Portland 1934". The Grey Hen. A' Chearc Ghlas, perhaps? Who was she?

Well, here is one story about the name. A widow lived close by. This was a long time ago. Her husband was killed at the Battle of Waterloo. The widow got the house's water from the well. The widow's nickname was "The Grey Hen" in Gaelic. I imagine that was "A' Chearc Ghlas".

After the woman's death, the house fell to pieces. The house's doorstep was used again. How? Well, as the well's slab. That's the slab where a person puts his knees while he's drawing water. A long time after that, the Duke of Portland put the stone there. That serves as a memorial to the widow.

Bha mi ann an Gallaibh o chionn ghoirid. Chunnaic mi seann tobar. Tha e ri taobh an rathaid mhòir eadar An t-Òrd Gallach agus Bearghdal. Tha feansa timcheall air. Agus tha clach ann air a bheil seo: "The Grey Hen's Well. Erected by the Duke of Portland 1934". The Grey Hen. A' Chearc Ghlas, 's dòcha? Cò bha innte?

Uill, seo agaibh aon stòiridh mu dheidhinn an ainm. Bha banntrach a' fuireach faisg air làimh. Bha seo o chionn fhada. Bha an duine aice air a mharbhadh aig Blàr Bhatairliù. Bha a' bhantrach a' faighinn uisge an taighe às an tobar. B' e far-ainm na banntraich "The Grey Hen" ann an Gàidhlig. Tha mi an dùil gum b' e sin a' Chearc Ghlas.

Às dèidh bàs a' bhoireannaich, thuit an taigh aice às a chèile. Ach chaidh stairsneach an taighe a chur gu feum a-rithist. Ciamar? Uill, mar leac an tobair. Sin an leac far an cuir neach a ghlùinean fhad 's a tha e a' tarraing uisge. Ùine mhòr às dèidh sin, chuir Diùc Phortland a' chlach ann. Tha sin mar chuimhneachan air a' bhantraich.