

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 247 (which corresponds to Litir 551). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

There are a few types of plant called Mahonia. If you are a gardener, you'll know them, perhaps. For example, there is Mahonia aquifolium. That's a beautiful plant with the English name Oregon Grape. It's native to the western side of North America. I myself have one growing in my garden.

I also have another type of Mahonia. It's large and robust with somewhat sharp leaves. Yellow flowers come on it in winter. That one is called Mahonia napaulensis. You'll understand from the name that it grows in Nepal.

I was in Nepal recently. I was in Himalayan forests. And I saw Mahonia napaulensis growing there naturally. It was a big bush and a small tree. Some people in Nepal use the plant. They make a treatment with it – so they say. The treatment is for cataract (of the eye).

I was contemplating those plants. How did they get to Britain? Well, people took them there – deliberately. That happ-

Tha grunn seòrsaichean de lus ris an can sinn *Mahonia*. Ma tha sibh nur gàirnealair, bidh sibh eòlach orra, 's dòcha. Mar eisimpleir, tha *Mahonia aquifolium* ann. 'S e sin lus brèagha leis an ainm Bheurla *Oregon Grape*. Tha e dùthchasach do thaobh an iar Ameireagaidh a Tuath. Tha fear agam fhìn a' fàs anns an leas agam.

Tha *Mahonia* de sheòrsa eile agam cuideachd. Tha e mòr is làidir le duilleagan rudeigin biorach. Thig flùraichean buidhe air anns a' gheamhradh. 'S e an t-ainm air an fhear sin *Mahonia napaulensis*. Tuigidh sibh bhon ainm gu bheil e a' fàs ann an Neapal.

Bha mi ann an Neapal o chionn ghoirid. Bha mi ann an coilltean Hiomalaitheach. Agus chunnaic mi *Mahonia napaulensis* a' fàs ann gu nàdarrach. Bha e na phreas mòr agus na chraobh bheag. Bidh cuid ann an Neapal a' cleachdadh an luis. Tha iad a' dèanamh leigheas leis – tha iad ag ràdh. Tha an leigheas airson neul-sùla, no *cataract*.

Bha mi a' meòrachadh air na lusan sin. Ciamar a fhuair iad a Bhreatainn? Uill, thug daoine ann iad – a dh'aona-ghnothach. Thachair sin gu

ened a lot in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. We call those people 'plant collectors'. Many of them were Scottish.

Perhaps the most famous of them was David Douglas from Perthshire. He gave his name to the Douglas Fir. He did a lot of collecting in North America. And he took samples of Mahonia home with him.

There was another Scot who took examples of Mahonia home with him as well. He was Robert Fortune. He was working in China and Japan. He took Mahonia japonica to Britain.

There were plenty of others from Scotland who collected plants overseas. And there were two – at least two – who spoke Gaelic. We'll look at one of them next week.

mòr anns an ochdamh agus an naoidheamh linn deug. 'S e 'luchd-cruinneachaidh lusan' a tha againn air na daoine sin. Bha mòran dhiubh Albannach.

'S dòcha gur e am fear a b' ainmeile dhiubh Daibhidh Dùbhghlas à Siorrachd Pheairt. Thug e ainm do *Ghiuthas an Dùbhghlasaich* no an *Douglas Fir*. Rinn esan tòrr cruinneachaidh ann an Ameireagaidh a Tuath. Agus thug e sampail de *Mahonia* dhachaigh leis.

Bha Albannach eile ann a thug eisimpleirean de *Mahonia* dhachaigh leis cuideachd. B' esan Raibeart Fortune. Bha e ag obair ann an Sìonaidh agus Iapan. Thug e *Mahonia japonica* a Bhreatainn.

Bha gu leòr eile à Alba a chruinnich lusan thall thairis. Agus bha dithis ann – co-dhiù dithis – aig an robh Gàidhlig. Bidh sinn a' toirt sùil air fear aca an ath-sheachdain.