

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 332 (which corresponds to Litir 636). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.macleon@bbc.co.uk.

The Norse influenced the Gaelic language. But did the Gaels influence the Norse language? Well, yes, to a small degree. I was in Iceland recently. There is a debate going on there – what effect did the Gaels have on the island?

The Icelanders wrote the sagas in their own language. No other Nordic people did that. Why? The Gaels, particularly the Irish, were doing the same thing. Did the Gaels influence the Icelanders in that way?

If they did, how did they do it? Well, there are three ways. In the first instance by Norsemen who went to live in Iceland from Scotland or Ireland. Those people had come under the influence of the Gaels.

In the second place, through cultural ties that were made in northern Scotland and Orkney. There, Gaels and Norsemen were meeting each other.

And the third way – through Gaels that went to live in Iceland. Some of them were slaves. Some of them were wives of Norsemen. And perhaps there were a few Gaelic speakers who went to live there

Thug na Lochlannaich buaidh air a' Ghàidhlig. Ach an tug na Gàidheil buaidh air Lochlannais? Uill, thug gu ìre bheag. Bha mi ann an Innis Tìle o chionn ghoirid. Tha deasbad a' dol an sin – dè a' bhuidh a thug na Gàidheil air an eilean?

Sgrìobh na Tìlich na faoinsgeulan mòra aca nan cànan fhèin. Cha do rinn sluagh Lochlannach eile sin. Carson? Bha na Gàidheil, gu sònraichte na h-Èireannaich, a' dèanamh an aon rud. An tug na Gàidheil buaidh air na Tìlich mar sin?

Ma thug, ciamar a rinn iad e? Uill, tha trì dòighean ann. Anns a' chiad dol a-mach le Lochlannaich a chaidh a dh'fhuireach ann an Innis Tìle à Alba no Èirinn. Bha na daoine sin air tighinn fo bhuidh nan Gàidheal.

Anns an dàrna àite, le ceanglaichean cultarach a bha air an dèanamh ann an ceann a tuath na h-Alba agus Arcaibh. Ann an sin, bha Gàidheil is Lochlannaich a' coinneachadh ri chèile.

Agus an treas dòigh – le Gàidheil a chaidh a dh'fhuireach ann an Innis Tìle. Bha cuid dhiubh nan tràillean. Bha cuid dhiubh nam mnathan aig Lochlannaich. Agus 's dòcha gun robh feadhainn ann, aig an robh

voluntarily.

There are a couple of words in Icelandic that are thought to have come from Gaelic. They have the word kapall, meaning a “mare” or “female horse”. That came from the Gaelic capall. They have the word tarfur, meaning “bull”. That came from the Gaelic tarbh.

There are a couple of personal names also. Njáll is an example; it came from Niall. Njáll is famous as a name in Iceland. There is a saga – Njálsaga – Niall’s saga.

But we’ll go back to the beginning. When the Norse first went to Iceland, there were already people there. They were Gaels. The Íslendingabók tells us, when the Vikings went there at first in the year 870, that there were Gaelic hermits already there. The Norse called them papar. We’ll look at them next week.

Gàidhlig mar chànan, a chaidh a dh’fhuireach ann gu saor-thoileach.

Tha facal no dhà ann an Tìlis an-diugh a thathar a’ smaoinichadh a thàinig bhon Ghàidhlig. Tha am facal *kapall* aca, a’ ciallachadh “làir” no “each boireann”. Thàinig sin bhon Ghàidhlig *capall*. Tha am facal *tarfur* aca, a’ ciallachadh “tarbh”. Thàinig sin bhon Ghàidhlig *tarbh*.

Tha ainm pearsanta no dhà ann cuideachd. ’S e eisimpleir *Njáll* a thàinig à *Niall*. Tha *Njáll* ainmeil mar ainm ann an Innis Tìle. Tha faoinsgeul ann – *Njálsaga* – sgeulachd Nèill.

Ach thèid sinn air ais don toiseach. Nuair a chaidh na Lochlannaich a dh’Innis Tìle an toiseach, bha daoine ann mu thràth. ’S e Gàidheil a bha annta. Tha an *Íslendingabók* ag innse dhuinn, nuair a chaidh na Lochlannaich ann an toiseach, ann an ochd ceud is seachdad (870), gun robh dìthreabhaich Ghàidhealach ann mu thràth. ’S e *papar* a bha aig na Lochlannaich orra. Bheir sinn sùil orrasan an-ath-sheachdain.