

## An Litir Bheag le Ruairidh MacIleathain

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 375 (which corresponds to Litir 679). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodny.macleane@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.macleane@bbc.co.uk).

In his book *In The Shadow of Cairngorm*, the Rev. Dr. William Forsyth says that families of goats would rank themselves in the fold. That was for sleeping at night. At the top would be the mother. Then the daughter. Then the grand-child, and so on, down the generations.

*My thoughts were drifting to the Gaelic terms for the different generations among a person's descendants. If it's true for goats, it's also true for people.*

*Here's how Dwelly's Dictionary reports the matter. I'll speak about men to start with, to keep it simple. To start with, the generations: father, son, grandson, great-grandson, great-great-grandson and great-great-great-grandson.*

*And here's the translation: athair, father; mac, son; ogha, grandson; iar-ogha, great-grandson, fionn-ogha, great-great-grandson; and dubh-ogha, great-great-great-grandson. And, further than that: great-great-great-great-grandson and great-great-great-great-great-grandson*

*If it's girls you're talking about, it works like this: ban-ogha, granddaughter; iar-bhan-ogha, great-granddaughter. I've never heard fionn or dubh*

Ann an leabhar aige *In The Shadow of Cairngorm*, tha an t-Oll. Urr. Uilleam Fearsithe ag ràdh gum biodh teaghlaichean de ghobhair gan rangachadh fhèin anns a' bhuaile. Bha sin airson cadal air an oidhche. Gu h-àrd, bhiodh a' mhàthair. An uair sin an nighean. An uair sin an t-ogha, agus mar sin air adhart, sìos na ginealaich.

Bha mo smuaintean a' dol don Ghàidhlig air na diofar ghinealaich ann an sliochd cuideigin. Ma tha e fìor airson ghobhar, tha e fìor cuideachd airson daoine.

Seo mar a tha Faclair Dwelly ag aithris a' ghnòthaich. Bruidhnidh mi mu fhìreannaich an toiseach, airson a chumail sìmplidh. An toiseach, na ginealaich: athair, mac, ogha, iar-ogha, fionn-ogha agus dubh-ogha.

Agus seo an t-eadar-theangachadh: athair, father; mac, son; ogha, grandson; iar-ogha, great-grandson, fionn-ogha, great-great-grandson; agus dubh-ogha, great-great-great-grandson. Agus, nas fhaide na sin: iar-dubh-ogha is iar-iar-dubh-ogha.

Mas ann air nigheanan tha sibh a' bruidhinn, tha e ag obair mar seo: ban-ogha, granddaughter; iar-bhan-ogha, great-granddaughter. Cha chuala mi fionn

*used with ban-ogha. But I've heard ogha for granddaughter and iar-ogha for great-granddaughter. Sometimes people do not distinguish between man and woman in that regard.*

*If we're working in the other direction – up the generations – it goes like this: athair, father; seanair, grandfather; sinn-seanair, great-grandfather; sinn-sinn-seanair, great-great-grandfather and so on.*

*With women, it works like this: màthair, mother; seanmhair, grandmother, sinn-seanmhair, great-grandmother, sinn-sinn-seanmhair, great-great-grandmother.*

*Now, here's a puzzle for you. I'm the great-grandchild of my great-grandfather. Who am I? I'm the great-grandchild of my great-grandfather. Who am I? Well, the solution is – me! But you'd also be correct by saying “my brother” or “my sister” or “my [first] cousin”.*

*The poor goats – they've run away on me! Oh, well, I'll return to them in the next Litir.*

*no dubh air an cleachdadh le ban-ogha. Ach chuala mi ogha airson granddaughter agus iar-ogha airson great-granddaughter. Uaireannan, cha dèan daoine diofar eadar fireannach is boireannach a thaobh sin.*

*Ma tha sinn ag obair an rathad eile – suas na ginealaich – tha e a' dol mar seo: athair, father; seanair, grandfather; sinn-seanair, great-grandfather; sinn-sinn-seanair, great-great-grandfather is mar sin air adhart.*

*Le boireannaich, tha e ag obair mar seo: màthair, mother; seanmhair, grandmother, sinn-seanmhair, great-grandmother, sinn-sinn-seanmhair, great-great-grandmother.*

*Nise, seo tòimhseachan dhuibh: Is mise iar-ogha mo shinn-seanar. Cò mi? Is mise iar-ogha mo shinn-seanar. Cò mi? Uill, 's e am fuasgladh – mise! Ach bhiodh sibh ceart cuideachd le bhith ag ràdh “mo bhràthair” no “mo phiuthar” no “mo cho-ogha”.*

*Na gobhair bhochd – theich iad orm! A, uill, tillidh mi thuca anns an ath Litir.*