

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 550 (which corresponds to Litir 854). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

How do you yourself pronounce the word F-E-A-D-H-A-I-N-N? There are four different ways. Here they are – feYin, fyeoin, feoin and fyeYin. If you're learning Gaelic, how do you say it? Perhaps you'll be following your teacher's way. Perhaps you'll be following the dialect in your geographical area.

But what about places where there was a Gaelic dialect until recently. How will you know what the pronunciation was? Well, Douglas Fraser has created a website with information like that on it. There are maps on it of Scotland connected to surveys of Gaelic. The surveys were done between 1950 and 1963. At that time, local dialects were still alive in almost the whole Highlands.

With regard to the word feadhainn, Douglas has created a map of the way in which people in each area were pronouncing the word. 'feYin' is said in Lewis and around Gairloch. On Skye and in Uist, Barra, Canna, parts of Argyll

Ciamar a tha sibh fhèin a' fuaimneachadh an fhacail F-E-A-D-H-A-I-N-N? Tha ceithir diofar dhòighean ann. Seo iad – feYin, fyeoin, feoin agus fyeYin. Ma tha sibh ag ionnsachadh na Gàidhlig, ciamar a chanas sibh fhèin e? 'S dòcha gum bi sibh a' leantainn dòigh ur tidseir. 'S dòcha gum bi sibh a' leantainn na dualchainnt anns an sgìre agaibh.

Ach dè mu dheidhinn àiteachan far an robh dualchainnt Ghàidhlig ann gu o chionn ghoirid? Ciamar a bhios fios agaibh air an fhuaimneachadh a bha ann? Uill, tha Dùghlas Friseal air làrach-lìn a chruthachadh le fiosrachadh mar sin oirre. Tha mapaichean ann de dh'Alba co-cheangailte ri suirbhidhean na Gàidhlig. Bha na suirbhidhean air an dèanamh eadar naoi ceud deug is caogad (1950), agus naoi ceud deug, seasgad 's a trì (1963). Aig an àm sin, bha dualchainntean sgìreil fhathast beò cha mhòr air feadh na Gàidhealtachd.

A thaobh an fhacail 'feadhainn', tha Dùghlas air mapa a dhèanamh dhen dòigh a bha aig daoine anns gach sgìre am facal fhuaimneachadh. Thathar ag ràdh 'feYin' ann an Leòdhas agus timcheall Gheàrrloch. Anns an Eilean Sgitheanach, agus ann an Uibhist,

and Perthshire, ‘fyeoin’ is said. ‘feoin’ is said on Mull, Ardnamurchan and parts of Ross-shire. And ‘fyeYin’ is obtained in Harris and the north-west of the mainland, in Assynt and the Mackay Country [of North Sutherland].

The pronunciation of feadhainn is only one thing that Douglas looked at. He also examined the pronunciation of the ‘bh’ in the middle of a word. For example, the first word in the name of the Gaelic College on Skye – Sabhal Mòr Ostaig. Some people say ‘sa-val’, pronouncing the ‘bh’ like a ‘v’ – but that’s only true in southern Argyll. In the rest of the country, ‘so-al’ or ‘sow-al’ is said, without pronouncing the ‘bh’ as a ‘v’.

There is much other information on the website. You’ll get the address for it in the written version of this Litir on the BBC’s website or the LearnGaelic.scot website. My felicitations to Douglas for his work.

Barraigh, Canaigh, pàirtean de dh’Earra-Ghàidheal is Siorrachd Pheairt, thathar ag ràdh ‘fyeoin’. Thathar ag ràdh ‘feoin’ ann am Muile, Àird nam Murchan is pàirtean de Shiorrachd Rois. Agus gheibhear ‘fyeYin’ anns Na Hearadh agus ceann an iar-thuath tìr-mòr, ann an Asainte agus Dùthaich MhicAoidh.

’S e fuaimneachadh ‘feadhainn’ dìreach aon rud air an tug Dùghlas sùil. Thug e sùil cuideachd air fuaimneachadh a’ ‘bh’ ann am meadhan facail. Mar eisimpleir, a’ chiad fhacal ann an ainm Colaiste na Gàidhlig anns an Eilean Sgitheanach – Sabhal Mòr Ostaig. Bidh cuid ag ràdh ‘sa-val’, a’ fuaimneachadh a’ ‘bh’ mar ‘v’ – ach tha sin fìor dìreach ann an ceann a deas Earra-Ghàidheal. Anns a’ chòrr dhen dùthaich, bithear ag ràdh ‘so-al’ no ‘sow-al’, gun a bhith a’ fuaimneachadh a’ ‘bh’ mar ‘v’.

Tha tòrr fiosrachaidh eile air an làraich-lìn. Gheibh sibh an seòladh air a son anns a’ chunntas sgrìobhte dhen Litir seo air làrach-lìn a’ BhBC no làrach-lìn LearnGaelic.scot. Mo bheannachd air Dùghlas airson a chuid obrach.