

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 564 (which corresponds to Litir 868). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

Have you ever suffered from road rage? Even in the Highlands, it's a danger. Our roads get choked with caravans and campervans in the summer. Not to mention the sheep!

That reminds me of the late Ali Abbasi. Ali worked for the BBC in Glasgow. He was reporting on the radio about the state of the roads every morning. He was also learning Gaelic.

At that time I was working on Aithris na Maidne in the BBC newsroom in Inverness. Ali would phone, asking if I had any news about the roads in the Highlands. We would have a bit of fun. I would say to him, 'Aye, Ali, there are reports of sheep on the road between Broadford and Armadale on Skye.'

He would reply, 'Ruairidh, there are always sheep on that road!'

One day, he said it. 'Reports are reaching us,' he said, 'of sheep on the road between Broadford and Armadale. Be careful.' I was feeling both guilty

An robh cuthach an rathaid a-riamh oirbh? Eadhon air a' Ghàidhealtachd, tha e na chunnart. Bidh na rathaidean againn air an tachdadh le carabhanaichean is camparbhanaichean as t-samhradh. Gun luaidh air caoraich!

Tha sin a' cur nam chuimhne Ali Abbasi nach maireann. Bha Ali ag obair don BhBC ann an Glaschu. Bha e ag aithris air an rèidio mu staid nan rathaidean gach madainn. Bha e cuideachd ag ionnsachadh na Gàidhlig.

Aig an àm sin bha mi ag obair air Aithris na Maidne ann an seòmair-naidheachd a' BhBC ann an Inbhir Nis. Bhiodh Ali a' fònadh, a' faighneachd an robh naidheachd sam bith agam mu rathaidean air a' Ghàidhealtachd. Bhiodh fealla-dhà againn. Bhithinn ag ràdh ris, 'Seadh, Ali, tha aithrisean ann de chaoraich air an rathad eadar an t-Ath Leathann agus Armadal san Eilean Sgitheanach.'

Bhiodh esan a' freagairt, 'Ruairidh, bidh caoraich an-còmhnaidh air an rathad sin!'

Latha a bha seo, thuirt e e. 'Tha aithrisean a' tighinn thugainn,' thuirt e, 'mu chaoraich air an rathad eadar an t-Ath Leathann agus Armadal. Bithibh faiceallach.' Bha mi a' faireachdainn

and pleased at the same time!

I don't know if anybody suffered road rage that day. But I myself suffered phone rage recently. I was phoning to a public authority. I was wanting to find out who had responsibility for Gaelic there.

I didn't get an opportunity to speak to a person, however. A female electronic voice welcomed me. She asked me to name the person I was looking for. I remembered an old name (although I've changed it!)

'Donald Mackenzie,' I said.

'Was that Donald MacHenry?' said the voice. 'If no, say "Cancel".'

'Cancel!' I said.

'Putting you through to Donald MacHenry.'

'I don't want him!' I shouted. I put the phone down.

I phoned again. This time, I said, 'Dòmhnall MacCoinnich'.

'Was that Tommy Picolli? If no, say "Cancel".'

'Cancel!'

'Putting you through to Tommy Picolli.'

I was developing phone rage. I put the phone down. And it's just as well – for me and for Mr Picolli, the good man, that I did!

ciontach agus toilichte aig an aon àm!

Chan eil fhios agam an do dh'fhuiling duine cuthach an rathaid an latha sin. Ach dh'fhuiling mi fhìn cuthach a' fòn o chionn ghoirid. Bha mi a' fònadh do dh'ughdarras poblach. Bha mi ag iarraidh faighinn a-mach cò bha an urra ris a' Ghàidhlig ann.

Cha d' fhuair mi cothrom bruidhinn ri duine, ge-tà. Chuir guth boireann eileagtronaigeach fàilte orm. Dh'iarr i orm an duine a bha mi a' sireadh ainmeachadh. Chuimhnich mi seann ainm (ged a tha mi air atharrachadh!)

'Donald Mackenzie,' thuirt mi.

'Was that Donald MacHenry?' thuirt an guth. 'If no, say "Cancel".'

'Cancel!' thuirt mi.

'Putting you through to Donald MacHenry.'

'Chan eil mi ga iarraidh!' dh'èigh mi. Chuir mi am fòn sìos.

Dh'fhòn mi a-rithist. An turas seo, thuirt mi 'Dòmhnall MacCoinnich'.

'Was that Tommy Picolli? If no, say "Cancel".'

'Cancel!'

'Putting you through to Tommy Picolli.'

Bha 'cuthach a' fòn' a' tighinn orm. Chuir mi am fòn sìos. Agus is math – dhomh fhìn agus do Mhgr Picolli còir – gun do chuir!