

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 580 (which corresponds to Litir 884). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was talking about the corra-mhonaidh – a large bird called crane in English. Place names tell us that they were throughout England at one time. Here are examples from Old English – Cranbourne ‘crane stream’, Cranmore ‘crane moor’ and Cranmere ‘crane pool’. Here are examples from Old Norse – Tranmire ‘crane bog’ and Tranby ‘crane farm’.

Afon Garan ‘crane river’ is in Wales. In Cornwall there is Rezgaran ‘crane ford’. Rezgaran has changed in English to Rosegarden. In the east of Scotland, there are examples that came from Old English – Cranshaws ‘crane copse’, Cranbog Moss ‘crane bog’ and Cranloch ‘crane loch’. Often the names are in wet places – the type of habitat favoured by cranes.

Why aren't there examples in the Highlands? Wasn't the crane ever living there? The difficulty in the Highlands is that even the heron isn't named often. And

Bha mi a' bruidhinn mun chorra-mhonaidh – eun mòr air a bheil crane ann am Beurla. Tha ainmean-àite ag innse dhuinn gun robh iad air feadh Shasainn uaireigin. Seo eisimpleirean às an t-Seann Bheurla – Cranbourne ‘allt corra-mhonaidh’, Cranmore ‘sliabh corra-mhonaidh’ agus Cranmere ‘lòn corra-mhonaidh’. Seo eisimpleirean às an t-Seann Lochlannais – Tranmire ‘boglach corra-mhonaidh’ agus Tranby ‘baile-fearainn corra-mhonaidh’.

Tha Afon Garan ‘abhainn corra-mhonaidh’ anns a' Chuimrigh. Anns a' Chòrn tha Rezgaran ‘ath corra-mhonaidh’. Tha Rezgaran air atharrachadh ann am Beurla gu Rosegarden. Ann an taobh sear na h-Alba, tha eisimpleirean ann a thàinig bhon t-Seann Bheurla – Cranshaws ‘doire corra-mhonaidh’, Cranbog Moss ‘boglach corra-mhonaidh’ agus Cranloch ‘loch corra-mhonaidh’. Gu tric tha na h-ainmean ann an àiteachan fliucha – an seòrsa àrainn as toigh le corrachan-monaidh.

Carson nach eil eisimpleirean air a' Ghàidhealtachd? Nach robh a' chorra-mhonaidh riamh a' fuireach ann? 'S e an duilgheadas a tha ann air a' Ghàidhealtachd nach eil eadhon a'

sometimes it isn't clear if it is the heron or another heron-like bird. There is an example at Rubha nan Corra on Loch Shiel. I'd say it is 'the point of the herons' that is the most likely meaning, rather than 'the point of the cranes'. But that isn't proven.

We have a story from oral tradition about the crane. It tells us that it was native to Ireland, but not native to Scotland.

Saint Columba was on Iona. He said to a monk that a crane would come in three days. It would be exhausted because it would come from Ireland.

The crane came. The monk picked it up and he took it home. He gave it food. Columba came and he thanked the monk. And he said that the bird would want to leave again in three days' time.

The crane was ready to leave Iona at the end of three days. The monk released it. It rose high. It turned to the south and made for Ireland. Columba had turned his back on Ireland. But the crane was returning home.

chorra-ghritheach air a h-ainmeachadh gu tric. Agus uaireannan, chan eil e soilleir an e a' chorra-ghritheach a tha ann no corra eile. Tha eisimpleir aig *Rubha nan Corra* air Loch Seile. Chanainn gur e 'the point of the herons' as coltaiche mar chiall, seach 'the point of the cranes'. Ach chan eil sin dearbhte.

Tha sgeulachd againn à beul-aithris mun chorra-mhonaidh. Tha i ag innse dhuinn gun robh i nàdarrach ann an Èirinn, ach nach robh i nàdarrach ann an Alba

Bha Calum Cille ann an Eilean Ì. Thuirt e ri manach gun tigeadh corra-mhonaidh an ceann trì latha. Bhiodh i claidhte oir thigeadh i às Èirinn.

Thàinig a' chorra-mhonaidh. Thog am manach i agus thug e dhachaigh i. Thug e biadh dhi. Thàinig Calum Cille agus thug e taing don mhanach. Agus thuirt e gum biodh an t-eun ag iarraidh falbh a-rithist an ceann trì latha.

Bha a' chorra-mhonaidh deiseil airson Ì fhàgail aig ceann trì latha. Leig am manach mu sgaoil i. Chaidh i an àirde. Thionndaidh i gu deas agus rinn i air Èirinn. Bha Calum Cille air a chùl a chur ri Èirinn. Ach bha a' chorra-mhonaidh a' tilleadh dhachaigh.