

Litir do Luchd-Ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

*A special programme, in the form of a “letter”, written and compiled by Roddy Maclean, and specifically aimed at Gaelic learners who already have some knowledge of the language. A short vocabulary and comments on points of grammar and figures of speech are included with the text. If you have comments, Roddy can be contacted by e-mail at roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk **

Halo a-rithist. Anns an Litir mu dheireadh, dh'iarr mi oirbh tri ainmean-àite eadar-theangachadh gu Beurla. Tha mi an dòchas gun deach agaibh air sin a dhèanamh. *Allt Gleann na Gaoithe* an toiseach. Tha sin a' ciallachadh *the burn of the glen of the wind*. Anns an ath-ainm, bha am facal *faing*. Ann an cuid de dh'àiteachan, 's e *fang* a chanas iad agus tha am facal air tighinn a-steach don Bheurla mar *fank*, co-dhiù ann an Alba. *Faing a' Chùirn Bhàin* – *the fank, or sheepfold, of the white cairn*. Agus, mu dheireadh, *Meall Dubh na Saobhaidh*: *the black lump-shaped hill of the fox den*.

Tha na h-ainmean-àite sin uile ann an taobh siar Rois agus, a bharrachd air beathaichean, tha mòran ainmean anns an sgìre sin co-cheangailte ri lusan is craobhan. Anns an ochdamh linn deug bha na coilltean faisg air Geàrrloch ainmeil air feadh ceann a tuath na Gaidhealtachd agus, bho àm gu àm, bhiodh eileanaich, eadhon bho na h-eileanan a-muigh, a' dol don sgìre sin airson fiodh fhaighinn airson taighean a thogail. Cha b' urrainn mullach a chur air taigh gun fhiodh.

Ann an seachd deug, ochdad 's a còig (1785) no mar sin, chaidh eathar làn fhear à Mealasta ann an Sgìre Ùige, ann an taobh siar Leòdhais, gu ruige Ros an Iar airson fiodh. Bha iad a' tilleadh, a' dèanamh air Caolas na Hearadh, nuair a dh'èirich stoirm mhòr. B' fheudar dhaibh coimhead airson fasgadh air cladach an ear Na Hearadh no Leòdhais. Mu dheireadh, fhuair iad air tìr ann an àite ris an canar am Bàgh Ciarach ann am fìor cheann a deas Sgìre na Pàirce ann an Leòdhas.

Chan eil duine a' fuireach anns a' Bhàgh Chiarach an-diugh ach, aig an àm sin, bha dhà no thrì teaghlaichean ann. Bha iad bochd agus, a rèir choltais, bha olc annta oir, an àite cobhair a dhèanamh air na maraichean, mar a dhèanadh a' mhòr-chuid, 's ann a mhuirt iad iad, gus am faigheadh iad greim air an cuid fiodha. A-rithist, a rèir beul-aithris, chaidh am murt le bhith air am bualadh air an cinn le clach aig bonn stocainn, agus chaidh an tiodhlacadh ann am boglach. Is thathar ag ràdh gu bheil lusan annasach air a bhith a' fàs anns a' bhoglach sin bhon uairsin.

Uill, cha do thill fir Mhealasta dhachaigh agus cha robh fios aig am mnàthan, thall ann an Sgìre Ùige, gu dè bh' air tachairt dhaibh. As dèidh greis, ghabh iad ris gu robh an eathar air a dhol fodha agus gu robh na fir uile marbh.

'S ann mar sin a bha e gu 's t-samhradh air a' bhliadhna as dèidh sin nuair a bha tè de na mnàthan aig fèill-sprèidh ann an Steòrnabhagh. Nise, tha dà sgeul ann mu dheidhinn na thachair. Tha cuid a' cumail a-mach gum faca i geansaidh a rinn i fhèin airson an duine aice air fear à Sgìre na Pàirce. Tha cuid eile ag ràdh gur e gu robh cuideigin a' reic plaidean, no

plangaidean, anns an robh piosan beaga tartain, a dhearbhadh dhi gur ann leis na daoine à Mealasta a bha iad.

Chan eil fhios a'm dè thachair do na murtairean. Ach uaireigin as dèidh sin, nochd fear de na mairbh, fear Donnchadh, do bhean ann an aisling, agus ghabh e òran dhi. Nuair a dhùisg i, bha an t-òran air a bilean:

*'S e nighean mo ghaoil an nighean donn òg,
Nam bithinn ri a taobh, cha bhithinn fo leòn...*

A bheil an sgeulachd fìor? Cò aige tha fios, ach 's iongantach mura h-eil fìrinn air choreigin innte.

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Faclan na seachdainne: taobh siar Rois, Ros an Iar: *Wester Ross*; Sgìre Ùige: *Uig (an area in SW Lewis)*; stoirm: *storm*; am Bàgh Ciarach: (*lit.*) *the dusky bay*; Sgìre na Pàirce: *Park (an area in SE Lewis)*; olc: *evil*; boglach: *bog, swamp*; am mnàthan: *their wives*; fèill-sprèidh: *livestock mart*; Steòrnabhagh: *Stornoway*; plaidean, plangaidean: *blankets*; murtairean: *murderers*.

Abairtean na seachdainne: anns an ochdamh linn deug bha na coilltean faisg air Geàrrloch ainmeil: *in the 18th Century, the forests near Gairloch were famous*; bhiodh eileanaich, eadhon bho na h-eileanan a-muigh, a' dol don sgìre sin: *islanders, even from the outer isles, would go to that area/parish*; cha b' urrainn mullach a chur air taigh gun fhiodh: *a house could not be roofed without timber*; chaidh eathar làn fhear à Mealasta: *a boatload of men from Mealasta*; b' fheudar dhaibh coimhead airson fàsghadh: *they had to look for shelter*; an àite cobhair a dhèanamh air na maraichean: *instead of assisting the seamen*; gus am faigheadh iad greim air an cuid fiodha: *so that they could get hold of their [cargo of] wood*; le bhith air am bualadh air an cinn: *by being struck on their heads*; le clach aig bonn stocainn: *with a stone at [in] the end of a stocking*; ghabh iad ris gu robh an eathar air a dhol fodha: *they accepted that their boat had sunk*; gum faca i geansaidh a rinn i fhèin: *that she saw a jumper she [had] made herself*; a dhearbhadh dhi gur ann le X a bha iad: *which proved to her that they belonged to X*; nochd fear de na mairbh ann an aisling do bhean: *one of the dead appeared to his wife in a dream*; 's iongantach mura h-eil fìrinn air choreigin innte: *it's likely there's some truth in it (fem)*.

Puing-ghràmar na seachdainne: Thathar ag ràdh gu bheil lusan annasach air a bhith a' fàs anns a' bhoglach sin bhon uairsin: *it is said that unusual plants have been growing in that bog ever since. I think it is about time we returned to look the impersonal forms of the verb "to be", which allow us easily to construct a passive (which we last looked at in Litir 5, June 18 1999). As far as the independent forms go, in the present tense, it is thathar (or thathas); in the past bhathar (or bhathas) and in the future bithear (bitheas). In the dependent form it is bheilear/eilear (bheileas/eileas), robhar (robhas) and bithear (bitheas). It is very easily employed – here are some examples. Bithear a' dèanamh obair Diluain (work will be done on Monday); chaidh a ràdh gu robhar a' coimhead airson luchd-obrach (it was said that workmen were being sought); bithear ag innse na sgeulachd sin fhathast (that story is still told – future acting as present habitual); tha mi cinnteach nach eilear ga innse a-nise (I am sure it is not told now).*

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdainne: Bha iad a' tilleadh, a' dèanamh air Caolas na Hearadh: *they were returning, making for the Sound of Harris. A' dèanamh air: making for, going towards.*

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