

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Na Rathaidean Co-shìnteach (2)

Each week the West Highland Free Press publishes the text for Ruairidh's "Letter to Gaelic Learners" on BBC Radio nan Gàidheal (103.5-105 FM). Broadcasts are as follows: 2:55pm on Sunday as part of BBC Radio nan Gàidheal's hour-long learning zone, following the Gaelic Learners' programme 'SpeakGaelic Extra', with a repeat at 10.30 pm on Wednesday. This is Litir 1,384. There is also a simpler version – An Litir Bheag – which is broadcast at 2:30pm each Sunday. Litir Bheag 1,080 corresponds to Litir 1,384. The Litir is also available at www.bbc.co.uk/litir and www.learnghaelic.scot/litir. Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learnghaelic.scot.

Nuair a chaidh Teàrlach Darwin a Ghleann Ruaidh ann am Bràigh Loch Abar ann an ochd ceud deug, trithead 's a h-ochd (1838), bha e air a bheò-ghlacadh leis na rathaidean co-shìnteach. Thuig e, leis gun robh na 'rathaidean' uile còmhnaidh, gun robh iad a' riochdachadh seann chladaichean a bh' ann **ùine mhòr mhòr air ais**.

Ge-tà, bha e dhen bheachd gur e cladaichean mara a bh' ann. Tha an rathad as ìsle an-diugh aig dà cheud is seasgad meatair os cionn na mara. Bha Darwin dhen bheachd gun robh tìr na h-Alba air èirigh gu mòr bhon a bha tuinn na mara a' briseadh ann an Gleann Ruaidh. Thachair èirigh mhòr trì tursan oir tha trì cladaichean ann.

Bha Darwin an dùil gum biodh sligean-mara air an lorg an cois nan rathaidean, agus gum biodh sin a' dearbhadh gun robh e ceart. Sgrìobh e pàipear saidheansail mun chùis. Ach, obh obh, cha do lorg duine slige-mhara sam bith.

Goirid an dèidh sin, bha eòlaiche-chreagan às an Eilbheis ann an Alba. B' esan Louis Agassiz. Bha Agassiz a' fuireach ann an dùthaich far an robh eigh-shruthan rim faicinn fhathast. Agus, nuair a thàinig e a dh'Alba, chunnaic e fianais le a shùilean fhèin gun robh eigh-shruthan uaireigin a' toirt buaidh air creagan is beanntan na tìre seo. Chuir e air adhart an smuain gun robh ceann a tuath na Roinn Eòrpa air fad air a chòmhdachadh le deigh o chionn mìltean de bhliadhnaichean.

Ann an Gleann Ruaidh, thuirt Agassiz nach e seann chladaichean mara a bha sna rathaidean co-shìnteach, ach seann chladaichean air loch-uisge mòr. Seo a-nise an dealbh a th' aig luchd-saidheans dhen ghnothach: Mu dhusan mìle bliadhna air ais, bha linn deighe ann. Bha eigh-shruth a' sruthadh bho na beanntan àrda timcheall Beinn Nibheis.

Dh'fhàs an eigh-shruth sin na bu mhotha is na b' fhaide. Mu dheireadh, chuir e stad air na h-aibhnichean ann an Gleann Ruaidh agus Gleann Spiothain. Bha e mar gun robh dàimh ann. Lìon na glinn sin le uisge gus an do ràinig an t-uisge àirde de dhà cheud is seasgad meatair os cionn na mara – no os cionn na mara mar a tha i an-diugh. Bha na tuinn a' briseadh air a' chladach sin fad ùine, a' fàgail a' chiad 'rathad'. Tha sin ri fhaicinn an dà chuid ann an Gleann Ruaidh agus Gleann Spiothain.

Dh'fhàs an eigh-shruth na b' fhaide agus rinn e dàim na b' àirde ann an Gleann Ruaidh, a' fàgail dàrna cladach aig àirde trì cheud, fichead 's a còig meatair. Ann an Gleann Spiothain, bha an t-uisge fhathast a' falbh don àird an ear agus mar sin cha robh dàrna cladach air a leasachadh ann.

Ach lean fàs na deighe aig beul Ghlinn Ruaidh agus chaidh treas cladach a leasachadh air an loch mhòr an sin, aig trì cheud is caogad meatair. **B' e an sealladh iongantach** nuair a leagh an deigh agus a bhris an dàim!

Ann an Gàidhlig, tha mi an dùil gur e 'rathaidean' a tha daoine a' gabhail air na *parallel roads* an-diugh. Ach air mapaichean na Suirbhìdh Òrdanais, tha am fear ann an Gleann Spiothain air ainmeachadh *Casan Ghlinn Spean*. Tha am facal *casan* a' ciallachadh 'ceum-coiseachd'. Saoil e an e 'Casanan Ghlinn Ruaidh' a bh' aig na seann daoine air na rathaidean co-shìnteach ainmeil?

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Faclan na Litreach: Gleann Ruaidh: *Glen Roy*; Bràigh Loch Abar: *Brae Lochaber*; còmhnaidh: *horizontal*; eòlaiche-chreagan: *geologist*; aibhnichean: *rivers*; Gleann Spiothain: *Glen Spean*; dàim: *dam*; Casan Ghlinn Spean: *this is what the OS give for 'parallel road' in Glen Spean (see Litir)*.

Abairtean na Litreach: bha e air a bheò-ghlacadh leis na rathaidean co-shìnteach: *he was captivated by the parallel roads*; ge-tà, bha e dhen bheachd gur e cladaichean mara a bh' annta: *however, he thought they were marine coastlines*; tha an rathad as ìsle an-diugh aig dà cheud is seasgad meatair os cionn na mara: *the lowest road today is at 260 metres above sea level*; gun robh tìr na h-Alba air èirigh gu mòr bhon a bha tuinn na mara a' briseadh ann an Gleann Ruaidh: *that Scotland's landmass had risen dramatically since coastal waves were breaking in Glen Roy*; thachair èirigh mhòr trì tursan: *a great rise took place three times*; gum biodh sligean-mara air an lorg an cois nan rathaidean: *that seashells would be found in the proximity of the roads*; cha do lorg duine slige-mhara sam bith: *nobody found any seashell*; far an robh eigh-shruthan rim faicinn fhathast: *where glaciers could still be seen*; chunnaic e fianais le a shùilean fhèin: *he saw evidence with his own eyes*; gun robh ceann a tuath na Roinn Eòrpa air fad air a chòmhdachadh le deigh: *that the whole of northern Europe was covered with ice*; seann chladaichean air loch-uisge mòr: *old shorelines on a large freshwater lake*; mu dhusan mìle bliadhna air ais, bha linn deighe ann: *about twelve thousand years ago, there was an ice age*; a' fàgail dàrna cladach aig àirde trì cheud, fichead 's a còig meatair: *leaving a second shoreline at an altitude of 325 metres*; bha an t-uisge fhathast a' falbh don àird an ear: *the water was still escaping to the east*; chaidh treas cladach a leasachadh aig trì cheud is caogad meatair: *a third shoreline was developed at 350m*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: seann chladaichean a bh' ann **ùine mhòr mhòr air ais**: *old shorelines that were in existence a long long time ago*. I might have used the expression o chionn ùine mhòr mhòr or o chionn fhad an t-saoghail but remember you can always use 'air ais' for 'ago' (as well as for 'backwards'), and sometimes the structure of a sentence lends itself to this.

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: **B' e an sealladh iongantach** nuair a leagh an deigh agus a bhris an dàim: *it was an incredible sight when the ice melted and the dam broke*.

Tha “Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh” air a maoineachadh le MG ALBA