

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 **

Thathar ag ràdh mas toigh leibh guga, gu bheil fuil Niseach a’ sruthadh nur cuislean. Chan eil daoine eile cho measail ’s a tha na Nisich air gugaichean – sùlairean òga. Agus leanaidh muinntir Nis le seann chleachdadh fhathast, anns am bi feadhainn a’ falbh a-mach gach samhradh gu ruige Sùla Sgeir airson gugaichean a ghlacadh. Ach saoilidh mi gu bheil e car annasach mar a tha daoine eile a’ cur sìos air blas a’ ghuga oir, mar as trice, is toigh leotha fhèin cearc-fheòil agus iasg, agus tha an guga letheach-slighe eadar na dha!

Tha Sùla Sgeir cho fad’ air falbh o àiteachan eile, cho beag is cho doirbh faighinn air is dheth, ’s gu bheil e iongantach gu robh daoine uaireigin a’ fuireach ann. Tha i còrr is ceathrad mìle gu tuath air Eilean Leòdhais, agus aona mhìle dheug gu siar air Rònaigh.

Uill, ’s dòcha nach robh daoine a’ fuireach air an sgeir fada oir chan eil tobar no fuaran oirre is cha bhiodh uisge, no bùrn, aca ri òl. ’S dòcha gur ann dìreach as t-samhradh a bhiodh iad ann nuair a gheibheadh iad biadh gu leòr le bhith a’ glacadh eòin-mhara. Ach tha fhios againn gum biodh uaireigin manaich a’ falbh a-mach gu eileanan iomallach airson fuireach orra, agus tha togalach cloiche ann an Sùla Sgeir a dh’fhaodadh a bhith na chealla.

Nuair a chaidh muinntir an t-Suirbhidh Òrdanais ann, ann am meadhan an naoidheamh linn deug, lorg iad grunn bhothan. Sgrìobh iad gur e am fear a bu shine is a bu mhò dhiubh “an Teampall”. Mun aon àm, chaidh T.S. Muir ann agus sgrìobh esan gum b’ e ainm an togalach seo “An Taigh Beannaichte”, agus gu robh mullach air.

An là an-diugh, chan eil daoine ag aontachadh mun togalach. Tha cuid a’ dèanamh dheth gu robh e air a chleachdadh dìreach le fir Nis, airson fuireach ann, nuair a chaidh iad ann airson gugaichean. Tha cuid eile ag ràdh gum biodh na h-eunadairean ag adhradh ann. Ach cha chuala Muir beul-aithris sam bith a dh’innseadh dha cò an duine, no cò na daoine, a dh’fhaodadh a bhith co-cheangailte ris.

Ach fhuair an Suirbhidh Òrdanais fios air a sin bho dhithis a bhuineadh do Nis. B’ e a’ chiad sgeulachd gu robh fear ann o chionn fhada, air an robh Maoldòmhnach mar ainm, a bha a’ fuireach ann an Rònaigh. Feumaidh gun do rinn e rudeigin ceàrr agus chaidh a thoirt a-null a Shùla Sgeir, far an do dh’fhuirich e ann am bothan beag. Nuair a chaidh bàta ann air a shon as dèidh

còig no sia seachdainean, bha e marbh. Tha e coltach gur e cion-bìdh no cion-uisge a chur às dha.

Tha an sgeulachd eile ag innse mu bhoireannach, Brianuilt, tè de na peathraichean aig an Naomh Rònán, a bha a' fuireach ann an Rònaigh còmhla ris an naomh. Bha e fhèin is i fhèin a' coiseachd còmhla là a bha seo nuair a dh'innis e do phiuthar cho tarraingeach 's a bha i dha. Shaoil ise gum biodh e glic dhi falbh, agus chaidh i a dh'fhuireach ann an Sùla Sgeir far am faiceadh i eilean a bràthar fhathast.

Is tha àiteachan ann an Sùla Sgeir a' cumail cuimhne air Brianuilt fhathast, agus mar a bhiodh i na suidhe, a' coimhead thar a' chuain a dh'ionnsaigh Rònaigh – àiteachan mar Suidhe Bhrianuilt agus Bealach an t-Suidhe. Agus tha e coltach gur e an t-ainm a bha uaireigin aig muinntir Nis airson an t-sùlaire – eun Bhrianuilt.

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Faclan na seachdaine: guga: *guga, young of gannet or solan goose*; Nisich: *people of Ness*; sùlairean: *gannets*; annasach: *unusual*; ceathrad: *forty*; Rònaigh: *(North) Rona*; manaich: *monks*; togalach cloiche: *a stone building*; cealla: *religious cell*; Suidhe Bhrianuilt: *Brianuilt's Seat*; Bealach an t-Suidhe: *the Pass of the Seat*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: gu bheil fuil Niseach a' sruthadh nur cuislean: *that Ness blood runs in your veins*; leanaidh X le seann chleachdadh: *X follows with an old practice*; mar a tha daoine eile a' cur sìos air X: *as others criticise X*; cho doirbh faighinn air is dheth: *so difficult to get on and off*; le bhith a' glacadh eòin-mhara: *by catching seabirds*; nuair a chaidh muinntir an t-Suirbhidh Òrdanais ann: *when the Ordnance Survey people went there*; lorg iad grunn bhothan: *they found a few bothies*; an Taigh Beannaichte: *the Blessed House*; tha cuid a' dèanamh dheth: *some reckon*; tha cuid eile ag ràdh gum biodh na h-eunadairean ag adhradh ann: *some others say that the birders would worship there*; feumaidh gun do rinn e rudeigin ceàrr: *he must have done something wrong*; tha e coltach gur e cion-bìdh no cion-uisge a chuir às dha: *it appears that a lack of food and a lack of water that did for him*; tè de na peathraichean aig an Naomh Rònán: *one of the sisters of St Ronan*; nuair a dh'innis e do phiuthar cho tarraingeach 's a bha i dha: *when he told his sister how attractive she was to him*; shaoil ise gum biodh e glic dhi falbh: *she thought it would be wise for her to leave*; a' coimhead thar a' chuain a dh'ionnsaigh Rònaigh: *looking across the ocean towards Rona*.

Puing-ghràmar na seachdaine: 's dòcha nach robh daoine a' fuireach air an sgeir fada: *probably people were not living long on the rock. I hope that fada here did not confuse you and make you think it was referring to the sgeir itself. Let us analyse which case sgeir is in: it is preceded by a simple preposition (air), so it is in the dative or prepositional case. If the fada referred to the sgeir, it would be lenited as it would be an adjective qualifying the dative noun, ie for "they were not on the long rock", we would say cha robh iad air an sgeir fhada. This is the same as saying tha iad air a' bhòrd mhòr, with the mòr lenited following the lenited bòrd. But for "they were not on the rock long", fada is acting as an adverb and is qualifying the verb not the noun. Thus we would say cha robh iad air an sgeir fada or cha robh iad fada air an sgeir. For "they were*

not long on the long rock” you could say cha robh iad fada air an sgeir fhada. There are two other points to be made. Fada still lenites when qualifying a dative singular noun even though “sg” cannot lenite – this is a general rule in Gaelic. Secondly sgeir is a feminine noun and one might expect a qualifying adjective to slenderise in the dative singular (eg anns an eaglais bhig, don nighinn òig), but fada does not slenderise. These exceptions to rules keep us on our toes!

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine: tha an guga letheach-slighe eadar na dhà: *the guga is halfway between the two.*

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