

## *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](mailto:roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk) \**

An t-seachdain sa chaidh bha mi a-mach air rud a leugh mi anns an leabhar *Tales and Traditions of the Lews* le Dòmhnall Dòmhnallach. Tha aon stòiridh aige gu h-àraidh a leugh mi le tlachd mhòr, oir tha e air a libhrigeadh gu siubhlach, brèagha. 'S e a th' ann sgeulachd à beul-aithris air an cuala mi iomradh ann an àiteachan eile cuideachd. Bheir mi blasadh dhith dhuibh an-dràsta.

Bidh sibh eòlach, tha mi an dùil, air Eilean Bheàrnaraigh air taobh siar Leòdhais. Canaidh daoine Beàrnaraigh Leòdhais ris, oir tha Beàrnaraigh no dhà eile ann cuideachd. Agus, leis an fhìrinn innse, tha dà Bheàrnaraigh ann an Leòdhas, eilean mòr, Beàrnaraigh Mhòr, agus eilean beag eile ri taobh – Beàrnaraigh Bheag. Chan eil duine a' fuireach ann am Beàrnaraigh Bheag an là an-diugh ach, o shean, bha sluagh ann. Agus ri linn nan creachadairean Lochlannach, bha daoine gu leòr a' fuireach anns an eilean.

Nam measg, bha tè òg a bha air leth brèagha. 'S e an t-ainm a bh' oirre “Gealachos”. Tha mi an dùil gum b' e ciall a h-ainm – geala-chas – is gu robh casan bàna aice. Bha na fleasgaich gu lèir dèidheil air Gealachos agus tha e coltach gu robh i ann an gaol le fear aca.

Ach, là a bha seo, nochd feachd de Lochlannaich ann am birlinn aig an tràigh. B' e fear “Suain” an ceannard aca, agus bha e na Rìgh air Lochlann air fad. Chunnaic e am boireannach òg brèagha, agus dh'fhairich e teas a' ghaoil na chridhe. Bha e airson 's gum pòsadh e i, agus dh'iarr e air cuid de na saighearan aige Gealachos a thoirt am bruid.

Goirid as dèidh sin bha i air a' bhirlinn air a slighe a Lochlann am measg dhaoine aig an robh cànan nach do thuig i idir. Bha i a' caoineadh fad an t-siubhail airson a pàrantan, airson a leannain agus airson eilean a h-àraich. Bha Suain glè shnog dhi agus bha i modhail gu leòr dha, ach bha cianalas mòr oirre.

Nuair a ràinig i Lochlann, bha sluagh mòr a' feitheamh rithe fhèin is ris an Rìgh. Shaoil na Lochlannaich gu lèir gu robh Gealachos brèagha agus bha iad airson a dèanamh toilichte nam measg. Nuair a bhiodh i a' sealg nan torc anns a' choille, nuair a bhiodh i gu h-àrd air na beanntan àlainn no ann am bàta mòr ann an loch brèagha, fiù 's an uair sin, cha robh i sona. Bha i airson a dhol dhachaigh. Agus dh'fhàg sin cridhe Shuain trom, oir bha e dha-rìreabh ann an gaol leatha.

Mu dheireadh, as dèidh seachd bliadhna, chaidh an Rìgh ga h-ionnsaigh agus 's e seo an còmhradh a bh' aca – a chaidh fhàgail againn mar rann Ghàidhlig, co-dhiù 's ann an Gàidhlig no Lochlannais a bha e aig an àm. 'S e an Rìgh a bhruidhneas an toiseach:

*Nam biodh tusa ann am Beàrnaraigh Bheag  
Cha bhiodh aca fleadh no fonn,  
Ach mac-talla chreagan àrda  
Toirt fianais air bàrcadh thonn.  
Fhreagair i gu socair ciùin,  
'S deòir bho a sùil a' ruith gu luath,  
'Chaoidh cha toir mi a Lochlann rùn,  
Le chuid shlèibhtean mùgach fuar.'*

Goirid as dèidh sin, thug Suain Gealachos air ais a Bheàrnaraigh agus, ged a dh'fhuirich i anns an eilean airson a' chòrr de a beatha, agus ged a bha i sona gu leòr, cha do ghabh i gaol air fear sam bith as dèidh na thachair dhi, agus chaochail i na seann bhoireannach gun phòsadh.

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**Faclan na seachdaine:** Beàrnaraigh Bheag: *Little Bernera*; sluagh: *people, population*; fleasgaich: *youths, bachelors*; feachd: *(armed) force*; birlinn: *galley*; Suain: *Sweyn*; torc: *wild boar*; àlainn: *(very) beautiful*; mac-talla: *echo*; deòir: *tears*.

**Abairtean na seachdaine:** a leugh mi le tlachd mhòr: *which I read with great pleasure*; bheir mi blasad dhith dhuibh: *I'll give you a taste of it*; ri linn nan creachadairean Lochlannach: *at the time of the Viking marauders*; tha mi an dùil gum b' e ciall a h-ainm...: *I think (expect) that the meaning of her name was...*; bha e na Rìgh air Lochlann air fad: *he was the king of the whole of Scandinavia*; dh'fhairich e teas a' ghaoil na chridhe: *he felt the heat of love in his heart*; bha e airson 's gum pòsadh e i: *he wanted to marry her*; dh'iarr e air X, Y a thoirt am bruid: *he asked X to kidnap Y*; airson eilean a h-àraich: *for the island of her upbringing*; bha iad airson a dèanamh toilichte: *they wanted to please her*; cha bhiodh aca fleadh no fonn: *they wouldn't have a feast or a tune (ie feast or fun)*; (a') toirt fianais air bàrcadh thonn: *bearing testimony to rushing of waves (noise on the shore)*; fhreagair i gu socair ciùin: *she replied gently and calmly*; (a-)chaidh cha toir mi a Lochlann rùn: *never will I give Lochlann my love*; le chuid shlèibhtean mùgach fuar: *with its gloomy cold moors (in parts of the mainland mùgach is mugach ie a short "u")*; chaochail i na seann bhoireannach gun phòsadh: *she died an old woman without marrying*.

**Puing-ghràmar na seachdaine:** sgeulachd à beul-aithris air an cuala mi iomradh ann an àiteachan eile: *a story derived from oral tradition which I (had) heard in other places. Do you note it is air an cuala mi, not air a chuala mi. Consider the English statements "I am ready" and "am I ready?" The verbal forms ("am") are the same, even though one is affirmative (a statement) while the other is interrogative (a question). In Gaelic the two forms are generally different eg "tha mi deiseil" (affirmative) and "a bheil mi deiseil?" (interrogative). Consider now the past tenses of the irregular verb cluinn (cluinntinn): "chuala mi e" and "an cuala mi e?" The former is the affirmative form and the latter the interrogative form. It is important to distinguish the two, because in certain phrases one is used in preference to the other: eg with cia mheud we use the affirmative form – cia mheud caora a tha agad? NOT cia mheud caora a bheil agad? With ciamar, we also use the affirmative form – ie ciamar a tha thu? NOT ciamar a bheil thu? And in the example in the Litir, following "air" we use the interrogative form. We might say "sin am boireannach air a bheil Uilleam dèidheil" (that's the woman William is keen on) but we would not say "sin am boireannach air a tha Uilleam dèidheil". Here are two more examples of that: sin a' phairc air an robh mi a' cluich (that's the park on which I was playing); sin an dearbh chuspair air am bi mi a' bruidhinn (that's the very subject on which I will be speaking).*

**Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine:** bha cianalas mòr oirre: *she was very homesick.*

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