

# 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) \* This is Litir 231.*

Càit a bheil an t-Eilean Gorm? Uill, ’s iomadh eilean ann an Alba a dh’fhaodadh an tiotal sin a ghiùlan, ’s dòcha, ged a tha na dhà dhiubh a’ seasamh a-mach bho chach nam bheachd-san, agus iad le chèile nas guirme nan àbhaist. Nise, mus tèid mi air adhart, feumaidh mi ràdh gu bheil mi a’ cleachdadh *gorm* an seo mar dhath an fheòir – a’ ciallachadh *green* ann am Beurla, chan e *blue*. Oir ’s e an t-ainm a th’ air an eilean seo ann am Beurla “*the Green Island*” agus thathar a’ dèanamh dheth gur e as coireach ri sin, gu robh e còmhdaichte le feur.

’S iad an dà eilean air a bheil mi a’ beachdachadh - Ìle agus eilean eile ann an Earra-Ghaidheal, gu tuath air Ìle – Liosmòr. Cha chreid mi gu bheil eilean eile ann an Alba a tha a cheart cho feurach is torrach ri Liosmòr.

Sin mo roghainn, ma-thà, ach càit a bheil “an t-Eilean Gorm”? Uill, leis an fhìrinn innse, chan eil mi cinnteach ca’ bheil e no, leis an fhìrinn innse, an robh e a-riamh ann am bith. Ach tha e air ainmeachadh ann am Beurla mar “*the Green Island*” ann an leabhar a thàinig a-mach às ùr o chionn ghoirid – an leabhar le Màrtainn MacIlleMhàrtainn air a bheil “*A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland*”.

’S ann o chionn trì cheud bliadhna a nochd an leabhar sin an toiseach, ach tha Urras Leabhraichean nan Eilean, buidheann a tha stèidhichte ann an Nis ann an Leòdhas, air a thoirt a-mach as ùr am-bliadhna. Tha am fear ùr na mhac-samhail don chiad iris dheth agus tha notaichean na chois, a rinn an sgrìobhadair Mìcheal Robson. Tha Mìcheal a’ fuireach ann am Port Nis agus tha eòlas air leth aige air na h-eileanan. Chuir an t-Urras an tiotal air an leabhar ùr “*Curiosities of Art and Nature*”, às dèidh rudeigin a chuir Màrtainn air a’ chiad dhuilleig aige anns an leabhar thùsail.

Sgrìobh Màrtainn gu robh an t-Eilean Gorm don iar-dheas air Ìle, Colasa is Diùra, fad là-seòlaidh air falbh bho na h-eileanan sin. Thàinig a chunntas bhon mhinistear ann an Diùra, an t-Urramach Iain MacSuain, a fhuair e bho chaithean soithich Shasannaich. Seo agaibh cuibhreann de na thuirt am maraiche ris a’ mhinistear:

“Bha mi a’ seòladh mu dheich lèigean fichead don iar-dheas air Ìle. Thàinig ciùineas orm faisg air eilean beag, far an do leig mi an acair is far an deach mi air tìr. Bha e còmhdaichte air fad le feur fada; bha na h-uimhir de ròin nan laighe air na creagan is air a’ chladach; tha mar an ceudna na h-uimhir de dh’èoin-mhara ann... Tha mòran dèileachan is bùird air cladach an eilein agus, leis gu bheil e còmhnard agus faisg air a bhith aig ìre na mara, dh’iarr mi air a’ chriubha agam (a bha dìomhain) am fiodh a chàrnadh gu àirde co-ionann ri dà ùrlar – gus am biodh e na b’ fhasa do mharaichean [an t-eilean] fhaicinn...”

Bu chòir dhomh cur ris an tuairisgeul a thug mi dhuibh dhen eilean, oir tha fhios agam gum bi cuid agaibh a’ falbh a choimhead air mapaichean dhen chuan eadar Alba is Eirinn, ga lorg. Thuirt an caiptean Sasannach gu robh an t-eilean ceithir mìle a dh’fhaide, le mìle de leud ann, agus le abhainn anns a’ mheadhan, ged a tha amharas agam gur dòcha gur e sàl, seach fìor-uisge, a bh’ anns an “abhainn”. Co-dhiù, an ath-sheachdain, innsidh mi dhuibh mar a chunnaic

muintir Cholasa an t-Eilean Gorm airson a' chiad turas, agus mar a dh'fhalbh e à fianais, taobh a-staigh bliadhna.

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**Faclan na seachdaine:** an t-Eilean Gorm: *the Green Island (for notes on gorm applying to the green of grass, see Litir 176 1<sup>st</sup> Nov 2002)*; còmhdach: *covered*; feur: *grass*; Ìle: *Islay*; Liosmòr: *Lismore*; Màrtainn MacIlleMhàrtainn: *Martin Martin*; Urras Leabhraichean nan Eilean: *The Islands Books Trust*; mac-samhail: *facsimile*; Port Nis: *Port of Ness*; iar-dheas: *south-west*; Diùra: *Jura*; an t-Urramach Iain MacSuain: *Rev. John MacSween*; ciùineas: *calm*; eòin-mhara: *sea-birds*; dèileachan is bùird: *planks and boards*; dìomhain: *idle*; leud: *width*; sàl: *salt-water*; fìor-uisge: *freshwater*; à fianais: *out of sight*; muintir Cholasa: *the people of Colonsay*.

**Abairtean na seachdaine:** 's iomadh eilean a dh'fhaodadh an tìotal sin a ghiùlan: *there's many an island could carry that title*; ged a tha na dhà dhiubh a' seasamh a-mach bho chàch: *although two of them stand out from the others*; mar dhath an fheadir: *as the colour of [the] grass*; cha chreid mi gu bheil: *I don't reckon*; a cheart cho feurach is torrach ri: *as grassy and fertile as*; a nochd an leabhar sin an toiseach: *that that book appeared at first*; air a thoirt a-mach as ùr: *newly brought out*; tha notaichean na chois: *there are notes accompanying it*; tha eòlas air leth aige air na h-eileanan: *he has a particularly good knowledge of the islands*; anns an leabhar thùsail: *in the original book*; fad là-seòlaidh air falbh: *a day's sail away*; bho chaipitean soithich Shasannaich: *from the captain of an English vessel*; mu dheic lèigean fichead: *about thirty leagues*; mar an ceudna: *likewise*; fiodh a chàrnadh gu àirde co-ionann ri dà ùrlar: *to pile up wood to the height [of the equivalent] of two stories*; gus am biodh e na b' fhasa do mharaichean an t-eilean fhaicinn: *so that it would be easier for mariners to see the island*.

**Puing-ghràmar na seachdaine:** bha na h-uimhir de ròin nan laighe air na creagan is air a' chladach: *there was an abundance of seals lying on the rocks and on the shore. Why did I say nan laighe instead of a' laighe? The difference is that nan laighe means that the seals are already in a state of lying. If the verbal noun were used here, it would be that they were actually in the process of lying down. You will be more familiar with the similar example of the verb suidh/suidhe (sit). Tha mi a' suidhe means that I am in the process of sitting down. Tha mi nam shuidhe means that I am already in a sitting position. Notice the latter employs the appropriate person of the prepositional possessive adjectives associated with ann eg bha thu nad [na do] shuidhe, bha e na shuidhe, bha i na suidhe etc. Literally, with bha na ròin nan laighe, we are saying "the seals were in their lying." Before I leave laigh/laighe, if you have a dog or a young child [or even a pet seal], the order "laigh sìos!" (lie down!) is a good one to remember.*

**Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine:** an robh e a-riamh ann am bith: *did it ever exist*.

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