

# 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 [rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk) \* This is Litir 251.*

Tha mapa mu mo choinneimh an-dràsta a tha a’ sealltainn nan làrach airceòlach a chaidh a lorg anns a’ Mhonadh Ruadh. Tha dà sheòrsa de chomharra air – cearcaill bheaga dhubha a tha a’ riochdachadh làraich co-cheangailte ris na Meadhan Aoisean, no ri linntean nas fhaisg air an là an-diugh; agus cearcaill bheaga gheala a tha a’ comharrachadh làraich a bhuineas don linn mus robh eachdraidh air a sgrìobhadh.

’S e rud a tha inntinneach mu dheidhinn a’ mhapa gu bheil pìos dheth anns a’ mheadhan anns a bheil glè bheag de chearcaill. Sin na beanntan a tha aig meadhan Pàirc Nàiseanta a’ Mhonaidh Ruaidh. Bha iad a-riamh ro àrd is ro fhuar airson leigeil le sluagh fuireach orra. Ach chan eil sin a’ ciallachadh nach robh sluagh a’ fuireach anns na glinn eadar na beanntan. Is, gu dearbh, tha na h-uibhir de chearcaill dhubha anns na glinn sin, a’ sealltainn gu robh daoine a’ fuireach annta, co-dhiù aig àmanna sa bhliadhna, bho na Meadhan Aoisean a-mach. Na Cruithnich ’s na Gaidheil, tha fhios.

Chan eil ann, ge-tà, ach aon chearcall beag geal anns na beanntan sin. Is chan eil am mapa sean. Chaidh fhoillseachadh o chionn trì bliadhna. Tha sin a’ ciallachadh nach eil fianais ann gu robh daoine a’ fuireach no a’ siubhal thairis air a’ Mhonadh Ruadh anns na linntean ro-eachdraidheil.

Uill, bu chòir dhomh ràdh – cha robh fianais ann. Oir, o chionn ghoirid, chaidh pìosan cloiche a lorg gu h-àrd ann an Gleann Dè, a tha a’ dearbhadh gu robh sluagh anns an sgìre sin timcheall air seachd mìle bliadhna air ais. Agus innsidh mi dhuibh ann am mionaid mun dòigh annasaich anns an tàinig iad gu aire airceòlaichean.

’S e a bh’ annta ach ceithir fichead pìos de chloich – clach-spor agus clach-èiteig – is feadhainn dhiubh air an deach cumadh ùr a dhèanamh a dh’aona-ghnothach le mac an duine. Chan eil clach-spor a’ nochdadh gu nàdarrach anns a’ Mhonadh Ruadh, agus thathar a’ smaoinichadh gu robh na clachan sin air an toirt a-steach don sgìre bho àite eile ann an Alba, ’s dòcha bho àite air choreigin faisg air cladach an ear na dùthcha.

Ach ’s e an rud a tha air leth inntinneach mu dheidhinn a’ ghnòthaich, gu robh daoine a’ dèanamh – a’ cruthachadh – acainn cloiche shuas an sin faisg air Uisge Dè. Ciamar a tha fios againn air sin? Uill, lorgadh pìosan beaga de chloich-spor anns an dearbh àite – pìosan a chaidh a bhriseadh far cloiche mòire nuair a bhathar a’ dèanamh nan acainn. Bhathar a’ cleachdadh nan acainn ann an sin cuideachd, oir chaidh feadhainn bhriste a lorg.

Tha airceòlaichean dhen bheachd gu bheil seo a’ sealltainn gu robh daoine a’ gluasad thairis air a’ Mhonadh Ruadh, no ’s dòcha tron Làirig Ghrù, a tha a’ ruith eadar na beanntan, o chionn seachd mìle bliadhna.

Chan e Albannach a lorg iad, ge-tà, ach airceòlaiche à Sasainn air a bheil Aonghas Wainwright mar ainm. Chunnaic e na pìosan cloiche nuair a chaidh e air chuairt ann an Gleann Dè, far an robhar a’ dèanamh obair-leasachaidh air frith-rathad. Leis gu robh e cleachdte ri bhith a’ lorg acainn de chloich-spor gu tric air talamh ìosal ann an Sasainn, cha do smaoinich e cus mu dheidhinn a’ ghnòthaich.

Bha e anns an sgìre airson co-labhairt air airceòlas agus, nuair a thill e don cho-labhairt, sheall e cuid de na clachan do dh'airceòlaichean eile. Abair co-labhairt bho sin a-mach! Le fhradharc geur, thòisich Aonghas Wainwright caibideil beag ùr ann an eachdraidh fhada na h-Alba.

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**Faclan na seachdaine:** làrach airceòlach: *archaeological site*; na Meadhan Aoisean: *Medieval times*; Pàirc Nàiseanta a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh: *Cairngorms National Park*; ro-eachdraidheil: *prehistoric*; Gleann Dè: *Glen Dee*; acainn cloiche: *stone tools*; lorgadh X: *X were found*; frith-rathad: *hill path*; cleachdte ri: *used to*; sheall e: *he showed*; caibideil: *chapter*.

**Abairtean na seachdaine:** tha mapa mu mo choinneimh an-dràsta: *there is a map in front of me just now*; a bhuineas don linn: *which belongs to the time (era)*; mus robh eachdraidh air a sgrìobhadh: *before history was written*; anns a bheil glè bheag de chearcaill: *in which there are very few circles*; bha iad a-riamh ro fhuar: *they were always too cold*; co-dhiù aig àmanna sa bhliadhna: *at least at [some] times in [of] the year*; bu chòir dhomh ràdh: *I should say*; timcheall air seachd mìle bliadhna air ais: *about 7,000 years ago*; gu aire airceòlaichean: *to the attention of archaeologists*; clach-spor agus clach-èiteig: *flint and quartzite*; air an deach cumadh ùr a dhèanamh: *which were shaped*; a chaidh a bhriseadh far cloiche mòire: *which were broken off a large stone*; nuair a chaidh e air chuairt: *when he went for a walk*; cha do smaoinich e cus mu dheidhinn: *he didn't think too much about*; abair co-labhairt!: *what a conference!*; le fhradharc geur: *with his keen vision*.

**Puing-ghràmar na seachdaine:** faisg air Uisge Dè: *close to the River Dee*. A point on place names this week. I wonder, if you were listening to the Litir, without reading the text, if you were puzzled here by the use of uisge? Normally you meet with it in such phrases as *tha an t-uisge ann (it is raining)* or *am faod mi gloidne uisge fhaighinn? (may I have a glass of water?)*. Bùrn is another word meaning water (other than rain), although it is missing from some dialects. But in some mainland areas, particularly in the central Highlands, uisge also means "river" or "stream" and is found in place names instead of abhainn. Examples are Uisge Spè (River Spey), Uisge Dè (River Dee), Uisge Eire (River Findhorn) and Uisge Sìdh (River Shee). It can even apply to tiny streams as in Uisge Dubh Poll a' Choin (Dark Stream of the Dog's Pool) which is met with by walkers on the Làirig an Laoigh. It is likely that Invernessians once called the River Ness Uisge Nis but, with the loss of the local dialect and the city's Gaelic-speakers coming largely from outside the area, it is now universally referred to as Abhainn Nis.

**Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine:** Na Cruithnich 's na Gaidheil, tha fhios: *the Picts and the Gaels, no doubt*. Tha fhios here refers to a fact which would generally accepted by the listeners or readers, an equivalent to "obviously" (although not quite as strong) or "no doubt" or "of course".

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