

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.maclea@bbc.co.uk * This is Litir 290.*

Is iomadh rud iongantach a chunnacas ann an uisgeachan taobh an iar na Gàidhealtachd. Bha mi a’ leughadh aithris an là eile mun turas a bhathar ag iasgach crodh. Uill, ’s ann mar sin a chaidh aithris co-dhiù. Bhathar ag iasgach crodh aig muir. Ghlac na h-iasgairan dà mhart Gàidhealach, agus iad a’ snàmh.

Thachair e faisg air Rubha Chreag Innis. Tha sin air tìr-mòr Earra-Ghàidheal, deas air an Òban, is faisg air ceann a tuath Eilein Diùra. B’ e am fear a rinn an aithris am bàrd is sgrìobhadair ainmeil, Seumas Hogg. ’S dòcha gum bi sibh eòlach air Hogg mar “Ciobair Eadaraig”, am far-ainm a bha e a’ cleachdadh, oir rugadh e ann an Eadaraig anns Na Crìochan.

Ann an ochd ceud deug is ceithir (1804), chaidh Hogg air turas air taobh an iar na Gàidhealtachd. Ann an Canàl a’ Chrìonain, fhuair e air bòrd soitheach a bha a’ dol chun an Eilein Sgitheanaich. Sgrìobh e mun turas mara aige ann an litir gu charaid, an sgrìobhadair ainmeil, Bhaltair Scott. “Mu mhìle a-mach à Rubha Chreag Innis,” sgrìobh e, “chunnaic sinn rud àraidh ... rud nach fhaca mi roimhe ... bàta le deagh sgioba air bòrd, ag iasgach crodh anns a’ chuan.”

“Seadh, coimhead air ais air an fhacal sin a-rithist,” sgrìobh e. “*Crodh* a th’ ann. Chun an là an-diugh chan urrainn dhomh a mhìneachadh idir, no ciamar a dh’èirich iasgach cho luachmhor anns an àite sin, ach seo mar a thachair e:”

Lean e air, ag innse do Bhaltair Scott mar a bha an soitheach aca a’ seòladh gu tuath. Mhìnich e mar a bha a’ ghaoth a’ socrachadh, ach mar a bha a’ mhuir a’ sruthadh gu luath, tron chaolas eadar na h-eileanan agus tìr-mòr, mar abhainn. Chunnaic Hogg bàta-seòlaidh mu leth-mhìle air falbh. An uair sin chunnaic e rudeigin dubh air uachdar na mara. Tro phrosbaig, bha e furasta gu leòr fhaicinn dè bh’ ann – mart dubh Gàidhealach.

Chaidh am bàta eile seachad air a’ mhart. Leag an criutha an seòl agus thilg iad ròpan timcheall air a’ bheathach. Dh’fheuch na seòladairean ri a shlaodadh air bòrd. “Cha deach aca air sin a dhèanamh, ge-tà,” sgrìobh am bàrd, “oir bha e a’ plubadaich mar mhuc-mhara, agus bha e coltach gu robh am bàta a’ dol a chur car.” Leis a sin, cheangail na fir am mart gu deireadh a’ bhàta.

“An uair sin,” lean Hogg, “agus fuaim na Gàidhlig anns a’ bhàta a’ lughdachadh, nochd mart donn às na tonnan mu cheathrad slat bhuainn. Bha e air fàs gu math fann, bha e a’ snàmh air a chliathaich agus bha e a’ sèideadh analach mar phèileag.”

Bha am mart seo a’ dol leis an t-sruth a dh’ionnsaigh a’ bhàta eile. “Chan urrainn dhomh innse dhut,” sgrìobh Hogg, “an othail a dh’èirich an lùib na dàrna duais a bha

seo.” Tharraing cuid an seòl suas [ach] bha cuid eile airson fuireach mar a bha iad, gun a bhith deònach na bh’ aca le cinnt a chall airson cothrom a bhith aca an dàrna mart fhaighinn. Ach chaidh aca air na dhà a ghlacadh, is rinn iad an uair sin air a’ chladach.

Cha robh fios aig Hogg air cò às a bha an crodh air tighinn. Ach saoilidh mi gu bheil e follaiseach – bhathar gan toirt gu margaidh bho eilean air choreigin. Bha an crodh a’ snàmh thar a’ chaolais, is chaidh an sguabadh air falbh leis an t-sruth. Is iad buachaillean, seach iasgairean, a bha gan glacadh. Sin, air neo, ’s e crodh-mara a bh’annta – ach an leigeadh crodh-mara le iasgairean an glacadh?

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Faclan na seachdaine: mart: *cow or steer (fattened for market)*; Creag Innis: *Craignish*; Cìobair Eadaraig: *The Ettrick Shepherd*; far-ainm: *nickname*; Na Crìochan: *The Borders*; Canàl a’ Chrìonain: *The Crinan Canal*; luachmhor: *valuable*; fann: *weak*; cliathaich: *side*; othail: *hubbub*; margaidh: *market*; buachaillean: *herdsmen*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: ’s ann mar sin a chaidh aithris: *that is how it was reported*; deas air an Òban: *south of Oban*; ceann a tuath Eilein Diùra: *the north of the Isle of Jura*; b’ e am fear a rinn an aithris: *the man who made the report was*; rud nach fhaca mi roimhe: *something I had never seen before*; coimhead air ais air an fhacal sin a-rithist: *look back at that word again*; lean e air: *he continued*; mar a bha an soitheach aca a’ seòladh gu tuath: *how their vessel was sailing north*; tron chaolas eadar X agus Y: *through the channel between X and Y*; air uachdar na mara: *on the surface of the sea*; tro phrosbaig, bha e furasta gu leòr fhaicinn dè bh’ ann: *through a spyglass it was easy enough to see what it was*; leag an criutha an seòl: *the crew lowered the sail*; dh’fheuch X ri a shlaodadh air bòrd: *X tried to haul it on board*; bha e a’ plubadaich mar mhuc-mhara: *it was splashing like a whale*; gu robh am bàta a’ dol a chur car: *that the boat was going to turn turtle*; mu cheathrad slat bhuainn: *about forty yards from us*; bha e a’ sèideadh analach mar phèileag: *it was blowing like a porpoise*; gun a bhith deònach na bh’ aca le cinnt a chall: *unwilling to lose what they had with certainty*; chaidh aca air na dhà a ghlacadh: *they managed to catch both*; bho eilean air choreigin: *from some island or another*; chaidh an sguabadh air falbh leis an t-sruth: *they were swept away by the current*; an leigeadh crodh-mara le iasgairean an glacadh?: *would sea-cattle (mythical animals in Gaelic tradition) let fishermen catch them?*

Puing-chànain na seachdaine: ag iasgach crodh anns a’ chuan: *fishing for cattle in the open sea. You might have thought, “shouldn’t it be ag iasgach cruìdh?” and certainly in the Gaelic spoken at the time of the incident, such would have been the case because the verbal noun (eg ag iasgach) places a following noun in the genitive case. The genitive of crodh is cruìdh. But in modern Gaelic, where the article is absent (ie the noun is indefinite), as in the Litir, the noun is generally in the nominative. But it still regularly adopts its genitive form following a verbal noun where there is an article. Thus we would say ag iasgach a’ chruìdh (fishing [for] the cattle), not ag iasgach an crodh. Of course, it is a phrase which is likely to be encountered very rarely!*

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine: Is iomadh rud iongantach a chunnacas: *it is many an amazing/surprising thing that was seen.*

** Tha “Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh” air a maoinachadh le Seirbheis nam Meadhanan Gàidhlig*