

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

A special programme, in the form of a “letter”, designed for 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, Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 364. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 60 corresponds to Litir 364.

Ann na bliadhnaichean mu dheireadh de chaogadan an naoidheamh linn deug càite an robh na coitheanalan Gàidhlig a bu mhotha air an t-saoghal? Tha mi a’ ciallachadh coitheanalan eaglaise. Ann an Steòrnabhagh, ’s dòcha? No Port Rìgh? No Inbhir Nis? Uill, tha e cinnteach gu robh coitheanalan mòra anns na h-àiteachan sin. Ach tha amharas agam nach robh gin aca na bu mhotha na coitheanalan Inbhir Ùige.

Seadh – Inbhir Ùige. Ged a bha Gàidhlig ga bruidhinn ann an taobh an iar is ceann a deas Ghallaibh, b’ i a’ Bheurla Ghallda càinnt muinntir Inbhir Ùige. Ach bha gnothaichean càinain a’ bhaile ag atharrachadh ann an seusan an iasgaich. Nuair a bha an t-iasgach a’ dol, bha na h-uibhir de Ghàidheil a’ dol ann, gu h-àraidh bhon Eilean Sgitheanach is na h-Eileanan Siar.

Bhiodh suas ri ceithir mìle duine a’ tighinn cruinn còmhla ann am pàirc ann an Inbhir Ùige air an t-Sàbaid airson seirbheis Ghàidhlig. Bhiodh suas ri trìùir mhinistearan a’ frithealadh a’ choitheanail oir bha e ro mhòr airson aon duine.

Bha gnìomhachas an iasgaich air leth mòr ann an Alba aig an àm sin. Agus bha Inbhir Ùige am measg nam bailtean a bu chudromaiche san dùthaich airson iasgach – gu h-àraidh iasgach an sgadain. Bha na h-iasgairean à iomadh àite. Bhiodh bonaidean Gàidhealach air na h-iasgairean Gàidhealach agus **bhiodh sin gan comharrachadh mar eadar-dhealaichte bho chàch.**

Bhiodh geansaidhean orra uile, ach bha diofar beag ann eadar na geansaidhean à diofar sgìrean. Bha dà sheòrsa de gheansaidh aig gach iasgair – fear obrach agus fear airson gnothaichean sòisealta, a’ gabhail a-steach frithealadh na h-eaglaise. Bha diofar eadar an dà sheòrsa. Cha robh putanan air an fheadhainn a bhathar a’ cleachdadh airson iasgach. Bhiodh putanan cunnartach. Dh’fhaodadh iad a bhith air an glacadh sna lìn. Bha na cinn-mhuinichill air na geansaidhean sin fada teann – airson blàths a chumail a-staigh. Bha na geansaichean fada air an cùlaibh cuideachd – airson dubhagan nan iasgairean a chumail blàth.

Ach bha na geansaidhean airson gnothaichean sòisealta na bu spaideile. Bha putanan orra a leigeadh leis an duine an geansaidh a thoirt dheth gun a bhith a’ sìneadh a’ bhann-mhuineil. Bha na putanan air na guailnean.

Bhiodh suas ri ceithir putanan air gach gualann aig geansaidhean iasgairean bhon chosta an ear. Bha e comasach do dhaoine dèanamh a-mach dè am port dham buineadh iasgair, le bhith a’ coimhead air na putanan air a gheansaidh. Mar eisimpleir, bhiodh ceithir putanan air gualann chli iasgairean à Inbhir Ùige, agus an t-aon astar eatarra. Bhiodh dìreach aon phutan, no dhà no thrì, air geansaidhean iasgairean a bhuineadh do chuid de phuirt eile.

Bha na putanan uaireannan na chuideachadh nuair a bhathar a' feuchainn ri iasgair a chaidh a bhàthadh aithneachadh.

Bha a' Ghàidhlig gu math làidir ann an Inbhir Ùige ann am mìosan an t-samhraidh. Tha mi cinnteach gu robh cuid de mhuinntir a' bhaile ann nach robh ro chofhurtail mun t-suidheachadh. Bho àm gu àm, bhiodh droch-rùn a' tighinn am follais eadar an dà shluagh.

B' e an tachartas a bu mhiosa dhiubh sin an aimhreit air an robh, agus air a bheil, "Sabaid Mhòr Inbhir Ùige". Thachair sin ann an ochd ceud deug, caogad 's a naoi (1859), agus innsidh mi dhuibh mu a deidhinn an ath-sheachdain.

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Faclan na Litreach: coitheanalan: *congregations*; geansaidh: *gansey, jumper*; putan: *button*; cunnartach: *dangerous*; cinn-mhuinichill: *cuffs*; gualann, guailnean: *shoulder, shoulders*; .

Abairtean na Litreach: na bliadhnaichean mu dheireadh de chaogadan an naoidheamh linn deug: *the late 1850s*; na bu mhotha na coitheanal Inbhir Ùige: *bigger than the Wick congregation*; ged a bha Gàidhlig ga bruidhinn ann an taobh an iar is ceann a deas Ghallaibh: *although Gaelic was spoken in western and southern Caithness*; na h-uibhir de Ghàidheil: *a large number of Gaels*; bhiodh suas ri trì ministearan a' frithealadh a' choitheanail: *up to three ministers would serve the congregation*; bha diofar beag ann eadar na geansaidhean à diofar sgìrean: *there was a little difference [ie were little differences] between the ganseys from different areas*; gnothaichean sòisealta, a' gabhail a-steach frithealadh na h-eaglaise: *social affairs, including attending church*; dh'fhaodadh iad a bhith air an glacadh sna lìn: *they could be caught in the nets*; fada air an cùlaibh cuideachd: *long on their backs as well*; airson dubhagan nan iasgairean a chumail blàth: *to keep the fishermen's kidneys warm*; na bu spaideile: *smarter in appearance*; a leigeadh leis an duine an geansaidh a thoirt dheth: *which would let the man take the gansey off*; gun a bhith a' sìneadh a' bhann-mhuineil: *without stretching the neckline/collar*; dèanamh a-mach dè am port dham buineadh iasgair: *to make out what port a fisherman belonged to*; agus an t-aon astar eatarra: *evenly spaced*; nuair a bhathar a' feuchainn ri iasgair a chaidh a bhàthadh aithneachadh: *when an attempt was being made to identify a drowned fisherman*; bhiodh droch-rùn a' tighinn am follais: *bad blood would surface*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: **Bha gnìomhachas an iasgaich air leth mòr:** *the fishing industry was exceptionally big. Air leth can act as both an adjective and adverb. In the Litir it is operating as an adjective modifier much as "uabhasach" might. Here are some other uses: bha iad air an cur air leth (they were set aside); bric air leth bho bhradain (trout as distinct from salmon); 's e oidhche air leth a bh' ann (it was a unique/fantastic night); bha ùidh air leth aice ann am matamataig (she was particularly interested in mathematics); duine air leth can mean both an "individual" or an "exceptional person/man" – the context will tell you what is meant.*

Gnàths-cainnt na Litreach: bhiodh sin gan comharrachadh mar eadar-dhealaichte bho chàch: *that would mark them out as different from the others.*

* Tha "Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh" air a maoinachadh le Seirbheis nam Meadhanan Gàidhlig.