

# 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.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk). This is Litir 383. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 79 corresponds to Litir 383.*

An t-seachdain sa chaidh bha sinn aig Dùn Dearduil faisg air Loch Nis. Chan eil sgìre ann an Alba a tha nas Gàidhealaiche a thaobh ainmean-àite. Agus mar a bha mi ag ràdh anns an Litir mu dheireadh tha i làn taibhsean cuideachd, co-dhiù a rèir beul-aithris.

Bho Inbhir Nis faodar dhol a dh'ionnsaigh Dhùn Dearduil air rathad cumhang sàmhach. **Bithear a' tòiseachadh air a B862**, a tha a' dol gu ruige Cille Chuimein. Bithear a' tionndadh dheth mus ruigear Tòrr an Eas. Eadar an ceann-rathaid sin agus Inbhir Fharragaig, ri taobh Loch Nis, chan eil ann ach cnuic is coilltean, le corra baile-fearainn an siud 's an seo.

Faisg air a' cheann-rathaid tha loch ann le ainm neònach, co-dhiù a rèir nam mapaichean. 'S e sin Loch Ceò Glais. Shaoileadh tu gu bheil sin a' ciallachadh *loch of grey mist*.

Uill, bha mi a' leughadh beagan mu eachdraidh na sgìre an latha eile, agus bha an t-ùghdar dhen bheachd nach e *Ceò* a bu chòir a bhith anns an ainm idir, ach *Cè*. Agus 's e *Cè* an dreach ginideach air *Cia*, ainm air seann dia pàganach Ceilteach. Mar sin, 's e Loch Cè Glais a bu chòir a bhith air an loch, a' ciallachadh *the loch of grey Cia*.

'S e Dùn Chia, ceart gu leòr, a chanar ris a' chnoc air taobh a deas an locha. Agus air an Dùin, tha àite air a bheil Tom na Croich (*the hill of the gibbet*). Tha an t-ainm sin air na mapaichean fhathast. A rèir choltais bha còraichean aig uachdarain o shean a bhith a' cur feadhainn gu bàs air a' chroich. Agus bhiodh Mac Shimidh a' dèanamh sin bho àm gu àm air Tom na Croich.

Nuair a ghabhas tu an rathad beag cumhang a dh'ionnsaigh Dùn Dearduil, tha thu a' dol a-steach a dhùthaich a bha ainmeil, anns an t-seann aimsir, airson ceatharnaich. A bheil sibh eòlach air an fhacal sin, *ceatharnach*? Chaidh e a-steach don Bheurla mar *cateran*, a' ciallachadh *freebooter*, *robber*. Agus 's e Baile Cheatharnach an t-ainm a bh' air an àite seo o shean. Cha robh na daoine ann cho onarach 's a tha iad an-diugh, a rèir choltais.

Anns a' ghleann tha ainm-àite co-cheangailte ris na ceatharnaich. Seachad air baile-fearainn ris an canar *Balnagarline*, no Baile na Garbh-loinn, tha an rathad a' dol thairis air allt. Aig an drochaid o shean bha muileann ann. Agus 's e Muileann nam Biodag an t-ainm a bh' air. Bhiodh na ceatharnaich a' **cur faobhar air** na

sgeinean, na biodagan, aca an sin mus fhalbhadh iad airson creach a thogail ann an àiteachan eile.

Tha fiosrachadh sònraichte air a ghlèidheadh mu aon bhaile-fearainn nas fhaide sìos an gleann, air a bheil *Balchraggan* no Bail' a' Chreagain. Tha fios againn air na h-ainmean a bh' air na h-achaidhean ann aig àm nuair a bha grunn teaghlaichean a' fuireach ann ri taobh a chèile, agus achadh fa leth aig gach baile-fearainn. Tha fiosrachadh mar sin air a dhol a dhìth ann am mòran de bhailtean na Gàidhealtachd. B' iad na h-achaidhean Cùl Arachain, Bail' an Fhraoich, Baile na Feadaige, Bail' a' Chreagain fhèin agus Bail' an t-Sìthein.

Agus cò às a thàinig am fiosrachadh mionaideach sin? Uill, thàinig cuid mhath dheth bho bhodach air an robh Seumas Gobha. Chaochail e ann an naoi ceud deug 's a trì (1903) aig aois ceud bliadhna. Innsidh mi dhuibh mu dheidhinn an ath-sheachdain.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Faclan na Litreach:** ceann-rathaid: *junction*; ùghdar: *author*; Mac Shimidh: *Fraser of Lovat*; cumhang: *narrow*; ceatharnach: *cateran, freebooter*; muileann: *mill*; biodag: *dirk*; achaidhean: *fields*; Seumas Gobha: *James Gow*.

**Abairtean na Litreach:** tha i làn taibhsean: *it's full of ghosts*; co-dhiù a rèir beul-aithris: *at least according to oral tradition*; faodar dhol a dh'ionnsaigh Dùn Dearduil: *Dùn Dearduil can be approached*; gu ruige Cille Chuimein: *to Fort Augustus*; chan eil ann ach cruic is coilltean: *there is nothing but hills and woods*; le corra baile-fearainn an siud 's an seo: *with the occasional farm here and there*; shaoileadh tu: *you would think*; seann dia pàganach Ceilteach: *an old pagan Celtic god*; a chanar ris a' chnoc: *that the hill is called*; bha còraichean aig uachdarain o shean: *landlords in olden times had rights*; Baile na Garbh-loinn: *given as the township of the rough arable land, but possibly of the rough enclosed land*; mus fhalbhadh iad airson creach a thogail: *before they would leave to plunder*; tha X air a ghlèidheadh: *X is [has been] preserved*; Bail' a' Chreagain: *the township of the little rock*; nuair a bha grunn teaghlaichean a' fuireach ann ri taobh a chèile: *when several families were living there next to each other*; achadh fa leth: *a separate field*; Cùl Arachain: *given as "the back of the little height"*; Bail' an Fhraoich: *the township of the heather*; Baile na Feadaige: *the township of the plover*; Bail' an t-Sìthein: *the township of the fairy hillock*.

**Puing-chànain na Litreach:** **Bithear a' tòiseachadh air a B862:** *how might we translate bithear in a sentence of this nature? As bithear is an impersonal future form of bi (the verb "to be"), the best way is probably to use the impersonal pronoun "one" in English (it would be "on" in French) ie "one starts on the B862" (or perhaps "a start is made on the B862"). The impersonal verbal forms of bi are very useful in Gaelic and they are easily understood in speech so don't shy away from them. They combine well with passive forms of other verbs as in the sentence Bithear a' tionndadh dheth mus ruigear Tòrr an Eas – one turns off before Torness is reached.*

**Gnàths-cainnt na Litreach:** Bhiodh na ceatharnaich a' cur faobhar air na sgeinean aca: *the caterans would sharpen their knives*. Faobhar means “edge”, particularly in reference to the cutting edge of a knife or sword.

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