

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.macleane@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 394. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 90 corresponds to Litir 394.

Tha Màrtainn MacIlleMhàrtainn ag innse naidheachd dhuinn a tha car annasach. 'S e Sgitheanach a bh' ann agus sgrìobh e an leabhar *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland*. Chaidh an leabhar fhoillseachadh an toiseach ann an seachd ceud deug 's a trì (1703). Co-dhiù, bha MacIlleMhàrtainn ann an Uibhist agus sgrìobh e mu dheidhinn nan dòighean anns an do chleachd muinntir an àite ròin.

Anns a' chiad dol a-mach, bhiodh iad gan ithe. Bhiodh iad a' glèidheadh na feòla thairis air a' gheamhradh le bhith a' cur luaithre oirre a fhuair iad le bhith a' losgadh feamainn. Ach airson an fheòil ithe as t-Earrach, bhiodh iad a' cleachdadh bioran – bioran fada, a rèir MhicIlleMhàrtainn. Cha bhiodh iad a' cur an làmhan air an fheòil idir. Carson? Uill, bha an samh dona dha-rìribh. Bhiodh samh na feòla a' dol air an làmhan, is a' fuireach orra airson grunn uairean a thìde!

A bharrachd air sin, bha bian an ròin gu math feumail. Bhiodh cuid a' cur pìos dheth mun timcheall mar leigheas airson siataig. Agus bhiodh iad a' ceangal crann treabhaidh ri each le stiallan de bhian ròin an àite ròp.

Tha iad sin inntinneach gu leòr, ach chan e sin an naidheachd annasach air an robh mi a-mach aig toiseach na Litreach. Thig mi gu sin **an ceartuir**.

Bha cunntas aig MacIlleMhàrtainn de dhòigh anns am biodh na daoine ann an Heisgeir a' glacadh ròin anns an t-seann aimsir. Tha Heisgeir na bhuidheann de dh'eileanan beaga gu siar air Uibhist a Tuath. Bha sluagh ann uaireigin, ged nach eil duine a' fuireach ann an-diugh. Bha crodh aca. Bha arbhar aca. Ach cha robh mòine no fiodh aca. Mar sin, bhiodh iad a' cleachdadh buachair thioram no feamainn thioram mar chonnadh. A rèir nan eileanach bha aran, a bh' air fhuine le bhith a' cleachdadh feamainn mar chonnadh na b' fheàrr na aran a bh' air fhuine le connadh sam bith eile.

Bhiodh iad a' dèanamh lìon de ghaoisid eich. Bhiodh iad a' dèanamh nàdar de phoca dheth. Bha comas aca an dàrna ceann dheth a dhùnadh le bhith a' tarraing air sreangan.

Chuireadh iad an lìon ann an amar anns a' mhuir. Bhiodh ròin a' snàmh a-steach ann, agus bhiodh iad a' dùnadh an lìn.

Uill, feumaidh mi an naidheachd annasach innse dhuibh mus ruith an ùine orm. Tha MacIlleMhàrtainn ag innse dhuinn mu chòmhradh a bh' ann eadar dithis – fear Pròstanach agus fear Caitligeach. Bha iad a' deasbad an diofair a bh' ann eadar iasg is ròin.

Tha an sgrìobhadair ag innse dhuinn gun robh na Caitligich anns na h-Eileanan an Iar ag ithe feòil ròin aig **àm a' Charghais** – no *Lent*. Agus bha am Pròstanach ag ràdh ris an fhear eile gun robh e a' briseadh riaghailtean na h-Eaglaise aige fhèin, oir chan e ròin iasg.

Thuir am fear Caitligeach nach biodh an ròn ag ithe ach iasg. Mar sin a thaobh riaghailtean na h-Eaglaise, 's e iasg a bh' ann. Agus bhiodh e a' creidsinn gur e iasg a bh' ann gus an cluinneadh e an caochladh bho shagart no bhon Phàp.

Cha do ghabh am fear Pròstanach ri a bheachd, ge-tà. Tha an ròn muir-thìreach, thuir e – bidh e a' laighe, a' snàigeadh, ag ithe, a' cadal agus a' cur seachad mòran tìde air tìr – rudan nach urrainn iasg a' dhèanamh. Agus – cuideachd – thuir e – mar gum b' e seo cnag na cùise – faodaidh ròn braidhm a dhèanamh a tha cho fuaimneach 's gun gabh e cluinntinn aig astar fada!

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Faclan na Litreach: Màrtainn MacIlleMhàrtainn: *Martin Martin*; Sgitheanach: *Skyeman*; ròin: *seals*; bioran: *sharp stick*; muir-thìreach: *amphibious*; braidhm: *breaking of wind*; fuaimneach: *noisy*.

Abairtean na Litreach: bhiodh iad gan ithe: *they would eat them*; bhiodh iad a' glèidheadh na feòla: *they would preserve the meat*; le bhith a' cur luaithre oirre: *by putting ash on it*; a' losgadh feamainn: *burning seaweed*; cha bhiodh iad a' cur an làmhan air an fheadil: *they wouldn't put their hands on the meat*; bha an samh dona dha-rìribh: *the smell was terrible*; pìos dheth mun timcheall mar leigheas airson siataig: *a piece of it around them as a cure for sciatica*; bhiodh iad a' ceangal crann treabhaidh ri each: *they would tie a plough to a horse*; stiallan de bhian ròin: *strips of sealskin*, dòigh anns am biodh na daoine ann an Heisgeir a' glacadh: *a way in which the people in Heisker (The Monach Isles) would catch seals*; bha sluagh ann uaireigin: *there was a population at one time*; cha robh mòine no fiodh aca: *they had no peat or wood*; buachair thioram no feamainn thioram mar chonnadh: *dried cow dung or dried seaweed as fuel*; aran a bh' air fhuine: *bread that was baked*; lìon de ghaoisid eich: *a net of horsehair*; an dàrna ceann dheth a dhùnadh: *to close one end of it*; a' tarraing air sreangan: *pulling on strings*; gun robh e a' briseadh riaghailtean na h-Eaglaise aige fhèin: *that he was breaking the rules of his own church*; chan e ròn iasg: *a seal is not a fish*; a thaobh riaghailtean na h-Eaglaise: *according to the rules of the Church*; gus an cluinneadh e an caochladh: *until he heard [to] the contrary*; rudan nach urrainn iasg a' dhèanamh: *things a fish can't do*; mar gum b' e seo cnag na cùise: *as if this were the nub of the matter*; gun gabh e cluinntinn aig astar fada: *that it can be heard at great distance*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: **àm a' Charghais:** *the time of Lent. The Gaelic for Lent, [An] Carghas may seem odd at first sight but it is arguably more in the European linguistic mainstream than the English term. Lent is an Anglo-Saxon word originally meaning "spring" – the season at which Lent occurs. Carghas, on the other hand, derives from the Latin quadragesima, representing the forty days between Ash Wednesday and Easter. Many Gaelic words associated with the church are derived originally from Latin (eaglais, easbaig and sagart being obvious examples). The Romance and Celtic languages preserve the link to quadragesima – eg Spanish cuaresma, Italian quaresima and Welsh Carawys.*

Gnàths-cainnt na Litreach: Thig mi gu sin **an ceartuair:** *I'll come to that shortly/presently.*

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