

# 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.macleon@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk). This is Litir 396. Note that there is also a simplified version called *An Litir Bheag* which is likewise available on the BBC website. *Litir Bheag* 92 corresponds to *Litir* 396.*

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh, an t-seachdain sa chaidh, mu chall dithis à Taigh-solais Heisgeir. Ach cha b’ e sin an call a bu mhotha – no a bu neònaiche – de luchd-obrach taigh-solais anns na h-Eileanan Siar. Thachair call mòran na bu neònaiche gu tuath air Heisgeir, agus mòran bhliadhnaichean roimhe.

B’ e sin call an triùir luchd-obrach à taigh-solais anns na h-Eileanan Flannach. Tha na h-eileanan sin gu siar air Leòdhas, agus thachair an tubaist anns a’ bhliadhna naoi ceud deug (1900). ’S e an rud a tha neònach mu a deidhinn nach eil fios aig duine chun an latha an-diugh dè dìreach a thachair.

Thadhail Màrtainn MacIlleMhàrtainn air Leòdhas aig deireadh an t-seachdamh linn deug. Sgrìobh e anns an leabhar aige *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland* gun robh daoine a’ dol do na h-Eileanan Flannach à Leòdhas airson eunachadh.

Nuair a ruigeadh iad an t-eilean, bhiodh na daoine a’ toirt am bonaidean dhiubh, bhiodh iad a’ tionndadh gu deiseil, agus bhiodh iad a’ toirt taing do Dhia airson an cumail sàbhailte.

Air an Eilean Mhòr, am fear as motha de na h-Eileanan Flannach, tha tobhta ann. ’S e seann chaibeal a th’ ann, agus bha e na thobhta nuair a chaidh MacIlleMhàrtainn ann. Bha e coisrigte don Naomh Flannan a bha beò anns an t-seachdamh linn. Bha cliù aig na h-eileanan sin o shean mar àite naomh.

Nuair a bhiodh na h-eunadairean a’ dol ann, tha MacIlleMhàrtainn ag innse dhuinn, bhiodh iad a’ dol a dh’ionnsaigh na h-altarach. Nuair a bhiodh iad mu fhichead ceum coise air falbh bhon altair, bhiodh iad a’ cur dhiubh an cuid gheansaidhean is lèintean. Agus gach latha mus biodh iad a’ tòiseachadh air an eunachadh, bhiodh iad a’ dèanamh trì ùrnaighean eadar-dhealaichte an cois an t-seann chaibeil.

Bha iad saobh-chràbhach cuideachd. Bha cuid de dh’fhaclan ann nach cleachdadh iad anns an eilean. Mar eisimpleir, cha chanadh iad “creag”. An àite sin ’s e “cruaidh” a chanadh iad. Chanadh iad “uamh” an àite “cladach”. Agus cha robh e ceadaichte a bhith a’ cantainn ainm nan eilean anns an robh iad, no eileanan eile a bha ainmeil airson eunachadh – Hiort.

Chaidh taigh-solais a thogail air an Eilean Mhòr anns a’ bhliadhna mu dheireadh dhen naoidheamh linn deug. Chaidh an solas a chur thuige airson a’ chiad turas air an t-seachdamh latha dhen Dùbhlachd, ochd ceud deug, naochad ’s a naoi (1899). **Dìreach dusan mìos às dèidh sin**, air a’ chòigeamh latha deug dhen Dùbhlachd anns a’ bhliadhna

naoi ceud deug (1900), thachair rudeigin fìor annasach. **Cha d' fhuaras fuasgladh air a shon fhathast.**

Bha soitheach air slighe à Philadelphia gu ruige Lìte – port Dhùn Èideann. Chaidh i seachad air na h-Eileanan Flannach ann an droch shìde agus mhothaich an sgiobair nach robh solas sam bith a' tighinn bhon taigh-sholais mar bu chòir. Dh'aithris e sin do na h-ùghdarrasan anns an Òban nuair a ràinig e am port sin. Ach cha do thachair dad sa bhad.

'S ann air an latha às dèidh Latha na Nollaige a ràinig soitheach nan taighean-solais – an Hesperus – an t-eilean. Cha robh sgeul air duine ann. Bha an triùir luchd-obrach air a dhol à fianais. Innsidh mi tuilleadh dhuibh mu dheidhinn a' ghnòthaich annasaich seo an ath-sheachdain.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Faclan na Litreach:** Na h-Eileanan Flannach: *The Flannan Isles*; Màrtainn MacIlleMhàrtainn: *Martin Martin*; eunachadh: *fowling, hunting birds*; tobhta: *ruin*; eunadairean: *wildfowlers*; saobh-chràbhach: *superstitious*; ceadach: *permitted*; Hiort: *St Kilda*; An Dùbhlachd: *December*.

**Abairtean na Litreach:** call dithis à Taigh-solais Heisgeir: *the loss of two people from the Heisker lighthouse*; an call a bu mhotha no a bu neònaiche: *the greatest or strangest loss*; thachair an tubaist: *the accident happened*; bhiodh na daoine a' toirt am bonaidean dhiubh: *the people would take their bonnets off*; a' toirt taing do Dhia airson an cumail sàbhailte: *thanking God for keeping them safe*; coisrigte don Naomh Flannan: *dedicated to Saint Flannan*; àite naomh: *a holy place*; a dh'ionnsaigh na h-altarach: *towards the altar*; bhiodh iad a' cur dhiubh an cuid gheansaidhean is lèintean: *they would take off their jerseys and shirts*; trì ùrnaighean eadar-dhealaichte an cois an t-seann chaibeil: *three different prayers in the vicinity of the old chapel*; chaidh an solas a chur thuige: *the light was lit*; bha soitheach air slighe à X gu ruige Lìte: *a ship was en route from X to Leith*; dh'aithris e sin do na h-ùghdarrasan anns an Òban: *he reported that to the authorities in Oban*; cha do thachair dad sa bhad: *nothing happened immediately*; cha robh sgeul air duine ann: *there was no sign of anybody there*; air a dhol à fianais: *had disappeared*.

**Puing-chànain na Litreach:** **Dìreach dusan mìos às dèidh sin:** *just twelve months after that. If you have trouble with counting the teens in Gaelic, dusan is a useful word to remember as an alternative to dhà-dheug (12). Note that dusan takes a noun in the singular. Note also that it almost always appears in normal usage as an equivalent to a single dozen eg dusan ugh, dusan gille, or a half-dozen (6) eg leth-dhusan ugh. You might meet with dà dhusan (two dozen, 24) occasionally, but only rarely will you encounter higher multiples of dusan. For the English “dozens” (eg dozens of seagulls) we might use ficheadan (twenties) or another expression meaning a considerable number (eg na h-uibhir) – ficheadan fhaoileagan or na h-uibhir de dh'fhaoileagan.*

**Gnàths-cainnt na Litreach:** **Cha d' fhuaras fuasgladh air a shon fhathast:** *[lit.] a solution for it has not been obtained yet – ie it remains unexplained.*

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