

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. This is Litir 397. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 93 corresponds to Litir 397.

Air an latha às dèidh Latha na Nollaige anns a’ bhliadhna naoi ceud deug (1900) ràinig an soitheach *Hesperus* na h-Eileanan Flannach. B’ ise an soitheach a bha a’ frithealadh nan taighean-solais. Bha fios aig Bòrd nan Taighean-solais gun robh rudeigin ceàrr. Cha robh an solas anns an taigh-sholais ag obair.

Bha ceathrar luchd-obrach ann. Bhiodh triùir còmhla anns an eilean aig an aon àm, leis a’ cheathramh duine a’ gabhail fòrladh. Bha am fear a bh’ air a bhith air fòrladh, Iòsaph Moore, air an *Hesperus*. Ach nuair a ràinig iad an t-eilean, cha robh sgeul air duine. Chuir iad lasair-bhoillsgean suas. Ach cha do nochd duine.

Bha doras an taigh-sholais dùinte. Bha sèithear anns a’ chidsin air a chliathaich. Cha robh an gleoc a’ dol. Bha aon seata oillsginean ann. Ach anns a h-uile dòigh eile, cha robh càil a-mach às an rathad. Bha na lampaichean glan agus làn connaidh. Bha uidheamachd a’ chidsin glan. Dè bh’ air tachairt, ma-thà, don triùir – Seumas Ducat, Tòmas Marshall agus Dòmhnall MacArtair?

Dh’fhuirich Iòsaph Moore agus triùir de chriutha an *Hesperus* anns an taigh-sholais. Thill an *Hesperus* a Bhreascleit ann an Leòdhas, far an robh ionad aig Bòrd nan Taighean-solais. Chuir caiptean an *Hesperus* telegram don Bhòrd, ag innse dhaibh gun robh tubaist air a bhith ann. Leis nach robh an gleoc a’ dol anns an taigh-sholais, bha e dhen bheachd gun do thachair an tubaist seachdain roimhe.

Rinn an ceathrar anns an eilean rannsachadh mòr. Bha e follaiseach gun robh stoirm mhòr air a bhith ann. Mar eisimpleir, bha bogsa aig ceud is deich troighean os cionn na mara briste, is stuth air a sgaoileadh mu a thimcheall. Bha rèilichean iarainn air an lùbadh. Bha clach mhòr de chuideam còrr is tonna air gluasad bhon àite aice. Aig mullach a’ bhearraidh, còrr is dà cheud troigh os cionn na mara, bha an stoirm air sgrathan a reubadh far na talmhainn trithead troigh air falbh bhon oir.

Ach – bha oifigearan an taigh-sholais air fios mun a seo a chur anns an leabhar-aithris aca. Thachair am milleadh mus deach na daoine à fianais.

Bha beachdan de gach seòrsa ann mu na thachair. Bha cuid dhen bheachd gun do mhuirt fear aca an dithis eile is an uair sin gun do ghabh e làmh na bheatha fhèin le bhith a’ leum don mhuir. A rèir cuid eile bha iad air an toirt am bruid le daoine à dùthaich chèin. Is iomadh smuain a rinn ceangal eadar an tubaist agus gnothaichean **os-nàdarrach**.

Air an naoidheamh latha fichead dhen Dùbhlachd chaidh Raibeart Muirhead, oifigear aig Bòrd nan Taighean-solais, ann. Cho-dhùin esan gun robh an triùir air a dhol a-mach a cheangal bogsa anns an robh ròpan. Bha am bogsa ann an eag sa bhearradh, ceud is deich

troighean os cionn na mara. Bha Dòmhnall MacArtair air a dhol a-mach gun a chuid oillsginean air. Chaidh tonn mòr thairis air an trìuir. Chaidh an sguabadh air falbh.

Tha feadhainn fhathast dhen bheachd gun robh Dòmhnall MacArtair anns an taigh-sholais nuair a bha an dithis eile a-muigh, agus gum fac' e rudeigin – 's dòcha tonn mòr a' tighinn. Ruith e a-mach ann an cabhaig airson rabhadh a thoirt don dithis eile. Bhiodh sin a' mìneachadh mar nach robh oillsginean air agus mar a bha an sèithear air a chliathaich. Ach 's **iongantach gum bi fios againn a-chaoidh** air dè dìreach a thachair air an latha uabhasach sin anns na h-Eileanan Flannach.

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Faclan na Litreach: Latha na Nollaige: *Christmas Day*; Na h-Eileanan Flannach: *The Flannan Isles*; lasair-bhoillsgean: *flares*; oillsginean: *oilskins*.

Abairtean na Litreach: a bha a' frithealadh nan taighean-solais: *which was servicing the lighthouses*; bhiodh trìuir còmhla anns an eilean aig an aon àm: *three people would be together on the island at the same time*; leis a' cheathramh duine a' gabhail fòrladh: *with the fourth person taking leave*; cha robh sgeul air duine: *there was no sign of anybody*; bha sèithear anns a' chidsin air a chliathaich: *a chair in the kitchen was on its side*; cha robh an gleoc a' dol: *the clock wasn't going*; cha robh càil a-mach às an rathad: *nothing was untoward*; dè bh' air tachairt?: *what had happened?*; a Bhreascleit, far an robh ionad aig Bòrd nan Taighean-solais: *to Breascleite, where the Lighthouse Board had a station*; seachdain roimhe: *a week before*; gun robh stoirm mhòr air a bhith ann: *that there had been a great storm*; ceud is deich troighean os cionn na mara: *110 feet above the sea*; air a sgaoileadh mu a thimcheall: *scattered around it*; bha rèilichean iarainn air an lùbadh: *iron railings were bent*; mullach a' bhearraidh: *the top of the cliffs*; bha an stoirm air sgrathan a reubadh far na talmhainn: *the storm had torn turf from the ground*; trithead troigh air falbh bhon oir: *30 feet from the edge*; bha X air fios mun a seo a chur anns an leabhar-aithris aca: *X had put information about this in their logbook*; gun do mhuirt fear aca an dithis eile: *that one of them murdered the other two*; gun do ghabh e làmh na bheatha fhèin: *that he committed suicide*; le bhith a' leum don mhuir: *by jumping into the sea*; bha iad air an toirt am bruid: *they were kidnapped*; ann an eag sa bhearradh: *in a notch in the cliff*; chaidh an sguabadh air falbh: *they were swept away*; ann an cabhaig: *in a hurry*; airson rabhadh a thoirt don dithis eile: *to warn the other two*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: eadar an tubaist agus gnothaichean **os-nàdarrach**: *between the accident and supernatural matters. Did you work out that os-nàdarrach means "supernatural" ie "above natural"? Os is an old preposition meaning "above, over" and is only encountered in compounds today. It occurs in the compound preposition os cionn as in the Litir – os cionn na mara (above the sea). But it also occurs in compound adjectives and nouns eg os-daonna (superhuman), os-bhiolait (ultraviolet), os-fhìreach (surreal), os-fhìreachas (surrealism), os-nàiseanta (cosmopolitan), os-stàit (superstate).*

Gnàths-cainnt na Litreach: 's iongantach gum bi fios againn a-chaoidh: *its unlikely we'll ever know*.

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