

# 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 roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 428. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 124 corresponds to Litir 428.*

Ann an Litir mu dheireadh, bha mi ag innse dhuibh mun dàn – ‘S Math an Còcaire an t-Acras, a chaidh a sgrìobhadh, a rèir aithris, le Alasdair Stiùbhart, Iarla Mhàrr, ann an ceithir cheud deug, trithead ’s a h-aon (1431), às dèidh Blàr Inbhir Lòchaidh. An t-seachdain seo tha mi airson tuilleadh innse dhuibh mu mar a sgrìobh an Stiùbhartach an dàn. Ach mus dèan mi sin, seo e a-rithist:

*’S math an còcaire an t-acras,  
’S mairg a nì tarcais air biadh,  
Fuarag eòrn’ à sàil mo bhròige  
Biadh as fheàrr a fhuair mi riamh.*

*Oidhche dhomh bhith ann ad theach  
Air mhòran bìdh ’s air bheag eudaich;  
Fhuaras sàth mòr de dh’fheòil air droch bhruich  
O Ó Birein sa Bhreugaich*

Bha am batail ann an Inbhir Lòchaidh – ann an Loch Abar – eadar feachd aig an Rìgh – Seumas I – agus feachd mhòr aig na Dòmhnallaich. Bha Iarla Mhàrr air taobh an Rìgh. Ach chaill iad. A rèir aithris chaidh an t-iarla a leòn na shliasaid. Theich e fhèin is sgalag aige bhon bhlàr. Chuir iad seachad dà latha air allaban ann am monaidhean Loch Abar gun bhiadh sam bith.

Thachair iad an uair sin ri boireannaich a bha ri buachailleachd. Dh’iarr iad air na boireannaich biadh a thoirt dhaibh. Agus mar a thathar ag ràdh air an treas loidhne dhen chiad rann, mheasgaich iad min-eòrna le uisge ann am bròg an iarla. Am biadh as fheàrr a fhuair e riamh oir is math an còcaire an t-acras.

Chuir an t-iarla aodach boireannaich air agus rinn e air Gleann Ruaidh. Air an oidhche sin fhuair e cuid-oidhche bho neach-taice ris an cante Ó Birein anns a’ Bhriagaich. Fhuair e feòil ach bha i air a droch bhruich – mar a dh’ aithris e anns an dàn. Air madainn an làrna-mhàireach, thuirt an t-iarla ri Ó Birein, nan tigeadh ainneart sam bith air, nach leigeadh e leas ach thighinn chun a’ chaisteil aige ann an Cionn Droma agus gheibheadh e taic.

Uill, tro thìde, thachair sin. Bha Ó Birein ann an suidheachadh truagh agus chaidh e a Chionn Droma. Ach cha leigeadh an dorsair a-steach e. Dh’fhairich an t-iarla fuaim a’ chonnsachaidh eadar Ó Birein agus an dorsair, agus chaidh e a-mach. A rèir aithris, rinn e ath-chruthachadh air dàrna rann an dàn. Seo na thuirt e:

*Oidhche dhomh bhith ann ad theach  
Air mhòran bìdh 's air bheag eudaich;  
'S ionmhainn am fireann' a tha **a-muigh**  
Ó Birein às a' Bhreugaich*

Chuir an t-iarla fàilte is furan air Ó Birein agus chuir e dhachaigh e le trì fichead de chrodh bainne.

Uill, 's e sin an dàn, agus an seanfhacal. Ach bu mhath leam rudeigin a ràdh mu Bhlàr Inbhir Lòchaidh fhèin. Bha dà bhlàr ainmeil air an làraich sin – fear ann an ceithir cheud deug, trithead 's a h-aon (1431) agus fear eile ann an sia ceud deug, ceathrad 's a còig (1645). An-dràsta, tha mi dìreach airson sùil a thoirt air an fhear anns a' chòigeamh linn deug.

Ann an ceithir cheud deug, fichead 's a seachd (1427) chaidh iarraidh air na cinn-chinnidh Ghàidhealach coinneachadh ann an Inbhir Nis. Bha an Rìgh gu bhith an làthair. Bha na cinn-chinnidh a' smaoinichadh gum biodh an Rìgh a' cur fàilte orra. Ach **'s ann air a' chaochladh a bha e**. Chaidh na ceannardan Gàidhealach a chur an grèim. Bha iad dhen bheachd gun deach an car a thoirt asta. Chì sinn mar a dh'èirich Blàr Inbhir Lòchaidh às a sin anns an ath Litir.

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**Faclan na Litreach:** Iarla Mhàrr: *The Earl of Mar*; Blàr Inbhir Lòchaidh: *The Battle of Inverlochy*; Gleann Ruaidh: *Glen Roy*; cuid-oidhche: *a night's lodging*; Cionn Droma: *Kildrummy (near Alford in Aberdeenshire)*; dorsair: *doorman (also used for a school janitor)*.

**Abairtean na Litreach:** 'S Math an Còcaire an t-Acras: *hunger is a good cook*; tha mi airson tuilleadh innse dhuibh: *I want to tell you more*; oidhche dhomh bhith ann ad theach: *one night [when] I was in your house*; air mhòran bìdh 's air bheag eudaich: *on plenty food and little clothing*; fhuaras sàth mòr de dh'fheòil air droch bhruch: *a fill was got of badly cooked meat*; chaidh an t-iarla a leòn na shliasaid: *the earl was wounded in his thigh*; theich e fhèin is sgalag aige: *he and a servant of his fled*; air allaban: *wandering*; a bha ri buachailleachd: *who were herding cattle*; mheasgaich iad min-eòrna le uisge: *they mixed barley meal with water*; am biadh as fheàrr a fhuair e riamh: *the best food he ever got*; nan tigeadh ainneart air: *if he were to suffer oppression*; nach leigeadh e leas ach thighinn chun a' chaisteil aige: *that he would only have to come to his castle*; dh'fhairich an t-iarla fuaim a' chonnsachaidh: *the earl heard the noise of the argument*; an làthair: *present*; chaidh X a chur an grèim: *X were arrested*; gun deach an car a thoirt asta: *that they were [had been] deceived*.

**Puing-chànain na Litreach:** 'S ionmhainn am fireann' a tha **a-muigh**: *dear is the man who is outside. Last week I told you of the origins of the adverbs a-steach and a-staigh. This week it's the turn of their opposite numbers – a-mach and a-muigh. According to MacBain's Etymological Dictionary, the Early Irish form of a-mach was immach which was derived from in, "into" and magh, a "field" ie literally "into the field" – using mach, the accusative form of magh (we don't have separate accusatives any more). A-muigh was immaig, with magh in its dative form meaning "in the field". If that interpretation is correct, the individual meanings of a-mach (movement out) and a-muigh (the state of being outside) are very long-standing.*

**Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach:** 's ann air a' chaochladh a bha e: *it was otherwise.*

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