

# 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 434. Note that there is also a simplified version called *An Litir Bheag* which is likewise available on the BBC website. *Litir Bheag 130* corresponds to *Litir 434*.*

Cò an reuladair Gàidhealach a b’ ainmeile a bh’ ann riamh? Abair ceist airson toiseach na Litreach an t-seachdain seo! ’S dòcha gum bi feadhainn agaibh ag ràdh – “An robh reuladair ainmeil ann riamh a bha cuideachd na Ghàidheal?” Uill, tha mi a’ dèanamh dheth gun robh. Co-dhiù, bha e ainmeil mar reuladair. B’ e fear de na reuladairean a b’ ainmeile a bh’ ann san t-saoghal ri linn. Agus chuireadh e iongnadh orm mura robh Gàidhlig aige – ged nach d’ fhuair mi dearbhadh air sin le cinnt.

Tha mi a-mach air Johann von Lamont nach maireann. Chan eil ainm a’ coimhead ro Ghàidhealach air a’ chiad shealladh, a bheil? Tha e a’ coimhead Gearmailteach – Johann von Lamont. Tha sinn eòlach air mòran Ghearmailteach san latha an-diugh a th’ air Gàidhlig ionnsachadh gu fileantachd – agus tha iad a’ toirt toileachas mòr dhòmhsa, feumaidh mi ràdh. Ach cha b’ e Gearmailteach a bh’ ann an Johann von Lamont, a dh’aindeoin ainm. ’S e Albannach a bh’ ann. Seo agaibh geàrr-chunntas de bheatha.

Rugadh e ann an ochd ceud deug ’s a còig (1805) ann an Coire Mhuillidh ann an Bràigh Mhàrr ann an Siorrachd Obar Dheathain. Tha Coire Mhuillidh eadar Baile a’ Chaisteil – no *Braemar* – agus Inbhir Èidh – no *Inverey*. Aig toiseach an naoidheamh linn deug, bha na daoine anns an sgìre sin **cho Gàidhealach ris na garragan**. Eadhon aig deireadh an naoidheamh linn deug, bha Gàidhlig aig ochdad ’s a sia às a’ cheud (86%) dhen t-sluagh ann an Inbhir Èidh. Chanainn, mar sin, gun robh e gu math coltach gur e a’ Ghàidhlig a bh’ aig Johann von Lamont mar chiad chànan. Johann von Lamont? Uill, ’s dòcha gu bheil an t-àm ann ainm tùsail a thoirt dhuibh.

Ann am Beurla, b’ e John Lamont. B’ e an aon phàiste aig Raibeart is Ealasaid Lamont. Bha Raibeart na choilltear air oighreachd Iarla Fìobha. Gu tric, ’s e “Mac Laomainn” a chanamaid ri “Lamont” ann an Gàidhlig, ach tha mi a’ smaoinichadh gur e MacIlleDhuibh a bh’ orra ann am Bràigh Mhàrr. Bha iad a’ dèanamh dheth gum b’ e fear air an robh “An Gille Dubh” a’ chiad cheann-cinnidh aca. Mar sin, ’s e “Iain MacIlleDhuibh” a tha mi a’ dol a ghabhail air John Lamont – gus an ruig ar stòiridh a’ Ghearmailt, co-dhiù. Ach feumaidh mi ràdh nach eil mi cinnteach nach e “Seonaidh” a bh’ air, seach “Iain”.

Chan eil mi cinnteach nas motha an robh falt dubh air. ’S e “Am Fear Òg Buidhe” a chanadh iad ri sheanair – Iain eile. Agus bha a shinn-sheanair, Iain eile a bharrachd, aithnichte mar “An Seanair Buidhe”. Bha “seanair” anns an fhrith-ainm aige a’ ciallachadh “èildear anns an Eaglais Chlèirich”. Ge-tà, cha do mhair e na Chlèireach. Chaidh e a-null don Eaglais Chaitligich ann an seachd ceud deug ’s a còig (1705). B’ e an creideamh Caitligeach am fear a bu làidire ann am Bràigh Mhàrr.

Bha Iain – an reuladair – na Chaitligeach cuideachd. 'S e sàr-sgoilear a bh' ann. Chaidh e gu sgoil bheag mu dhà mhìle bhon taigh aige. Thathar ag ràdh gun do sheall e ùidh anns na speuran aig aois gu math òg. Bhiodh e a' coimhead air na rionnagan air an oidhche. Chanainn gun robh e a' fuireach ann an àite math airson sin. Air oidhche shoilleir gheamhraidh, gheibhear sealladh math de Shlighe Chlann Uisnich agus na rionnagan eile.

Ach tha sinn fhathast fada bhon Ghearmailt. Bidh sinn a' gabhail sgrìob ann an ath-sheachdain.

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**Faclan na Litreach:** reuladair: *astronomer*; dearbhadh: *proof*; Coire Mhuillidh: *Corriemulzie*; Inbhir Èidh: *Inverey*; rionnagan: *stars*; chanainn: *I would say*.

**Abairtean na Litreach:** a bha cuideachd na Ghàidheal: *who was also a Gael*; tha mi a' dèanamh dheth: *I reckon*; san t-saoghal ri linn: *in the world in his day*; chuireadh e iongnadh orm mura robh Gàidhlig aige: *it would surprise if he hadn't spoken Gaelic*; air a' chiad shealladh: *at first sight*; a dh'aindeoin ainm: *despite his name*; geàrr-chunntas de bheatha: *a short account of his life*; 's dòcha gu bheil an t-àm ann ainm tùsail a thoirt dhuibh: *perhaps it's now time to give you his original name*; bha Raibeart na choilltear air oighreachd Iarla Fìobha: *Robert was a forester on the Earl of Fife's estate*; gus an ruig ar stòiridh a' Ghearmailt: *until our story reaches Germany*; a chanadh iad ri sheanair: *that they called his grandfather*; bha a shinn-sheanair, Iain eile a bharrachd, aithnichte mar “An Seanair Buidhe”: *his great-grandfather, yet another John, was known as “the yellow-haired elder”*; cha do mhair e na Chlàireach: *he didn't remain a Presbyterian*; chaidh e a-null don Eaglais Chaitligich: *he went over to the Catholic Church*; 's e sàr-sgoilear a bh' ann: *he was a terrific student*; gun do sheall e ùidh anns na speuran aig aois gu math òg: *that he showed an interest in the heavens (ie the stars) at a young age*; air oidhche shoilleir gheamhraidh: *on a clear winter night*; gheibhear sealladh math de Shlighe Chlann Uisnich: *a good view is obtained of the Milky Way*.

**Puing-chànain na Litreach:** *Just a small point this week about a place name. There is a tendency for Gaels of the modern era to re-Gaelicise place names which were originally Gaelic and went into English with a different nuance. A classic example is how the Monadh Ruadh became named “The Cairngorms” by English-speakers after one mountain, An Càrn Gorm; there was a tendency for island Gaels of the 20th Century to call that range of mountains “An Càrn Gorm” in Gaelic, after the English form. Thankfully, the traditional Gaelic form has now prevailed. Braemar in this Litir is another example. It is originally a district name Bràigh Mhàrr (“the upland area of Mar”). Braemar (the village) was originally Baile a' Chaisteil or Castleton (Castleton of Braemar, to give it its full English name). Again, referring to the town as “Bràigh Mhàrr” (effectively retranslated from the English) seems a trifle strange, given the meaning of “bràigh”.*

**Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach:** cho Gàidhealach ris na garragan: *as Gàidhealach (Gaelic in character) as the rooks (see also Litir 180 29.11.02).*

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