

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.macleam@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 437. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 133 corresponds to Litir 437.

Thàinig leabhar a-mach o chionn ghoirid le fiosrachadh inntinneach, luachmhor ann mu eilean ainmeil Gàidhealach. Tha an t-eilean an-diugh gun sluagh ach bha daoine uaireigin a’ fuireach ann. ’S e an t-eilean – Miughalaigh – deas air Barraigh, às an do dh’fhalbh na daoine o chionn ceud bliadhna no mar sin. ’S e an t-ainm air an leabhar *Muinntir Mhiughalaigh* agus ’s i Lisa Storey a chuir ri chèile e. B’ e athair Lisa Donnchadh Anndra Dhonnchaidh Cìobair agus rugadh esan ann am Miughalaigh.

’S iomadh seud a th’ anns an leabhar – a th’ ann an Gàidhlig air fad – agus cha bu mhath leam cus innse oir bu chòir dhuibh a cheannach! Ach bu mhath leam earrann de stòiridh innse dhuibh – fear de na stòiridhean a chruinnich Lisa bho mhuinntir Mhiughalaigh.

’S e an t-ainm a th’ air – Boban Saor. ’S e sin ainm an duine a tha aig meadhan an stòiridh. Boban Saor. Tha mi a’ dol ga dhèanamh beagan nas sìmplidhe na bha e nuair a fhuair Lisa e.

Bha fear ann roimhe ris an canadh iad Boban Saor. Bha triùir mhac aige. Dh’fhàs a’ bhean aige bochd. Bha i an galar a bàis. Thuirt i ri Boban Saor gun robh triùir mhac aige ach nach bu leis fhèin ach dithis dhiubh. Cha tuirt Boban guth agus chaochail a bhean. Dh’fhàgadh an triùir mhac mar a bha iad. Cha robh càil a dh’fhios aca mu na thuirt am màthair.

An dèidh don bhean aige falbh, thuirt Boban ris fhèin, “**Nach mis’ a tha gòrach a’ dol a bheathachadh mac duine eile. Nach eil an fheadhainn agam fhìn gu leòr dhomh? Feumaidh mi faighinn a-mach cò am fear nach eil leam fhìn. Cuiridh mi bhuan e.**”

Latha a bha seo, thug e a-mach trì eich. Thug e each an t-aon do na gillean agus thuirt e riutha, “Thallaibh is thoiribh deoch dha na h-eich. Na toiribh dhaibh boinne ach far a bheil **sruth an aghaidh àird.**” A bheil sibh a’ tuigsinn sin – *sruth an aghaidh àird?* Tha e a’ ciallachadh “running uphill”. Na toiribh dhaibh boinne ach far a bheil sruth an aghaidh àird. *Don’t give them a drop except where the water is running uphill.*

Mmm. A bheil sibh a’ faicinn dè tha a’ dol a thachairt? Dh’fhalbh dithis de na mic agus, far an do chrom na h-eich, ag òl deoch, leig na gillean leotha. Dh’fhalbh an treas fear agus bha e a’ siubhal gach àite gus am faigheadh e sruth an aghaidh àird. Thill an dithis dhachaigh, agus na h-eich aca, agus thuirt Boban Saor riutha, “An tug sibh deoch dha na h-eich?”

“Thug,” fhreagair iad.

“An ann far an robh sruth an aghaidh àird?” dh’fhaighnich Boban Saor.

“S ann,” fhreagair na gillean, “Nach robh sruth an aghaidh àird aca nuair a bha iad ga shluigeadh?”

Thill an gille eile. Cha tug e deoch don each aige. Cha d’ fhuair e lorg air àite far an robh sruth an aghaidh àird. “An tug thu deoch dhan each?” dh’ fhaighnich Boban Saor.

“Cha tug,” ars esan, “Cha d’ fhuair mise sruth an aghaidh àird ann.”

“O cha d’ fhuair,” thuir Boban, “Ma-tà, faodaidh tusa do cheithir rathad fichead a ghabhail. Chan eil turas againne riut.”

Uill, bha sin cruaidh, ach ’s ann mar sin a fhuair Boban Saor a-mach cò an gille nach robh leis-san. Chuir e an gille air falbh. An ath-sheachdain cluinnidh sinn an aon stòiridh an ìre mhath – ach nach eil buileach cho cruaidh air a’ ghille. Agus bidh sin bho thaobh thall a’ chuain mhòir.

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Faclan na Litreach: Miughalaigh: *Mingulay*; seud: *gem*; chaochail: *died*.

Abairtean na Litreach: gun sluagh: *without a population*; deas air Barraigh: *south of Barra*; bu chòir dhuibh a cheannach: *you should buy it*; a chruinnich Lisa bho mhuinntir Mhiughalaigh: *that Lisa collected from the Mingulay folk*; bha fear ann roimhe ris an canadh iad: *there was once a man they called*; dh’ fhàs a’ bhean aige bochd: *his wife became ill*; an galar a bàis: *suffering a terminal illness*; nach bu leis fhèin ach dithis dhiubh: *only two of them were his*; dh’ fhàgadh an trìuir mhac mar a bha iad: *the three sons were left as they were*; a’ dol a bheathachadh mac duine eile: *going to support another man’s son*; gu leòr dhomh: *enough for me*; cò am fear nach eil leam fhìn: *which one isn’t mine*; cuiridh mi bhuam e: *I’ll send him away*; thug e each an t-aon do na gillean: *he gave each lad a horse*; thallaibh is thoiribh deoch dha na h-eich: *go and give a drink to the horses*; far an do chrom na h-eich: *where the horses bent down*; leig na gillean leotha: *the lads let them*; bha e a’ siubhal gach àite: *he was travelling [looking] everywhere*; nuair a bha iad ga shluigeadh: *when they were swallowing it*; cha d’ fhuair e lorg air àite: *he didn’t find a place*; cha d’ fhuair mise sruth an aghaidh àird ann: *I didn’t find water running uphill [the “ann” is emphatic]*; faodaidh tusa do cheithir rathad fichead a ghabhail: *you can go your own way [lit. you can take your 24 roads]*; chan eil turas againne riut: *we won’t have anything to do with you [I didn’t say Boban Saor was a nice guy!]*; nach robh leis-san: *that wasn’t his*; bho thaobh thall a’ chuain mhòir: *from the other side of the great ocean*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: far a bheil sruth an aghaidh àird: *where the stream/current [ie water] runs uphill (which, of course, can happen by peristaltis of the oesophagus when a horse drinks). There are different ways of saying “uphill” in Gaelic. The one in the Litir might be considered a little old-fashioned or “fancy” for normal speech, but it is in an ideal register for a traditional story. Other ways of saying “uphill” are ri bruthach, ris a’ bhruthaich or an aghaidh a’ bhruthaich. Downhill can be expressed by le bruthach, leis a’ bhruthaich. Note that these refer to actual motion; different expressions would be used for “going downhill” (getting worse) or “an uphill struggle”.*

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: nach mis’ a tha gòrach: *am I not foolish? [lit. isn’t it myself that is foolish?]. Idiomatically, one might say in English “what a fool I am!”*

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