

# 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 476. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 172 corresponds to Litir 476.*

Tha seanfhacal againn a tha ag ràdh, *Is minig a dh’èirich muir gharbh à plumanaich*. Tha Alasdair MacNeacail ag innse dhuinn gu bheil an seanfhacal a’ ciallachadh *rough sea has often followed noise of surge*. Is minig a dh’èirich muir gharbh à plumanaich. Tha e ag ràdh, *A muffled roar from the sea at night in calm weather often precedes a storm. A muffled roar – plumanaich*. Tha Dwelly ga chomharrachadh mar *continued noise, as of stones falling into water*.

Bha mi ann an gheat ann an cala Stromness ann an Arcaibh. Bha sinn a’ feitheamh ri sìde a bhiodh freagarrach airson seòladh. Bha e tràth sa mhadainn. Dhùisg mi. Chuala mi plumanaich. Cha robh sin uabhasach fàbharach. Ach bha sinn anns a’ chala. Am biomaid a’ cluinntinn plumanaich an sin?

Stob mi mo cheann a-mach air a haidse. Bha soitheach mòr mòr a’ dèanamh air a’ chala. Soitheach Gearmailteach làn luchd-turais. Bha mi a’ cluinntinn a h-einnseanan. Co-dhiù cha b’ e plumanaich na mara a bh’ ann!

An latha roimhe bha a’ ghaoth air a bhith aig ìre gèile. Bha i ro gharbh airson seòladh. Anns a’ mhadainn a sheòl sinn a-mach mu dheireadh thall, bha astar na gaoithe air tuiteam gu ìre a sia no mar sin. Ach bha a’ mhuir fhathast garbh, bagarrach. Bha am bàta a’ tulgadh gu dona. Bha mi aig an stiùir airson greis, agus an einnsean air.

An uair sin thàinig an t-òrdugh bhon sgiobair. *Togaibh an seòl-cinn! Cuiribh stad air an einnsean!* ’S e an seòl-cinn an *jib* – seòl aig toiseach a’ gheat, air thoiseach air a’ chrann. Mar as trice bithear a’ seòladh gheat dhen t-seòrsa san robh mi le seòl-cinn agus seòl-mòr air an togail. Ach air an latha sin, bha a’ ghaoth cho làidir ’s nach robh feum againn air an t-seòl mhòr.

“Cha b’ urrainn na b’ fheàrr,” bha mi a’ smaoinichadh rium fhìn. “Tha mi ann am **bàta èasgaidh**, a’ dol aig astar aig muir, gun fhuaim bho einnsean. Tha i ag aomadh gu snog agus tha sinn a’ dèanamh air taobh an iar-thuath na Gàidhealtachd.” Bha sinn cruaidh air a’ ghaoith ach nam fanadh i mar sin, ’s gann gum biodh feum againn air tacadh.

’S iomadh rud a th’ agam ri ionnsachadh mu sheòladh agus gnothaichean na mara. Ach air an latha sin, dh’ionnsaich mi rudeigin nach do dh’ionnsaich mi riamh roimhe. Agus saoilidh mi, ged nach do chòrd e rium aig an àm, gun robh e gu math feumail dhomh. Airson a’ chiad turas riamh, bha cur na mara orm. Tha mi air a bhith a’ dol ann am bàtaichean de gach seòrsa fad mo bheatha is cha robh riamh cur na mara orm. Uill, cha robh chun an latha sin.

Chan urrainn dhomh a ràdh dè dh'adhbharaich e. Ceart gu leòr, bha a' mhuir garbh. Bha suaile throm ann. Bha muir mholach ann. Bha sguailean dona ann. Bha sinn a' tulgadh gu mòr. Ach cha robh eagal sam bith oirnn. Bha bàta math againn.

Ach, òbh òbh. Mean air mhean, dh'atharraich m' aigne. "Tarraing air sgòd an t-siùil-chinn!" thàinig an t-òrdugh. "Làmhnan air an unndais!"

"Gabhaibh mo leisgeul ach chan urrainn dhomh," fhreagair mi mus do chuir mi mo cheann thar cliathaich a' bhàta. Agus nuair a thàinig mi thuige mu dheireadh thall, chuir mi romham nach bithinn a-chaidh tuilleadh mì-bhàidheil no mì-fhoighidneach le daoine a tha a' fulang le tinneas na fairge.

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**Faclan na Litreach:** plumanaich: *muffled roar*; gheat: *yacht*; soitheach: *vessel*; Gearmailteach: *German*; a h-einnseanan: *her engines*; bagarrach: *threatening*; seòl-mòr: *mainsail*.

**Abairtean na Litreach:** a' feitheamh ri sìde a bhiodh freagarrach airson seòladh: *waiting for weather which would be suitable for sailing*; dhùisg mi: *I woke up*; stob mi mo cheann a-mach air a haidse: *I stuck my head out of the hatch*; bha soitheach mòr mòr a' dèanamh air a' chala: *a very big vessel was heading for the harbour*; bha a' ghaoth air a bhith aig ìre gèile: *the wind had been at gale force*; ro gharbh airson seòladh: *too rough to sail*; a' tulgadh: *rolling*; aig an stiùir: *at the helm*; togaibh an seòl-cinn: *raise the jib (sail)*; cha b' urrainn na b' fheàrr: *it couldn't be better*; aig astar: *at speed*; ag aomadh gu snog: *heeling nicely*; cruaidh air a' ghaoith: *close to the wind*; nam fanadh i mar sin, 's gann gum biodh feum againn air tacadh: *if it remained like that, we'd hardly need to tack*; 's iomadh rud a th' agam ri ionnsachadh: *I have much to learn*; ged nach do chòrd e rium aig an àm: *although I didn't enjoy it at the time*; bha cur na mara orm: *I was seasick*; dè dh'adhbharaich e: *what caused it*; bha suaile throm ann, bha muir mholach ann: *there was a heavy swell, there was a stormy sea*; sguailean dona: *bad squalls*; dh'atharraich m' aigne: *my disposition changed*; tarraing air sgòd an t-siùil-chinn: *haul on the jib sheet*; làmhnan air an unndais: *hands on the winch*; thar cliathaich a' bhàta: *over the side of the boat*; nuair a thàinig mi thuige mu dheireadh thall: *when I recovered eventually*; chuir mi romham nach bithinn a-chaidh tuilleadh mì-bhàidheil no mì-fhoighidneach: *I decided that I would never again be unsympathetic or impatient*; tinneas na fairge: *seasickness (alternative term)*.

**Puing-chànain na Litreach: bàta èasgaidh:** *an active, lively, fast boat. If you would like to expand your knowledge of the Gaelic vocabulary associated with boats and the sea, I would recommend the book Muir is Tìr by Seòras Chaluum Sheòrais (George MacLeod), published in Stornoway by Acair. Here are some other adjectives that Seòras used to describe boats: calma (strong, good), sàbhailt (safe), sanntach (desirous, willing), luath (fast), leathann (broad beamed), màsach (large-quartered), dùr (obstinate, stubborn), corrach (unstable, cranky), frionasach (temperamental), leisg (lazy, slow, heavy). You will appreciate that most of these adjectives can also be used of humans!*

**Seanfhacal na Litreach: Is minig a dh'èirich muir gharbh à plumanaich:** *rough sea has often followed a muffled roar (when the sea is still calm).*

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