

# 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 490. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 186 corresponds to Litir 490.*

A bheil sibh eòlach air an fhacal *aisir*? Tha Dwelly ga eadar-theangachadh mar “*passage, pass, path, defile*”. Tha e a’ nochdadh ann an dà ainm-àite ann an iar-thuath Chataibh, faisg air a’ Pharbh – Aisir Mòr agus Aisir Beag. Is iad sin na bailtean croitearachd air a bheil *Oldshoremore* agus *Oldshorebeg* ann am Beurla. Chan eil na h-ainmean idir co-cheangailte ri seann chladaichean.

Gu tuath air na bailtean sin, tha seann bhaile-fearainn air a bheil *Inshore*. Tha e pìos beag air falbh bhon chladach, ceart gu leòr, agus cha chuireadh e iongnadh orm nam biodh cuid de luchd-tadhail a’ smaoinichadh gun robh an t-ainm co-cheangailte ri astar bhon mhuir. Ach chan eil. Tha *Inshore* a’ tighinn bhon Ghàidhlig *Innis Odhar* – *the dun meadow* – agus tha an t-ainm gu math freagarrach airson an àite.

Nach eil an t-àm ann na mapaichean againn a bhith dà-chànanach? Tha mòran ainmean, air a bheil dreach Beurla a-mhàin air na mapaichean, nach eil a’ dèanamh ciall sam bith. Ach tha an t-ainm Gàidhlig ciallach! Ann an iar-thuath Chataibh, tha baile beag ann air a bheil Rhiconich – R-H-I-C-O-N-I-C-H. Dè fon ghrèin a tha sin a’ ciallachadh? ’S e an t-ainm tùsail air – *An Ruigh Còinnich*. Uill, tha e a’ dèanamh ciall a-nise, nach eil? Tha mapa na h-Alba a’ bruidhinn rinn tro ar cànan – nuair a bheir sinn an cothrom dha.

Tha Aisir Mòr is Aisir Beag air oighreachd bheag a tha leis a’ bhuidhinn ghlèidhteachais, Urras Iain Mhuir. Tha am fearann gu lèir fo chroitearachd, ged as e cùl-cinn a tha sa chuid as motha dheth. Tha deichnear a’ ruith beagan is leth-cheud croit. Carson a bha ùidh aig an Urras anns an oighreachd seo? Uill, tha tràigh mhòr bhrèagha oirre – Bàgh Sheannabhaid, no *Sandwood Bay*. Tha glè bheag de thràighean gainmich air tìr-mòr na h-Alba a tha cho brèagha rithe. Agus tha a’ chuid as motha dhen fhearann air an oighreachd às aonais sluagh.

Dìreach taobh a-muigh na h-oighreachd tha bothan ann. ’S e an t-ainm air an àite anns a bheil e – An Srathan. Tha mòran eòlach air a’ bhothan mar *Strathan Bothy*. Tha e air a chumail an òrdugh le Comann Bothain nam Beann mar a tha ceud bothan eile ann an Alba. Mar a tha a’ chuid as motha de bhothain, ’s e dachaigh a bh’ ann uaireigin.

Tha an Srathan pìos mòr air falbh bho thaigh sam bith eile. Tha e beagan mhìltean thar na mòintich air frith-rathad garbh. Agus feumaidh tu dhol tarsainn abhainn mus ruig thu am bothan. Gu tuath air an t-Srathan, chan eil duine sam bith a' fuireach.

Chan eil mi cinnteach cuin mu dheireadh a bha daoine a bhuineadh don àite a' fuireach anns an t-srathan. **Tha greis bhuaithe.** Ach thachair rud neònach ann o chionn beagan bhliadhnaichean. Ghluais cupall a-steach agus rinn iad an dachaigh ann gun chead bho dhuine sam bith. B' iad Robbie is Anne Northway agus bu mhath leam innse dhuibh mun deidhinn. Tha an stòiridh gu math annasach.

Anns an t-Sultain 2000, ghluais Robbie is Anne don t-Srathan cuide ri dusan cù, ceathrad gèadh, meall chearcan is thunnagan, agus gearran. Cha robh an dithis aca ann an deagh shlàinte ach, a dh'aindeoin sin, thug iad an àirneis a-steach leotha don dachaigh ùr aca – air an druim. Bha sin fhèin doirbh gu leòr – ach cha b' ann leothasan a bha am bothan. Am biodh Comann Bothain nam Beann riarachta le daoine a' fuireach fad na h-ùine ann am fear de na bothain aca? Chì sinn dè thachair an ath-sheachdain.

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**Faclan na Litreach:** aisir: *passage, pass, path, defile*; Cataibh: *Sutherland*; Am Parbh: *Cape Wrath*; tùsail: *original*; deichnear: *ten people*; Bàgh Sheannabhaid: *Sandwood Bay*; An Srathan: *Strathan*; àirneis: *furniture*.

**Abairtean na Litreach:** co-cheangailte ri seann chladaichean: *connected to old shores*; seann bhaile-fearainn: *an old farm/fermtoun*; cha chuireadh e iongnadh orm: *it wouldn't surprise me*; nam biodh cuid de luchd-tadhail a' smaoineachadh: *if some visitors thought*; astar bhon mhuir: *distance from the sea*; dreach Beurla a-mhàin: *only an anglicized form*; An Ruigh Còinnich: *Rhiconich [lit. the mossy slope]*; nuair a bheir sinn an cothrom dha: *when we give it the opportunity*; oighreachd bheag a tha leis a' bhuidhinn ghlèidhteachais, Urras Iain Mhuir: *a small estate which is owned by the conservation group, the John Muir Trust*; tha am fearann gu lèir fo chroitreachd: *all the land is under crofting tenure*; ged as e cùl-cinn a tha sa chuid as motha dheth: *although most of it is common grazing [ie rough country]*; glè bheag de thràighean gainmhich: *very few sandy beaches*; às aonais sluagh: *without a population*; air a chumail an òrdugh le Comann Bothain nam Beann: *maintained by the Mountain Bothies Association*; 's e dachaigh a bh' ann uaireigin: *it was once a home*; thar na mòintich air frith-rathad garbh: *over the moor on a rough track*; feumaidh tu dhol tarsainn abhainn mus ruig thu: *you have to cross a river before you reach*; cuin mu dheireadh a bha daoine a bhuineadh don àite a' fuireach ann: *when local people last lived there*; ghluais cupall a-steach: *a couple moved in*; meall chearcan is thunnagan, agus gearran: *a number of hens and ducks, and a pony*; doirbh gu leòr: *hard enough*; cha b' ann leothasan a bha am bothan: *the bothy wasn't theirs*.

**Puing-chànain na Litreach:** *It's surely reasonable of us in the Gaelic world, given the passing of the Gaelic Language Act, to expect our maps to get gradually*

*more bilingual. There are many towns and villages which bear only anglicized forms of their names – and these mean nothing until back-translated into the Gaelic (or sometimes Norse) original. If we take Am Parbh (Cape Wrath) as an example, the map of the countryside is full of meaningful names like Meall na Mòine, Cnoc an Daimh, Creag Riabhach and Loch na Seamraig. But when it comes to the places where people live, we get meaningless anglicized forms like Oldshoremore, Oldshorebeg, Inshore and Balchrack, without the originals (Aisir Mòr, Aisir Beag, Innis Odhar and Baile a' Chnuic). Of course, where the original is Norse, the meaning may not be clear but, where a Gaelic form exists, even of a Norse original, it should be on the map – because that is what the place is called in our language in this bilingual country. And why is learning to read the map of Scotland not a compulsory study for all students in Scotland's schools? It would bring immediate awareness of their country's cultural and linguistic heritage – Gaelic, Norse, Pictish, Cumbric, Scots and English. It's time a national task force created such an education module!*

**Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: Tha greis bhuaithe:** *It's a while since [it happened].*

\* Tha “Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh” air a maoinachadh le MG ALBA