

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.macleon@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 518. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 214 corresponds to Litir 518.

Bidh sibh eòlach air an fhacal *nigheadaireachd*. 'S e sin rud nach gabh seachnadh. Ach san latha an-diugh, tha innealan againn a nì an obair dhuinn.

Chan eil e air a bhith mar sin bho chionn ùine mhòr. Tha map de dh'Ìle fosgailte air mo bheulaibh an-dràsta agus, faisg air Rubha an Lagain, tha loch beag ann. 'S e an t-ainm air an loch – Lochan na Nigheadaireachd. Feumaidh gur e sin àite dham biodh an sluagh a' dol anns an t-seann aimsir airson nigheadaireachd mhòr a dhèanamh.

Tha àite eile ann an ceann a deas Asainte air a bheil Lochan Nigheadh. An e sin loch eile dham biodh daoine a' dol airson nigheadaireachd a dhèanamh? Agus an e fìor dhroch latha a bhiodh ann nuair a rachadh na daoine ann airson am plaideachan a nighe? Uill, a rèir aon bhoireannaich a rinn a leithid na h-òige, chan e rud dòrainneach a bh' ann idir.

Bha mi a' leughadh leabhar gu math tarraingeach o chionn ghoirid air a bheil *Còco is Crùbagan*. 'S i Flòraidh NicDhòmhnaiill an t-ùghdar agus tha an leabhar mu dheidhinn a h-àraich ann an àite iomallach ann am Beinn na Fadhlà. Anns an leabhar tha Flòraidh ag innse mu latha na nigheadaireachd nuair a bha i òg. Tha i a' sgrìobhadh mu “latha sònraichte ... latha nighe nam plangaidean aig an loch is latha mòr a' phicnic.”

An toiseach tharraing iad na plaideachan – no plangaidean – far nan leapannan. Fhuair iad tuba sinc agus chuir iad na rudan a bha a dhìth na bhroinn – fùdar nigheadaireachd agus siabann. Chuir iad botal ammonia ann cuideachd – airson “an sgolaidh mu dheireadh air na plangaidean. Chaidh innse dhuinn gum fàgadh seo na plangaidean **cho bog ri clòimhseach**.”

Bha iad **cho trang ris na seangain** air an latha sin, a' cruinneachadh stuth airson teine a thogail. Nuair a bha an teine a' dol, chuir iad poit mhòr dhubh eanamail air. Lìon iad a' phoit le uisge bhon loch. Nuair a bha an t-uisge teth, chaidh a dhòrtadh don tuba.

Seo mar a tha Flòraidh a' mìneachadh na thachair an uair sin: “Dhòirt [Mamaidh] bucaid no dhà de dh'uisge fuar a thug i às an loch na cheann. Lìon i a' phoit le tuilleadh uisge is chuir i air ais air an teine i. Thomhais Mamaidh a-mach am fùdar nigheadaireachd na bois is chaith i dhan tuba e. Sgol is sgaoil i am fùdar le làimh gus an do leagh e san uisge. Bha an t-uisge a-nise na chop bog, geal.”

Do Fhlòraidh, bha an rud a lean air sin gu math tlachdmhor. “B' e an ath rud plangaid a bhogadh,” tha i a' sgrìobhadh. “Thàinig oirnne an uair sin leum dhan tuba,

duine aig gach ceann mu choinneamh a chèile ... Bha sinn a' bocadaich is a' leumadaich is a' stampadh. Bha sinn dìreach mar yo-yos suas is sìos sa chop gheal. Bha sinn ann an saoghal eile leis a' chop bhog bhàth a' diogladh tro na h-òrdagan againn..."

Bha Flòraidh uabhasach measail air na builgeanan. "Tha mo chridhe a' lìonadh le toileachas," tha i a' sgrìobhadh, "nuair a chuimhnicheas mi air na builgeanan àlainn."

Às dèidh a' ghlanaidh, bha aca ris na plaideachan a sgoil san loch. Bha na plaideachan an uairsin air am fàsgadh agus air an cur a-mach airson tiormachadh.

Obair chruaidh? Gun teagamh. Ach obair a chòrd gu mòr ri Flòraidh òg. Is iongantach mura chòrd e ri mòran Ghàidheal eile thar nan linntean.

* * * * *

Faclan na Litreach: nigheadaireachd: *washing*; Ìle: *Islay*; Asainte: *Assynt*; fùdar: *powder*; siabann: *soap*; sgoiladh: *rinsing*; eanamail: *enamel*; thomhais: *measured*; cop: *foam, froth*; builgeanan: *bubbles*; tiormachadh: *drying*.

Abairtean na Litreach: nach gabh seachnadh: *that can't be avoided*; innealan a nì an obair dhuinn: *machines that do the work for us*; chan eil e air a bhith mar sin bho chionn ùine mhòr: *it's not been like that for a long time*; anns an t-seann aimsir: *in the old days*; an e fìor dhroch latha a bhiodh ann?: *would it be a terrible day?*; nuair a rachadh na daoine ann airson am plaideachan a nighe: *when the people would go there to wash their blankets*; a rèir aon bhoireannaich a rinn a leithid na h-òige: *according to one woman who did such a thing in her childhood*; mu dheidhinn a h-àraich ann an àite iomallach ann am Beinn na Fadhlà: *about her upbringing in a remote place in Benbecula*; far nan leapannan: *off the beds*; tuba sinc: *zinc bath*; na rudan a bha a dhìth na bhroinn: *the things that were needed inside it*; sgoil is sgaoil i am fùdar le làimh: *she stirred the powder by hand*; gus an do leagh e: *until it dissolved*; duine aig gach ceann mu choinneamh a chèile: *a person at each end opposite each other*; a' bocadaich is a' leumadaich is a' stampadh: *bouncing and jumping and stamping*; a' diogladh tro na h-òrdagan againn: *tickling through our toes*; tha mo chridhe a' lìonadh le toileachas: *my heart fills with happiness*; bha na plaideachan an uairsin air am fàsgadh: *the blankets were then wrung out*; thar nan linntean: *over the ages/centuries*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Còco is Crùbagan (*Cocoa and Crabs*) by Flora MacDonald (*Islands Books Trust 2009*) is a very good book for advanced Gaelic learners (who are at the stage of reading *Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh* without too much difficulty). The book is bilingual but each language text is similar rather than identical. Flora writes with delightful passion about her childhood in Benbecula in clear Gaelic which is easily read. Her language is precise and grammatical, but also full of rich idiom with phraseology dealing with matters of day to day life that is sometimes difficult for a learner to access. It's a warm and uplifting story and it comes with 2 CDs on which Flora reads her Gaelic text. I heartily recommend the publication.

Samhlaidhean na Litreach: cho bog ri clòimhseach (clòimhteach): *as soft as down*; cho trang ris na seangain: *as busy as [the] ants*.

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