

# 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 522. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 218 corresponds to Litir 522.*

Thòisich mi an t-seachdain sa chaidh air an sgeulachd à beul-aithris *Iain Dubh Leòdhasach, an Seòladair*. Bha Iain air long fad còig bliadhna. Bha e a’ dol a dh’fhaighinn bonn-a-sia aig ceann a’ chiad mhìos agus dà bhonn-a-sia aig ceann an dara mìos, a’ dùblachadh mar sin gach mìos. Ach cha do thuig an sgiobair gun robh e air fortan a ghealltainn dha. “Gheall thu tuilleadh nas fhiach an long fhèin,” thuirt fear leis an robh an long.

“Dè nì sinn?” dh’fhaighnich an sgiobair.

“Air an latha mu dheireadh de mhuinntireas a’ ghille,” thuirt am fear eile, “cùm air falbh bho thìr. Bheir sinne dhut na th’ againn de dh’airgead ann an trì pocannan. Can ris a’ ghille gu bheil a thuarastal anns na pocannan agus gum faigh e e ma dh’fhàgas e an long an sin. Ach mura fàg, gum pàigh thu dha sùim a thoilicheas tu fhèin.”

Thàinig an latha mu dheireadh de mhuinntireas Iain Duibh. Mus tàinig an long ann an sealladh na tìre, thairg an sgiobair a thuarastal don ghille – nam fàgadh e an long **sa mhionaid**.

“Ma gheibh mi mo thuarastal, fàgaidh mi,” ars an gille. “Ach an toir sibh dhomh dà uair a thìde de dh’obair an t-saoir, airson ràth a thogail air mo shon?”

“Gheibh thu sin, agus am fiodh cuideachd,” fhreagair an sgiobair. Bha e duilich dealachadh ri Iain, agus toilichte a chuideachadh.

Nuair a bha an ràth deiseil, chaidh a leigeil sìos thar taobh na luinge. Fhuair Iain na trì pocannan – fear làn òir, fear làn airgid agus fear làn copair. Thug e leis cuideachd poca bhriosgaidean agus searrag uisge.

Chuir Iain trì latha seachad air an ràth. Mu dheireadh ràinig e tìr. Cha robh sgeul air duine. Thug e na pocannan leis gu **bràigh a’ chladaich** agus chuir e am falach iad anns a’ ghainmhich. An uair sin, dh’fhalbh e don choille. Choisich e fad na h-oidhche ach chan fhaca e taigh no duine. Aig beul an latha ràinig e togalach mòr dubh a bha coltach ri seann mhuileann. Choisich e a-steach.

Bha boireannach dreachmhor na suidhe aig an teine. Ghabh i eagal an toiseach ach thuirt Iain rithe nach robh ann ach seòladair bochd a bh’ air snàmh gu tìr bho long a chaidh fodha. Thug am boireannach biadh is deoch dha, ach dh’iarr i air falbh gu sgiobalta.

“Carson?” dh’fhaighnich Iain Dubh.

“Tha seachd robairean a’ fuireach anns an taigh,” fhreagair i, “agus bidh iad air ais **ann am mionaid**.”

“Thigeadh iad,” thuirt an seòladair. “Chan fhalbh mi gus am faigh mi beagan cadail.”

Fhuair e greis cadail ach dhùisg na robairean e. “S e robairean a th’ annainn,” thuirt fear dhiubh, “agus cha leig sinn às thu beò.”

“Nach mi a tha toilichte,” fhreagair Iain Dubh. “B’ e robaireachd mo cheàird fhèin gus an robh agam ri teicheadh. Ma leigeas sibh leam siubhal cuide ribh, bidh mi cho dìleas ’s a ghabhas.”

“Ceart gu leòr,” arsa fear de na robairean. “Gabhaidh sinn latha fois. An uair sin gabhaidh gach fear dhinn a rathad fhèin. Am fear as motha a bheir dhachaigh de chreach thar trì oidhcheannan, ’s e a bhios na cheannard air càch.”

Chunnaic Iain Dubh a chothrom. Air a’ chiad oidhche thill e le poca làn copair. Air an dàrna oidhche, thill e le poca làn airgid. Air an treas oidhche thill e le poca làn òir. Chùm na robairean rin gealladh agus rinn iad Iain Dubh na cheannard air càch. Ach cha do ràinig sinn deireadh na sgeòil fhathast...

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**Faclan na Litreach:** bonn-a-sia: *a halfpenny*; dara/dàrna: *second (the terms are interchangeable)*; a’ dùblachadh: *doubling*; muinntireas: *engagement*; ràth: *raft*; dreachmhor: *good-looking*; robairean: *robbers*; dìleas: *loyal*.

**Abairtean na Litreach:** Iain Dubh Leòdhasach, an Seòladair: *Black-haired John of Lewis, the Sailor*; gun robh e air fortan a ghealltainn dha: *that he had promised him a fortune*; dè nì sinn?: *what shall we do?*; bheir sinne dhut na th’ againn de dh’airgead: *we’ll give you what you have of money*; gum pàigh thu dha sùim a thoilicheas tu fhèin: *that you’ll pay him an amount of your own choosing*; dà uair a thìde de dh’obair an t-saoir: *two hours of the carpenter’s time*; poca bhriosgaidean agus searrag uisge: *a bag of biscuits and a leather bottle of water*; anns a’ ghainmhich: *in the sand*; beul an latha: *daybreak*; seòladair bochd a bh’ air snàmh gu tìr bho long a chaidh fodha: *a poor sailor who’d swum to shore from a ship that went down*; dh’iarr i air falbh gu sgiobalta: *she asked him to leave quickly*; thigeadh iad: *let them come*; cha leig sinn às thu beò: *we’ll not let you leave alive*; b’ e robaireachd mo cheàird fhèin: *robbing was my own trade*; am fear as motha a bheir dhachaigh creach: *the man who brings home the most plunder*; chùm X rin gealladh: *X kept to their promise*; rinn iad Y na cheannard air càch: *they made Y the leader of the rest*.

**Puing-chànain na Litreach:** Thug e na pocannan leis gu **bràigh a’ chladaich**: *he took the bags [with him] to the upper part of the shore. The word bràigh seems to be less frequently used than in former times, and many people might say “ceann shuas a’ chladaich” today. But it’s a nice word and worth retaining. Its original meaning is “neck” or “throat”; its genitive form is bràghad which you might know in losgadh-bràghad (heartburn), but bràghad has become a noun in its own right and is well known in the area name Bràghad Albainn, the upper part of Alban (Scotland), anglicized Breadalbane. Bràigh in topographical terms means “the upper part of” and bràigheach is a term for a mountaineer or inhabitant of the mountains, particularly the Highlands and most particularly Brae Lochaber (Bràigh Loch Abar), the upper part of that beautiful region of the Gàidhealtachd.*

**Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach:** nam fàgadh e an long **sa mhionaid**. *if he left the ship immediately. Note also bidh iad air ais ann am mionaid: they’ll be back in a minute, presently.*

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