

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.maclea@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 527. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 223 corresponds to Litir 527.

An t-seachdain sa chaidh, bha mi a’ toirt sùil air mapaichean na h-Alba aig an Dùitseach Joan Blaeu. Chuir Blaeu an Atlas Maior aige ann an clò anns na seasgadan dhen t-seachdamh linn deug. Ach bha e air atlas na h-Alba fhoillseachadh anns na leth-cheudan. Bha a mhapaichean de dh’Alba gu mòr stèidhichte air an rannsachadh a rinn Timothy Pont leth-cheud bliadhna roimhe. ’S e obair mhòr a rinn an dithis.

Tha sinn cleachdte ri dreach na Beurla a bhith air mòran ainmean-àite aig a bheil tùs Gàidhlig no Lochlannach. Mar sin bha e inntinneach dhomh a bhith a’ coimhead air mapaichean Bhlaeu airson faicinn an robh sin fìor anns an t-seachdamh linn deug. Uill, bha gu ìre. Ach seo ainm no dhà a tha car inntinneach. Far am faic sinn Stornoway is Steòrnabhagh còmhla an-diugh, chithear air map Bhlaeu, *Steornava*. Agus, ann an Uibhist a Tuath, far am faic sinn Lochmaddy is Loch nam Madadh còmhla an-diugh, tha *Loch na Maddy* aig Blaeu.

Agus tha e inntinneach gun do roghnaich Blaeu cuid de dh’àiteachan a shealltainn gu dà-chànanach. Tha an roghainn sin stèidhichte air an fhiosrachadh a dh’fhàg Pont aige agus chan eil e soilleir carson a roghnaich Pont fhèin cuid de dh’ainmean a riochdachadh anns an dà chànan. Air mapa Leòdhais chithear *Lewes or Lodhus*. Ge-tà, air mapa Na Hearadh, tha dìreach *Harry* ann. Tha ceithir eileanan eile air an riochdachadh gu dà-chànanach – *Skye [or] Skianach, Mula or Mul, Diùra or Iiura* agus *Ila or Il*.

Tha notaichean anns an Atlas Mhaoir cuideachd, ag innse beagan mu dhiofar àiteachan. Seo na sgrìobh e mu Na Hearadh: “..tha ionaltradh math ann do chaoraich, gu sònraichte beinn àrd a tha còmhdaichte gu lèir le feur bho a bonn gu a mullach. Tha Dòmhnall Rothach, fear naomh air leth ionnsaichte, ag ràdh nuair a bha e anns na h-eileanan seo, gum fac’ e seann chaoraich air seachran, agus iad gun a bhith le duine sam bith. Tha àireamh nan caorach a’ dol am meud fad na h-ùine a chionn ’s nach eil madaidhean-allaidh, madaidhean-ruadha no nathraichean ann.” Uill, **fàgaidh mi agaibh fhèin e** tomhas a dhèanamh air an tuairisgeul sin de Na Hearadh!

Agus tha tuairisgeul inntinneach – is annasach – aig Blaeu dhen Tràigh Mhòir ann am Barraigh agus mar a fhuair an tràigh a cuid choilleagan no shrùban: “Air costa tuath Bharraigh tha cnoc ag èiridh, a tha gorm bho a mhullach gu a bhonn, agus fuaran fìor-uisge air a’ mhullach dhith; tha seo a’ dèanamh allt a tha a’ ruith chun na mara, agus e a’ giùlain na uisgeachan an t-uabhas de chreutairean beaga gun chumadh a tha

gu math coltach ris na seilcheagan againne. Tha muinntir an àite a' cur 'the wide sands' air a' phàirt dhen chladach far a bheil an t-allt a' ruigsinn na mara oir tha tràigh mhòr ghainmhich ann nuair a tha a' mhuir air tràghadh. An seo **bithear a' cladhach maorach**, a thathar a' dèanamh dheth a dh'fhàs bho na creutairean a chaidh a ghiùlain sìos anns an allt, a thàinig gu ìre anns a' mhuir." Uill, sin agaibh e. An robh fios aig na Barraich gun tàinig an cuid shrùban bho fhuaran air mullach an eilein?!

Agus, mus fhalbh mi, air mapa Bhlaeu far a bheil an t-Òban an-diugh, chan eil ann ach *Soirbe* air cladhach òba. Agus 's e ainm an òba *Loch en na Ouillin*. Tha mi an dùil gur e sin *Lochan na h-Uilinn*. Ma tha fiosrachadh sam bith agaibhse mun ainm sin, b' fhìor thoigh leam cluinntinn bhuaibh. Mar sin leibh an-dràsta.

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Faclan na Litreach: Dùitseach: *Dutchman*; Dòmhnall Rothach: *Donald Munro (Dean of the Isles)*; gorm: *green (in landscape)*; seilcheagan: *snails*.

Abairtean na Litreach: anns na seasgadan dhen t-seachdamh linn deug: *in the 60s of the 17th Century (ie 1660s)*; anns na leth-cheudan: *in the fifties*; cleachdte ri: *used to*; bha e inntinneach dhomh: *it was interesting for me*; bha gu ìre: *it was to an extent*; gun do roghnaich Blaeu X a shealltainn gu dà-chànanach: *that Blaeu chose to show X bilingually*; air an riochdachadh: *represented*; tha ionaltradh math ann do chaoraich: *there is excellent pasture for sheep*; còmhdhaichte gu lèir le feur: *entirely covered with grass*; fear naomh air leth ionnsaichte: *a saintly man of great erudition*; air seachran: *wandering*; gun a bhith le duine sam bith: *[that] belonged to no one*; a chionn 's nach eil madaidhean-allaidh, madaidhean-ruadha no nathraichean ann: *because there are no wolves, foxes or snakes*; mar a fhuair an tràigh a cuid choilleagan no shrùban: *how the beach got its cockles*; fuaran fìor-uisge air a' mhullach dhith: *a freshwater spring on its summit*; agus e a' giùlain na uisgeachan an t-uabhas de chreutairean beaga gun chumadh: *which carries in its waters innumerable shapeless little creatures*; nuair a tha a' mhuir air tràghadh: *when the tide is out [has ebbed]*; a thàinig gu ìre: *which have grown to maturity*; air cladhach òba: *on the shore of an enclosed bay*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: **bithear a' cladhach maorach:** *shellfish are dug up. The noun maorach, while grammatically singular, has collective import – rather like clann and feadhainn. It is important to remember that and not pluralise it as might be expected from the English. A good way of remembering it, if you ever catch the Ullapool-Stornoway ferry, is that the last point of the mainland, on the port side (leaving Ullapool) is Rubha Camas a' Mhaoraich. Lots of shellfish would have been gathered in Camas a' Mhaoraich (the bay of the shellfish) but the word maorach is clearly singular. In the Litir I did not slenderise maorach following the verbal noun as it is indefinite ie does not carry an article. You would however say bithear a' cladhach a' mhaoraich (the shellfish are/will be dug up) with the article causing the noun to adopt its genitive (singular) form.*

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: **fàgaidh mi agaibh fhèin e** tomhas a dhèanamh air an tuairisgeul sin de Na Hearadh: *I'll leave it [up] to you to assess that description of Harris.*

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