

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 536. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 232 corresponds to Litir 536.

*Gleanna Gollaidh, Gleanna Gollaidh,
Gleanna Gollaidh nan craobh,
Cò a chì e nach mol e,
Gleanna Gollaidh nan craobh.*

Bidh sibh a’ smaoinichadh gu bheil mi air mearachd a dhèanamh agus gu bheil sinn a’ craobh-sgaoileadh a-rithist Litir na seachdain sa chaidh! Ach chan eil. Bha mi dìreach airson rud beag a bharrachd a ràdh mun dàn a sgrìobh am bàrd ainmeil à Dùthaich MhicAoidh – Rob Donn – mun ghleann faisg air àite a bhreith ann an Allt na Caillich. ’S e sin Gleanna Gollaidh far an robh coille bhreagha a’ fàs.

Tha e coltach gun do sgrìobh Rob an dàn seo as dèidh dha a bhith air a ghluasad a-mach às an t-Strath Mhòr far an robh e a’ fuireach fad ùine mhòr. Cha robh an ceann-cinnidh toilichte leis **air dà adhbhar**. Bha an dà rud co-cheangailte ri beachdan poilitigeach a’ bhàird.

Rugadh Rob ann an seachd ceud deug is ceithir-deug (1714) agus bha e air tighinn gu ìre ro Bhliadhna a’ Phrionnsa. Bha cinn-chinnidh Clann ’ic Aoidh taiceil do na Hanobhèirianaich, ach bha Rob a’ taobhadh leis na Seumasaich, mar a bha mòran bhàrd eile. Seo rann a sgrìobh e:

*Nis, a Theàrlaich Òig Stiùbhairt,
Riut tha dùil aig gach fine
Chaidh a chothachadh crùin dhut
'S a leig an dùthaich na teine;
Tha iad mar nathraichean falaicht'
A chaill an earradh an-uiridh
Ach tha 'g ath-ghleusadh an gathan
Gu èirigh latha do thighinn.*

Tuigidh sibh nach biodh an t-uachdaran aige ro thoilichte leis! A bharrachd air sin, chuir Rob Donn gu làidir an aghaidh mar a bha na h-uachdarain a’ feuchainn ri stad a chur air an tuath bho bhith a’ sealg nam fiadh anns a’ mhonadh. Mar a tha iomadach Gàidheal eadhon an-diugh cha robh beachd na tuatha air **poidseadh** co-ionann ri beachd nan uaislean air poidseadh, co-dhiù tha sinn a-mach air fèidh no air bradain.

Ach ’s iad na h-uaislean a bha a’ cruthachadh an lagh. Seo pàirt de dhàn a sgrìobh Rob air sealg nam fiadh, agus e a’ labhairt, mar gum biodh, do a bhràthair, Dòmhnall – no Dòmhnallan Dubh:

*Bha fuil am broilleach do lèine,
'S cha b' e fuil na gaibhre cèire
Ach fuil an fhèidh a bha san dàmhair,
'S cha bu mhèirleach Dòmhnallan Dubh.*

Cha b’ urrainn don bhàrd a bhith na bu shoilleire na sin! ’S cha bu mhèirleach Dòmhnallan Dubh...

Hogaidh hò, mo Dhòmhnallan Dubh,

*Sealgair sìthne, Dòmhnallan Dubh,
'S fear neo-bhruidhneach, Dòmhnallan Dubh,
'S gheibh e an nì a chionn a bhith ruith.*

Tha e coltach, air sàillibh a h-uile nì, gun tugadh air Rob Donn gluasad a-mach às an t-Srath Mhòr gu ruige àite air a' chladach far nach b' urrainn dha a bhith a' sealg nam fiadh tuilleadh. Thachair sin, 's dòcha, faisg air deireadh nan caogadan anns an ochdamh linn deug. Tha feadhainn a' dèanamh a-mach gur ann an uair sin a sgrìobh e *Gleanna Gollaidh*, a' moladh a' ghlinn sin far am b' fheàrr leis a bhith a' fuireach:

*Ri faicinn crìoch àrdain
Ga mo bhreugadh gu taobh,
'S ann a smuainich mi fanadh
An Gleanna Gollaidh nan craobh
Gleanna Gollaidh, Gleanna Gollaidh,
Gleanna Gollaidh nan craobh,
Cò a chì e nach mol e,
Gleanna Gollaidh nan craobh.*

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Faclan na Litreach: *Gleanna Gollaidh: Glen Golly; earradh: covering (snake skin); neo-bhruidhneach: non-talkative.*

Abairtean na Litreach: a' craobh-sgaoileadh: *broadcasting*; àite a bhreith: *his birthplace*; bha e air tighinn gu ìre ro Bhliadhna a' Phrionnsa: *he had reached maturity before the Year of the Prince (1745-6)*; taiceil do na Hanobhèirianaich: *supportive of the Hanoverians*; a' taobhadh leis na Seumasaich: *siding with the Jacobites*; riut tha dùil aig gach fine: *every clan places its hope in you*; [a] chaidh a chothachadh crùin dhut: *who went to seek a crown for you*; 's a leig an dùthaich na teine: *and set fire to the country*; nathraichean falaicht': *hidden snakes*; ag ath-ghleusadh an gathan: *making ready their fangs*; gu èirigh latha do thighinn: *to arise on the day of your coming*; fuil am broilleach do lèine: *blood on the front of your shirt*; cha b' e fuil na gaibhre cèire: *it wasn't the blood of the dark goat*; san dàmhair: *in the deer rut*; cha bu mhèirleach Dòmhnallan Dubh: *dark-haired wee Donald was not a thief*; sealgair sìthne: *hunter of venison*; gheibh e an nì a chionn a bhith ruith: *he will have a reward for the chase*; gun tugadh air X: *that X was forced to*; crìoch àrdain: *the frontier heights*; ga mo bhreugadh gu taobh: *enticing me yonder.*

Puing-chànain na Litreach: cha robh beachd na tuatha air **poidseadh** co-ionann ri beachd nan uaislean air poidseadh: *the ordinary people's opinion of poaching was not the same as the gentry's opinion of poaching. It's interesting to consider why, with a large vocabulary available with regard to hunting and land use, that our forebears adopted the English word poaching and adapted it as poidseadh (dialectally poidsigeadh). MacLennan's (1925) dictionary gives dèan goid frìthe for "poach" and mèirleach seilge for "poacher" but neither sounds very convincing, does it?! I might venture to suggest that poaching was not a traditional Gaelic concept and, even today, many Gaels consider game laws to be an unjust infringement of their traditional moral right to use their ancestral lands. Poaching is defined in my English dictionary as "catching game illegally by trespassing on private property". The concept was foreign. It's hardly surprising that we adopted the English word along with the concept.*

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: Cha robh an ceann-cinnidh toilichte leis **air dà adhbhar**: *the clan chief wasn't pleased with him for two reasons.*

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

