

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. This is Litir 546. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 242 corresponds to Litir 546.

Tha sinn a’ leantainn air ar cuairt tro Chataibh is Gallaibh, stèidhichte air stòiridhean à beul-aithris anns na diofar sgìrean. Tha sinn an-diugh air a dhol thar crìoch Ghallaibh – gu sgìre Dhùn Bheithe. Tha mòran de dhualchas na sgìre seo stèidhichte air dualchas nan Gàidheal oir bha a’ Ghàidhlig ga bruidhinn ann fad ùine mhòr. Agus seo agaibh stòiridh air a bheil *Na Trì Snaidhmeannan*. Tha snaidhmeannan a’ dol air ais fada ann an dualchas nan Ceilteach. Agus bha an àireamh trì rudeigin naomh do na seann Cheiltich. Tha an stòiridh seo a’ tòiseachadh ann an Liabost – ’s e sin a’ Ghàidhlig air *Lybster* – baile beag ann an taobh an earra-dheas Ghallaibh.

Thachair e ann am meadhan an naoidheamh linn deug nuair a bhathar ag iasgach an sgadain. Chaidh bàta à Liabost gu ruige Port Mo Cholmaig ann an Siorrachd Rois airson clàran-baraille a cheannach. Bha cùbairean anns gach port a’ dèanamh nam baraillean anns an cuireadh na h-iasgairean an sgadan. Nuair a dh’fhàg na h-iasgairean Liabost, bha an aimsir math agus lean i mar sin fad na slighe gu ruige Port Mo Cholmaig. Nise, nuair a chanas mi gun robh an aimsir math, chan eil mi a’ ciallachadh gun robh i ciùin. ’S ann le bhith a’ seòladh a bha na bàtaichean-iasgaich a’ falbh aig an àm sin, agus bha iad feumach air beagan gaoithe.

An ath latha, chuir iad an cargu air a’ bhàta agus rinn iad deiseil airson falbh air an làrna-mhàireach. Ach thairis air an oidhche, shocraich a’ ghaoth. Anns a’ mhadainn bha **fèath nan eun** ann. Bha an sgiobair – fear air an robh Seumas mar ainm – mì-thoilichte. Bha e ag iarraidh a bhith air ais aig an taigh, agus a bhith ag iasgach.

Bha Seumas a’ bruidhinn mun chùis ri caraid dha ann am Port Mo Cholmaig. Thuir a charaid gum bu chòir dha dhol a bhruidhinn ri bana-bhuidseach a bha a’ fuireach faisg air làimh. Dh’fheumadh e leth-chrùn a thoirt dhi. Chaidh Seumas gu taigh na bana-bhuidsich. Bha fios aice mu thràth dè bha a dhìth air.

Thug i dha pìos snàithlein anns an robh trì snaidhmeannan. Agus thug i òrdughan dha air na dh’fheumadh e dhèanamh. “Nuair a tha sibh a’ falbh,” thuir i, “fuasgail a chiad shnaidhm. Thig beagan gaoithe airson ur cur a dol. Nuair a tha sibh pìos math air falbh aig muir, fuasgail an dàrna snaidhm agus thig barrachd gaoithe airson ur toirt dhachaigh gu luath. Ach na fuasgail – **air chor sam bith** – an treas snaidhm.”

Bha Seumas gu math toilichte. Dh’fhalbh e don chala agus rinn e deiseil airson falbh dhachaigh a Liabost. Nuair a bha aodach a’ bhàta deiseil, dh’fhuasgail Seumas a’

chiad shnaidhm. Dh'èirich a' ghaoth beagan bhon iar-dheas agus lìon i na siùil. Sheòl iad gu snog a-mach à cala Phort Mo Cholmaig.

Nuair a bha iad letheach-slighe air an rathad dhachaigh, dh'fhuasgail Seumas an dàrna snaidhm. Dh'fhàs a' ghaoth na bu làidire agus chaidh am bàta na bu luaithe buileach. Nuair a bha iad faisg air Liabost, dh'iarr gille dhen chriutha air Seumas an treas snaidhm fhuasgladh. A dh'aindeoin na thuirt a' bhana-bhuidseach, dh'fhuasgail Seumas an treas snaidhm. Cho luath 's a rinn e sin, thionndaidh a' ghaoth, dh'èirich i gu ìre gèile agus chaidh am bàta a sguabadh a-mach gu muir. Cha robh roghainn aig Seumas an uair sin ach am bàta a stiùireadh air ais gu Port Mo Cholmaig – am port a dh'fhàg iad deich uairean a thìde roimhe.

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Faclan na Litreach: naomh: *sacred*; Liabost: *Lybster*; clàran-baraille: *staves for barrels*; cùbaircean: *coopers*; ciùin: *calm*; cargu: *cargo*; letheach-slighe: *halfway*; roghainn: *choice*.

Abairtean na Litreach: thar crìoch Ghallaibh – gu sgìre Dhùn Bheith: *over the border of Caithness – to the area of Dunbeath*; Na Trì Snaidhmeannan: *The Three Knots*; dualchas nan Ceilteach: *the heritage of the Celts*; nuair a bhathar ag iasgach an sgadain: *when the herring were being fished*; gu ruige Port Mo Cholmaig: *to Portmahomack*; anns an cuireadh na h-iasgairean an sgadan: *in which the fishermen would put the herring*; lean i mar sin fad na slighe: *it continued like that all the way*; 's ann le bhith a' seòladh a bha na bàtaichean-iasgaich a' falbh: *it is by sailing that the fishing boats would move*; air an làrna-mhàireach: *[on] the next day*; shocraich a' ghaoth: *the wind subsided*; gum bu chòir dha dhol a bhruidhinn ri bana-bhuidseach: *that he should go and speak to a witch*; dh'fheumadh e leth-chrùn a thoirt dhi: *he would need to give her a half-crown*; bha fios aice mu thràth dè bha a dhìth air: *she already knew what he needed*; pìos snàithlein anns an robh trì snaidhmeannan: *a piece of thread in which there were three knots*; thug i òrdughan dha air na dh'fheumadh e dhèanamh: *he gave him orders on what he needed to do*; fuasgail a chiad shnaidhm: *loosen the first knot*; thig barrachd gaoithe: *more wind will come*; aodach a' bhàta: *the boat's sails*; dh'èirich a' ghaoth beagan bhon iar-dheas: *the wind arose a little from the south-west*; lìon i na siùil: *it filled the sails*; gu ìre gèile: *to gale force*; chaidh am bàta a sguabadh a-mach gu muir: *the boat was driven out to sea*; deich uairean a thìde roimhe: *ten hours before*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: **fèath nan eun:** *conditions of complete tranquility. One of the things I love about the Gaelic language is its strong links to the environment around us. If you have been out in a boat in summer off the west coast when there is absolutely no wind, you will have noticed how the seabirds just sit around on the water, often in large groups – and it is easy to get close to them. This is fèath nan eun – “the calmness of the birds”. It's a lovely expression. Fèath can be used on its own (eg thàinig fèath oirnn – we were becalmed) but fèath nan eun is even calmer!*

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: **air chor sam bith:** *under any circumstance.*

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