

# 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.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk). This is Litir 563. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 259 corresponds to Litir 563.*

Tha dùbhlán agam dhuibh aig toiseach na Litreach. Seo faclan à seann fhaclairan Gàidhlig agus tha iad uile a’ ciallachadh an aon rud: *ailp, ailpe, boir, borr* agus *fil*. Chan eil sibh eòlach orra? Na gabhaibh dragh – **cha robh no mise**. Tha iad uile a’ seasamh airson beathach fìor mhòr. Seo feadhainn eile a tha a’ ciallachadh an aon rud: *oileabhan, oilleabhaint, albhan dubh, elebhean* agus *elephant*. Tuigidh sibh a-nise gu bheil iad uile a’ ciallachadh *ailbhean*. Nach iongantach na th’ againn de dh’fhaclan Gàidhlig airson a’ chreutair seo!

Tha am facal Beurla *elephant* a’ tighinn bhon Laidinn *elephantus* a tha e fhèin a’ tighinn bhon Ghreugais *elephas*. Ach tha cuid de na faclan co-cheangailte ri ailbheanan ann am Beurla a’ tighinn bho Hindi. Mar eisimpleir *mahout* – fear a bhios na shuidhe air cùl ceann ailbhein agus ga stiùireadh. ’S ann bhon aon chànan a tha *howdah* a’ tighinn; ’s e sin an suidheachan mòr air muin ailbhein.

Uill, chuir mi seachad dà uair a thìde gu leth aig toiseach na bliadhna ann an *howdah* air muin ailbhein. Bha sin fada gu leòr! Bha mi ann an ceann a deas Neapail agus bha mi fhìn is trìuir eile anns a’ choille mhòir no *jungle* (facal Hindi eile) air muin ailbhein. ’S e sin an dòigh as fheàrr airson beathaichean fiadhaich fhaicinn oir leigidh iadsan le ailbhean a dhol gu math faisg orra. Tha e an ìre mhath sàbhailte cuideachd oir cha bhi beathaichean eile, mar as trice, a’ toirt ionnsaigh air ailbhean – ach a-mhàin tìgear corra uair. Tha tìgearan gu leòr ann far an robh mi, agus sròn-adharcaich, mathain is crògallan, agus mar sin bha mi toilichte a bhith gu h-àrd air muin ailbhein, eadhon ged nach robh e uabhasach cofhurtail.

Leis na th’ againn de dh’fhaclan Gàidhlig airson ailbhean, bha mi a’ meòrachadh air cho eòlach ’s a bha na seann Cheiltich air na creutairean sin. Agus an latha eile, thàinig mi tarsainn air seann phàipear ann am Fraingis air an robh *Les Celtes et Les Éléphants* le H Gaidoz, Àrd-ollamh a’ Chruinn-eòlais agus Sluagh-eòlais anns an *École des Sciences Politiques* ann am Paris. Chaidh a sgrìobhadh ann an ochd ceud deug, seachdad ’s a trì (1873).

Tha am Proif. Gaidoz dhen bheachd gur e a’ chiad turas a chunnaic mòran Cheilteach ailbheanan nuair a nochd an ceannard Carthaginianach, Hannibal, le arm ann an ceann a deas **na Gaille**. Bha sin anns a’ bhliadhna dà cheud is ochd-

deug (218) RC. Dh'fheuch na Ceiltich ri stad a chur air Hannibal aig Abhainn Rhône ach dh'fhailnich orra. A bharrachd air leth-cheud mìle saighdear, bha faisg air ceathrad ailbhean-cogaidh aig Hannibal. Tha dùil gun do chuir e an sàs iad anns a' chath an aghaidh nan Ceilteach. Bidh sibh eòlach air a' chòrr de dh'eachdraidh Hannibal is mar a thug e arm thar nan Ailpean gu ruige tìr na Ròimhe.

Chan iad na treubhan **anns a' Ghail** an aon fheadhainn Cheilteach a fhuair eòlas air an ailbhean air sàillibh Hannibal. Bha Ceiltich eile a' fuireach anns na beanntan, agus air taobh thall nam beann gu tuath air an Ròimh – far a bheil ceann a tuath na h-Eadailt an-diugh. Tha e inntinneach gur e *ailp* fear de na seann fhaclan Gàidhlig airson ailbhean; tha e a' ciallachadh *protuberance, any gross lump, mountain* agus *elephant*. Bha na h-ailpean anns na h-Ailpean, gu dearbh.

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**Faclan na Litreach:** co-cheangailte ri: *linked to*; triùir: *three people*; sàbhailte: *safe*; Ceilteach: *Celt*; ailbhean-cogaidh: *war-elephant*; air sàillibh: *because of*.  
**Abairtean na Litreach:** Tha dùbhlán agam dhuibh: *I have a challenge for you*; a' seasamh airson beathach fìor mhòr: *standing for a really big animal*; nach iongantach na th' againn de dh'fhaclan Gàidhlig airson a' chreutair seo: *isn't it amazing how many Gaelic words we have for this creature*; a bhios na shuidhe air cùl ceann ailbhein agus ga stiùireadh: *who sits behind an elephant's head and controls it*; an suidheachan mòr air muin ailbhein: *the big seat on the back of an elephant*; an dòigh as fheàrr airson beathaichean fiadhaich fhaicinn: *the best way to see wild elephants*; cha bhi beathaichean eile, mar as trice, a' toirt ionnsaigh air: *other animals won't normally attack*; ach a-mhàin tìgear corra uair: *except for a tiger occasionally*; sròn-adharcaich, mathain is crògallan: *rhinoceroses, beers and crocodiles*; eadhon ged nach robh e uabhasach cofhurtail: *even though it was not very comfortable*; Àrd-ollamh a' Chruinn-eòlais agus Sluagh-eòlais: *Professor of Geography and Ethnology*; Dh'fheuch na Ceiltich ri stad a chur air: *the Celts tried to stop*; dh'fhailnich orra: *they failed*; mar a thug e arm thar nan Ailpean gu ruige tìr na Ròimhe: *how he took an army across the Alps to the territory of Rome*; air taobh thall nam beann: *on the far side of the mountains*.

**Puing-chànain na Litreach:** ceann a deas **na Gaille**: *the south of Gaul. The Gaelic for Gaul is A' Ghall (countries are almost always feminine). It slenderizes in the dative singular (because it is feminine) so we would say traditionally anns a' Ghail. And the genitive form is na Gaille. The Roman name for Gaul was Gallia. The French words Gaule, Gaulois (belonging to Gaul) and Gallique have a common origin with the Gaelic word, as does the English Gallic, referring to Gaul or modern France. The Gaelic word Gall "foreigner" is also related to the aforementioned words; it is said that the foreigners the early Gaels in Ireland most commonly encountered were Gauls. And there is an echo of the cultural and linguistic links between the Gauls and the Welsh in the French words for Wales – Pays de Galles – and Welshman – Gallois.*

**Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach**: Na gabhaibh dragh – **cha robh no mise**: don't be upset – **I wasn't either**.

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