

# 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 587. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 283 corresponds to Litir 587.*

Tha leabhar Gàidhlig air mo bheulaibh agus tha mi a’ dol a leughadh earrann às. Saoil am bi fios agaibh cò air a tha i a-mach. “... bann àlainn de dhealradh a tha a’ sineadh tarsainn an adhair, a’ siubhal tro reul-bhadan mar an Dà Leth-aon ... Cassiopeia agus Perseus.” An tuig sibh am facal *reul-bhad*? ’S e sin a’ Ghàidhlig air cruinneachadh de reultan no rionnagan. Ann am Beurla – *constellation*.

Agus dè “am bann àlainn de dhealradh”? ’S e a th’ ann rud ris an canar ann am Beurla *The Milky Way*. Ann an Gàidhlig ***Slighe Chlann Uisnich***. Thàinig *Milky Way* a-steach don Bheurla mar eadar-theangachadh air an Laidinn *Via Lactea*. Tha a’ Bheurla air an t-uabhas iasaid a dhèanamh bhon Laidinn. Thàinig *constellation* bhon Laidinn *constellatio*; thàinig a’ Ghàidhlig *reul-bhad*, air an làimh eile, bho fhreumhan Ceilteach.

Ach chan eil a’ Bheurla leatha fhèin ann a bhith a’ toirt an ainm sin bhon Laidinn. Tha na cànanan Laideannach fhèin mar sin, mar a bhiodh dùil – ged a tha seann ainmean aig cuid aca co-cheangailte ris an t-slighe naoimh gu ruige Santiago de Compostela. Ach tha a’ Ghearmailtis *Milchstraße* agus an Dùitsis *Melkweg* à nead na Laidinn, mar a tha na h-ainmean anns na cànanan Slàbhach.

Ach tha cuid de dh’ainmean co-cheangailte ri fionnsgeulan, am fear againne nam measg. Tha Slighe Chlann Uisnich air ainmeachadh airson na trìuir ghaisgeach a bha nan companaich do Dheirdre. B’ iad sin leannan Deirdre, Naois, agus a dhithis bhràithrean, Ailleán is Àrdan. Rinn iad slighe ainmeil eadar Alba is Èirinn.

’S e tìotal an leabhair a th’ air mo bheulaibh *Reul-eòlas*. Chaidh a sgrìobhadh leis an Ollamh Pàdraig Moore agus chaidh eadar-theangachadh gu Gàidhlig le Iain Aonghas MacLeòid. Seo rud eile ann mu Shlighe Chlann Uisnich: “Tha eagal orm gur gann gum faic sibh i air Ghàidhealtachd anns an t-Samhradh, ach tron Gheamhradh tha i òirdheirc.” Uill, bha mi a-muigh ann an àite sònraichte as t-samhradh agus chunnaic mi Slighe Chlann Uisnich **cho soilleir ’s a dh’iarrainn**.

Ann an Litir trì cheud, ochdad ’s a h-aon (381), rinn mi ceangal eadar *Deirdre ’s Clann Uisnich* agus àite taobh Loch Nis, Dùn Dearduil. Ach tha àite eile ann an Alba far a bheil daoine a’ cumail a-mach gun robh Deirdre a’ fuireach. Tha sin air taobh an iar na Gàidhealtachd, ann an Gleann Eite. Chaidh mi ann as t-samhradh airson *Dùn Dearduil Ghleann Eite* fhaicinn dhomh fhìn.

’S e àite brèagha a th’ ann – cnoc feurach os cionn na h-aibhne, air a chuartaich le beanntan àrda. Sheas mi san àite far an robh Deirdre a’ fuireach, a rèir

beul-aithris. Bha “fèidh a’ bhearraidh bhric” a’ ruith seachad orm. Agus bha “bradain a’ bhoinne bhrais” a’ snàmh san abhainn fodham.

Champaich mi aig ceann shìos a’ ghlinne. Dhùisg mi air an oidhche. Cha robh ann mar sholas ach Slighe Chlann Uisnich agus rionnagan eile a’ lìonadh an adhair. Bha e àlainn. Agus bha an t-Slighe a’ dol mar gum biodh sìos an gleann bho Dhùn Dearduil gu muir, mar gum robh i a’ sealltainn an dearbh rathaid a thug Clann Uisnich bho shean eadar Alba is Èirinn. Mairidh an sealladh sin nam chuimhne airson ùine mhòr.

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**Faclan na Litreach:** reul-bhad: *constellation*; an Dà Leth-aon: *Gemini*; eadar-theangachadh: *translation*; Slàbhach: *Slavic*; fionnsgeulan: *legends*; leannan: *sweetheart, lover*; Gleann Eite: *Glen Etive*.

**Abairtean na Litreach:** air mo bheulaibh: *in front of me*; cò air a tha i a-mach: *what it’s on about*; bann àlainn de dhealradh: *a beautiful shining band*; a tha a’ sìneadh tarsainn an adhair: *that stretches across the sky*; tha a’ Bheurla air an t-uabhas iasaid a dhèanamh bhon Laidinn: *the English language has borrowed a tremendous amount from Latin*; air an làimh eile: *on the other hand*; bho fhreumhan Ceilteach: *from Celtic roots*; leatha fhèin: *on her own*; mar a bhiodh dùil: *as would be expected*; co-cheangailte ris an t-slighe naoimh gu ruige: *connected to the sacred route to*; à nead na Laidinn: *from [the] Latin [nest]*; airson na trìuir ghaisgeach a bha nan companaich do Dheirdre: *for the three heroes who were companions to Deirdre*; gur gann gum faic sibh i air Ghàidhealtachd anns an t-Samhradh: *that you’ll hardly see it in the Highlands in summer*; tron Gheamhradh tha i òirdheirc: *through the winter it is glorious*; cnoc feurach os cionn na h-aibhne: *a grassy hill above the river*; air a chuartaich le: *surrounded by*; fèidh a’ bhearraidh bhric: *the deer of the speckled slope*; bradain a’ bhoinne bhrais: *the salmon of the rapid stream*; ceann shìos a’ ghlinne: *the bottom end of the glen*; a’ lìonadh an adhair: *filling the sky*; mar gum biodh sìos an gleann: *as it were down the glen*; bho X gu muir: *from X to the sea*; a’ sealltainn an dearbh rathaid a thug X bho shean: *showing the very route that X took in the old days*; mairidh an sealladh sin nam chuimhne: *that view will remain in my memory*.

**Puing-chànain na Litreach:** **Slighe Chlann Uisnich:** *The Milky Way. The Scottish name (“the path of the children of Uisneach”), connecting the celestial phenomenon to a famous story from oral tradition, is unique. While many cultures recognise the Milky Way as a “path” or “road”, none are equivalent to our own, even in the broader Gaelic world. The Manx name is Raad Mooar Ree Gorree (Rathad Mòr Rìgh Ghoraidh) and the Irish name is Bealach na Bó Finne (Slighe na Bà Finne). Many European cultures have lost their older names for the Milky Way, replacing it with a translation of the Latin. For example, the Hungarian Hadak Útja (“The Road of the Warriors”) has been replaced by Tejút, meaning “Milk Way”. One Scottish dictionary gives Geal-shruth nan Speur (white stream of the heavens). But I hope we shall retain and use the old Gaelic name which has so much cultural significance to us.*

**Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach:** cho soilleir ’s a dh’iarrainn: *as clear as I would wish.*

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