

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIleathain

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.macleam@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 618. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 314 corresponds to Litir 618.

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Sheòras Gunnach – no am Bràisteach Mòr mar a chanadh daoine ris. Bha e na cheann-cinnidh aig na Gunnaich anns a’ chòigeamh linn deug. Agus bha caisteal aige ann an Ceann a’ Bhràist no *Kinbrace* ann an Dìthreach Chat. Thàinig coigreach agus fhuair e cuid na h-oidhche. Thàinig dusan fear òg, àrd, eireachdail.

“An iad seo do mhic?” dh’fhaighnich an coigreach.

“S iad,” fhreagair am Bràisteach Mòr, “agus is beag an nàire a th’ orm gur ann leamsa a tha iad.”

“Faodaidh tu a bhith moiteil asta,” ars an coigreach. “Chan eil mi eòlach air aon duine ann an Gallaibh nach biodh farmadach dhiubh – ach a-mhàin aonan.”

“Agus cò e?” dh’fhaighnich am Bràisteach Mòr.

“Mi fhìn,” fhreagair an srainnsear. Agus leig e a-mach cò e. “Faodaidh tu eòlas a chur orm a-nise,” thuirt e. “Chan eil eagal orm romhad, ged a tha sinn air a bhith nar dubh-nàimhdean do chèile, oir tha do chuid aoigheachd gam dhìon an aghaidh cron. Is mise Cèith Ackergill. Chuirinn mo dhusan mac an aghaidh do chuid fhèin, a Ghunnaich, air latha sam bith a thogradh tu fhèin, air blàr cothromach.”

Cho luath ’s a chuireadh an dùbhlán, ghabhadh ris. Bhiodh trì duine deug an aghaidh trì duine deug, a h-uile duine dhiubh le làn armachd agus air muin eich. Bhiodh iad a’ coinneachadh ann an Gallaibh, ann an àite a bha cho iomallach ’s nach b’ urrainn daoine eile gnothach a ghabhail ris a’ chòmhraig.

Chaidh aontachadh gum biodh na Gunnaich a’ dol a-steach don t-Srath Mhòr ann an Gallaibh. Dh’fhaodadh iad stad aig allt sam bith a bha a’ ruith a-steach do dh’Uisge Gluta, far am faiceadh iad laogh ag ionaltradh air a bhruaichean. Chaidh am Bràisteach Mòr agus a dhusan mac air adhart agus ràinig iad allt faisg air an àite ris an canar An Gluta. A rèir an Urramaich Dòmhnall Saigeach, a sgrìobh an cunntas, ’s e Allt nan Gamhna no “the brook of the stirks” a bh’ air an allt bho sin a-mach, ged nach eil an t-ainm air na mapaichean an-diugh.

Nuair a thàinig an dà bhuidhinn faisg air a chèile, **thug** na Gunnaich **an aire** gun robh Clann Chèith air a bhith ri foill. Bha dusan each aca, ach bha dithis ridire air gach each. Bu choma leis na Gunnaich, ge-tà – cha robh iad a’ dol a theicheadh à blàr a’ bhatail. Thàinig iad **far an each** agus thòisich an t-sabaid gharg. Bha na Gunnaich treun is gaisgeil ach bha cus nàimhdean ann dhaibh. Chaidh an latha le Clann Chèith. Chaidh am Bràisteach Mòr agus seachdnar mhac a mharbhadh. Ghoid na Cèithich a’

bhràiste ainmeil bho chorp a' Bhràistich Mhòir. Agus ghoid iad claidheamh bhuaithe cuideachd.

Thèich an còignear mhac eile aig a' Bhràisteach Mhòr agus chuir iad seachad an oidhche aig Allt Thorcuill, allt eile a' tha sruthadh a-steach do dh'Uisge Gluta aig ceann shuas an t-sratha. Thathar ag ràdh gun d' fhuair an t-allt ainm leis gun do chuir fear de na bràithrean, Torcuill, bannan air na lotan aig càch. Bha na mic claidhte is leònte ach cha robh iad uile-gu-lèir ceannsaichte. Bha fear dhiubh, Eanraig, air leth feargach mu fhoill nan Cèitheach agus gheall e gum faigheadh e dìoghaltas. Chì sinn dè thachair an-ath-sheachdain.

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Faclan na Litreach: Sèdras Gunnach: *George Gunn*; Ceann a' Bhràist: *Kinbrace*; còigreach: *stranger*; cuid na h-oidhche: *a night's accommodation*; dubh-nàimhdean: *deadly enemies*; Cèith Ackergill: *Keith of Ackergill (sometimes Keith is rendered Kàigh in pseudo-Gaelic spelling)*; Uisge Gluta: *The Water of Glutt*; An t-Urramach Dòmhnall Saigheach: *Rev Donald Sage*; garg: *fierce*; Eanraig: *Henry*.

Abairtean na Litreach: mar a chanadh daoine ris: *as people would call him*; dusan fear òg, àrd, eireachdail: *a dozen young, tall, handsome men*; is beag an nàire a th' orm gur ann leamsa a tha iad: *I'm not ashamed [to say] they're mine*; moiteil asta: *proud of them*; chan eil mi eòlach air aon duine ann an Gallaibh nach biodh farmadach dhiubh – ach a-mhàin aonan: *I don't know one man in Caithness who would not be envious of them – except one*; chan eil eagal orm romhad: *I'm not afraid of you*; tha do chuid aoi gheachd gam dhìon an aghaidh cron: *your hospitality protects me from harm*; latha sam bith a thogradh tu fhèin, air blàr cothromach: *on any day of your choosing, on a fair field*; cho luath 's a chuireadh an dùbhlán, ghabhadh ris: *as soon as the challenge was given, it was accepted*; le làn armachd agus air muin eich: *fully armed and on horseback*; cho iomallach 's nach b' urrainn daoine eile gnothach a ghabhail ris a' chòmhraig: *so remote that no others could interfere with the combat*; gun robh Clann Chèith air a bhith ri foill: *that the Keiths had been deceitful*; dithis ridire: *two mounted soldiers*; à blàr a' bhatail: *from the battlefield*; treun is gaisgeil ach bha cus nàimhdean ann dhaibh: *brave and valorous but they had too many enemies*; a ghoid iad claidheamh bhuaithe cuideachd: *they stole a sword from him also*; bannan air na lotan aig càch: *bandages on the others' wounds*; claidhte is leònte ach cha robh iad uile-gu-lèir ceannsaichte: *exhausted and wounded but they were not completely defeated*; gheall e gum faigheadh e dìoghaltas: *he promised to get revenge*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Thàinig iad far an each: *they came off their horses*. In *Litir 66 (25.08.00)* I explained far an eich (“off/from the horse”) – far takes the genitive case, in that case the genitive singular. In the current *Litir*, we have a plural situation. The genitive plural of each is each (the same as the nominative singular) as in *Meall nan Each (the hill of the horses)* and *rèis-each (a horse race, race of horses)*. “Off the horses” would be far nan each. But in the *Litir*, the possessive pronoun (third person plural) takes the place of the article so that “from their horses” is far an each. “Off our horses” would be far ar n-each.

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: thug na Gunnaich an aire: *The Gunns noticed*.

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