

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 620. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 316 corresponds to Litir 620.

Am measg nan sinnsirean agam bha feadhainn a bhuineadh don fhine ris an canar MacNair ann am Beurla. Ach dè a’ Ghàidhlig a th’ air MacNair? Uill, a rèir choltais, Mac ‘an Uidhir. Tha cuid dhen bheachd gu bheil e a’ ciallachadh Mac Iain Uidhir – sin an seann dreach air Mac Iain Odhair no “the son of John of the sallow complexion”. Bha Clann ‘an Uidhir anns an t-sinnsireachd agamsa à Ros an Iar. Rugadh mo shìr-shìr-sheanair, Coinneach Mac ‘an Uidhir, air a’ Chomraich ann an ochd ceud deug ‘s a dhà-dheug (1812).

Chan e Mac ‘an Uidhir a thathar ag ràdh, ge-tà, ri MacNair ann an sgìre Loch Laomainn. Tha dreach eile acasan. Tha iadsan a’ cumail a-mach gu bheil MacNair a’ tighinn bho Mac an Oighre, “the son of the heir”. Agus tha stòiridh aca a dh’innseas mar a thàinig an t-ainm gu bith. ‘S e tìotal an stòiridh *Sliochd an Eich Bhric Nach Robh Riamh Glic*. Thig mi don stòiridh a dh’aithghearr.

Tha an eachdraidh a’ dol air ais don linn an dèidh Cath Phincidh faisg air Dùn Èideann ann an còig ceud deug, ceathrad ‘s a seachd (1547). B’ e sin am blàr mu dheireadh eadar airm Shasainn ‘s na h-Alba mus tàinig an dà rìoghachd còmhla fon aon rìgh ann an sia ceud deug ‘s a trì (1603). Agus **tha ar sùilean air** fine a ghabh pàirt anns a’ bhatail. Chan e Clann an Oighre, ge-tà, ach Clann Phàrlain an Arair. Chaill iadsan mòran dhaoine ann an Cath Phincidh, an ceann-cinnidh Donnchadh nam measg.

Rinn iad nàimhdean gu leòr am measg uaislean Shasainn. Agus, nuair a thàinig Alba is Sasainn na b’ fhaisge air a chèile, bha an Riaghaltas ann an Dùn Èideann gu math trom orra. Bhathar a’ cur as leth Clann Phàrlain gun robh iad ri mèirle, murt is ceannairc. Chaill iad mòran dhen fhearann aca.

A-nise, don stòiridh *Sliochd an Eich Bhric Nach Robh Riamh Glic*. Bha MacPhàrlain an Arair air a bhith pòsta dà thuras agus bha an dàrna bean aige na ban-Shasannach. Dh’fhàg a chiad bhean mac. B’ esan an t-oighre ach bha an **oighreachd** aige gu math beag. Chuir an gille seo roimhe a dhol a Dhùn Èideann airson bruidhinn ris an Rìgh, feuch am fearann a chaill iad fhaighinn air ais.

Ach, òbh òbh, cha robh each aige a bhiodh freagarrach a thoirt a Dhùn Èideann. Cha robh airgead gu leòr aige airson each brèagha a cheannach. Agus dh’fheumadh e each brèagha a bhith aige airson a bhith am measg nan uaislean anns a’ phrìomh bhaile. Cha dèanadh each robach a’ chùis idir.

Nise, bha fios aige gun robh each bòidheach breac aig a leth-bhràthair – an gille aig athair agus an dàrna bean aige, an tè Shasannach. Dh’iarr an t-oighre (sin a’ chiad mhac) air a leth-bhràthair an t-each a thoirt dha air iasad airson a thurais a Dhùn Èideann.

Chuala màthair a’ bhràthar a b’ òige an còmhradh agus chuir i stad air a’ bhargan. Bha i seòlta oir bha i ag iarraidh gum biodh a mac fhèin na oighre. Chì sinn dè am bargan a rinn i mun each bhreac an-ath-sheachdain.

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Faclan na Litreach: Mac □ an Uidhir/Mac an Oighre: *MacNair/Macnair*; Loch Laomainn: *Loch Lomond*; a dh’aithghearr: *soon*; Cath Phincidh: *The Battle of Pinkie*; Clann Phàrlain an Arair: *The MacFarlanes of Arrochar*; pòsta: *married*; òbh òbh: *dear, oh dear*; freagarrach: *suitable*; robach: *ragged*.

Abairtean na Litreach: mo shìr-shìr-sheanair, Coinneach Mac □ an Uidhir: *my great-great-grandfather, Kenneth MacNair*; ’s e tiotal an stòiridh *Sliochd an Eich Bhric Nach Robh Riamh Glic*: *the title of the story is The Descendants of the Speckled Horse who was Never Wise*; am blàr mu dheireadh eadar airm Shasainn □s na h-Alba: *the last battle between the armies of England and Scotland*; mus tàinig an dà rìoghachd còmhla: *before the two kingdoms came together*; bhathar a’ cur as leth Clann Phàrlain gun robh iad ri mèirle, murt is ceannairc: *the MacFarlanes were accused of being involved in robbery, murder and sedition*; chaill iad mòran dhen fhearann aca: *they lost much of their land*; bha an dàrna bean aige na ban-Shasannach: *his second wife was an Englishwoman*; chuir an gille seo roimhe a dhol a Dhùn Èideann: *this lad decided to go to Edinburgh*; feuch am fearann a chaill iad fhaighinn air ais: *to try to get back the land they lost*; dh’fheumadh e each brèagha a bhith aige: *he would need to have a fine-looking horse*; dh’iarr an t-oighre air a leth-bhràthair an t-each a thoirt dha air iasad: *the heir asked his half-brother to give him a loan of the horse*; chuir i stad air a’ bhargan: *she stopped the bargain*; bha i seòlta oir bha i ag iarraidh gum biodh a mac fhèin na oighre: *she was cunning because she was wanting her own son to be the heir*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: bha an oighreachd aige gu math beag: *his inheritance/estate was pretty small. You will probably know the word oighreachd as meaning an “estate” ie a parcel of a land or territory eg Oighreachd a’ Chrùin (The Crown Estate), Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn (The Galson Estate Trust). But its origin lies in a development of oighre (“heir”); in other words, it reflects the fact that clan lands used to pass from one generation to the next as an inheritance. In order to avoid confusion, if you want to talk specifically about an estate, meaning only the land, you might use the word fearann or refer to “fearann na h-oighreachd”. Incidentally, oighre might share a common origin with the English heir, both originating from the Latin heres (“heir”). The related Latin word hereditas (“inheritance”) gives us the English heredity.*

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: **tha ar sùilean air** fine a ghabh pàirt anns a’ bhatail: *We’re considering [lit. our eyes are upon] a clan that took part in the battle.*

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