

# Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

## Ainmean-àite Innis Tìle

*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 635. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 331 corresponds to Litir 635.*

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu eilean beag ann an Innis Tìle air a bheil Bjarnarey mar ainm – an aon rud ri Beàrnaraigh an seo. Tha e a’ ciallachadh “eilean Bhjörn”. ’S e Björn (Björn) ainm duine. Chunnaic mi ainmean-àite gu leòr ann an Innis Tìle a chuir ainmean ann an Alba nam cheann. Gu tric, ’s ann air sàillibh ’s gu bheil ainmean-àite Lochlannach an seo, gu sònraichte ann an Arcaibh, Sealtainn, ceann a tuath na Gàidhealtachd agus air cladaichean is eileanan an taoibh an iar. Ach uaireannan chunnaic mi ainmean a bha a’ cur faclan Gàidhlig no Albais nam cheann.

Anns a’ chiad dol a-mach – am prìomh bhaile, Reykjavik. Tha sin a’ cur nam chuimhne còmhradh a bh’ agam le boireannach ann an Sealan Nuadh. “My father taught me some Gaelic,” ars ise. “Oh, and what was that?” dh’fhaighnich mi, agus an t-eagal orm gum biodh e mì-mhodhail. “**Lang may yer lum reek!**” ars ise le gaire. “O, uill,” thuirt mise, “tha sin Albannach, ceart gu leòr, ach chan e Gàidhlig a th’ ann!”

Co-dhiù, tha sinn uile eòlach air an fhacal *reek*. Agus ’s e sin a tha *Reykja-vík* a’ ciallachadh – “reeky bay” no “bàgh na toite”. Tha grunn àiteachan ann an Innis Tìle le *reykja-* aig toiseach an ainm. Chan eil sin na iongnadh. Tha grunn àiteachan far a bheil toit ag èirigh às an talamh an sin.

Tha mi a’ dol a dh’innse dhuibh cuid de dh’ainmean-àite Innis Tìle. Agus cuiridh mi geall gun tuig sibh feadhainn aca sa mhionaid. An toiseach *Barnafoss*. Barnafoss. Tha sin a’ ciallachadh fors no eas na cloinne, *the waterfall of the bairns*. Barnafoss. Thathar ag ràdh gun do thuit dithis bhalach dom bàs anns an eas sin.

Seo fear eile – *Bláfell*. Bláfell. Smaoinichibh air Blàbheinn anns an Eilean Sgitheanach a tha leth-Lochlannach is leth-Ghàidhlig. Beinn ghorm, *blue mountain*, Bláfell. Agus *Breiðavík*. Breiðavík. Mar Brèibhig ann an Leòdhas. Bagh leathann, *broad bay*, Breiðavík. Agus Djúpavík. ’S e sin an t-ainm tùsail air Diabaig ann an Toirbheartan. Bàgh domhainn, *deep bay*, Djúpavík.

Agus dè a’ Ghàidhlig air *pike*? Tha mi a’ ciallachadh an èisg. *Geadas*. Tha trì àiteachan ann an Alba air a bheil Loch no Lochan nan Geadas. Thàinig am facal bhon t-Seann Lochlannais *gedda*. Agus tha dà loch ann an Innis Tìle air a bheil *Gedduvatn* – loch nan geadas – ged a tha na Tilich ag ràdh gun robh am facal cuideachd a’ ciallachadh seòrsaichean eile de dh’èisg, leithid bric, anns an t-seann aimsir.

Agus Héraðsvötn. Seo fiosrachadh a fhuair mi ann am Beurla: “Héraðsvötn – ‘district rivers’ from *hérað* – district and *vatn* – water/lake, in this instance meaning river”. Tha cuid de dh’eòlaichean dhen bheachd gun tàinig Hearadh – Na Hearadh –

bho *hérað*. Tha cuid eile ag ràdh gur ann bho fhacal a' ciallachadh “talamh àrd” a thàinig e.

Mu dheireadh, seo fear a tha furasta – *Rif*. Tha àite ann an Leòdhas air a bheil Riof. Thàinig am facal a-steach don Ghàidhlig (tha e ann am faclair Dwelly). Agus tha e a' ciallachadh, ann am Beurla, *reef*. Chan ann tric a gheibhear fear a ghabhas tuigsinn gu furasta mar sin eadar na trì cànanan.

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**Faclan na Litreach:** Innis Tìle: *Iceland*; Beàrnaraigh: *Bernera(y)*; Arcaibh: *Orkney*; Sealtainn: *Shetland*; fors, eas: *waterfall*; Brèibhig: *Brevig*; Toirbheartan: *Torridon*; geadas: *pike (fish)*; Na Hearadh: *Harris*.

**Abairtean na Litreach:** 's ann air sàillibh 's gu bheil ainmean-àite Lochlannach an seo: *it's because there are Norse place-names here*; cladaichean is eileanan an taobh an iar: *the shores and islands of the west*; tha sin a' cur nam chuimhne còmhradh a bh' agam le boireannach ann an Sealan Nuadh: *that reminds me of a conversation I had with a woman in New Zealand*; agus an t-eagal orm gum biodh e mì-mhodhail: *fearing that it would be rude*; chan eil sin na iongnadh: *that's not a surprise*; far a bheil toit ag èirigh às an talamh: *where smoke comes out of the ground*; cuiridh mi geall gun tuig sibh feadhainn aca sa mhionaid: *I bet you'll immediately understand some of them*; leth-Lochlannach is leth-Ghàidhlig: *half Norse and half Gaelic*; an t-ainm tùsail air Diabaig: *the original name for Diabaig*; ged a tha na Tilich ag ràdh: *although the Icelanders say*; seòrsaichean eile de dh'èisg, leithid bric: *other types of fish, such as trout*; anns an t-seann aimsir: *in olden times*; tha cuid de dh'èolaichean dhen bheachd: *some experts are of the opinion*; chan ann tric a gheibhear fear a ghabhas tuigsinn gu furasta mar sin eadar na trì cànanan: *it's not often that one is obtained that can be understood easily like that between the three languages*.

**Puing-chànain na Litreach:** *If you're a teacher in the northern or western parts of the Gàidhealtachd, particularly Skye or the Western Isles, I can recommend a holiday or study trip to Iceland, because you will see place-names that immediately remind you of home. It will help you interpret your own landscape. Not only should every child in the Gàidhealtachd be getting Gaelic as part of their education (without it you can't read the map of Scotland), they should also be exposed to the Norse heritage of the country, which is important in understanding the environment. They could do worse than learn some basic Icelandic which is as close you can get in a living tongue to the Old Norse once spoken in Scotland.*

**Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach:** *Lang may yer lum reek: there is a reason for including a Scots saying this week – there is a direct Gaelic equivalent to this one – Guma fada beò thu agus ceò às do shimileir (long may you live with smoke coming from your chimney). Or, in the plural/formal, guma fada beò sibh agus ceò às ur simileir.*

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