

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Am Brisgean (3)

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. This is Litir 661. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 357 corresponds to Litir 661.

Brisgean beannaichte an Earraich, seachdamh aran a’ Ghàidheil. Tha mi air a bhith a’ bruidhinn mun bhrisgean, lus a bhiodh na seann Ghàidheil ag ithe agus, uaireannan, a’ fàs, co-dhiù anns na h-eileanan machaireach. Thug mi an seanfhacal sin dhuibh an t-seachdain sa chaidh. Agus seo fear eile – Am brisgean biadhach, an seachdamh biadh as ciataiche a thig tro thalamh. Uill, ’s e a’ cheist a th’ agam – mas e am brisgean an seachdamh aran, dè na sia eile a th’ ann?

Anns an leabhar *The Gaelic Otherworld*, cruinneachadh de bheul-aithris a rinn Iain MacGhriogair Caimbeul, tha an Deasaiche, Ragnall MacIlleDhuibh, a’ toirt sùil air an dearbh cheist sin. Seo an co-dhùnadh aige: aran-coirce is aran-eòrna a bha le chèile air an ithe gu cumanta, agus aran-seagail is aran-peasrach nach robh cho cumanta. Sin ceithir. Dè na dhà eile a bhiodh ann? Uill ’s dòcha dà aran a bhiodh na h-uaislean ag ithe – aran cruithneachd (an seòrsa as cumanta againne) agus aran-milis – seòrsa a bhiodh na ceannaichean-siubhail a’ toirt leotha gu fèilltean-reic. Agus an seachdamh aran – aran-brisgein.

Ann an *Carmina Gadelica*, thathar ag innse dhuinn gun robh na daoine dharribh a’ bleith freumh tioram a’ bhrisgein airson min a dhèanamh. Dhèanadh iad aran no brochan leatha. A bharrachd air sin, bhiodh daoine ag ithe nam freumhan amh no gan goil no gan ròstadh.

Bha am brisgean fìor chudromach aig àm gorta agus chùim cuid ann an Uibhist iad fhèin beò air brisgean is maorach às dèidh gun deach am fuadachadh bho na dachannan aca. Ann an Tìrìodh bha droch bhliadhna ann, goirid às dèidh Blàr Chùil Lodair, air an robh *Bliadhna nam Brisgeanan*. Leis gun robh cogadh catharra air a bhith ann, cha robh am fearann air obrachadh mar bu chòir. As t-Earrach bha am brisgean pailt far am bu chòir bàrr eile a bhith. Ach rinn na daoine biadh às.

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh an t-seachdain sa chaidh gu robh mi eòlach air dìreach aon ainm-àite leis an fhacal brisgean ann. Uill, lorg mi aithris air fear eile – *Lag nam Brisgean* faisg air Stafainn anns an Eilean Sgitheanach. A-rithist, chan fhaigh mi lorg air air na mapaichean, ach ’s dòcha gum bi fios aig feadhainn **air an Taobh Sear** ca’ bheil e.

An robh na seann Ghàidheil a’ cur a’ bhrisgein gu feum sam bith eile, ach mar bhìadh? Uill, bha. Uaireannan, bhiodh daoine a’ cur nan duilleagan **am broinn am bròg** mar linig, airson **fàileadh an cas** a laigeachadh. Bhite a’ cleachdadh nan duilleagan cuideachd airson clò a dhathadh. Gheibhear dath làidir buidhe bhuapa.

Ann am mòran dùthchannan, bha am brisgean air a chleachdadh mar leigheas airson iomadach rud, nam measg an t-orc, fiabhras, losgadh-bràghad agus comharran na brice air a' chraiceann. Agus, mu dheireadh, tha Ragnall MacIlleDhuibh ag aithris gun cuala e bhon Àrd-ollamh Dòmhnall Meek gum fac' esan daoine ann an Tiriodh, a' fùdarachadh a' bhrisgein. An uair sin, chuir iad am fùdar do na pìoban aca, agus ghabh iad ceò a' bhrisgein, mar a bhios daoine a' gabhail ceò tombaca!

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Faclan na Litreach: brisgean: *silverweed*; Ragnall MacIlleDhuibh: *Ronald Black*; amh: *raw*; Barraigh: *Barra*; maorach: *shellfish*; Tiriodh: *Tiree*; Blàr Chùil Lodair: *The Battle of Culloden*; leigheas: *cure*; a' fùdarachadh: *making a powder*.

Abairtean na Litreach: brisgean beannaichte an Earraich, seachdamh aran a' Ghàidheil: *blessed silverweed of the spring, the seventh bread of the Gael*; co-dhiù anns na h-eileanan machaireach: *at least in the islands where machair abounds*; am brisgean biadhtach, an seachdamh biadh as ciataiche a thig tro thalamh: *the food-giving silverweed, the seventh nicest food that comes through the ground*; aran-coirce is aran-eòrna a bha le chèile air an ithe gu cumanta: *oat-bread and barley-bread that were both commonly eaten*; aran-seagail is aran-peasrach: *rye bread and pease bread*; a bhiodh na h-uaislean ag ithe: *that the gentry would eat*; aran cruithneachd agus aran-milis: *wheaten bread and ginger bread*; a bhiodh na ceannaichean-siubhail a' toirt gu fèilltean-reic: *that the travelling salesmen would take to festivals*; a' bleith freumh tioram a' bhrisgein airson min a dhèanamh: *grinding the dry root of the silverweed to make meal*; gan goil no gan ròstadh: *boiling them or roasting them*; aig àm gorta: *at a time of famine*; às dèidh gun deach am fuadachadh: *after they had been evicted*; cogadh catharra: *a civil war*; cha robh am fearann air obrachadh: *the land wasn't worked*; Stafainn anns an Eilean Sgitheanach: *Staffin on the Isle of Skye*; bhìte a' cleachdadh nan duilleagan airson clò a dhathadh: *the leaves would be used to dye cloth*; an t-orc, fiabhras, losgadh-bràghad agus comharran na brice: *cramp, fever, indigestion and the marks left by smallpox*; ghabh iad ceò: *they smoked*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: bhiodh daoine a' cur nan duilleagan **am broinn am bròg** mar lìnig, airson **fàileadh an cas** a laigeachadh: *people would put the leaves inside their shoes as a lining, to diminish the smell of their feet*. I have taken the conservative grammatical view here and given the genitive plural forms of bròg and cas as equivalent to their nominative singular forms. This rule usually only applies today to masculine nouns that pluralise in their nominative forms by slenderisation (eg bodach, balach); many people would say am broinn am brògan and fàileadh an casan. But some would retain the older inflection, even for these feminine words which pluralise with addition of a terminal -an.

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: air an Taobh Sear: *in Trotternish*. It might sound strange when it means 'on the east side' but it is widely used for referring to the peninsula in the north-east of Skye.

Tha "Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh" air a maoineachadh le MG ALBA