

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

John Anderson, caraid Bhurns

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 797. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 493 corresponds to Litir 797.

*John Anderson, my jo, John,
When we were first acquaint;
Your locks were like the raven,
Your bonnie brow was brent;
But now your brow is beld, John,
Your locks are like the snaw;
But blessings on your frosty pow,
John Anderson, my jo.*

Carson a tha mi a’ tòiseachadh na Litreach an t-seachdain seo le bàrdachd ann an Albais? Uill, tha deagh adhbhar agam. Bidh fios agaibh cò sgrìobh an rann sin. Raibeart Burns,

Bha John Anderson na charaid aig Burns. Rugadh iad anns an aon siorrachd – Siorrachd Adhair – anns an aon bhliadhna – seachd ceud deug, caogad ’s a naoi (1759). Bha iad nan caraidean fad am beatha. Uill, fad beatha Bhurns co-dhiù. Chaochail am bàrd ann an seachd ceud deug, naochad ’s a sia (1796). **Dh’eug** John Anderson ann an ochd ceud deug, trithead ’s a dhà (1832).

Agus ’s e bàs Anderson a thug gu m’ aire e. Bha mi a’ coiseachd anns an t-seann chladh ann an Cille Chuimein. ’S e àite brèagha a th’ ann le seallaidhean dhen mhonadh nach eil fad às.

Thàinig mi tarsainn air seann chlach-uaighe le còinneach is crotal a’ fàs oirre. Ri a taobh bha sanas beag air an robh na faclan ‘*John Anderson, my Jo. Friend of Robert Burns, character of one of the most touching of Burns’ songs*’. Choimhead mi gu dlùth air a’ chloich fhèin. Tha ‘*Sacred to the Memory of John Anderson*,’ snàighte oirre, ‘*who died at Invergarry on the 4 May 1832.*’

’S e saor a bh’ ann an John agus, a rèir aithris, ’s e a rinn a’ chiste-laighe anns an deach Raibeart Burns don uaigh. Tha e coltach gun robh a nighean a’ fuireach ann an Inbhir Garadh. Chaochail ise dìreach sia mìosan **an dèidh a h-athar**, agus tha i air a h-ainmeachadh air an aon chloich-uaighe.

A bharrachd oirrese, tha a’ chlach a’ cuimhneachadh James Grearson, a chailleadh ann an tubaist-mhara faisg air Guireag seachd bliadhna ro bhàs John. B’ esan mac-cèile John.

Tha cuid de sgoilearan a’ cumail a-mach nach e an dàn dà-rannach a th’ againn an-diugh a’ chiad dreach a bh’ air. Tha e coltach gun do sgrìobh Burns òran car mì-mhodhail anns an robh sia rannan, mu dheidhinn mar a bha John a’ fàs eu-comasach

anns an leabaidh, agus a bhean mì-thoilichte leis. Ach 's e na th' againn an-diugh ach dàn brèagha mu ghaol ann an seann aois.

*John Anderson my jo, John,
We clamb the hill the gither;
And mony a canty day, John,
We've had wi' ane anither:
Now we maun totter down, John,
And hand in hand we'll go;
And sleep the gither at the foot,
John Anderson, my jo.*

Agus sin far an tàinig sgeul John Anderson gu crìch, na chadal aig bonn nam beann, ann an seann chladh brèagha air a' Ghàidhealtachd. Ach chan e John an aon duine, le ceangal do bhàrdachd, a tha aig fois ann an Cladh Chille Chuimein. Tha bàrd Gàidhlig air a thiodhlacadh ann cuideachd. Innsidh mi dhuibh mu dheidhinn-san anns an ath Litir.

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Faclan na Litreach: ainmeil: *famous*; sanas: *sign, notice*; snàighte: *carved*; Inbhir Garadh: *Invergarry*; mac-cèile: *son-in-law*.

Abairtean na Litreach: Rugadh iad anns an aon siorrachd: *they were born in the same county*; bha iad nan caraidean fad am beatha: *they were lifelong friends*; 's e bàs X a thug gu m' aire e: *it is X's death that brought him to my attention*; anns an t-seann chladh ann an Cille Chuimein: *in the old cemetery at Fort Augustus*; le seallaidhean dhen mhonadh nach eil fad às: *with views of the hills that aren't far away*; thàinig mi tarsainn air: *I came across*; seann chlach-uaighe le còinneach is crotal a' fàs oirre: *an old gravestone with moss and lichen growing on it*; 's e a rinn a' chiste-laighe anns an deach Raibeart Burns don uaigh: *it was himself that made the coffin in which Robert Burns went to the grave*; tha i air a h-ainmeachadh air an aon chloich-uaighe: *she is named on the same gravestone*; a chailleadh ann an tubaist-mhara faisg air Guireag: *who was lost in a maritime accident near Gourock*; nach e an dàn dà-rannach a th' againn an-diugh a' chiad dreach a bh' air: *that the two-verse poem we have today is not its original format*; a' fàs eu-comasach anns an leabaidh: *becoming incapable in [the] bed*; dàn brèagha mu ghaol ann an seann aois: *a beautiful poem about love in old age*; far an tàinig sgeul X gu crìch: *where X's story came to an end*; na chadal aig bonn nam beann: *asleep at the base of the mountains*; aig fois: *at peace*; a bha ainmeil ri a linn: *who was famous in his day*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Chaochail ise dìreach sia mìosan **an dèidh a h-athar**: *she died just six months after her father*. An dèidh is a compound preposition, made up of two elements, so it takes the genitive case. Thus athair (nominative singular form) becomes athar (genitive singular form which is, slightly unusually, broadened). And a h- is added as the third person singular feminine possessive pronoun.

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: Dh'eug John Anderson: *John Anderson died*.

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