

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

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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 805. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 501 corresponds to Litir 805.

Càite a bheil **an taigh-staile uisge-bheatha** as fhaide tuath ann an Alba? An t-Eilean Sgitheanach, 's dòcha, far a bheil Talisker air a dhèanamh? No Leòdhas, far a bheil an Abhainn Dearg? Tha sin nas fhaide tuath na Talisker. Agus, gu dearbh, 's e an Abhainn Dearg an taigh-staile as fhaide siar ann an Alba. Ach chan e am fear as fhaide tuath.

Dè mu dheidhinn Inbhir Ùige ann an Gallaibh, far a bheilear a' dèanamh Old Pulteney? Tha sin fada tuath, ach feumar cuimhneachadh gu bheil eileanan gu tuath air sin far a bheilear a' dèanamh uisge-bheatha. Tha mi a' ciallachadh Arcaibh. Tha cuid gu math dèidheil air uisge-beatha Highland Park a th' air a dhèanamh ann am Baile na h-Eaglaise, no Kirkwall. 'S e, fhad 's as aithne dhomh, an taigh-staile as fhaide tuath ann an Alba.

Chaidh ainmeachadh 'Highland Park' oir 's e 'High Park' a bh' air an àite far a bheil an taigh-staile bho shean. Agus tha e co-cheangailte ri fear Magnus Eunson no 'Mansie'. Thathar ag ràdh gun robh Mansie a' dèanamh uisge-bheatha gu mì-laghail air an làraich sin aig deireadh an ochdamh linn deug.

Agus cha robh e leis fhèin. Bha feadhainn eile ann an Arcaibh an sàs ann an dèanamh agus cùl-mhùtaireachd uisge-bheatha. Agus bha iad nan uaislean aig an aon àm!

Bha Mansie na bhùidsear agus na oifigear eaglais tron latha agus na chùl-mhùtaire air an oidhche. Bha fios aig na h-oifigearan cusbainn gun robh e an sàs ann an gnothaichean mì-laghail. Bha fathann ann gun robh e a' falach baraillean uisge-bheatha mì-laghail anns an eaglais far an robh e ag obair. Agus bha!

Aon turas bha am ministear a' searmonachadh. B' e **a cheann-teagaisg** 'olc na dibhe'. Fhad 's a bha e sa chùbaid, bha sia baraillean de dheoch làidir fo a chasan!

Latha a bha seo, roghnaich na h-oifigearan cusbainn reud a dhèanamh air an eaglais, feuch an t-uisge-beatha a lorg. Ach fhuair Mansie fios gu robh iad a' tighinn. Ghluais e na baraillean don taigh aige agus chuir e ann am meadhan seòmar falamh iad. Chuir e ceann ciste-laighe air am muin, agus siota bàn glan thairis air a h-uile nì. Bha e a' coimhead coltach ri eileatrom, le corp anns a' chiste.

Nuair a bha na h-oifigearan air an rathad chun an taigh' aige, chruinnich Mansie grunnan còmhla anns an t-seòmar. Shleuchdaich iad mar gun robh iad ag adhradh. Bha Bìoball mòr aig Mansie, agus bha leabhar-ùrnaigh aig a h-uile duine eile. Nuair a chuala iad na h-oifigearan a' tighinn a-steach don taigh, thòisich iad air caoineadh.

Thàinig a' chiad oifigear a-steach. Nuair a chunnaic e na bha a' dol, thug e a bhonaid dheth. Choimhead Mansie suas bhon Bhìoball aige. Bha coltas bròin air. Ann an cagair, thuir e aon rud sìmplidh ris an oifigear – ‘a’ Bhreac’. ’S e galair uabhasach a bha sin, agus theich na h-oifigearan cusbainn gun rannsachadh sam bith a dhèanamh. Cha deach iad faisg air Mansie airson greis an dèidh sin!

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Faclan na Litreach: Inbhir Ùige: *Wick*; Gallaibh: *Caithness*; gu mì-laghail: *unlawfully*; a' searmonachadh: *preaching*; eileatrom: *funeral bier*; a' Bhreac: *smallpox*.

Abairtean na Litreach: as fhaide tuath: *most northerly*; 's e X an taigh-staile as fhaide siar: *X is the most westerly distillery*; feumar cuimhneachadh gu bheil eileanan gu tuath air sin: *it must be remembered that there are islands north of that*; fhad 's as aithne dhomh: *as far as I know*; cha robh e leis fhèin: *he wasn't alone*; dèanamh agus cùl-mhùtaireachd uisge-bheatha: *the making and smuggling of whisky*; bha iad nan uaislean aig an aon àm: *they were gentlemen at the same time*; bha X na bhùidsear agus na oifigear eaglais tron latha: *X was a butcher and a church officer through the day*; bha fathann ann gun robh e a' falach baraillean anns an eaglais: *there was a rumour that he was hiding barrels in the church*; fhad 's a bha e sa chùbaid: *while he was in the pulpit*; bha sia baraillean de dheoch làidir fo a chasan: *there were six barrels of alcoholic drink below his feet*; roghnaich na h-oifigearan cusbainn reud a dhèanamh: *the excise officers chose to raid*; ann am meadhan seòmar falamh: *in the middle of an empty room*; chuir e ceann ciste-laighe air am muin: *he put a coffin lid on top of them*; shleuchdaich iad mar gun robh iad ag adhradh: *they knelt as if they were worshipping*; thòisich iad air caoineadh: *they started to keen*; thug e a bhonaid dheth: *he took his hat off*; coltas bròin: *a look of sadness*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: taigh-staile uisge-bheatha: *[a] whisky distillery*. *Whisky is uisge-beatha; there is no lenition of beatha following the masculine noun uisge. And, anyway, beatha in a compound sometimes doesn't lenite in the nominative case following an initial feminine noun eg eachdraidh-beatha 'biography' rather than eachdraidh-bheatha. But it is correct to lenite beatha in inflected forms eg the dative anns an uisge-bheatha 'in the whisky' and the genitive prìs an uisge-bheatha 'the price of the whisky'. In modern Gaelic, we tend not to inflect the adjective when it qualifies a masculine noun in the indefinite genitive singular, so one would expect botal uisge-beatha 'a bottle of whisky'. But many people would still be more comfortable with the traditional inflection (for this very traditional Gaelic product) ie botal uisge-bheatha. That's the model I've stuck with in this Litir.*

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: B' e a cheann-teagaisg 'olc na dibhe': *the subject of his sermon was 'the evil of drink'*.

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