

# Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

## le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

### An Teine Mòr (1)

*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.macleam@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk). This is Litir 825. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 521 corresponds to Litir 825.*

O chionn ghoirid, bha mi a’ leughadh seann phàipear leis an Urramach Iain MacRuairidh. Chaidh a libhrigeadh do Chomunn Gàidhlig Inbhir Nis ann an ochd ceud deug, naochad ’s a ceithir (1894). Tha e a’ dèiligeadh ri beul-aithris mu rudeigin a thachras gu nàdarrach, no anns an robh daoine a’ creidsinn co-dhiù. Mus inns mi dhuibh mun phàipear aige, bu math leam rudeigin a thuir Mgr MacRuairidh aig deireadh òraid aithris dhuibh. Tha e a’ buntainn ris an fheallsanachd a th’ air cùl mòran dhen obair a bhios mi fhìn a’ dèanamh.

‘Is fheàrrde gach neach leis an àill fiosrachadh fhaotainn,’ thuir Mgr MacRuairidh, ‘fios a bhith aige air na beachdan a bha cumanta am measg an t-sluaigh san àm a dh’fhalbh. Is e seo aon de na dòighean air am faighear a-mach seann eachdraidh nan Gàidheal. Am fear a tha aineolach air na seann naidheachdan, air na seann òrain, agus air na seanfhacail, tha e **ann an tomhas mòr** aineolach air seann eachdraidh a dhùthcha. An Gàidheal a tha aineolach air seann eachdraidh a dhùthcha is gann gun urrainnear “fìor Ghàidheal” a ràdh ris.’

’S dòcha gu bheil ‘fìor Ghàidheal’ no dhà a tha ag èisteachd an-dràsta nach aontaicheadh ris an Urramach MacRuairidh! Ach saoilidh mi fhìn bheil tomhas mòr dhen fhìrinn aige – gun robh e fìor an uair sin is gu bheil e fìor fhathast. Chan fheum beul-aithris a bhith ‘ceart’. Ma tha i Gàidhealach, nì sin an gnothach dhuinn!

Bha am ministear a’ toirt òraid mu dheidhinn rud nàdarrach. Uill, nàdarrach no os-nàdarrach, chan eil mi cinnteach. Ann an Uibhist, canaidh daoine ‘An Teine Mòr’ ris. Anns an Eilean Sgitheanach, ’s e ‘An Teine Biorach’ a chanar ris. Agus tha ainmean eile air a bharrachd – sionnachan, teine sionnachain, coinneal bianain, srada bianain, spiorad lodain agus teine dreallsach. Abair sreath de dh’ainmean airson rud a tha cuid a’ cumail a-mach nach eil ann ach sa mhac-meanmna!

Ann am Beurla, canaidh daoine *will-o’-the-wisp* ris. No *jack o’ lantern*. ’S e a th’ ann ach solas lag coltach ri teine a chithear air oidhche dhorch. Gu tric, bithear – no bhathar – ga fhaicinn os cionn bhoglaichean. Tha cuid a’ cumail a-mach gur e as coireach gasaichean mar meatan a th’ air an dèanamh anns na boglaichean agus a tha so-loisgeach. Ma tha lasair de sheòrsa sam bith timcheall, bidh an gas a’ losgadh.

Agus ’s dòcha gur e sin as coireach gum biodh daoine ga fhaicinn anns an t-seann aimsir. Nam biodh solas sam bith aca, agus iad a-muigh air an oidhche, ’s e lasair a bhiodh ann – coinneal no lòchran. No uaireannan leus (no **coinneal-ghiuthais**). Nam biodh gas so-loisgeach ann, bhiodh e a’ losgadh. Agus chitheadh na daoine sin oir bha na solais aca cho lag. Ach an-diugh, le tordsaichean dealain

cumhachdach, cha bhi na gasaichean a' losgadh, agus chan fhaiceamaid an teine mòr co-dhiù.

Sin gu leòr dhen t-saidheans. A-nise am beul-aithris. 'S aithne dhomh dà sgeulachd a tha a' mìneachadh mar a thàinig an teine mòr gu bith. Bha tè dhiubh aithnichte ann an diofar àiteachan, leithid Geàrrloch. Bha i air a h-aithris ann an Èirinn cuideachd. Tha an tèile à Uibhist agus nì mi aithris air an tè sin an-ath-sheachdain. Chun an uair sin, mar sin leibh.

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**Faclan na Litreach:** naidheachdan: *anecdotes, stories*; os-nàdarrach: *supernatural*; meatan: *methane*; so-loisgeach: *inflammable*; an tèile [an tè eile]: *the other one [fem]*.

**Abairtean na Litreach:** leis an Urramach Iain MacRuairidh: *by the Rev. John MacRury*; no anns an robh daoine a' creidsinn co-dhiù: *in which people believed, at least*; a' buntainn ris an fheallsanachd a th' air cùl mòran dhen obair: *it is relevant to the philosophy that is behind much of the work*; is fheàrrde gach neach leis an àill fiosrachadh fhaotainn: *each person who desires to get information is better off*; fios a bhith aige air na beachdan a bha cumanta am measg an t-sluaigh san àm a dh'fhalbh: *to know the opinions that were common among the people in past time[s]*; aon de na dòighean air am faighear a-mach seann eachdraidh nan Gàidheal: *one of the ways to find out the old history of the Gaels*; is gann gun urrainnear X a ràdh ris: *he can hardly be called X*; nì sin an gnothach dhuinn: *that will suffice for us*; a chithear air oidhche dhorch: *that is seen on a dark night*; bithear – no bhathar – ga fhaicinn os cionn bhoglaichean: *it is – or was – seen above bogs*; ma tha lasair de sheòrsa sam bith timcheall: *if any form of flame is present*; 's e lasair a bhiodh ann – coinneal no lòchran: *it would be a flame – a candle or lantern*; chitheadh na daoine sin oir bha na solais aca cho lag: *the people would see that because their lights were so weak*; le tordsaichean dealain cumhachdach...chan fhaiceamaid an teine mòr: *with powerful electric torches...we wouldn't see the will-o'-the-wisp*; gu leòr dhen t-saidheans: *enough of the science*; aithnichte ann an diofar àiteachan: *known in different places*.

**Puing-chànain na Litreach: coinneal-ghiuthais:** *pine candle. Are you familiar with the coinneal-ghiuthais (sometimes called leus)? In many parts of the Gàidhealtachd, resinous pine was dug up from peat bogs; once dried, it made a good torch and could be used outside. In places where pines (craobhan-giuthais) grew, people would sometimes cut pine candles from the heartwood of the living tree – I was sent a picture recently of such a tree in Lochaber. This was the norm in Glenmoriston, where the pine forest was extensive, leading to the expression 'Gleann Moireastan, far nach ith na coin na coinnlean' (Glenmoriston, where the dogs don't eat the candles). Dogs, of course, would eat candles made from animal fat but not those made of pine wood!*

**Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach:** tha e ann an tomhas mòr aineolach: *he is, to a great degree, ignorant.*

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