

# Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

## Alasdair Mòr Mac an Rìgh

*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](mailto:rodny.maclea@bbc.co.uk). This is Litir 898. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 594 corresponds to Litir 898.*

Tha ceathramh de sheann bhàrdachd Ghàidhlig ann an Leabhar Deathain Lios Mòr – làmh-sgrìobhainn a bhuineas don t-siathamh linn deug. Nam biodh e sgrìobhte anns an latha an-diugh, bhiodh e a’ dol rudeigin mar seo:

*Ceathrar a bha aig uaigh an fhir  
Tuam Alaxandair Uaibhrigh  
Thuirt iad briathran gun bhreug  
Os cionn an fhlaith on Fhionn Ghrèig*

Cò mu dheidhinn a tha an ceathramh? Flath air choreigin. Bha ceathrar cruinn còmhla aig uaigh no tuam aige. Bha iad ‘os cionn an fhlaith on Fhionn Ghrèig’. Tha flath a’ ciallachadh ‘prionnsa’ no ‘ceannaire’. ’S e seann fhacal a th’ ann agus mar as trice cluinnear e a-mhàin ann an seann sgeulachdan. Agus bha e às an Fhionn Ghrèig – *fair no beautiful Greece*. B’ e ainm Gàidhlig an duine, aig an àm sin, *Alaxandair Uaibhreach* no, le dreach ginideach air, *Alaxandair Uaibhrigh*.

Tha mi a’ dèanamh dheth a-nise gu bheil fios agaibh cò th’ anns an fhlaith sin – *Alexander the Great*, Rìgh Greugach Rìoghachd Mhacedon. Gu tric, bithear a’ gabhail ‘Alasdair’ air *Alexander* ann an Gàidhlig. Mar sin, ’s e ‘Alasdair Uaibhreach’ a chanas mi ris. Tha *uaibhreach* a’ ciallachadh ‘*proud*’ no ‘*haughty*’.

’S e rud follaiseach anns a’ Ghrèig gu bheil fionn-chlach no clach bhàn cho bitheanta ann. ’S iad dathan na Grèige dhòmhsa – geal agus gorm. Geal na creige, agus gorm an adhair ’s na mara. Tha bratach na dùthcha mar sin gu math freagarrach.

Co-dhiù, air ais do dh’Alasdair Uaibhreach. Tha mi a’ beachdachadh air an t-seann rìgh Ghreugach sin air sàillibh ’s gun robh mi a’ leughadh alt a sgrìobh an sgoilear Gàidhlig – agus ‘Alasdair’ air fhèin – Alasdair MacIlleBhàin. Tha e mu dheidhinn Bhàideanach, an sgìre dhan do bhuin e. Agus tha e mu dheidhinn Alasdair eile – treas fear – Alasdair Mòr Mac an Rìgh, a bhuineadh do Bhàideanach.

Seo na sgrìobh an t-ùghdar ann am Beurla: [*Alasdair*] gets confused with his famous namesake of Macedon, also Alasdair Mòr, but the more accurate of tradition-mongers differentiate them easily, for they call Alexander the Great ‘Alasdair Uaibhreach Mac Rìgh Philip.’ Chan eil fhios agam a bheil mi nam ‘tradition monger’ ach ’s e Alasdair Uaibhreach a ghabhas mi fhìn air an Rìgh Ghreugach, seach Alasdair Mòr. ’S iomadh croitear Gàidhealach air an robh, no air a bheil, Alasdair Mòr mar ainm!

'S e an ath cheist, ma-thà, cò bh' ann an Alasdair Mòr Mac an Rìgh? Uill, 's e Albannach a bh' ann, agus tha e aithnichte ann am Beurla mar '*The Wolf of Badenoch*'. B' e mac Rìgh Raibeirt II a bh' ann agus bha urram air a bhuileachadh air le athair no tro phòsadh – mar Thighearna Bhàideanach, Iarla Bhuchain agus Iarla Rois. **B' e am fear a bu chumhachdaiche** ann an ceann a tuath na h-Alba ri a linn. 'S e duine foghainteach a bh' ann. Ach bha e borb cuideachd.

Chaidh Alasdair Mòr agus Easbaig Mhoireibh **a-mach air a chèile gu dubh** mu fhearann is gnothaichean eile. Aig a' cheann thall, ghabh Alasdair grèim air fearann an Easbaig agus air sgàth sin bha e air ascaointeachadh bhon Eaglais. An uair sin, loisg Alasdair bailtean Farrais is Eilginn – agus Cathair-eaglais Eilginn – gu làr. Aig a' cheann thall, an robh e cho diofraichte sin bho Alasdair Uaibhreach?

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**Faclan na Litreach:** ginideach: *genitive*; ùghdar: *author*; seach: *rather than, instead of*; croitear: *crofter*; Easbaig Mhoireibh: *the Bishop of Moray*; air ascaointeachadh: *excommunicated*; cathair-eaglais: *cathedral*.

**Abairtean na Litreach:** Leabhar Deathain Lios Mòr: *The Book of the Dean of Lismore*; nam biodh e sgrìobhte anns an latha an-diugh: *if it were written today*; bhiodh e a' dol rudeigin mar seo: *it would go something like this*; ceathrar a bha aig uaigh an fhir: *four people that were at the grave of the man*; briathran gun bhreug: *words without a lie*; flath air choreigin: *some prince or other*; mar as trice cluinnear e a-mhàin ann an seann sgeulachdan: *most often it is heard only in old stories*; gu bheil fionn-chlach cho bitheanta ann: *that white stone is so common there*; 's iad dathan na Grèige dhòmhsa – geal agus gorm: *the colours of Greece for me are white and blue*; tha bratach na dùthcha mar sin gu math freagarrach: *the country's flag is thus very suitable*; air sàillibh 's gun robh mi a' leughadh alt: *because I was reading an article*; mu dheidhinn Bhàideanach, an sgìre dhan do bhuin e: *about Badenoch, the area he belonged to*; tha e aithnichte ann am Beurla: *he is known [recognised] in English*; mar Thighearna Bhàideanach, Iarla Bhuchain agus Iarla Rois: *as the Lord of Badenoch, the Earl of Buchan and the Earl of Ross*; aig a' cheann thall, ghabh Alasdair grèim air fearann X: *finally, Alasdair expropriated X's land*; loisg X bailtean Farrais is Eilginn gu làr: *X burned the towns of Forres and Elgin to the ground*.

**Puing-chànain na Litreach:** B' e am fear a bu chumhachdaiche ann an ceann a tuath na h-Alba: *he was the most powerful man in the north of Scotland*. Are you comfortable with this structure? It is the past tense equivalent of 's e am fear as cumhachdaiche. The bu appears in both the (assertive) verb and the comparative (adjective). In the first case Bu e becomes B' e because of the adjacent vowels.

**Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach:** Chaidh X agus Y **a-mach air a chèile gu dubh**: *X and Y fell out with each other big time*.

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