

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Fearchar a' Ghunna (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.macleon@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 993. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 689 corresponds to Litir 993.

An t-seachdain sa chaidh thug mi dhuibh Ùrnaigh na Creubhaig. B' e sin an ùrnaigh aig Fearchar a' Ghunna, Fearchar MacIllInnein, a rugadh ann an Srath Chonain ann an Siorrachd Rois ann an seachd ceud deug, ochdad 's a ceithir (1784). Thogadh e air croit agus cha robh foghlam sgoile aige. Bha e eòlach air dìreach dà fhacal ann am Beurla – *yes* agus *no*. Ach **bha sgoil aige** ann an dà ghnothach – sealg agus cùiltearachd. Bha e math orra sin!

'S e fear beag a bh' ann, le falt fada. Agus bha e car neònach na dhòighean eadhon aig aois òg. Tha stòiridh ann gur e tuathanach dha robh e ag obair a bu choireach ri sin. Oidhche a bha seo, bha Fearchar agus treabhaiche ri plòigh. Chàrnaich iad sgrathan taobh a-muigh uinneag seòmair-cadail an tuathanaich. Cha d' fhuair solas an latha a-steach agus cha do dh'èirich an tuathanach gu meadhan-latha. Nuair a chaidh e a-mach, bha an caothach air agus b' e Fearchar a' chiad duine a chunnaic e. Ghabh an tuathanach grèim air spaid agus thug e sgleog do dh'Fhearchar air a cheann leatha. Bha laigse intinn aig Fearchar bhon latha sin a-mach.

Bha Srath Chonain ainmeil airson obair na poite-duibhe agus airson cùiltearachd uisge-bheatha – no *poitearachd* mar a chanadh iad ann an taobh sear Rois. Bhiodh Fearchar ag ràdh le moit gum buineadh e do *phoitearan Srath Chonain*.

Chuir an riaghaltas sguad de dh'oifigearan cìs-bhathair chun an t-sratha ach, oidhche a bha seo, chaidh an taigh aca a losgadh gu làr. Thàinig Fearchar fo amharas agus chaidh a cheasnachadh, ach cha do dh'aidich e càil. Goirid an dèidh sin, chaidh bràthair aig Fearchar a mharbhadh ann an còmhstri le oifigearan riaghaltais. Bhon uair sin, bha taobh cruaidh aig Fearchar nach robh aige roimhe.

Aig aois còig air fhichead, chuir Fearchar a chùl ri srath àraich agus thòisich e beatha ùr mar fhalbhanach. Chuireadh e a' chuid a bu mhotha de a bheatha seachad anns an Eilean Dubh agus timcheall Poll an Ròid – no am *Beauly Firth*. Bha muinntir an àite measail air agus rinn iad cinnteach nach biodh e gann de bhiadh no tombaca.

Bha e furasta Fearchar aithneachadh. Bha a chuid aodaich ioma-dhathach, bhiodh e a' cur slabhraidhean, cnàmhan, itean is eile thairis air. Bha dà ghunna-làimhe aige ceangailte ri crios iarainn mu a thimcheall. Ach 's e an gunna mòr a bhiodh e a' giùlan leis a bha iongantach annasach. Bha sia baraillean air. Bha e mòr agus trom, agus chan eil e cinnteach an robh e èifeachdach. Tha amharas ann nach do mharbh e beathach sam bith leis!

Aig amannan, bha càirdeas doirbh aig Fearchar le pearsaichean eaglais. Airson greis bha e a' fuireach ann am bothan ceangailte ris a' mhansa anns a' Chaisteal

Ruadh san Eilean Dubh. Bha am Ministear, Mgr MacRath, air tilleadh ann bho Ameireagaidh airson a bhith na mhinistear. Latha a bha seo, chuir Mgr MacRath a cheann a-steach air doras bothan Fhearchair. ‘S ann agad a tha am fàileadh, Fhearchair,’ thuirt e.

‘Tha iad ag innse dhòmhsa,’ fhreagair Fearchar, ‘gu bheil cuinneanan glan aig na fèidh, ach ’s ann agads’ a bha na cuinneanan glan nuair a fhuair thu fàileadh stìpean a’ Chaisteil Ruaidh ann an Ameireagaidh.’ **’S ann aig Fearchar a’ Ghunna a bha teanga bhiorach!**

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Faclan na Litreach: MacIllInnein: *MacLennan*; cha do dh’èirich: *didn’t rise*; laigse inntinn: *mental weakness*; oifigearan cìs-bhathair: *excise officers*; Poll an Ròid: *The Beaully Firth [lit. ‘the inlet of the holy cross’]*; baraillean: *barrels*; pearsaichean eaglais: *church figures*; cuinneanan: *nostrils*; stìpean: *stipend*.

Abairtean na Litreach: Thogadh e air croit agus cha robh foghlam sgoile aige: *he was raised on a croft and he had no school education*; bha e math orra sin: *he was good at them*; bha e car neònach na dhòighean eadhon aig aois òg: *he was a bit strange in his ways even at a young age*; tha stòiridh ann gur e tuathanach dha robh e ag obair a bu choireach ri sin: *there is a story that it was a farmer for whom he worked that was responsible for that*; bha Fearchar agus treabhaiche ri plòigh: *Farquhar and a ploughman were up to a trick*; chàrnaich iad sgrathan taobh a-muigh uinneag seòmar-cadail an tuathanaich: *they piled turves outside the farmer’s bedroom window*; bha an caothach air agus b’ e Fearchar a’ chiad duine a chunnaic e: *he was furious and Farquhar was the first person he saw*; thug e sgleog do X air a cheann leatha: *he thumped X on his head with it*; obair na poite-duibhe: *illegal whisky distilling*; gum buineadh e do phoitearan Srath Chonain: *that he belonged to the illegal whisky distillers of Strathconon*; chaidh a cheasnachadh, ach cha do dh’aidich e càil: *he was questioned, but he didn’t admit anything*; chuir X a chùl ri srath àraich: *X left the strath of his upbringing*; nach biodh e gann de bhiadh no tombaca: *that he wouldn’t be short of food or tobacco*; bha e furasta X aithneachadh: *it was easy to recognise X*; bha a chuid aodaich ioma-dhathach: *his clothing was multicoloured*; nach do mharbh e beathach sam bith leis: *that he didn’t kill any animal with it*; ann am bothan ceangailte ris a’ mhansa anns a’ Chaisteal Ruadh san Eilean Dubh: *in a bothy connected to the manse in Redcastle on the Black Isle*; ’s ann agad a tha am fàileadh: *you’re really smelly*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: bha sgoil aige ann an dà ghnothach – sealg agus cùilttearachd: *he was well educated in two matters – hunting and smuggling*. Remember that sgoil doesn’t mean just ‘school’ but can refer to education and knowledge in more general terms. And a sgoilear is not only a school pupil but an adult who is learned in his or her field.

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: **’S ann aig X a bha teanga bhiorach: X had a sharp tongue.**

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