

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Alasdair MacIlleMhìcheil agus Coimisean Napier (2)

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.maclean@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 1,014. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 710 corresponds to Litir 1,014.

Nuair a bha mi ann an Uibhist turas, chuala mi beul-aithris gun robh uaireigin na h-eileanan ris an canar Heisgeir ceangailte ri Uibhist a Tuath. A-nise, tha caolas mòr ann eadar taobh an iar Uibhist a Tuath agus Heisgeir.

Tha cunntas mu na h-eileanan sin aig Alasdair MacIlleMhìcheil ann an aithisg Choimisean Napier. Chuir e trì ainmean Gàidhlig orra – Heisgeir, Teisgeir agus Aoisgeir. Agus sgrìobh e gur e an treas ainm sin am fear as ciallaiche. Aoisgeir – *isthmus rock*. Tha am facal **aidh** aithnichte airson tairbeart no dòrlinn.

Sgrìobh MacIlleMhìcheil gun robh aoidh ann uaireigin a bha a’ ceangal Heisgeir ri Uibhist a Tuath. Mean air mhean, dh’fhalbh an talamh gu bhith nam fadhlaichean. Dh’fhalbh na fadhlaichean agus an uair sin bha caolas eu-domhainn ann (le grunn gainmhich). Agus bha comas aig daoine ri linn MhicIlleMhìcheil an fheadhainn mu dheireadh a choisich a-null ’s a-nall ainmeachadh – agus feadhainn a chaidh a bhàthadh air an turas a-null cuideachd.

Bidh cuid de sgoilearan ainmean-àite a’ cur teagamh anns an argamaid aig MacIlleMhìcheil, ach cha robh an Liosach deiseil aige sin. Sgrìobh e cuideachd gur e aoidh bunait ainm eilein a tha cho ainmeil ri gin ann an Alba – Ì no Ì Chaluim Chille. Bha e dhen bheachd gur e Aoidh Chaluim Chille a bh’ air an eilean mar ainm aig aon àm. Bha e a’ cumail a-mach gun robh e follaiseach do dhuine sam bith a bheireadh sùil air gun robh Ì uaireigin ceangailte ri Muile, agus aoidh eatarra.

Bhiodh e doirbh a dhol às àicheadh sin gu tur. Tha mi air seòladh dà thuras tro Chaolas Ì agus tha e gu math eu-domhainn, le oitirean is sruthan a bhios a’ gluasad fad na h-ùine oir tha an grunn air a dhèanamh de ghainmheach.

Agus tha ceangal eile ann eadar Ì agus Heisgeir. Sgrìobh MacIlleMhìcheil gur e fìor ainm eilean mòr Heisgeir (gu fìrinneach tha trì eileanan ceangailte ann a tha ceangailte ri chèile le fadhlaichean) Heisgeir nan Cailleach ‘*Heisgeir of the Nuns*’. Bha uaireigin coimhearsnachd de chailleachan-dubha – a bha co-cheangailte ri Eilean Ì – a’ fuireach ann. Gu siar air an eilean, **thar caolas**, tha eilean eile, far a bheil taigh-solais. Ged as e Siolaigh a th’ air an-diugh, ’s e Heisgeir nam Manach ‘*Heisgeir of the Monks*’ a bh’ air uaireigin. ’S e sin as coireach gur e Na h-Eileanan Monach no *Monach Isles* a th’ air an àite seo mar ainm cuideachd.

Tha MacIlleMhìcheil ag innse seann naidheachd mu Heisgeir. Air latha samhraidh o chionn fhada, chaidh grunn de mhuinntir an eilein gu ruige Siolaigh airson caoraich a rùsgadh. Chuir na fir na boireannach air tìr ann an Siolaigh.

Dh'fhalbh na fir an uair sin gu sgeir airson ròin a shealg. Ge-tà, cha do cheangail iad an eathar mar bu chòir agus dh'fhalbh i leis a' ghaoith 's leis an t-sruth.

Cha robh bàta aig na boireannaich airson na fir a shàbhaladh agus bha a' mhuir a' lionadh. Bha na boireannaich ann an Siolaigh ag èigheachd agus chuala boireannach eile air Heisgeir fhèin iad. Rinn an tè sin spàirn airson eathar a tharraing sìos an cladach. Chuir i air bhog sa chaolas i. Ach cha robh i luath gu leòr. Chaidh na fir a sguabadh far na sgeire le tuinn mhòra a' Chuain Siar. Bha am mnathan gan coimhead ach cha b' urrainn dhaibh dad a dhèanamh airson an sàbhaladh.

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Faclan na Litreach: caolas: *channel, strait*; Alasdair MacIlleMhìcheil: *Alexander Carmichael*; Liosach: *native of Lismore*; Ì no Ì Chaluim Chille: *Iona*; cailleachan-dubha: *nuns*; Siolaigh: *Shillay*; spàirn: *struggle*.

Abairtean na Litreach: chuala mi beul-aithris gun robh uaireigin na h-eileanan ris an canar Heisgeir ceangailte ri Uibhist a Tuath: *I heard oral tradition that at one time the islands called Heisgeir were connected to North Uist*; mean air mhean, dh'fhalbh an talamh gu bhith nam fadhlaichean: *gradually, the land changed to be sea-fords*; dh'fhalbh na fadhlaichean: *the sea-fords disappeared*; bha caolas eu-domhainn ann (le grunn gainmhich): *there was a shallow strait there (with a sandy bottom)*; bha comas aig daoine ri linn X an fheadhainn mu dheireadh a choisich a-null 's a-nall ainmeachadh: *people had the ability in X's time to name the last ones to walk there and back*; a chaidh a bhàthadh: *who were drowned*; gur e aoidh bunait ainm eilein a tha cho ainmeil ri gin ann an Alba: *that aoidh is the basis of the name of an island that is as famous as any in Scotland*; gun robh e follaiseach do dhuine sam bith a bheireadh sùil air: *that it was obvious to anybody that would look at it*; gun robh Ì uaireigin ceangailte ri Muile: *that Iona was at one time connected to Mull*; bhiodh e doirbh a dhol às àicheadh sin gu tur: *it would be difficult to entirely deny that*; eu-domhainn, le oitirean is sruthan a bhios a' gluasad fad na h-ùine: *shallow, with sandbanks and channels that are constantly shifting*; air latha samhraidh o chionn fhada: *on a summer's day a long time ago*; airson caoraich a rùsgadh: *to shear sheep*; gu sgeir airson ròin a shealg: *to a skerry to hunt seals*; cha do cheangail iad an eathar mar bu chòir: *they didn't tie up their boat as they should*; bha a' mhuir a' lionadh: *the tide was rising ['the sea was filling']*; chaidh na fir a sguabadh far na sgeire le tuinn mhòra a' Chuain Siar: *the men were swept from the skerry by great Atlantic waves*; airson an sàbhaladh: *to save them*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Tha am facal **aoidh** aithnichte airson tairbeart no dòirlinn: *the word aoidh is known for an isthmus. Aoidh is sometimes given as ùidh. It is considered to be a loan-word, originating in the Old Norse eið 'isthmus, neck of land'. Tairbeart and dòirlinn are words of Gaelic origin which can also stand for an isthmus.*

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: thar caolas: *across a channel/strait*.

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