

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

An Gibean mar Leigheas

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 1,030. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 726 corresponds to Litir 1,030.

A bheil sibh eòlach air an fhacal *gibean*? Am measg eile, tha e a’ ciallachadh, a rèir Faclair Dwelly, ‘*St Kilda pudding made of ... a mixture of fulmar fat, oatmeal etc. Said to be most sustaining and efficacious against coughs and kindred lung troubles.*’

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh an t-seachdain sa chaidh mun chunntas a rinn an Sgitheanach, Màrtainn MacIlleMhàrtainn, de Hiort o chionn còrr is trì cheud bliadhna. *A Late Voyage to St Kilda*. Dh’inns e mar a bhiodh a’ chuthag a’ nochdadh anns na h-eileanan sin mar chomharra gun robh ceann-cinnidh nan Leòdach air bàs fhaighinn.

Anns an dearbh chunntas, dh’inns an t-ùghdar dhuinn mun ghibean. Bha an stuth sin air a chleachdadh mar leigheas airson casadaich a thigeadh air na h-eileanaich gach turas a nochdadh bàta à àite eile, gu sònraichte bàta bàillidh na h-oighreachd. Bha an galar seo draghail, gu h-àraidh air an oidhche **nuair a bhite a’ dhèanamh** ronno no splangaid gu leòr. Bhiodh e a’ maireachdainn suas ri ceala-deug.

Sgrìobh MacIlleMhàrtainn, ‘*the most sovereign remedy against this disease is their great and beloved catholicon, the giben ...*’ Mhìnich e gum b’ e an ghibean geir nan eun-mara a chuireadh iad gu feum airson sgròban an t-sùlaire a lìonadh, agus nàdar de dh’annlan a dhèanamh. Bha a leithid aig na Gàidheil ann an eileanan eile cuideachd.

Bhiodh na Hiortaich a’ measgachadh a’ ghibein le min-choirce airson brochan a dhèanamh, agus ghabhadh iad am brochan mar leigheas airson a’ ghalair. Agus ’s e ‘brochan’ a chanadh iad ris, mar a dhearbh MacIlleMhàrtainn – aig an robh làn a chinn de Ghàidhlig. Dh’inns na h-eileanaich dha, ge-tà, nach robh an leigheas cho èifeachdach ri a linn-sa ’s a bha e ùine roimhe.

Cha do thuig daoine aig an àm sin mar a bhiodh galaran a’ sgaoileadh. No mar a sheasadh anti-cuirp an aghaidh ghalaran. Agus cha robh na Hiortaich toilichte nuair a dhearbh MacIlleMhàrtainn gun robh e teagmhach mun sgeul aca. Feumaidh nach do ghabh e ris an toiseach gum biodh casadaich a’ nochdadh nam measg gach turas a thigeadh bàta à àite eile. Ach chuir e ceist mun ghnothach air a h-uile duine agus dh’aontaich iad uile – sean is òg – gun robh e fìor. Bha eadhon leanaban air a’ bhroilleach a’ fulang leis a’ ghalair. Bha na h-eileanaich dhen bheachd gun robh iad ga fhaighinn bho luchd-siubhail a bha a’ fuireach anns na taighean aca.

Chan e sin a-mhàin, ach bhiodh a’ chasadaich a’ maireachdainn na b’ fhaide nuair a bha bathar air a thoirt air tìr. Agus, gach turas a rachadh Hiortach gu eilean eile, leithid Na Hearadh no an Eilein Sgitheanaich, bhiodh a’ chasadaich a’ tighinn

orra anns an dearbh dhòigh. Dh'fheumadh iad an dàrna cuid gibeann fhaighinn no falbh dhachaigh a Hiort airson feabhas a thoirt orra fhèin. O, nam biodh lighichean air èisteachd ris na Hiortaich aig an àm sin – 's dòcha gun robh iad air mòran ionnsachadh mu sgaoileadh ghalaran!

Feumaidh gun do nochd an galar nuair a chaidh MacIlleMhàrtainn ann. Ach sgrìobh e, cho luath 's a bha e seachad, agus e **air a chur am feabhas** le gibeann, nach robhar a' casadaich tuilleadh, eadhon ged a bha iad uile – dà cheud gu leth duine eadar Hiortaich is coigrich – a' tighinn cruinn còmhla mar choitheanal airson seirbheisean eaglais.

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Faclan na Litreach: Màrtainn MacIlleMhàrtainn: *Martin Martin*; na h-eileanaich: *the islanders*; dh'aontaich: *agreed*; Hiortach: *St Kildan*; lighichean: *physicians*.

Abairtean na Litreach: mar chomharra gun robh ceann-cinnidh nan Leòdach air bàs fhaighinn: *as a mark of the death of the clan chief of the MacLeods*; mar leigheas airson casadaich a thigeadh air na h-eileanaich gach turas a nochdadh bàta à àite eile: *as a cure for coughing that would come upon the islanders every time a boat would come from another place*; gu sònraichte bàta bàillidh na h-oighreachd: *particularly the estate steward's boat*; a' maireachdainn suas ri ceala-deug: *lasting up to a fortnight*; geir nan eun-mara a chuireadh iad gu feum airson sgròban an t-sùlaire a lìonadh: *fat of seabirds that they would use to fill the crop of the gannet*; agus nàdar de dh'annlan a dhèanamh: *to make a sort of main course*; a' measgachadh a' ghibein le min-choirce airson brochan a dhèanamh: *mixing the gibeann with oatmeal to make a porridge*; aig an robh làn a chinn de Ghàidhlig: *who was totally fluent in Gaelic*; cho èifeachdach ri a linn-sa 's a bha e ùine roimhe: *as effective in his time as it was a time before*; mar a sheasadh anti-cuirp an aghaidh ghalaran: *how antibodies would stand against diseases*; bha eadhon leanaban air a' bhroilleach a' fulang: *even babies on the breast would be suffering*; bhiodh a' chasadaich a' maireachdainn na b' fhaide nuair a bha bathar air a thoirt air tìr: *the coughing would last longer when goods were brought ashore*; anns an dearbh dhòigh: *in the same way*; no falbh dhachaigh a Hiort airson feabhas a thoirt orra fhèin: *or to go home to St Kilda to cure themselves*; 's dòcha gun robh iad air mòran ionnsachadh mu sgaoileadh ghalaran: *perhaps they would have learned a lot about the spread of diseases*; nach robhar a' casadaich tuilleadh: *that there was no longer any coughing*; dà cheud gu leth duine eadar Hiortaich is coigrich: *two hundred and fifty people between St Kildans and strangers*; a' tighinn cruinn còmhla mar choitheanal airson seirbheisean eaglais: *coming together as a congregation for church services*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: nuair a bhite a' dèanamh ronno no splangaid gu leòr: *when plenty of phlegm was being generated*. Bhite is a passive conditional verb and is often used in conjunction with a verbal noun, describing an action over time.

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: air a chur am feabhas le: *cured by*.

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