

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Sgadain Dearga

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 1,064. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 760 corresponds to Litir 1,064.

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh an t-seachdain sa chaidh mu Eilean Mhàrtainn, faisg air Ullapul ann an taobh siar Rois. Am measg nan gnìomhachasan anns an eilean, bha cuaraidh às an robhar a’ faighinn clach – clach-ghainmhich.

Aig deireadh na Litreach mu dheireadh, chuir mi ceist oirbh. Dè an dà thogalach ainmeil ann an Steòrnabhagh anns a bheil clach à cuaraidh ann an Eilean Mhàrtainn a’ còmhachadh nam ballachan? Uill, ’s e am fuasgladh – Talla a’ Bhaile agus eaglais ann am meadhan a’ bhaile – Eaglais a’ Mhàrtainnich – *Martin’s Memorial Church*.

Tha mi a’ tuigsinn gur e as coireach gun do chleachd iad clach à Eilean Mhàrtainn gun robh e na b’ fhasa a h-obrachadh, seach a’ chlach ann an Leòdhas fhèin, a tha cianail cruaidh. An e sin as coireach gur e *Martin’s Memorial Church* a th’ air an eaglais mar ainm? Gun tàinig a’ chlach à ‘Isle Martin’? Uill, chan e. Chaidh an eaglais ainmeachadh airson a’ chiad mhinistear aca, an t-Urramach Dòmhnall Iain Mhàrtainn.

Bha mi cuideachd ag innse dhuibh gun robhar a’ giollachd sgadain ann an dà dhòigh air Eilean Mhàrtainn. Bha iad a’ cur feadhainn ann an salann no mear-shal. B’ iad sin na sgadain bhàna no *white herring*. Feadhainn eile, bha iad gan smocadh le toit à teine anns an robhar a’ cur shliseagan daraich. B’ iad sin na **sgadain dearga** no *red herring*. Ach bha iad na bu duirche na *smokie* à taobh an ear na h-Alba. Bidh *smokies* air an smocadh airson grunn uairean a thìde. Ach bidh sgadain dearga air an smocadh airson làithean no seachdainean. Mu dheireadh, bidh iad a’ tionndadh dearg.

Thug sin orm a bhith a’ beachdachadh air an abairt ann am Beurla – *‘red herring’*. Canaidh daoine *‘red herring’* nuair a tha iad a’ leantainn rathad smaoinichaidh a tha gan toirt gu ceann-uidhe ceàrr no fuadan. Cha robh mi cinnteach an robh ceangal sam bith ann eadar na sgadain smocte agus *‘red herring’*.

A rèir choltais, tha. Tha fàileadh làidir air sgadan dearg. Agus thathar a’ cumail a-mach gun do chleachd sgrìobhadair Sasannach ‘sgadan dearg’ ann an sgeulachd a sgrìobh e aig toiseach an naoidheamh linn deug. Bha cuideigin ag iarraidh nach biodh coin a’ leantainn le bhith an tòir air gearr. Dhragh e sgadan dearg sìos rathad eile tron fheur, agus chaidh na coin an rathad sin. Nuair a ràinig iad an ceann-uidhe, cha robh sgeul air a’ gheàrr. Cha robh ann ach sgadan dearg. No *red herring*.

Tha grunn abairtean againn co-cheangailte ris an sgadan. Mar eisimpleir: **beag air bheag, mar a dh'itheas an cat an sgadan.** *Little by little, as the cat eats the herring.* Beag air bheag, mar a dh'itheas an cat an sgadan.

An cuala sibh riamh an abairt *tàrr an sgadain 's earball a' bhràdain?* 'S iad sin na h-earrannan as blasta dhen dà iasg sin. *The lower belly of the herring and the tail of the salmon. Tàrr an sgadain 's earball a' bhràdain.*

Cha robh na Gàidheil riamh measail air ceann an sgadain mar bhiadh. Chanadh iad *ceann cnòdain, 's ceann sgadain, 's ceann goibhr' air dhroch fheannadh* – tri cinn nach fhiach ithe. Tha mi làn chinnteach gun robh iad ceart!

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Faclan na Litreach: Eilean Mhàrtainn: *Isle Martin*; an t-Urramach Dòmhnall Iain Màrtainn: *Rev. Donald John Martin*; mear-shal: *brine*; iasg smocte: *smoked fish*; fàileadh: *smelling*.

Abairtean na Litreach: am measg nan gnìomhachasan anns an eilean, bha cuaraidh às an robhar a' faighinn clach-ghainmhich: *among the businesses on the island, there was a quarry from which sandstone was obtained*; dà thogalach ainmeil ann an Steòrnabhagh: *two well-known buildings in Stornoway*; gur e as coireach gun do chleachd iad X: *that the reason they used X is*; gun robhar a' giollachd sgadain ann an dà dhòigh: *that herring was being processed in two ways*; bha iad gan smocadh le toit à teine anns an robhar a' cur shliseagan daraich: *they were smoking them with smoke from a fire in which oak chips were put*; na bu duirche na X: *darker than X*; nuair a tha iad a' leantainn rathad smaoineachaidh a tha gan toirt gu ceann-uidhe ceàrr no fuadan: *when they follow a line of thinking that takes them to a wrong or false destination*; thathar a' cumail a-mach gun do chleachd sgrìobhadair Sasannach X: *it is maintained that an English writer used X*; nach biodh coin a' leantainn le bhith an tòir air gearr: *that dogs wouldn't continue to pursue a hare*; dhragh e sgadan dearg sìos rathad eile tron fheur: *he dragged a red herring down another track through the grass*; 's iad sin na h-earrannan as blasta dhen dà iasg sin: *they are the tastiest parts of those two fish*; tha mi làn chinnteach gun robh iad ceart: *I'm absolutely certain they were correct*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: *sgadain dearga: red herring. You might expect sgadain dhearga, just like sgadain bhàna, because the general rule is to lenite the adjective when a noun pluralises in the nominative by slenderisation (sgadan > sgadain). However, traditionally, a terminal 'n' blocks the lenition of an initial 'd'. We call this 'bacadh air sèimheachadh' or 'lenition blocking'.*

Seanfhacal na Litreach: **beag air bheag, mar a dh'itheas an cat an sgadan.** *Little by little, as the cat eats the herring.*

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