

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Iain Beag MacAnndra (1)

Each week the West Highland Free Press publishes the text for Ruairidh's "Letter to Gaelic Learners" on BBC Radio nan Gàidheal (103.5-105 FM). Broadcasts are as follows: 2:55pm on Sunday as part of BBC Radio nan Gàidheal's hour-long learning zone, following the Gaelic Learners' programme 'SpeakGaelic Extra', with a repeat at 10.30 pm on Wednesday. This is Litir 1,341. There is also a simpler version – An Litir Bheag – which is broadcast at 2:30pm each Sunday. Litir Bheag 1,037 corresponds to Litir 1,341. The Litir is also available at www.bbc.co.uk/litir and www.learnghaelic.scot/litir. Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learnghaelic.scot.

Ann an àite iomallach ann an Srath Spè, tha baile beag ann faisg air an t-slighe far an do thog an Seanalair Wade rathad-airm anns an ochdamh linn deug. Air na mapaichean, 's e Dalnahaitnach a th' air mar ainm. Ach tha cunntasan Beurla ann mu dheidhinn, agus 's e Dalnahatnich a th' air. Saoilidh mi gu bheil iad a' riochdachadh na Gàidhlig Dail na h-Aitnich 'the meadow of the juniper-place'. Tha a' chraobh-aitinn cumanta gu leòr anns an sgìre sin, eadhon an-diugh.

Co-dhiù, ceart no ceàrr mi, tha mi a' dol a ghabhail 'Dail na h-Aitnich' air a' bhaile. Ach carson a tha mi a' beachdachadh air an àite sin? A chionn 's gur ann an Dail na h-Aitnich a bha Iain Beag MacAnndra a' fuireach. **Ged a bha Iain beag, cha robh e bog.** Tha mi airson innse dhuibh mu dheidhinn.

An toiseach, feumaidh mi innse dhuibh cà' bheil Dail na h-Aitnich. Tha e ann an suidheachadh àlainn ri taobh Uisge Thulnain – *the River Dulnain*. Tha e beagan mhiltean suas an abhainn bho Dhrochaid Chàrr aig ceann rathad beag sàmhach. Ged a tha rathad mòr an A9 agus loidhne-rèile meadhanach faisg, nuair a ruigeas tu Dail na h-Aitnich, tha an t-àite sìtheil. Tha thu air do chuirteachadh le nàdar – abhainn, coille agus monadh fraochach.

Cha robh an t-àite an-còmhnaidh cho sàmhach, ge-tà. Bha e air 'Rathad nam Mèirleach' air am biodh luchd-togail na creiche a' toirt sprèidh dhachaigh a Loch Abar bhon ear-thuath. Nise, cha chreid mi gur e aon rathad a bh' ann an Rathad nam Mèirleach, ach slighe fharsaing ioma-mheurach eadar Loch Abar agus an talamh torrach ann an Srath Èireann agus cladaichean Linne Mhoireibh. Bhiodh na h-Abraich a' togail na creiche ann agus a' tilleadh dhachaigh, **ag iomain feudail.**

Bha Iain Beag MacAnndra à Dail na h-Aitnich na bhoghadair ainmeil. Tha cuid a' cumail a-mach nach robh boghadair na b' fheàrr na Iain air a' Ghàidhealtachd air fad. No math dh'fhaodte ann an Alba air fad. Seo agaibh aon sgeul mu Iain à beul-aithris Shrath Spè.

Bha uachdaran an Achaidh Luachraich ann an Loch Abar os cionn gràisg a thog creach air an fhearann aig an Ròsach ann an Cill Ràthaig, faisg air Inbhir Nis. Bha iad a' tilleadh dhachaigh leis an fheudail aca tro Shrath Èireann, pìos gu tuath air Dail na h-Aitnich. Bha fios air a dhol a-mach gu muinntir Shrath Èireann stad a chur air na mèirlich. Nan dèanadh iad sin, gheibheadh iad duais nach beag bhon Ròsach.

Bha iad a' feitheamh ris na mèirlich ann an Coileachaidh ann an Srath Èireann. Bha muinntir Chill Ràthaig a' leantainn nan creachadairean cuideachd. Bha uachdaran Choileachaidh air iarraidh air Iain Beag taic a thoirt dha, leis gun robh e cho sgileil leis a' bhogha. A rèir aithris, bha Iain ann an Srath Èireann aig an àm air gnothach eile.

Ann an Coileachaidh bha còmhrag mhòr ann. Mharbh Iain gu leòr de na h-Abraich le a bhogha. Nam measg, bha an ceannard – uachdaran an Achaidh Luachraich. Gu mì-fhortanach do dh'Iain, dh'èigh uachdaran Choileachaidh ann an guth mòr, 'Tapadh leat, Iain Bhig MhicAnndra à Dail na h-Aitnich, 's e do làmh fhèin a rinn sin!' Bhiodh fios aig na h-Abraich cò a bu choireach. Chuireadh iad romhpa dìoghaltas a ghabhail air Iain Beag MacAnndra.

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Faclan na Litreach: iomallach: *remote, at the edge*; Srath Spè: *Strathspey*; craobh-aitinn: *juniper tree*; eadhon an-diugh: *even today*; loidhne-rèile: *railway line*; monadh fraochach: *heathery hills*; mèirleach: *robber, reiver*; beul-aithris: *oral tradition*; uachdaran an Achaidh Luachraich: *the laird of Achluachrach (in Glen Spean)*; Ròsach: *Rose (surname)*; Cill Ràthaig: *Kilravock*; Coileachaidh: *Kyllachy*; Srath Èireann: *Strathdearn*; còmhrag: *conflict*.

Abairtean na Litreach: far an do thog an Seanalair Wade rathad-airm: *where General Wade built a military road*; beagan mhiltean suas an abhainn bho Dhrochaid Chàrr: *a few miles upriver from Carrbridge*; ceann rathad beag sàmhach: *the end of a small quiet road*; air am biodh luchd-togail na creiche a' toirt sprèidh dhachaigh a Loch Abar: *on which the cattle plunderers would take cattle home to Lochaber*; slighe fharsaing ioma-mheurach: *a broad multi-stranded route*; Srath Èireann agus cladaichean Linne Mhoireibh: *Strathdearn and the shores of the Moray Firth*; bhiodh na h-Abraich a' togail na creiche: *the Lochaber men would plunder*; tha cuid a' cumail a-mach nach robh boghadair na b' fheàrr na X: *some people maintain that there was no better archer than X*; no math dh'fhaodte ann an Alba air fad: *or perhaps in the whole of Scotland*; nan dèanadh iad sin, gheibheadh iad duais nach beag: *if they did that, they would get a decent reward*; tapadh leat, Iain Bhig MhicAnndra à Dail na h-Aitnich: *thanks, Iain Beag MacAnndra from Dalnhatnich*; bhiodh fios aig na h-Abraich cò a bu choireach: *the Lochaber folk would know who was responsible*; chuireadh iad romhpa dìoghaltas a ghabhail air X: *they would decide to get revenge on X*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: a' tilleadh dhachaigh, **ag iomain feudail:** *returning home, driving stolen cattle*. Feudail is a wonderful word, which has the meaning of 'spoils, booty' but almost always refers to cattle, which were the primary targets of such activity in the days of the clans. Because cattle were so valuable, feudail became a term of endearment for a loved one, usually recognised today as the word eudail (m' fheudail and m' eudail sound the same). You will hear it widely used in the Gaelic community towards a subject of romantic love, but also a child – O, m' eudail! 'Oh, my darling!'

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: Ged a bha Iain beag, cha robh e bog: *although Iain was small, he wasn't soft*. This is a well-known saying – tha e beag ach chan eil e bog.

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