

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Fear-cluig Inbhir Nis (2)

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 1,392. There is also a simpler version – An Litir Bheag – which is broadcast at 2:30pm each Sunday. Litir Bheag 1,088 corresponds to Litir 1,392. The Litir is also available at www.bbc.co.uk/litir and www.learnghaelic.scot/litir. Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learnghaelic.scot.

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Iain Stephen, fear-cluig ann an Inbhir Nis anns an naoidheamh linn deug. Bhuineadh e do dh'Inbhir Nis. 'S e **'gille Clach na Cùdainn'** a bh' ann. Nuair a bha e òg, bhiodh e an sàs gu tric ann an ùpraid air an t-sràid. Cha robh seirbheis poilis ann aig an àm sin.

Nuair a ràinig e ìre, fhuair e obair mar sguidsear no *heckler*. Sin neach a bha ag obair le lìon. Bha e ga chìreadh airson a dhèanamh deiseil airson snìomh. Ach cha do mhair an obair sin ro fhada. Bha innealan a' dèanamh na h-obrach agus cha robh feum air daoine anns a' ghnìomhachas sin mar a bha roimhe.

An uair sin, fhuair Iain obair leis an Eaglais. Bha e a' cumail rian air Cladh a' Chaibeil, *the Chapel Yard*, a' dèanamh cinnteach gun robh a h-uile càil ann an òrdugh. Nuair a bha e ag obair an sin, choisinn e cliù mar shealgair eun. Bha e a' cumail eun beag ann an cèidse. Bhiodh an t-eun a' gairm agus bhiodh eòin eile air an tarraing thuige. Bha Iain a' smeuradh stuth steigeach air geugan faisg air a' chèidse agus bhiodh na h-eòin a' dol an sàs ann.

Cha b' ann airson an ithe a bha Iain gan glacadh. Bha e gan reic do dhaoine a bha ag iarraidh eun ann an cèidse a-staigh aca. Bha an cleachdadh sin cumanta aig an àm sin, a rèir choltais.

Gu tric, bhiodh Iain a' sealg nan eun faisg air cala Inbhir Nis, far an robh an dùn aig Crombail aig aon àm. 'S e bigeanan-Bride – no *linnets* – a bu mhotha a ghlacadh e an sin. Bhiodh e a' sealg cuideachd ann an àite eile far am faigheadh e lasraichean-coille, no *goldfinches*. Agus ann an Coille Chùil Lodair, gheibheadh e loin-dubha, *blackbirds*, agus smeòraich, *thrushes*.

Anns a' chunntas a bha mi a' leughadh mu Iain Stephen, bha e a-muigh ann an Coille Chùil Lodair turas cuide ri greusaiche air an robh Sandie Gordon mar ainm. Bha an dithis fhear gu math eòlach air a chèile.

'Èist ris na h-eòin,' thuirt Iain. 'Tha iad a' seinn – Gordanaich dubh, Gordanaich dubh, fàg a' choille!' *Black Gordon, Black Gordon, leave the wood!*

Fhreagair an Gòrdanach, 'Ist, chan ann mar sin a tha e. Tha e ag ràdh – Iain a' chluig, Iain a' chluig! Tha am peathair a' tighinn!' *John of the bell, John of the bell! The forester is coming!*

'S e an rud a tha inntinneach mun chòmhradh sin gur ann ann an Gàidhlig a bha e, ged a bha an cunntas gu lèir ann am Beurla. Tha sin a' dearbhadh dhuinn gun robh Gàidhlig aig an dithis agus gun robh iad ag aithneachadh cainnt nan eun ann an Gàidhlig. Agus, mar sin, tha mi a' tilleadh chun na ceist – am biodh Iain mar fhear-cluig ag aithris nan naidheachdan do mhuinntir Inbhir Nis anns an dà chànan? Chan eil fhios a'm.

Bha laigse no dhà aig Iain – gu sònraichte snaoisean agus uisge-beatha. Latha a bha seo, bha e ag obair mar fhear-cluig agus bha e air mhisg. Chaidh rabhadh a thoirt dha gu feumadh e sguir dhen deoch-làidir nuair a bha e ag obair no gun cailleadh e a dhreuchd. Bho sin a-mach bha Iain stuama, measarra, sòbair.

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Faclan na Litreach: fear-cluig: *bellman, public crier*; bhuineadh e do: *he belonged to*; sguidsear: *scutcher, heckler [jobs in the flax processing industry]*; lìon: *flax*; innealan: *machines*; cèidse: *cage*; bigean Brìde: *linnet*; lasair-choille: *goldfinch*; Coille Chùil Lodair: *Culloden Woods*; lon-dubh: *blackbird*; smeòrach: *thrush*; greusaiche: *shoemaker*; stuama, measarra, sòbair: *abstemious, moderate and sober*.

Abairtean na Litreach: bhiodh e an sàs gu tric ann an ùpraid air an t-sràid: *he would often be involved in commotion on the street*; ga chìreadh airson a dhèanamh deiseil airson snìomh: *combing it to prepare it for spinning*; cha do mhair an obair sin ro fhada: *that work didn't last too long*; a' dèanamh cinnteach gun robh a h-uile càil ann an òrdugh: *making sure that everything was functioning*; choisinn e cliù mar shealgair eun: *he achieved a reputation as a hunter of birds*; bhiodh an t-eun a' gairm agus bhiodh eòin eile air an tarraing thuige: *the bird would call and other birds would be attracted to it*; a' smeuradh stuth steigeach air geugan: *smearing sticky material on branches*; bhiodh na h-eòin a' dol an sàs ann: *the birds would get stuck on it*; cha b' ann airson an ithe a bha Iain gan glacadh: *it wasn't in order to eat them that Jock was catching them*; ag iarraidh eun ann an cèidse a-staigh aca: *wanting a bird in a cage in their house*; faisg air cala Inbhir Nis, far an robh an dùn aig Crombail aig aon àm: *near Inverness Harbour, where Cromwell's fort once stood*; ag aithneachadh cainnt nan eun: *recognising the speech of the birds*; am biodh Iain mar fhear-cluig ag aithris nan naidheachdan do mhuinntir Inbhir Nis anns an dà chànan?: *would Jock as town-crier report the news to the people of Inverness in both languages?*; bha laigse no dhà aig Iain: *Jock had a couple of weaknesses*; gu sònraichte snaoisean agus uisge-beatha: *particularly snuff and whisky*; bha e air mhisg: *he was drunk*; chaidh rabhadh a thoirt dha: *he was warned*; gu feumadh e sguir dhen deoch-làidir: *that he would have to avoid alcohol*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: gille Clach na Cùdainn: *a Clachnacuddin lad. Clach na Cùdainn 'the stone of the tub', now in front of Inverness Town House, was where the women of the old town would rest their tubs on their way to and from the river. It became an icon of the town and people born and bred in the Highland capital would call themselves 'Clachnacuddin lads and lasses'.*

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: Nuair a ràinig e ìre: when he reached adulthood.

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