

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Stailc Chlann-nighean an Sgadain

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 1,414. There is also a simpler version – An Litir Bheag – which is broadcast at 2:30pm each Sunday. Litir Bheag 1,110 corresponds to Litir 1,414. The Litir is also available at www.bbc.co.uk/litir and www.learnghaelic.scot/litir. Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learnghaelic.scot.

O chionn naochad bliadhna – no **ceithir fichead bliadhna 's a deich** mar a chanadh a' mhòr-chuid aig an àm – bha stailc ann. Tha mi a' ciallachadh le 'stailc' gun robh luchd-obrach a' diùltadh a bhith ag obair. 'S e boireannaich a bh' annta agus bha an t-uabhas de luchd na Gàidhlig nam measg. B' iad sin **clann-nighean an sgadain**.

Bha na boireannaich sin, cuid mhath dhiubh òg, a' siubhal timcheall costa Bhreatainn, a' leantainn iasgairean an sgadain. Agus bha na h-iasgairean a' leantainn nan sgaothan sgadain a bha a' gluasad gu nàdarrach.

'S ann ri cutadh nan sgadan a bha na boireannaich. 'S e obair chruaidh, neo-thlachdmhor a bh' ann. Bha na h-èisg air an cur ann am baraillean le salann. Bha na mìltean de bharaillean làn sgadan air an cur don mhargaidh thall thairis.

Bhiodh na sgadain pailt aig deireadh an earraich agus toiseach an t-samhraidh anns a' Chuan Sgìth. Bhiodh clann-nighean an sgadain a' faighinn obair ann an àiteachan mar Steòrnabhagh. Ach, tron t-samhradh, bhiodh na h-èisg a' falbh gu deas, gu àiteachan mar Mhalaig, Eilean Mhanainn agus ceann a tuath na h-Eireann. As t-fhoghar, agus gu faisg air deireadh na bliadhna, bhiodh na sgaothan sgadain air leth pailt anns a' Chuan a Tuath, far chosta sear Shasainn. Bhiodh a' chlann-nighean an uair sin a' dol gu puirt-mhara mar *Great Yarmouth* agus *Lowestoft*.

Bha am beatha air leth doirbh. Bha an salann agus salachar an èisg a' faighinn a-steach do lotan anns na làmhnan aca. Bha iad uaireannan ag obair airson còrr is dusan uair a thìde gach latha. Bha àiteachan fuirich air an cur air dòigh dhaibh leis na companaidhean a bha gam fastadh. Ach tha iomadh aithris ann gun robh na h-àiteachan sin fuar agus salach, gun taighean-beaga annta.

Ann an naoi ceud deug is seachd-deug (1917), bha stailc ann an Steòrnabhagh. Bha a' chlann-nighean ag iarraidh àrdachadh anns an tuarastal aca bho chòig air fhichead sgillinn gach seachdain gu trithead sgillinn gach seachdain. Agus bha stailcean beaga an siud 's an seo ann an diofar phuirt, co-cheangailte ri cumhaichean obrach na cloinn-nighean. Bha gu leòr dhen bheachd nach robh ann ach aon dòigh airson gnothaichean a thoirt am feabhas, agus b' e sin le bhith a' gairm stailc.

Ann an naoi ceud deug, trithead 's a sia (1936) bha stailc mhòr ann an *Great Yarmouth*, agus bailtean eile ann an *East Anglia*, a thàinig gu aire mòr-shluagh

Bhreatainn. Air a' chòigeamh latha air fhichead dhen Dàmhair, bha ceann-naidheachd mòr aig an *Daily Express* – '3000 Scots Fisher-girls on Strike'.

Bha a' chlann-nighean a' diùltadh obair sam bith a dhèanamh gus am biodh àrdachadh anns an tuarastal aca bho dheich sgillinn gach baraille gu tastan (sin dusan sgillinn) gach baraille.

Ann an Yarmouth, thàinig na poilis air muin-eich agus sgaoil iad na boireannaich. Ach ghèill an riaghaltas agus na companaidhean, agus fhuair cuid dhen chloinn-nighean Ghàidhealach an deagh naidheachd mun àrdachadh tuarastail bho mhinistear anns a' chùbaid ann an Gàidhlig.

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Faclan na Litreach: stailc: *strike (industrial)*; a' diùltadh: *refusing*; neo-thlachdmhor: *disagreeable*; Malaig: *Mallaig*; Eilean Mhanainn: *the Isle of Man*; puirt-mhara: *maritime ports*; cumhaichean obrach: *working conditions*; crìonadh eacanomaigeach: *economic downturn*; muin-eich: *horseback*; sgaoil: *dispersed*; ghèill: *yielded*; cùbaid: *pulpit*.

Abairtean na Litreach: bha an t-uabhas de luchd na Gàidhlig nam measg: *there were many Gaelic-speakers among them*; cuid mhath dhiubh òg: *many of them young*; a' siubhal timcheall costa Bhreatainn, a' leantainn iasgairean an sgadain: *travelling around the coast of Britain, following the herring fishers*; bha na h-iasgairean a' leantainn nan sgaothan sgadain: *the fishermen were following the shoals of herring*; 's ann ri cutadh nan sgadan a bha na boireannaich: *the women were involved in gutting the herring*; bha na mìltean de bharraillean làn sgadan air an cur don mhargaidh thall thairis: *thousands of barrels full of herring were sent to market overseas*; pailt aig deireadh an earraich agus toiseach an t-samhraidh anns a' Chuan Sgìth: *plentiful at the end of the spring and beginning of summer in the Minch*; air leth pailt anns a' Chuan a Tuath, far chosta sear Shasainn: *particularly abundant in the North Sea, off the east coast of England*; bha an salann agus salachar an èisg a' faighinn a-steach do lotan anns na làmhnan aca: *the salt and fish muck were getting into cuts in their hands*; còrr is dusan uair a thìde gach latha: *more than twelve hours every day*; na companaidhean a bha gam fastadh: *the companies that were hiring them*; bhiodh aig X ri pàigheadh airson uisge-òil: *X had to pay for drinking water*; gu aire mòr-shluagh Bhreatainn: *to the attention of the people of Britain*; àrdachadh anns an tuarastal aca: *an increase in their wages*; bho deich sgillinn gach baraille gu tastan: *from ten pence per barrel to a shilling*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: clann-nighean an sgadain: 'the herring girls'. This is the name given to the young women who followed the herring around the coasts and worked as gutters. Clann-nighean is a singular compound noun meaning 'girls'. In the nominative with the article, it is a' chlann-nighean 'the girls'; in the vocative it is a chlann-nighean! 'girls!'; in the dative e.g. air a' chloinn-nighean 'on the girls'; the genitive is e.g. obair na cloinn-nighean 'the work of the girls'. You will note that it is only the first element that inflects according to case; the second element remains in the genitive plural form regardless of the case of the compound.

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: ceithir fichead bliadhna 's a deich: *ninety years [in the vigesimal counting system]*.

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