

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Beurla Rois an Ear

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 1,416. There is also a simpler version – An Litir Bheag – which is broadcast at 2:30pm each Sunday. Litir Bheag 1,112 corresponds to Litir 1,416. The Litir is also available at www.bbc.co.uk/litir and www.learnghaelic.scot/litir. Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learnghaelic.scot.

Tha na Gàidheil – agus feadhainn aig a bheil ùidh ann an ainmean-àite – air a bhith a' comharrachadh beatha sàr-sgoileir am-bliadhna. B' esan Uilleam MacBhatair no William J. Watson, prìomh sgoilear ainmean-àite na h-Alba anns an fhicheadamh linn. Tha tòrr dhen tuigse a th' againn air ainmean-àite stèidhichte air a sgoilearachd.

Rugadh MacBhatair ann an ochd ceud deug, seasgad 's a còig (1865). Chaochail e ann an naoi ceud deug, ceathrad 's a h-ochd (1948). Mar sin, carson a thathar a' comharrachadh a bheatha am-bliadhna – ann an dà mhìle, fichead 's a sia (2026)? Uill, tha a chionn 's gun do nochd an leabhar mòr mòr aige ann an clò o chionn ceud bliadhna, ann an naoi ceud deug, fichead 's a sia (2026). B' e sin '*The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland*'.

Leugh mi an leabhar sin às ùr o chionn ghoirid. Mar a thachras le leabhar tomadach, fhuair mi a-mach rudan a bha mi air dìochuimhneachadh bhon chiad turas a leugh mi e. Agus thog aon rud m' aire gu sònraichte oir dh'fhosgail e doras a-steach don t-suidheachadh phearsanta aig MacBhatair fhèin.

Thogadh e ann an Ros an Ear, sgìre a bha – mean air mhean – a' call a cuid Gàidhlig nuair a bha e òg. Bha MacBhatair fileanta ann an Gàidhlig agus Beurla. Mhothaich e mar a bhiodh na Gàidheil ann an Ros an Ear a' stobadh faclan Gàidhlig a-steach don Bheurla aca, oir **cha robh Beurla choileanta aca**.

Mar eisimpleir, chanadh iad, '*I have a meanmhainn in my nose*'. Eadhon an-diugh, chan eil mi cinnteach an dèanadh aon fhacal Beurla a' chùis mar eadar-theangachadh air! Tha faclair Dwelly ag innse dhuinn gu bheil *meanmhainn* a' ciallachadh '*titillation of the nose, an omen of a stranger's arrival or of good news*'.

Chanadh muinntir Rois an Ear ri pàiste nach itheadh a lite aig àm bracaist '*[that] you'll be a taibhse*' i.e. *a phantom*. Agus chanadh iad mu dheidhinn duine a bha gun smior '*that there was nothing in him but a blianach*.' Tha Dwelly a' toirt seo dhuinn airson *blianach* – '*slow, inactive person*'. A bheil facal math agaibh airson sin ann am Beurla? No an cleachdadh sibh fhèin '*blianach*' ann am Beurla?!

Mar a dh'fhàs cuid ann an Ros an Ear fileanta ann am Beurla, bhiodh iad a' tarraing à feadhainn a chleachdadh faclan is abairtean Gàidhlig anns a' Bheurla aca fhèin. Bhiodh iad eadhon a' magadh orra.

Bha fear ann a chaidh gu bùth-bhùidseir ann an Inbhir Ghòrdain. Dh'iarr e air fear na bùtha **a leithid de seo de** chuideam de 'beef-uain' i.e. *beef of lamb* a thoirt dha. 'S e sin a bh' aige air 'mutton'. Bho sin a-mach bha aithnig ùr aige – 'Beef-uain'! Agus bha fear eile air an robh 'twenty-ten' mar aithnig oir 's e sin a chanadh e fhèin airson 'thirty'. Tuigidh sibh gun robh e a' smaoinachadh ann an Gàidhlig.

Cha do mhair na faclan sin ann am Beurla Rois an Ear. Sgrìobh MacBhatair gun robh gu leòr dhiubh a' falbh ri a linn fhèin. Ach, ann an sgìrean eile de dh'Alba, far an robh a' Ghàidhlig ann uaireigin, bha seann fhaclan is abairtean fhathast ann. Thug MacBhatair eisimpleir à Fìobh – an abairt 'car-haun' airson 'left-hand'. Thàinig an 'car' bhon Ghàidhlig *ceàrr*, a' ciallachadh 'left'.

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Faclan na Litreach: tomadach: *weighty, substantial*; Ros an Ear: *Easter Ross*; meanmhainn: *titillation of the nose, an omen of a stranger's arrival or of good news*; bùth-bhùidseir: *a butcher's shop*; Inbhir Ghòrdain: *Invergordon*; aithnig: *nickname*; Fìobh: *Fife*.

Abairtean na Litreach: feadhainn aig a bheil ùidh ann an ainmean-àite: *those who are interested in place-names*; a' comharrachadh beatha sàr-sgoileir: *marking the life of an excellent scholar*; tha tòrr dhen tuigse a th' againn air ainmean-àite stèidhichte air a sgoilearachd: *much of the understanding we have of place-names is based on his scholarship*; a chionn 's gun do nochd an leabhar mòr mòr aige ann an clò o chionn ceud bliadhna: *because his magnum opus was published a century ago*; leugh mi an leabhar sin às ùr o chionn ghoirid: *I re-read that book a short time ago*; thog aon rud m' aire gu sònraichte: *one thing in particular captured my attention*; chanadh muinntir Rois an Ear ri pàiste nach itheadh a lite aig àm bracaist: *the people of Easter Ross would say to a child that wouldn't eat their porridge at breakfast time*; duine a bha gun smior: *a pithless person*; a' tarraing à feadhainn a chleachdadh faclan is abairtean Gàidhlig anns a' Bheurla aca fhèin: *teasing those who would use Gaelic words and phrases in their own English*; bhiodh iad eadhon a' magadh orra: *they would even be mocking them*; cha do mhair na faclan sin: *those words did not survive*; gun robh gu leòr dhiubh a' falbh ri a linn fhèin: *that many of them were disappearing in his own day*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Dh'iarr e air fear na bùtha **a leithid de seo de** chuideam de X a thoirt dha: *he asked the shopkeeper to give him a certain (named) amount of X*. Leithid 'equal, like, equivalent' is used a lot in idiomatic phrases e.g. air a leithid seo de latha 'on such and such a day'. Another good one to remember is how you might respond to a greeting like Nollaig shona dhut 'happy Christmas to you'. You can say agus a leithid cheudna dhut fhèin 'and the same to you'.

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: cha robh Beurla choileanta aca: *they didn't have perfect, idiomatic Gaelic*.

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