Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Iain Dubh MacLeòid

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 1,427. There is also a simpler version – An Litir Bheag – which is broadcast at 2:30pm each Sunday. Litir Bheag 1,123 corresponds to Litir 1,427. The Litir is also available at www.bbc.co.uk/litir *and* www.learngaelic.scot/litir. *Ruairidh can be contacted at* fios@learngaelic.scot.

Bha Niall MacLeòid na bhàrd ainmeil às an Eilean Sgitheanach. Bha e mar phàirt de theaghlach ris an canadh iad 'Bàird Ghleann Dail'. Bha a bhràthair, Iain Dubh, cuideachd na bhàrd. Bha cuid dhen bheachd gun robh Iain na bu sgileile mar bhàrd na Niall, **ged as e Niall a bha cliùmhor**.

Thathar ag ràdh gun do chuir am beachd sin dragh air Niall. Thachair an dithis bhràithrean ri chèile turas mar thuiteamas. Thug Niall a' chreidsinn nach fhaca e, no nach do dh'aithnich e, a bhràthair. Cha robh Iain a' dol a ghabhail ri sin. Ann an guth mòr, thuirt e, 'Math dh'fhaodte nach aithnich thu mi, ach 's ann agams' a tha fios gun do chaidil do mhàthair le m' athair!' Chan eil fios againn dè thuirt Niall!

Bha Iain gu tric ri cleas is plòigh. Leis gun robh e na mharaiche, bha e air sgilean agus eòlas a thogail ann an dùthchannan cèine. Bhathar ag ràdh gun do dh'ionnsaich e mu gheasadaireachd bho bhoireannach ann am Montreal ann an Canada. No math dh'fhaodte gun deach e gu sgoil-dhubh anns an Eadailt.

Co-dhiù bha an fhìrinn aca gus nach robh, bha Iain air leth sgileil mar chleasaiche draoidheil. Nuair a bha aige ri pàigheadh airson deoch, uaireannan bhiodh e a' tarraing buinn a sia bho na muinchillean aige. Bha cleas aige far am biodh e a' tarraing ribeanan fada às a bheul. Bha e aithnichte fad is farsaing ann an Alba mar '*The Wizard of the North*'.

Math dh'fhaodte gur e 'Gillean Ghleann Dail' an t-òran as ainmeile aige:

'Illean òga tapaidh,
Tha 'n Gleann Dail ag èirigh suas,
Tha cuid dhibh a tha deònach
Ur lòn thoirt far a' chuain.
Nis, èistibh ris an òran
Rinn MacLeòid a chuir a' chuairt,
'S bidh cuimhn' agaibh an-còmhnaidh air,
Nuair sheòlas sibh à Cluaidh.

Thathar ag ràdh gun robh Iain aig an taigh ann an Gleann Dail air fòrladh nuair a chruthaich e an t-òran seo. Bha e ann am bothan cuide ri gillean òga às an sgìre. Bha e ag innse dhaibh mu a bheatha mar mharaiche. A rèir beul-aithris, chruthaich Iain an dàn mar dhòigh airson sgeul a bheatha innse dhaibh.

Nuair a dh'èisteas sibh ris an òran, tha e làn rabhaidhean do dh'fhir òga – gu sònraichte mu dheidhinn deoch-làidir agus boireannaich. Saoilidh mi, ge-tà, gun robh Iain a' gabhail spòrs leis an luchd-èisteachd. Ach, gu dearbh, chan e deagh dhealbh a chruthaich de bheatha an t-seòladair. Seo an còigeamh rann de Ghillean Ghleann Dail:

Gur iomadh rud a chì thu
Mun till thu far do chuairt,
Gun toir droch lòn do neart asad
'S a' mhaise bha nad ghruaidh.
Chì thu daoine bàsachadh
Gun bhàigh riu' no truas,
Ach slabhraidhean mun sliasaidean
'S an tiodhlacadh sa chuan.

Tha bàrdachd mhath anns an dàn, ged a tha e rudeigin eadar-dhealaichte bho na sgrìobhadh a bhràthair, Niall! Cha robh càil romansach mu a bheatha air druim a' chuain, a rèir Iain Duibh. Fàgaidh mi sibh leis an t-siathamh rann:

Nuair dh'èireas stoirm le cabhaig ort,
'S an fhairg' ag at na glinn,
Na tonnan uaine chlisgeas tu,
A' bristeadh mu do dhruim,
Gu slatan àrda cuirear thu,
Ged bhitheadh tu car tinn,
Gur tric riut fhèin a chanas tu
'Bu mhath a bhith air tìr.'

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Faclan na Litreach: Bàird Ghleann Dail: *The Bards of Glendale;* na bu sgileile: *more skilful;* sgoil-dhubh: *school of the 'black arts';* ribeanan: *ribbons;* fòrladh: *(shore) leave;* bothan: *bothy.*

Abairtean na Litreach: Thathar ag ràdh gun do chuir am beachd sin dragh air Niall: *it is said that Neil was annoyed by that opinion;* thachair an dithis bhràithrean ri chèile turas mar thuiteamas: *the two brothers met up once by accident;* no nach do dh'aithnich e: *or that he didn't recognise;* 's ann agams' a tha fios gun do chaidil do mhàthair le m' athair: *I happen to know that your mother slept with my father;* bha X gu tric ri cleas is plòigh: *X was often involved in mischievous trickery;* gun do dh'ionnsaich e mu gheasadaireachd: *that he learned about conjuring;* co-dhiù bha an fhìrinn aca gus nach robh: *whether or not they spoke the truth;* bhiodh e a' tarraing buinn a sia bho na muinchillean aige: *he would draw sixpence coins from his sleeves;*'illean òga tapaidh, tha 'n Gleann Dail ag èirigh suas: *young stalwart lads who are growing up in Glendale;* tha cuid dhibh a tha deònach ur lòn thoirt far a' chuain: *some of you are willing to make your living from the ocean;* nuair sheòlas sibh à Cluaidh: *when you sail out of the Clyde;* làn rabhaidhean do dh'fhir òga: *full of warnings for young men;* gun toir droch lòn do neart asad: *that bad food will take your strength from you;* 's a' mhaise bha nad ghruaidh: *and the beauty that was in your cheek;* ach slabhraidhean mun sliasaidean 's an tiodhlacadh sa chuan: *but chains around their thighs and their being buried at sea;* 's an fhairg' ag at na

glinn: *and the sea swelling in her troughs;* gu slatan àrda cuirear thu: *to the high yards you'll be put;* bu mhath a bhith air tìr: *[I] would like to be on land.*
<u>Puing-chànain na Litreach</u>: **Na tonnan uaine chlisgeas tu**: ***the green waves that alarm you.*** *Are you surprised that the nominative plural form of* tonn *'wave' is* tonnan*, rather than* tuinn*? The truth is – it can be either. This is not unknown – some other nouns pluralise through either adding a terminal* -an *or by slenderisation, depending on dialect. Examples are* facal *'word' which can become* faclan *or* facail *'words' and* gartan *'tick (insect)' which pluralises to* gartanan *or* gartain.
<u>Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach</u>: **ged as e Niall a bha cliùmhor:** *although it is Neil that was renowned.*

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