

# An Litir Bheag

## le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

An Litir Bheag is a shortened and simplified version of Ruairidh's Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh (also available on the BBC website), designed for those who are at an earlier stage of learning Gaelic. The topic each week is the same as Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh so that, once the Litir Bheag is mastered, a student of the language might wish to try the full Litir. This is Litir Bheag 90 (which corresponds to Litir 394). Ruairidh can be contacted at [roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk).

Sgrìobh Màrtainn MacIlleMhàrtainn an leabhar *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland*. Nochd an leabhar ann an seachd ceud deug 's a trì (1703). Bha MacIlleMhàrtainn ann an Uibhist. Sgrìobh e mu mar a bha daoine a' cleachdadh ròin.

Bha iad ag ithe nan ròin. Bha iad a' cumail na feòla thairis air a' gheamhradh. Ach, as t-earrach, bha samh uabhasach air an fheadil.

Bha bian an ròin feumail. Bha feadhainn a' cur pìos de bhian orra mar leigheas airson siataig. Agus bha iad a' ceangal crann treabhaidh ri each le stiallan de bhian ròin – an àite ròp.

Sgrìobh MacIlleMhàrtainn mun dòigh anns an robh na daoine ann an Heisgeir a' glacadh ròin. 'S e Heisgeir eileanan beaga gu siar air Uibhist. Chan eil duine a' fuireach ann an-diugh. Ach bha daoine a' fuireach ann uaireigin. Bha crodh aca. Bha arbhar aca. Ach cha robh mòine no fiodh aca. Bha iad a' cleachdadh buachair thioram no feamainn thioram mar chonnadh.

Bha muinntir Heisgeir a' dèanamh lìon de ghaoisid eich – 's e sin *horse hair*. Gaoisid eich. Bha an lìon mar phoca. Bha iad a' ceangal aon cheann dheth le bhith a' tarraing air sreangan. Chuir iad an lìon anns a' mhuir. Nuair a chaidh ròin a-steach ann, dhùin iad an lìon.

Sgrìobh MacIlleMhàrtainn mu chòmhradh eadar dithis – fear Pròstanach agus fear Caitligeach. Bha iad a' deasbad an diofair eadar iasg is ròin. Bha na Caitligich anns na h-eileanan ag ithe feòil ròin aig àm a' Charghais – no *Lent*. Bha am Pròstanach ag ràdh gun robh an Caitligeach a' briseadh riaghailtean na h-Eaglaise aige fhèin. Carson? Uill, thuirt e, chan e ròin iasg.

Thuirt am fear Caitligeach nach robh ròin ag ithe dad ach iasg. Mar sin, 's e iasg a bh' ann. Cha do dh'aontaich am fear Pròstanach. Tha an ròin muir-thìreach, thuirt e – sin *amphibious* – muir-thìreach. Bidh ròin a' cur seachad mòran ùine air tìr. Cha bhi iasg a' dèanamh sin. Cuideachd – thuirt e – mar gun robh seo a' dearbhadh na cùise – bidh ròin a' dèanamh braidhm fuaimneach!

\* \* \* \* \*

**Faclan is abairtean:** Màrtainn MacIlleMhàrtainn: *Martin Martin*; nochd an leabhar: *the book appeared*; mu mar a bha daoine a' cleachdadh ròin: *about how*

*people were using seals; ag ithe nan ròn: eating the seals; a' cumail na feòla thairis air a' gheamhradh: keeping the meat over the winter; as t-earrach, bha samh uabhasach air an fheadil: in the spring there was a terrible smell on the meat; pìos de bhian orra mar leigheas airson siataig: a piece of [seal]skin on them as a cure for sciatica; a' ceangal crann treabhaidh ri each le stiallan: tying a plough to a horse with strips; an àite ròp: in place of rope; mun dòigh anns an robh na daoine ann an Heisgeir a' glacadh ròn: about the way in which the people in Heisker were catching seals; bha daoine a' fuireach ann uaireigin: people used to live there; crodh: cattle; arbhar: corn; cha robh mòine no fiodh aca: they did not have peat or wood; buachair thioram no feamainn thioram mar chonnadh: dried cow dung or dried seaweed as fuel; lìon de ghaoisid eich: a net of horse hair; a' ceangal aon cheann dheth le bhith a' tarraing air sreangan: closing one end of it by pulling on strings; dhùin iad an lìon: they closed the net; mu chòmhradh eadar dithis: about a conversation between two people; Pròstanach: Protestant; Caitligeach: Catholic; bha iad a' deasbad an diofair eadar iasg is ròn: they were debating the difference between a fish and a seal; ag ithe feòil ròin aig àm a' Charghais: eating seal meat at the time of Lent; a' briseadh riaghailtean na h-Eaglaise aige fhèin: breaking the rules of his own church; chan e ròn iasg: a seal is not a fish; nach robh ròn ag ithe dad ach iasg: that the seal ate nothing but fish; muir-thìreach: amphibious; a' cur seachad mòran ùine air tìr: spending much time on land; mar gun robh seo a' dearbhadh na cùise: as if this were proving the issue; bidh ròn a' dèanamh braidhm fuaimneach: a seal breaks wind loudly.*

ends