

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 333 (which corresponds to Litir 637). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleane@bbc.co.uk.

Papar – Gaelic-speaking hermits – were living in Iceland in the year 870. Íslendingabók tells us that. That's the year the Norse appeared. The papar left. They did not return. They left bells and books on the island.

But other Gaels appeared in Iceland. Some of the Norse had Gaelic wives. And the slaves of the Norse were from Ireland and Scotland. They spoke Gaelic.

We've learned from DNA, history, place-names and language that the Gaels influenced the people of Iceland. We don't know how many Gaels there were. Some people say that they made up to forty percent of the population.

Were the slaves telling stories? Did the Icelanders get their love of stories from the Gaels? Experts recognise similarities between the old Gaelic stories and the old Icelandic stories. That's an interesting thought.

Before I bid farewell to Iceland, I want to tell you about a famous mountain in that country.

Bha papar – dìthreabhaich Ghàidhealach – a' fuireach ann an Innis Tìle ann an ochd ceud is seachdad (870). Tha an Íslendingabók ag innse sin dhuinn. 'S e sin a' bhliadhna a nochd na Lochlannaich. Dh'fhalbh na papar. Cha do thill iad. Dh'fhàg iad clagan agus leabhraichean air an eilean.

Ach nochd Gàidheil eile ann an Innis Tìle. Bha mnathan Gàidhealach aig cuid de Lochlannaich. Agus bha na tràilleann aig na Lochlannaich à Èirinn is Alba. Bha Gàidhlig acasan.

Dh'ionnsaich sinn bho DNA, eachdraidh, ainmean-àite is cànan gun tug na Gàidheil buaidh air muinntir Innis Tìle. Chan eil fios againn cia mheud Gàidheal a bha ann. Tha cuid ag ràdh gun robh iad a' dèanamh suas ri ceathrad às a' cheud dhen t-sluagh.

An robh na tràilleann ag innse sgeulachdan? An d' fhuair na Tìlich an gràdh aca air stòiridhean bho na Gàidheil? Tha eòlaichean ag aithneachadh rudan coltach eadar na seann stòiridhean Gàidhealach agus na seann stòiridhean Tìleach. 'S e smuain inntinneach a tha sin.

Mus leig mi soraidh le Innis Tìle, tha mi ag iarraidh innse dhuibh mu bheinn ainmeil anns an dùthaich

It's about the same height as Ben Nevis. But, unlike Ben Nevis, it erupts from time to time. It's a volcano. It's name is Hekla.

Hekla erupted four times in the twentieth century. Some time or another it will erupt again. I put that out of my thoughts when I was close to it. But what about its name? Hekla means "cloak". It has mist/cloud on it like a cloak almost all the time.

Do you know another mountain called Hecla? There is one in South Uist. Does it often get mist/cloud on it as well? That would make sense.

But some people say that perhaps it's from Uist that the Icelandic name came. Perhaps some people went from the Western Isles to live in Iceland. They took the name "Hecla" with them. That's a thought. But one thing is true. It's safer living near the Hecla in Uist!

sin. Tha i mun aon àirde ri Beinn Nibheis. Ach, eucoltach ri Beinn Nibheis, bidh i a' spreadhadh bho àm gu àm. 'S e bholcàno a tha innte. 'S e an t-ainm oirre – *Hekla*.

Spreadh Hekla ceithir tursan anns an fhicheadamh linn. Uair no uaireigin bidh a' spreadhadh a-rithist. Chuir mi sin às mo cheann nuair a bha mi faisg oirre. Ach dè mu dheidhinn a h-ainm? Tha *hekla* a' ciallachadh *cleòca*. Bidh ceò oirre mar chleòca cha mhòr fad na h-ùine.

A bheil sibh eòlach air beinn eile air a bheil *Hecla*? Tha tè ann an Uibhist a Deas. Am bi ceò oirrese gu tric cuideachd? Bhiodh sin ciallach gu leòr.

Ach tha cuid ag ràdh gur dòcha gur ann à Uibhist a thàinig an t-ainm Tìleach. 'S dòcha gun deach feadhainn às na h-Eileanan an Iar a dh'fhuireach ann an Innis Tìle. Thug iad an t-ainm "Hecla" leotha. 'S e smuain a tha sin. Ach tha aon rud fìor. Tha e nas sàbhailte a bhith a' fuireach faisg air a' Hecla ann an Uibhist!