

Litir do Luchd-Ionnsachaidh **le Ruairidh MacIlleathain**

*A special programme, in the form of a “letter”, written and compiled by Roddy Maclean, and specifically aimed at Gaelic learners who already have some knowledge of the language. A short vocabulary and comments on points of grammar and figures of speech are included with the text. If you have comments, Roddy can be contacted by e-mail at rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk **

Tha am feasgar ann. Tha Fionnghal Nic Dhòmhnail agus Fear Chinnseburg shuas air mullach a’ mhonaidh os cionn Phort Rìgh. Tha iad nan seasamh air tom fraoich, agus tha iad a’ coimhead sìos air Caolas Ratharsair. Tha iad a’ feuchainn, o àm gu àm, ri sealladh fhaotainn air an eathar anns a bheil am Prionnsa.

Tha Cinnseburg ag ràdh: “Tha sibh sgìth. Nach dèan sibh suidhe? Chan eil an t-eathar fhathast anns an t-sealladh.”

Tha Fionnghal a’ freagairt: “Tha – tha mi glè sgìth, ach chan eil saorsa fhathast ann. Tha sinn ann an cunnart an seo; dèanaibh suidhe sibh fhèin, air neo chithear sinn gu ro fhurasta le càirdean nan saighdearan shìos anns a’ bhaile.”

Bidh sibh eòlach air an eachdraidh. Tha i mu dheidhinn mar a fhuair Teàrlach Og Stiùbhart air falbh bho na saighdearan dearga anns an Eilean Sgitheanach an dèidh Blàr Chùil Lodair. Tharraing mi à dealbh-chluich Gàidhlig i, air a bheil “Fionnghal Nic Dhòmhnail”, a chaidh a sgrìobhadh le fear, I. M. Moffatt-Pender, agus a chaidh fhoillseachadh ann an leabhar ann an naoi ceud deug, leth-cheud ’s a ceithir (1954).

Cha robh mi air càil a chluinntinn mu Mhuffatt-Pender mus do cheannaich mi an leabhar agus ’s e a ghlac m’ aire gu robh na dealbhan-cluich dà-chànanach. Chan e gu bheil Gàidhlig is Beurla ann, ge-tà, ach dà Ghàidhlig - Gàidhlig na h-Alba is Gàidhlig na h-Eireann. Thug an t-ùghdar dà mhìle dhen leabhar seachad an-asgaidh – mìle do chloinn ann an Eirinn, agus mìle do chloinn ann an Alba, gus am faiceadh an dà chuid cho faisg ‘s a tha na cànanan.

Bha Moffatt-Pender anns na Sìophortaich anns a’ chiad chogadh, agus ’s ann le taic bho shaighdearan anns an rèisimeid sin a thòisich e air Gàidhlig ionnsachadh. Phòs e tè à Melbourne agus, an dèidh a’ chogaidh, thug e seachad mòran tìde ann an Astràilia. Ach bha e tric a-bhos ann an Alba agus sheas e mar thagraiche-pàrlamaid airson nan Eilean Siar ann an naoi ceud deug ’s naoi ar fhichead (1929). Ged nach d’fhuair e a-steach, choisinn e cliù dha fhèin airson nan òraidean Gàidhlig aige aig àm an taghaidh!

Bha e an sàs gu mòr ann am pìobaireachd is dannsa Gaidhealach, sgrìobh e grunn leabhraichean ann an Gàidhlig is Gaeilge agus bha e cliùiteach cuideachd anns a’ Bhreatainn Bhig, far an robh e na “Dhraoidh” anns a’ Ghorsedd. Ann an Astràilia bha e na cheannard air Comunn Gàidhlig Bhictoria airson ùine mhòir.

Bha e cuideachd uabhasach dèidheil air spòrs. Chluich e rugbaidh airson Alba na òige, bha e math air *curling*, agus choisich e iomadach mìle air frith-rathaidean na Gaidhealtachd. Ann an Astràilia, choisich e turas gun stad bho bhaile ris an canar Bendigo gu ruig' a dhachaigh ann am Melbourne, barrachd na ceud mìle, ann an deich uairean fichead. Bha e còrr is leth-cheud bliadhna a dh'aois aig an àm.

Tha còig dealbhan-cluich anns an leabhar a cheannaich mi, agus bhuannaich Moffatt-Pender duaisean le trì aca aig Mòdan Nàiseanta. Bhuannaich “Fionnghal Nic Dhòmhnail” aig Mòd a' Ghearasdain ann an naoi ceud deug, is dhà-dheug ar fhichead (1932).

Tha na dealbhan uile a' crìochnachadh leis na faclan (òrdughan airson luchd-stiùiridh an àrd-ùrlair) – “thig am brat a-nis' a-nuas”. Uill, thàinig am brat a-nuas mu dheireadh air Moffatt-Pender fhèin, mar a thig air gach fear is tè againn aig a' cheann thall. Tha an duine fhèin fon fhòid, ach tha ceist agam mu dheidhinn na dìleib a dh'fhàg e dhuinn - a dhealbhan-cluich. Saoil am faic sinn air an àrd-ùrlar a-rithist iad – 's dòcha anns an dà Ghàidhlig – uair neo uaireigin?

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Faclan na seachdaine: Fionnghal Nic Dhòmhnail: *Flora MacDonald*; Fear Chinnseburg: *Alexander MacDonald of Kingsburgh who assisted Flora and the Prince*; Caolas Ratharsair: *The Sound of Raasay*; an-asgaidh: *free of charge*; Na Siophortaich: *The Seaforth Highlanders*; rèisimeid: *regiment*; Draoidh: *Druid*; Gorsedd: *meeting of bards and druids (Welsh/Breton)*; dìleab (genitive dìleib): *legacy*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: tha iad nan seasamh air tom fraoich: *they are standing on a heather knoll*; nach dèan sibh suidhe?: *won't you sit down?*; chithear sinn gu ro fhurasta le X: *we will be seen too easily by X*; tharraing mi à dealbh-chluich Gàidhlig i: *I extracted it (eachdraidh is a feminine word) from a Gaelic play*; gus am faiceadh an dà chuid cho faisg 's a tha na cànanan: *so that both (groups of children) would see how close the languages are*; thug e seachad mòran tìde ann an Astràilia: *he spent much time in Australia*; bha e tric a-bhos ann an Alba: *he was often over here in Scotland*; sheas e mar thagraiche-pàrlamaid airson nan Eilean Siar: *he stood as a parliamentary candidate for the Western Isles*; choisinn e cliù dha fhèin: *he won himself a reputation*; òrdughan airson luchd-stiùiridh an àrd-ùrlair: *instructions for the stage managers*; thig am brat a-nis a-nuas: *the curtain will now descend*; uair neo uaireigin: *sometime or other*.

Puing ghràmair na seachdaine: Tha iad a' feuchainn...ri sealladh fhaotainn air an eathar anns a bheil am Prionnsa: *they are trying to get a view of the boat containing the Prince. Are you familiar with the word “eathar”, which means a small to medium-sized boat? In some parts of the country eg Wester Ross it is more common than bàta. People will normally talk of “eathraichean-iasgaich” rather than “bàtaichean-iasgaich”. In fact, although your dictionary might list “bàta” as the Gaelic equivalent of “boat”, there are many different words for different types of vessel, and this would make a good topic of conversation with your Gaelic teacher. Here are some other examples of boat types still in use today (although be aware that the Gaelic terms may vary from place to place): sgoth: a skiff or sailing craft, pointed at both stern and bow; geòla: a small dinghy or rowing boat; culaidh: the Sutherland equivalent of eathar; coit: a small dinghy for use on rivers or freshwater lochs (the Gaelic for Boat of Garten, an old crossing on the River Spey, is Coit a' Ghartain). A “yacht” (despite what the dictionaries might say) is generally referred to as a “yaht”, usually written gheàt (the word is derived from the English and the orthography is still a matter of contention).*

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine: mar a thig air gach fear is tè againn aig a' cheann thall: *as comes on every man and woman of us in the end*. Aig (or air) a' cheann thall is a good Gaelic idiom for "in the end, in the final instance". The increasingly common "aig deireadh an latha" is an English idiom.

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