

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 roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk **

A bheil cuimhne agaibh air Iain Major, neo John Major, mar a th’ ac’ air ann am Beurla? Tha fhios gu bheil. ’S e e fhèin a thug iomradh ainmeil air na rudan a bu mhòtha a chòrd ris. Seana-mhnàthan a’ raighdeadh baidisgalan air feasgar samhraidh, leann meadh-bhlàth taobh a-muigh taigh-seinnse, agus criogad air an fheur. Dealbh snog do mhòran, ach tha fhios nach robh e a’ bruidhinn mu dheidhinn Na Hearadh!

Ach an robh fios agaibh gun tuirt Iain Major seo: *O chionn ùine nach robh fada, bha a’ Ghàidhlig air a bruidhinn leis a’ mhòr-chuid againn.* Seadh, Iain Major. Ach feumaidh mi a bhith onarach. Chan e an aon Iain Major a bh’ ann! Tha an darna fear na Shasannach agus bha e na Phrìomhaire ann am Breatainn o chionn beagan bhliadhnaichean. Bha am fear eile na Albannach agus bha e beò o chionn còig ceud bliadhna.

Ged is e “Major” a chanas sinn ris an-diugh, thathar a’ smaoinichadh gur e “Mair” an sloinneadh a bh’ air ann am Beurla anns an sgìre far an do thogadh e – Lodainn an Ear faisg air Dùn Eideann. Ach sgrìobh e gu mòr ann an Laidinn, agus anns a’ chànan sin, ’s e “Majorus” a bh’ aige air fhèin. ’S e an leabhar a b’ ainmeile a sgrìobh e – *Historia Majoris Britanniae*. Tha sin a’ ciallachadh “Eachdraidh Bhreatainn Mhòir”, ach tha cuid a’ cumail a-mach gu robh Major a’ gabhail spòrs leis na faclan, is a’ fàgail smuain aig feadhainn gu robh am “Majoris” a’ seasamh air a shon fhèin!

Bha Major air thoiseach air a’ chuid mhòir ann a bhith a’ cleachdadh nam faclan *Great Britain* neo *Greater Britain*, ceud bliadhna mus do chuir Rìgh Seumas VI sin mar thìotal air an rìoghachd ùir aige, nuair a fhuair e crùn Shasainn.

Chaidh Iain Major gu sgoil ann an Haddington, agus chaidh e an uairsin gu Oilthigh Chambridge. Ann an ceithir cheud deug, ceithir fichead ’s a trì-deug (1493), chaidh e a dh’Oilthigh Pharis far an do ghabh e ceum. ’S iad na cuspairean a bh’ aige – feallsanachd, diadhachd agus ealain-reusanachaidh, neo loidig.

Chuir e seachad bliadhnaichean mar òraidiche anns an Fhraing, ach thill e a dh’Alba ann an còig ceud deug ’s a h-ochd-deug (1518) mar Ard-ollamh na Feallsanachd is na Diadhachd ann an Oilthigh Ghlaschu. Roimhe sin bha e air a’ chuid mhòr dhen leabhar aige, mu dheidhinn eachdraidh Bhreatainn, a sgrìobhadh.

Tha beachdan Mhajor anns an leabhar gu math inntinneach. Bha e na bu bhàidheile ri muinntir Shasainn na mòran eile de luchd-eachdraidh na h-Alba aig an àm. Agus bha e dhen bheachd gu robh an t-àm ann an dà rìoghachd, Alba agus Sasainn, a chur còmhla fon aon rìgh neo bànrigh. Sgrìobh e tric mu na “Breatannaich” neo “Britons” aig àm nuair a bha daoine eile rudeigin leisg a thaobh a bhith a’ cur na Sasannaich is na h-Albannaich còmhla mar sin.

Agus bha beachdan air leth inntinneach aige mu dheidhinn muinntir na h-Alba fhèin agus gu h-àraidh mu dheidhinn nan Gaidheal. Mar a thuirt mi aig an toiseach, sgrìobh e gu robh Gàidhlig air a bhith aig a’ mhòr-chuid de mhuinntir na h-Alba goirid ro linn fhèin. Agus dhion e am biadh àraidh a bh’ aig na h-Albannaich. “Faodaidh na Frangaich is na Sasannaich a bhith ri fanaid,” sgrìobh e, “ach tha sinne air batailean a bhuannachadh air an stuth seo”! Dè am biadh a bh’ ann? Innsidh mi sin dhuibh an ath sheachdain.

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Faclan na seachdainne: seana-mhnàthan: *old wives*; leann: *beer*; meadh-bhlàth: *lukewarm*; taigh-seinnse: *pub*; criogad: *cricket*; Na Hearadh: *Harris*; onarach: *honest*; Prìomhaire: *Prime Minister*; ceum: *degree (University)*; cuspairean: *subjects*.

Abairtean na seachdainne: ’s e e fhèin a thug iomradh ainmeil air na rudan a bu mhotha a chòrd ris: *it’s himself that made famous mention of the things he enjoyed most*; tha an darna fear na Shasannach: *the first (lit. the second) is an Englishman*; o chionn beagan bhliadhnaichean: *a few years ago*; bha am fear eile na Albannach: *the other was a Scot*; a’ seasamh air a shon fhèin: *standing for himself*; bha e na bu bhàidheile ri muinntir Shasainn: *he was more kindly disposed towards the people of England*; nuair a bha daoine eile rudeigin leisg a thaobh a bhith a’ cur X is Y còmhla mar sin: *when others were somewhat reluctant to put X and Y together like that*; goirid ro linn fhèin: *shortly before his time*; dhion e am biadh àraidh: *he defended the particular food*; faodaidh na Frangaich is na Sasannaich a bhith ri fanaid: *the French and English may well mock (us)*; tha sinne air batailean a bhuannachadh air an stuth seo: *we have won battles on this stuff*.

Puing ghràmair na seachdainne: mar Ard-ollamh na Feallsanachd is na Diadhachd ann an Oilthigh Ghlaschu: *as Professor of Philosophy and Divinity at the University of Glasgow*. Do you recall in *Litir 34 (14 January 2000)* that I mentioned that the Gaelic word for episcopacy is *easbaigeachd*, which is formed from *easbaig (bishop)* and *–(e)achd*? Here is a similar word – *diadhachd (Divinity, Theology)* – which is formed from *Dia (God)* and *–achd*, with the “*dh*” included to break up the double vowel sound. And it probably won’t surprise you to hear that *diadhach* or *diadhair* means a religious personage and that both words are masculine, while the form ending in *–(e)achd* is feminine. The verbal noun is a *diadhachadh* which means *deifying* and the adjective is *diadhaidh (godly, pious or divine)*. Such relationships between words are common, and an understanding of how they work (including the irregularities) can increase your word power quickly. *Feallsanachd (philosophy)* is feminine as might be expected, as it ends in *–achd*, but *feallsanach (philosopher)* is masculine. The adjective is *feallsanachail (philosophical)*. Try to work out the Gaelic for *tooth, toothed, baring your teeth, dentist and dentistry* and then check your answers with your teacher or in a dictionary.

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdainne: Chuir e seachad bliadhnaichean mar oraidiche: *he spent years as a lecturer*. This is a common expression and literally means “*he put past years*”. How would you say “*I spent years living in Germany*”?

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