

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 rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk **

An t-seachdain 's a chaidh, dh'innis mi dhuibh mu dheidhinn an sgoileir ainmeil Albannaich, Iain Major, a bha beò o chionn còig ceud bliadhna. Anns an leabhar mhòr aige mu eachdraidh Bhreatainn, am measg mòran rudan eile, dh'ion e cliù nan Albannach, agus am biadh aca. Bha droch bheachd aig na Sasannaich agus na Frangaich air min-choirce, ach sgrìobh Major gu robh a cho-chreutairean Albannach air batailean gu leòr a bhuannachadh, as dèidh dhaibh a h-ithe!

Thogadh Major ann an Lodainn agus 's e a' Bheurla a bh' aige mar phrìomh chànan. Agus tha e inntinneach na tha e ag ràdh mu dheidhinn suidheachadh an dà chànan, agus an dà shluaigh, ann an Alba aig an àm. Bha Gàidhlig aig an darna cuid de mhuinntir na rìoghachd ri linn, thuirt e, agus 's e an t-ainm a bh' aig daoine eile air an son – *na h-Albannaich Fhiadhaich, the Wild Scots*. B' iad an fheadhainn eile, aig an robh Beurla, *na h-Albannaich Thaisgeil, the Householding Scots*.

Ann an cuid de dhòighean, sgrìobh Major, bha na h-Albannaich Thaisgeil, na Goill, air thoiseach air an fheadhainn fhiadhaich, na Gaidheil. A thaobh aodach is beusachd, co-dhiù, bha iad na b' fheàrr. Ach bha na Gaidheil na b' fhèarr air sabaid. Agus thug Major adhbhar airson sin. Bha na h-Albannaich Fhiadhaich a' fuireach nas fhaide gu tuath, agus air sgàth 's gu robh iad a' tighinn às na beanntan, agus a' fuireach ann an coilltean, bha an nàdar na bu chogail. Ach, air an làimh eile, bha iad math air ceòl. Agus 's e an ionnstramaid a bh' aca – a' chlarsach.

Bha na h-Albannaich Thaisgeil na b' fheàrr, ge-tà, ann a bhith a' riaghladh na rìoghachd, air sgàth 's gu robh iad na bu shìobhalta. Ach bha cuid de na Gaidheil Fhiadhaich a' tuigsinn mar a dh'fheumadh iad a bhith fo ùghdarras nan cùirtean agus fo ùghdarras an Rìgh. B' iad sin an fheadhainn aig an robh crodh is caoraich is eich. Ach an fheadhainn nach robh beartach, uill, thuirt Major gu robh iad coma mu ghnòthaichean mar sin. Bha iad leisg, agus cha robh càil ann a b' fheàrr leotha na bhith a' sealg.

Agus, sgrìobh Major, bha gràin aig na Gaidheil air na Goill agus air na Sasannaich agus, gu dearbh, air duine sam bith a bha sìtheil, sìobhalta is reusanta – chan ann air sgàth 's gu robh iad sìtheil, sìobhalta is reusanta, ach air sgàth 's gu robh cànan eadar-dhealaichte aca. Tha amharas agam gum biodh beachd Goill air na Gaidheil aig an àm, agus beachd Gaidheil air na Goill rudeigin coltach ri chèile.

Sgrìobh Major rudan inntinneach mu Eirinn cuideachd. Bha e dhen bheachd gu robh an t-eilean gu math torrach, le aibhnichean brèagha làn iasg. Bha an ceann a deas fo smachd Rìgh

Shasainn, agus bha an ceann a tuath ann an làmhnan nan ceann-cinnidh Gaidhealach. Uill, tha sin air atharrachadh.

Ach tha aon rud ann nach eil air atharrachadh. Cha robh nathraichean ann an Eirinn an uairsin, agus chan eil a-nise. Agus 's e a bu choireach – agus cha chluinn thu bìog air Naomh Pàdraig an seo – 's e a bu choireach gu robh an talamh, an ùir, a' cur às don a h-uile beathach puinnseanach. Ma bheir thu ùir Eireannach gu dùthaich eile, thuir e, gheibh nathair sam bith a thèid faisg oirre, bàs. Uill, tha mi a' smaoinneachadh gu bheil sin a' sealltainn dhuinn aon rud mu dheidhinn Iain Mhajoir. A dh'aindeoin cho math 's a bha a chuid sgoilearachd anns an fharsaingeachd, cha ghabh a h-uile rud a sgrìobh e creidsinn.

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Faclan na seachdainne: min-choirce: *oatmeal*; ri linn: *in his day*; fiadhaich: *wild*; taigheil: *domestic, householding*; beusachd: *moral rectitude*; ionnstramaid: *musical instrument*; clàrsach: *harp*; sìobhalta: *civil, peaceful, mild*; beartach: *wealthy*; sìtheil: *peaceful*; reusanta: *reasonable*; torrach: *fertile*; Naomh Pàdraig: *Saint Patrick*; ùir: *soil*; nathair, nathraichean: *snake, snakes*

Abairtean na seachdainne: dh'ion e cliù nan Albannach: *he defended the reputation of the Scots*; gu robh a cho-chreutairean Albannach air batailean a bhuannachadh, as dèidh dhaibh a h-ithe: *that his fellow Scots had won battles after eating it (fem.)*; bha X na b' fheàrr air sabaid: *X was better at fighting*; bha an nàdair na bu chogaile: *their nature was more bellicose*; bha X a' tuigsinn mar a dh'fheumadh iad a bhith fo ùghdarras nan cùirtean agus fo ùghdarras an Rìgh: *X understood that they were required to be under the authority of the courts and of the King*; thuir Major gu robh iad coma mu ghnothaichean mar sin: *Major said they were indifferent to (ie that they disregarded) things like that*; cha robh càil ann a b' fheàrr leotha na bhith a' sealg: *there was nothing they would rather do than go hunting*; aibhnichean brèagha làn iasg: *beautiful rivers full of fish*; ann an làmhnan nan ceann-cinnidh Gaidhealach: *in the hands of the Gaelic chieftains*; a dh'aindeoin 's cho math a bha a chuid sgoilearachd: *regardless of how good his scholarship was*; cha ghabh a h-uile rud a sgrìobh e creidsinn: *not everything he wrote can be believed*.

Puing ghràmair na seachdainne: Dh'innis mi dhuibh mu dheidhinn an sgoileir ainmeil Albannaich, Iain Major: *I told you about the famous Scottish scholar, John Major (note that sgoilear may also mean a pupil at school ie someone who goes to "sgoil" but it is usually obvious which meaning is intended). Are you clear as to why we say Albannaich, with the slenderised ending, and not Albannach? The reason is that the adjective Albannach (Scottish) is qualifying a noun, sgoileir, which is in the genitive case, following a compound preposition (mu dheidhinn). Sgoilear is slenderised in the genitive to become sgoileir, with an attendant change in pronunciation, both of the terminal vowel and of the "r". And the adjectives change with it. Ainmeil is already slender, the final vowel being an "i" so it cannot be changed, but Albannach is changed to Albannaich. Note that the man's name, however, being separated from sgoilear and its adjectives, is not in the genitive, but in the nominative case. In the second last sentence of the Litir you see it in its genitive form, Iain Mhajoir (Iain, already being slender and being incapable of being lenited, remains unchanged).*

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdainne: bha gràin aig na Gaidheil air na Goill agus air na Sasannaich: *the Gaels hated the Lowlanders and English*. Tha gràin aig X air Y means that X hates Y. eg tha gràin aige orm (*he hates me*), tha gràin agam orra (*I hate them*).

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