

## **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](mailto:roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk) \**

A bheil an t-ainm Sir Pòl Edmund de Strzelecki a’ ciallachadh dad dhuibh? Cuiridh mi geall nach eil, ach, o chionn ceud gu leth bliadhna, bha mòran Ghaidheal gu math eòlach air ainm, agus bha a’ chuid a bu mhotha aca dhen bheachd, a rèir choltais, gur e trustar a bh’ ann. Nuair a chanas mi Gaidheil, tha mi a-mach air Gaidheil Astràilia agus, ann an meadhan an naoidheamh linn deug, cha bu bheag an àireamh aca.

’S e duine-uasal Pòlainneach a bh’ ann an Strzelecki, agus thàinig e a dh’Alba turas nuair a bha e òg. Chuir e seachad ùine air an fhearann aig Pàdraig Sellar ann an Srath Nabhair, às an deach na daoine dùthchasach fhuadachadh. Tha e coltach gu robh Strzelecki dhen bheachd gu robh Sellar a’ dèanamh rudan math’ ann, is ga adhartachadh airson an t-saoghail mhòir. Ach cha b’ e sin an t-adhbhar a bha gràin aig Gaidheil Astràilia air.

Chaidh e a dh’Astràilia ann an ochd ceud deug, trithead ’s a naoi (1839), agus cha b’ fhada gus an robh e air a dhol a-mach don dùthaich, a’ rannsachadh sgìrean iomallach. Bliadhna as dèidh sin, chaidh e tro cheann an ear-dheas New South Wales, eadar Sydney agus Melbourne, nach robh aithnichte idir do na daoine geala. No, ’s e sin a bha Strzelecki a’ smaoinichadh co-dhiù.

Chuir e seachad còrr is dà mhìos anns na beanntan is coilltean mus do ràinig e Melbourne, a bha dìreach na bhaile beag bìodach aig an àm. Lorg e aibhnichean, lochan is beanntan dhan tug e ainmean agus, don sgìre gu lèir, thug e an t-ainm Gipps’ Land, as dèidh Riaghladair New South Wales, Sir Seòras Gipps, an t-ainm a th’ air fhathast.

Ach chuir sin caothach air na h-Albannaich, oir bha iadsan a’ cumail a-mach gu robh fear dhen fheadhainn aca fhèin air a bhith ann roimhe, agus gu robh e fhèin air ainmean a chur air na beanntan is eile. Agus chuir e an t-ainm air an sgìre air fad “Caledonia Australis”.

B’ esan Aonghas Mac a’ Mhaoilein. Bhuineadh e don Eilean Sgitheanach, ged a bha e air ùine a thoirt seachad ann am Barraigh cuideachd, agus bha e ag obair mar mhanaidsear-stuic aig fear de na h-uachdarain Albannach ann an New South Wales. Chaidh e air cuairt fhada tro Chaledonia Australis ach – agus seo a’ mhearachd a rinn e – cha do dh’fhoillsich e càil mu dheidhinn don mhòr-shluagh.

Bha diofar bheachdan air na bha a’ gluasad an dithis fhear-rannsachaidh. Thuirt luchd-taic Strzelecki nach robh Mac a’ Mhaoilein na fhear-rannsachaidh ceart anns an t-seadh ’s nach robh e airson fiosrachadh a leigeil ma sgaoil mu na h-àiteachan a lorg e; bha e a’ cleith an fhiosrachaidh gus am faigheadh e fhèin buannachd às le bhith a’ cur crodh is caoraich air an fhearann as fheàrr mus robh fios aig duine sam bith eile mu dheidhinn.

Air an làimh eile, thog luchd-taic Mhic a' Mhaoilein iomhaigh dheth mar dhuine iriosal nach robh idir airson cliù a choisinn dha fhèin am measg àrd-urrachan na dùthcha. Cha robh e ag iarraidh a bhith cliùmhòr, mar a bha Strzelecki. Agus chaidh na casaidean air ais is air adhart, le gach taobh a' dèanamh dheth gur e am fear eile a bha fèineil.

Chan eil an deasbad buileach seachad an-diugh, agus beachdan làidir ann fhathast airson, agus an aghaidh, Mhic a' Mhaoilein. Ach bha aon sluagh ann an Astràilia a bha coma mu dheidhinn – na daoine dubha a bh' air a bhith a' fuireach ann airson nam mìltean bhliadhnaichean, fada mus robh guth air Caledonia neo air a' Phòlainn, neo air Sir Seòras Gipps.

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**Faclan na seachdaine:** trustar: *a rogue, bad person*; Pòlainneach: *Polish*; Srath Nabhair: *Strathnaver*; riaghladair: *governor*; fear-rannsachaidh: *explorer*; mearachd: *mistake*; cliùmhòr: *renowned, celebrated*; casaidean: *accusations*.

**Abairtean na seachdaine:** às an deach na daoine dùthchasach fhuadachadh: *I from which the native people were cleared*; ga adhartachadh airson an t-saoghail mhòir: *improving it for the greater world*; a' rannsachadh sgìrean iomallach: *exploring remote areas*; nach robh aithnichte idir do na daoine geala: *which was unknown to the white people*; chuir sin caothach air na h-Albannaich: *that greatly angered the Scots*; gu robh fear dhen fheadhainn aca fhèin air a bhith ann roimhe: *that one of their own had been there before*; bha e ag obair mar mhanaidsear-stuic aig fear de na h-uachdarain: *he was working as livestock manager to one of the landowners*; cha do dh'fhoillsich e càil mu dheidhinn don mhòr-shluagh: *he didn't tell the population anything about it*; nach robh e airson fiosrachadh a leigeil ma sgaoil: *that he didn't want to release information*; bha e a' cleith an fhiosrachaidh gus am faigheadh e fhèin buannachd às: *he was keeping information hidden so that he himself would benefit*; thog luchd-taic X iomhaigh dheth mar dhuine iriosal: *X's supporters created an image for him as a humble man*; le gach taobh a' dèanamh dheth gur e am fear eile a bha fèineil: *with each side making out that it was the other man who was selfish*; chan eil an deasbad buileach seachad an-diugh: *the debate is not entirely over today*.

**Puing ghràmair na seachdaine:** ann am meadhan an naoidheamh linn deug, cha bu bheag an àireamh aca: *in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, that was not small (there were reputedly 20,000 Gaelic speakers in Australia at that time). The use of the assertive verb (“is”) in this type of phrase may seem a little old-fashioned and it probably shouldn't be overdone, certainly in conversation. But used appropriately, it is very neat. Remember that, in the past tense, it is bu (or b' before vowels or before f followed by a vowel). Bu usually lenites the following word eg bu mhòr am bonnach (the cake was large), bu bheag an t-iongnadh (little was the surprise), bu mhise am ministear (I was the minister). However, it does not lenite words starting with “d” or “t” or “s” eg bu daor an crùn (the crown was expensive), bu tusa an duine! (you were the man! ie well done), nach bu sinne na gaisgich (weren't we the heroes). It is worth noting that the assertive verb cannot exist independently of its subject, ie while we may say “tha” or “rinn” or “chì” without an accompanying noun or pronoun, we cannot say “is” or “bu” on their own. If the question is asked, “am bu tusa an dotair?”, the answer must be “bu mhi” or “cha bu mhi”.*

**Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine:** cuiridh mi geall nach eil: *I bet (it) doesn't.*

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