

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 **

Ann an Litir an t-seachdain sa chaidh, dh’ainmich mi Ramsay Dòmhnallach, no Seumas Ramsay Dòmhnallach, airson ainm slàn a thoirt dha. Bha e na Phrìomhaire ann an trì riaghaltasan eadar-dhealaichte – an riaghaltas Làbarach ann an naoi ceud deug, fichead ’s a trì gu fichead ’s a ceithir (1923-4) agus am fear Làbarach sia bliadhna as dèidh sin, agus cuideachd anns an riaghaltas nàiseanta eadar naoi ceud deug, trithead ’s a h-aon agus trithead ’s a còig (1931-5).

Tha a’ chuid as mò de na leabhraichean eachdraidh ag innse dhuinn gu robh e na mhac diolain aig Màiri Ramsay a bha ag obair ann am muinntireas ann an Inbhir Losaidh, agus gur e an t-ainm a bh’ air aig àm a bhreith – Seumas Dòmhnallach Ramsay, ged a chaidh sin atharrachadh mus deach e don sgoil. Tha iad cuideachd ag innse dhuinn gum b’ e athair fear Iain Dòmhnallach, a bhuineadh don Eilean Dubh, agus a bha ag obair mar sgalag. Tuigidh sibh nach ann beartach a bha Ramsay nuair a bha e òg.

Co-dhiù, ’s e sin a tha na leabhraichean a’ cumail a-mach. Ach thàinig e am follais o chionn ghoirid gu bheil beachd eile ann mun chùis, fada gu siar air an Eilean Dubh, am measg nan Gaidheal ann an ceann a deas an Eilein Sgitheanaich. Tha feadhainn ann a sin dhen bheachd gun do rugadh Iain Dòmhnallach, athair Ramsay, ann an Tòcabhaig, baile beag biodach ann an Slèite ann am fìor cheann a deas an eilein. Cha robh e na sgalaig, tha iad ag ràdh, ach na chlachair le sinnsireachd a chaidh air ais gu Sgrios Ghlinn Chomhainn aig deireadh an t-seachdamh linn deug.

A rèir beul-aithris, bha triùir bhràithrean ann a theich às Gleann Comhainn as dèidh an sgriosa. B’ iad Dòmhnall, a chaidh a dh’fhuireach anns a’ Ghearasdan, Iain a chaidh a dh’Uibhist agus Pòl a fhuair àite-fuirich anns an Eilean Sgitheanach. Bha Iain Dòmhnallach, athair Ramsay, am measg sliochd Phòil. Agus chaill e lethbhràthair, mac eile aig Iain Dòmhnallach, a chaidh a bhàthadh ann an allt anns an Eilean Sgitheanach, agus e na phàiste.

Co-dhiù tha an eachdraidh fìor gus nach eil, tha e coltach nach do dh’aidich Ramsay Dòmhnallach a-riamh gu poblach gu robh ceangal sam bith aige don Eilean Sgitheanach. ’S dòcha nach robh fios aige. Tha e coltach gu robh athair agus a mhàthair ag iarraidh pòsadh, ach nach d’fhuair iad cead bho sheanmhair, màthair a mhàthar.

’S ann tro iomadh car a chaidh beatha poilitigeach Ramsay. Bha e mar phàirt dhen Phàrtaidh Làbarach nuair a chaidh a chur air chois agus as dèidh còig bliadhna, lean e air Keir Hardie mar cheannard. B’ fheudar dha a dhreuchd a leigeil dheth, ge-tà, aig toiseach a’ Chogaidh Mhòir, oir bha e dhen bheachd nach robh còir aig Breatainn a bhith an sàs anns a’

chogadh. Chaidh ochd bliadhna seachad mus d'fhuair e air ais mar cheannard, agus chaidh bliadhna eile seachad mus d'fhuair e gu Sràid Downing.

Chuala mi naidheachd mu Ramsay Dòmhnallach o chionn ghoirid ann an Srath Spè. Bha e fhèin agus a bhean air a bhith a' coiseachd nam beann là a bha seo agus chaidh iad gu doras taigh-òsta. Bha e na Phrìomhaire aig an àm. Bha iad a' coimhead rudeigin robach as dèidh là anns a' mhonadh, agus thuirt bean an taighe ri Ramsay, gun fhios aice cò bh' ann, nach fhaodadh e tighinn a-steach, oir bha an t-àite dìreach airson "toffs"! Tha fhios gu robh e air fàilte na bu chridheile na sin fhaighinn am measg nan croitearan ann an Tòcabhaig!

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Faclan na seachdaine: prìomhaire: *Prime Minister*; leabhraichean eachdraidh: *history books*; beartach: *wealthy*; Tòcabhaig: *Tokavaig*; Sgrios Ghlinn Chomhainn: *The Glencoe massacre*; an Gearasdan: *Fort William*; lethbhrathair: *half-brother*; robach: *slovenly*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: a bha ag obair ann am muinntireas ann an Inbhir Losaidh: *who was in domestic service in Lossiemouth*; a bhuineadh don Eilean Dubh: *who belonged to the Black Isle*; thàinig e am follais o chionn ghoirid: *it became apparent recently*; ann an ceann a deas an Eilein Sgitheanaich: *in the south of Skye*; baile beag bìodach ann an Slèite: *a tiny wee village in Sleat*; cha robh e na sgalaig, ach na chlachair: *he was not an agricultural labourer, but a stonemason (sgalag is a feminine noun although it represents a masculine person)*; a chaidh a bhàthadh ann an allt: *who was drowned in a burn*; ach nach d'fhuair iad cead bho sheanmhair, màthair a mhàthar: *but that they did not get permission from his grandmother, the mother of his mother*; 's ann tro iomadh car a chaidh beatha poilitigeach Ramsay: *Ramsay's political life took many a turn*; gun fhios aice cò bh' ann: *without knowing who he was*.

Puing-ghràmaid na seachdaine: Seumas Ramsay Dòmhnallach, airson ainm slàn a thoirt dha: *James Ramsay MacDonald, to give him his full name. Learners often ask me whether to translate the surname MacDonald as Dòmhnallach or MacDhòmhnail. It is difficult to give an answer to that if Gaelic has died out within the family tree and I would say that the choice is up to the person himself, because both occur within the Gaelic world. Remember, however, that if you are female you will be (for example) Màiri Dhòmhnallach, not Màiri Dòmhnallach, as the surname will be lenited. If you prefer MacDhòmhnail, remember that the feminine form is NicDhòmhnail. 'The MacDonalds' (as in a family) would be na Dòmhnallaich or Clann ic' Dhòmhnail but 'Clan Donald' (ie all the MacDonalds) is Clann Dòmhnail (the 'D' is not lenited following the 'n'). Note also that not all those for whom their English surname is MacDonald go by the same in Gaelic. The MacDonalds of Glencoe, which suffered in the 1692 massacre, were MacIains (Clann 'ic Iain). And MacIain also appears as a Gaelic equivalent for Johnson and Johnstone.*

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine: bha e dhen bheachd nach robh còir aig Breatainn a bhith an sàs anns a' chogadh: *he was of the opinion that Britain should not have been involved in the war. Make sure you do not get confused by the difference between dhen bheachd and am beachd. The first means 'of the opinion'; the latter means 'of the intention' eg bha mi am beachd rudeigin a dhèanamh (I intended to do something).*

* "*Litir do Luchd-Ionnsachaidh*" is funded by Comataidh Craolaidh Gàidhlig