

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 **

Bliadhna Mhath Ùr dhuibh! Do fheadhainn agaibh, bidh mi rudeigin fadalach ann a bhith ag ràdh sin, ach cuimhnichibh gur e an dàrna là deug dhen Fhaoilleach là na seann Bhliadhn' Ùire, agus gu bheil feadhainn fhathast a' comharrachadh na h-oidhche roimhe sin mar Oidhche Challainn.

Co-dhiù, chuir mi ceist oirbh an t-seachdain sa chaidh mu dheidhinn nan litreachan “RA” anns an t-seantans – “as dèidh [1707] bha pàirt chudromach aig Alba ann am Pàrlamaid na RA ann am Westminster.” Tha e a' seasamh airson “Rìoghachd Aonaichte”.

Aig an àm seo dhen bhliadhna, air an t-siathamh là dhen Fhaoilleach, o chionn da cheud is fichead bliadhna, bha batail ann anns an robh saighdearan Gaidhealach an sàs, nuair a dhion iad eilean. Air sàilleamh an cuid gaisgeachd, chaidh an t-eilean, agus na h-eileanan eile timcheall air, a shàbhaladh fo chrùn Bhreatainn. B' e an t-eilean – Jersey, agus na h-eileanan gu lèir an fheadhainn ris a chanas sinn Eileanan Chaolas Shasainn.

Canaidh na Frangaich riutha “Les îles Anglo-normandes” agus bha iad fhèin gan iarraidh airson ùine mhòir. Is beag an t-iongnadh, leis cho faisg 's a tha iad air costa na Frainge. Ann an seachd deug, ochdad 's a h-aon (1781), dh'fheuch iad rin gabhail thairis. Bha rèiseamaid Ghàidhealach, na 78th *Highlanders* mar a chanadh iad riutha, ann an St Helier, agus rinn iad fhèin is saighdearan eile an gnothach air an fheachd Fhrangaich.

Fhad 's as fiosrach leam, b' e sin a' chiad turas a bha na 78th an sàs ann an cogadh, oir bha an rèiseamaid glè òg aig an àm sin. Bha i air a cur ri cheile dìreach trì bliadhna roimhe le Coinneach MacCoinnich, siathamh Iarla Shìophort, agus bha a' chuid mhòr aca às na h-oighreachdan aige anns an iar-thuath, le feadhainn à oighreachdan eile a bha le buill eile de Chloinn 'ic Coinnich. A bharrachd air Cloinn 'ic Coinnich fhèin, bhuineadh mòran de buill na rèiseamaid, anns an robh mìle is ceud duine, do Chloinn 'ic Rath.

Uill, chaidh gnothaichean glè mhath anns a' chiad dol a-mach. Bha na saighdearan dhen bheachd gu robh aonta ann nach biodh aca ri dhol a-null thairis a dh'àite sam bith. Ach chaidh an cur gu Lìte, faisg air Dùn Eideann, agus chaidh iarraidh orra dèanamh deiseil airson dhol do na h-Innsean! Uill, chuir sin an ceòl air feadh na fìdhle.

Dhiùlt na saighdearan dhol air bòrd agus thug iad an casan leotha, na pìoban aca gan seinn, a-mach à Lìte. As dèidh greis, bha còmhraidhean ann eadar iad fhèin is an ceannardan is dh'aontaich iad tilleadh gu cala Lìte anns an dearbh dhòigh san do dh'fhalbh iad, a' meàrrsadh sìos an rathad lem pìobairean air thoiseach orra. An àite dhol a dh'ionnsaigh nan

Innsean, 's ann a dh'fhalbh iad a Chaolas Shasainn, airson Jersey a dhìon an aghaidh nam Frangach.

Is chun an là an-diugh, thathar a' comharrachadh sin air balla ann an St Helier – seann bhalla a bhuineadh do dh'ospadal aig an àm sin, far an robh saighdearan an 78th a' fuireach fhad 's a bha iad ann an Jersey. Agus an robh an riaghaltas riarachta leatha? Bha – cho riarachta 's gun do chuir iad, mar dhuais, trì mìosan as dèidh sin, gu muir a-rithist iad – chun nan Innsean. Bha iad aig muir fad mhìosan, agus chaochail da cheud gu leth duine aca air bòrd. Abair duais airson an cuid gaisgeachd.

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Faclan na seachdainne: Oidhche Challainn: *Hogmanay (or night before old style New Year)*; an Rìoghachd Aonaichte: *the United Kingdom*; Eileanan Chaolas Shasainn: *The Channel Isles*; Coinneach MacCoinnich, siathamh Iarla Shìophort: *Kenneth Mackenzie, the sixth Earl of Seaforth*; na h-Innsean/Innseachan: *India (the Indies)*; Cala Lìte: *Leith Harbour*.

Abairtean na seachdainne: bidh mi rudeigin fadalach ann a bhith ag ràdh sin: *I'm a bit slow in saying that*; an dàrna là deug dhen Fhaoilleach: *12 January*; airson cha mhòr ceud bliadhna as dèidh sin: *for almost 100 years after that*; chaidh an t-eilean a shàbhaladh fo chrùn Bhreatainn: *the island was saved under (for) the British crown*; bha iad fhèin gan iarraidh airson ùine mhòir: *they themselves wanted them for a long time*; leis cho faisg 's a tha iad air costa na Frainge: *as they are so close to the coast of France*; rinn iad an gnothach air an fheachd Fhrangaich: *they defeated the French force*; bha i air a cur ri chèile dìreach trì bliadhna roimhe: *it was set up only three years before*; le feadhainn à oighreachdan eile a bha le buill eile de Chloinn 'ic Coinnich: *with some from other estates that belonged to other members of the Clan Mackenzie*; bhuineadh mòran do Chloinn 'ic Rath: *many belonged to the MacRae clan*; nach biodh aca ri dhol a-null thairis: *that they wouldn't have to go overseas*; a' mèarsadh sìos an rathad lem pìobairean air thoiseach orra: *marching down the road with their pipers in front of them*; an robh an riaghaltas riarachta leatha?: *was the government satisfied with them?*; abair duais airson an cuid gaisgeachd: *what a reward for their bravery*.

Puing-ghràmar na seachdainne: chuir sin an ceòl air feadh na fìdhle: *that put the cat among the pigeons/sent everything haywire. This is a commonly used, and very colourful, Gaelic expression which literally means "that put the music throughout the fiddle". You might commonly hear it as "chaidh an ceòl air feadh na fìdhle". I have heard differing explanations as to its origin, including the smashing of a fiddle over a knee but, as well as being a good idiom, it also reminds us of a couple of grammatical points (as all good old proverbs do). The first is that air feadh is a compound preposition and places the following noun in the genitive case. The second is that the Gaelic for fiddle, fìdheall, is a feminine word and carries the diagnostic genitive singular article "na". Note that the short "i" in fìdheall lengthens to "ì" in the genitive fìdhle, as it does in the plural nominative fìdhean. Given all the above, you should be able to work out how to say "on the fiddle" (talking musically!). It is "air an fhìdhill", not "air an fhìdheall". Feminine nouns traditionally slenderise in the dative singular, following a simple preposition like "air". Again, a proverb bears this inflexion out: cha bhi teud rèidh san fhìdhill (there won't be a tuned string in the fiddle).*

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdainne: air sàilleamh an cuid gaisgeachd: *because of their bravery*.

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