

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 Tiriodh, thathar fhathast a’ cuimhneachadh seòladair an naoidheamh linn deug air an robh an Caiptean Dòmhnall MacFhiongain mar ainm. B’ e a shloinneadh Dòmhnall mac Nèill ’ic Dhòmhnail Ruaidh agus tha e air a chuimhneachadh fhathast ann an Tiriodh air sàilleamh gnothaichean a rinn e aig muir, fad air falbh o eilean a bhreith.

Bha e na sgiobair air longan de sheòrsa sònraichte a bha a’ toirt carago – gu h-àraidh tì – eadar Sìna agus Breatainn – na clipearan. Bhiodh farpais mhòr ann eadar na companaidhean, agus na sgiobairean, a bha a’ ruith diofar chlipearan. Agus bhiodh moit mhòr à sgiobair soithich nan tigeadh e dhachaigh na bu luaithe na càch. Bidh sibh a’ tuigsinn gu robh seo mus robh einnseanan ann am bàtaichean. Bha iad an urra ris a’ ghaoith a-mhàin.

Chaidh uabhasach math do Dhòmhnall MacFhiongain ann an ochd deug, seasgad ’s a ceithir (1864) nuair a thug e dìreach ochdad ’s a h-ochd là eadar Sìna is Lunnainn. A’ bhliadhna as dèidh sin, b’ e a bu luaithe a-rithist, ged a thug e beagan na b’ fhaide an turas sin - ceud’s a dhà là.

Agus bliadhna as dèidh sin, chaidh farpais cheart a chur air dòigh, le duais luach ceud not airson an sgiobair a dhèanadh a’ chùis. Uill, bha cabhag mhòr air muinntir gach luinge faighinn air falbh agus gu h-annasach, dh’fhalbh seachd soithichean an ìre mhath aig an aon àm. Bha iad gu bhith a’ rèiseadh thar a’ chuain mhòir fad na slighe a Bhreatainn.

As dèidh greis, bha dà shoitheach air thoiseach, agus a’ strì gu làidir an aghaidh a’ chèile airson a bhith anns a’ phrìomh àite. ’S iad na h-ainmean a bh’ orra an Taeping agus an Ariel agus bha iad le chèile air an togail air Abhainn Chluaidh. Agus b’ iad na sgiobairean dithis Albannach, an Caiptean Keay anns an Ariel agus an Caiptean Dòmhnall MacFhiongain anns an Taeping.

Chaidh na seachdainean seachad agus bha an dà chlipear aig fairge, fad air falbh o chèile, ach a’ dèanamh air Lunnainn aig an aon astar. Thar a’ Chuain Innseanaich is faisg air costa Afraga, ann am Bàgh Bhiscèidh agus ann an Caolas Shasainn, chan fhaca MacFhiongain an Ariel, is chan fhaca Keay an Taeping. Ach nuair a bha an Ariel aig beul Abhainn Thames, chunnaic Keay seòl air faire – an Taeping agus bha i a’ seòladh aig astar!

Bha a’ ghaoth na b’ fheàrr do MhacFhiongain agus rinn e a’ chùis ann a bhith a’ faighinn gu tuga a bheireadh suas an abhainn e. Agus ràinig an Taeping an cidhe fichead mionaid air thoiseach air an Ariel. Dìreach fichead mionaid as dèidh seachdainean os cionn na doimhne!

Uill, dè seòrsa duine a bh' ann an Dòmhnall mac Nèill 'ic Dhòmhnail Ruaidh? Duine math, a rèir choltais, oir shaoil e gu robh an rèis air a bhith cho math, agus na longan cho faisg air a' chèile aig an deireadh, 's gun do cho-dhùin e gum biodh e iomchaidh dha leth dhen duais a thoirt seachad don Chaiptean Keay.

Tha an duine agus an rèis air an cuimhneachadh ann am beul-aithris Thiriodh. Ach tha iad cuideachd air an cuimhneachadh ann an òran, "Deoch-slàinte nan Gillean" a chaidh a sgrìobhadh le fear dhen chriubha air bòrd an Taeping. Cha chreid mi nach ann à Muile a bha e, oir 's e an loighne mu dheireadh dhen òran: "Gum b' fheàrr a bhith 'm Muile fo dhubhar nam beann." Mar iomadach Gaidheal eile, ged a sheòl e tric gu ceann thall an t-saoghail, bha a chridhe a-riamh ann an dùthaich a bhreith.

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Faclan na seachdaine: Tiriodh: *Tiree*; an Caiptean Dòmhnall MacFhiongain: *Captain Donald Mackinnon*; Dòmhnall mac Nèill 'ic Dhòmhnail Ruaidh: *Donald, son of Neil who was the son of Red-haired Donald*; longan: *ships*; carago: *cargo*; an Cuan Innseanach: *the Indian Ocean*; Bàgh Bhiscèidh: *Bay of Biscay*; Caolas Shasainn: *The English Channel*; tuga: *tug(boat)*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: Thathar fhathast a' cuimhneachadh seòladair an naoidheamh linn deug: *a 19th Century sailor is still remembered*; air sàilleamh gnothaichean a rinn e aig muir: *because of things he did at sea*; fad air falbh o eilean a bhreith: *far away from the isle of his birth*; bhiodh moit mhòr à sgiobair soithich nan tigeadh e dhachaigh na bu luaithe na càch: *a skipper of a vessel would be very proud if he came home quicker than the rest*; b' e a bu luaithe a-rithist: *it was him that was fastest again*; le duais luach ceud not airson an sgiobair a dhèanadh a' chùis: *with a prize worth £100 for the winning skipper*; bha cabhag mhòr air muinntir gach luinge: *the people of all the ships were in a hurry*; bha iad le chèile air an togail air Abhainn Chluaidh: *they were both built on the River Clyde*; bha an dà chlipear aig fairge: *the two clippers were at sea*; a' dèanamh air Lunnainn aig an aon astar: *making for London at the same speed*; chunnaic Keay seòl air fàire: *Keay saw a sail at a distance (on the horizon)*; ràinig X an cidhe fichead mionaid air thoiseach air Y: *X reached the quay 20 minutes before Y*; as dèidh seachdainean os cionn na doimhne: *after weeks above the deep (on the ocean)*; gum biodh e iomchaidh dha leth dhen duais a thoirt seachad: *that it would be fitting for him to give away half of the prize*; tha iad cuideachd air an cuimhneachadh ann an òran: *they are also remembered in a song*; cha chreid mi nach ann à Muile a bha e: *I think he was from Mull*.

Puing-ghràmar na seachdaine: Bha iad gu bhith a' rèiseadh thar a' chuain mhòir fad na slighe a Bhreatainn: *they were to be racing across the great ocean all the way to Britain*. Thar is one of the slightly tricky prepositions, which acts like a compound preposition in that it commands the genitive case, although it appears to be a simple preposition with only one element (which would take the dative). So instead of thar a' chuan we say thar a' chuain, with cuan lenited and slenderised because it is in the genitive. The adjective qualifying cuan ie mòr behaves in the same way ie it is also lenited and slenderised so we get thar a' chuain mhòir. Three other prepositions, commonly met with, behave in the same grammatical manner, taking the genitive, rather than the dative: chun (eg chun na traghaidh), far (eg far a' bhùird) and rè (eg rè na bliadhna).

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine: Bha iad an urra ris a' ghaoith a-mhàin: *they were dependent on the wind alone*.

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