

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 **

Leugh mi aithris bheag an là eile air a’ Ghaidheal chliùiteach, Alasdair MacCoinnich. Thuirt an aithris gu robh a chuid Gàidhlig gu math feumail dha oir ’s ann tric a bhiodh e a’ dèiligeadh ri Gaidheil na chuid obrach. Agus càite ann an Alba a bha seo? Uill, chan ann an Alba idir a bha e, ach ann an Canada.

Agus, cò Alasdair MacCoinnich a tha mi a’ ciallachadh – oir bha barrachd na aonan dhiubh a choisinn cliù ann an Canada. Uill, Sir Alasdair MacCoinnich, a thogadh ann an Eilean Leòdhais. Tuigidh sibh ann am mionaid no dhà, carson a tha mi a’ cur cuideam air “Sir”.

’S ann le bhith a’ rannsachadh na dùthcha a choisinn Alasdair a chliù agus, an là an-diugh, ann am British Columbia agus ann an Tìrean an Iar-thuath, tha aona àite deug, eadar beanntan is aibhnichean, a tha a’ giulan ainm. ’S i Abhainn MhicCoinnich, am Mackenzie River, a tha còrr is dà mhìle mìle a dh’fhaide, as ainmeile dhiubh sin. Ann an seachd deug, ochdad ’s a naoi (1789) chaidh e sìos an abhainn, tro dhùthaich fhiadhaich, gus an do ràinig e a’ mhuir.

Shaoileadh tu gu robh MacCoinnich air a bhith toilichte. Ach gu mì-fhortanach dha, bha e a’ coimhead airson abhainn a bheireadh don Chuan Sèimh e. Ach tha beul Abhainn MhicCoinnich gu tuath air a sin anns a’ Chuan Arctach, agus chuir Alasdair roimhe feuchainn a-rithist, gu deas air sin.

Bha e air na sgìlean aige ionnsachadh, airson a bhith a’ fuireach a-muigh ann an ceann a tuath Chanada, le bhith ag obair do Chompanaidh an Iar-thuath, buidheann a bha a’ malairt ann an seicheannan no bèin. Is a bharrachd air Gaidheil, bha aige ri dèiligeadh ri feadhainn dùthchasach, na h-Innseanaich, muinntir na Frangais, agus muinntir Arcaibh, oir bha mòran acasan an sàs anns a’ ghnìomhachas sin. Gun teagamh, bha MacCoinnich ioma-chànanach.

Ann an seachd deug, naochad ’s a dhà (1792), thòisich e a-rithist air rannsachadh na dùthcha agus, an turas seo, ràinig e an Cuan Sèimh gu tuath air far a bheil Vancouver an-diugh. Mar sin, b’ esan a’ chiad duine geal a chaidh eadar costa sear agus costa siar Chanada. Dh’fhoillsich e leabhar mu dheidhinn ann an ochd deug ’s a h-aon (1801) agus, bliadhna as dèidh sin, chaidh inbhe ridire a bhuileachadh air.

Fichead bliadhna as dèidh sin, rugadh Alasdair MacCoinnich eile, ann an Siorrachd Pheairt. Cha deach ridire a dhèanamh dheth idir, ged a chaidh a mholadh air a shon trì tursan. Dhiùlt e gach trup. Chaidh e a Chanada nuair a bha e na dhuine òg agus chaidh e a dh’fhuireach ann an Ontario, far an robh e an sàs, mar a bha athair roimhe, ann a bhith a’ togail taighean. As dèidh ùine, thòisich e mar fhear-deasachaidh air pàipear-naidheachd Libearalach. Aig a’

cheann thall, chaidh e an sàs ann am poileataics agus dh'èirich e gu bhith na cheannard air na Libearalaich.

Agus seo, ann an dòigh, far an do nochd ceangal eadar e fhèin agus Sir Alasdair MacCoinnich, a bh' air a bhith marbh bliadhnaichean, oir bha an riaghaltas Canèidianach a' feuchainn ri rathad-iarainn a thogail eadar costa sear agus costa siar Chanada – proiseact mòr dha-rìreabh. Dh'èirich sgainneal timcheall a' phròiseict agus ghabh Alasdair MacCoinnich brath air sin airson cur às don riaghaltas. Bha e a-nise na Phrìomhaire, a' chiad fhear Libearalach a-riamh ann an Canada.

Ach cha b' esan a' chiad phrìomhaire Canèidianach aig an robh buinteanas don Ghaidhealtachd. Rugadh am fear a bh' ann roimhe cuideachd ann an Alba is bheir sinn sùil airsan an ath-sheachdain.

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Faclan na seachdainne: aithris: *report*; cliùiteach: *renowned*; Alasdair MacCoinnich: *Alexander Mackenzie*; oir: *because*; Tìrean an Iar-thuath: *Northwest Territories*; an Cuan Arctach: *the Arctic Ocean*; ioma-chànanach: *multilingual*; fear-deasachaidh: *editor*; ceannard: *leader*; rathad-iarainn: *railway line*; Prìomhaire: *Prime Minister*.

Abairtean na seachdainne: bha barrachd na aonan dhiubh a choisinn cliù: *there was more than one of them that built up a reputation*; a tha còrr is dà mhìle mìle a dh'fhaide: *that is more than 2000 miles long*; tro dhùthaich fhiadhaich, gus an do ràinig e a' mhuir: *through wild country, until he reached the sea*; a bheireadh don Chuan Sèimh e: *that would take him to the Pacific Ocean*; buidheann a bha a' malairt ann an seicheannan no bèin: *a group which traded in hides or skins*; muinntir na Frangais agus muinntir Arcaibh: *French-speaking people and Orcadians*; eadar costa agus costa siar Chanada: *between the east coast and west coast of Canada*; chiadh inbhe ridire a bhuileachadh air: *the status of a knight was conferred upon him (ie he was knighted)*; cha deach ridire a dhèanamh dheth ged a chaidh a mholadh air a shon trì tursan: *he was not knighted although he was recommended for it three times*; dhiùlt e gach trup: *he refused each time*; pròiseact mòr dha-rìreabh: *a really big project*; dh'èirich sgainneal timcheall a' phròiseict: *a scandal arose in connection with the project*; ghabh X brath air sin: *X took advantage of that*.

Puing-ghràmar na seachdainne: “Cuid” is used twice in this week's *Litir do express* ownership or acquisition. Note that the noun governed by *cuid* is always in the genitive: gu robh a chuid Gàidhlig gu math feumail: *that his Gaelic would be very useful – this would, in older Gaelic, be a chuid Gàidhlighe*. Also, 's ann tric a bhiodh e a' dèiligeadh ri Gaidheil na chuid obrach: *it is often he would be dealing with Gaels in his work*. If the person related to *cuid* were female, we would say a *cuid Gàidhlig (her Gaelic)* and a *cuid obrach (her work)*. This works in similar ways for all persons eg *mo chuid obrach (my work)*, *do chuid obrach (your work)*, *ar cuid obrach (our work)*, *ur cuid obrach (your work)*, *an cuid obrach (their work)*.

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdainne: Chuir Alasdair roimhe feuchainn a-rithist, gu deas air sin: *Alexander decided to try again, to the south of there*. This is an important idiomatic form and infinitely preferable to “rinn e an àirde inntinn” (*ie he made up his mind*) which is a direct translation of the English. It works, as follows, with the prepositional pronouns associated with *ro* (roimh): *chuir mi romham (I decided)*; *chuir i roimhpe (she decided)*; *chuir iad romhpa (they decided)*.

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