

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 mu dheireadh, bha mi ag innse dhuibh mar a thrèig am Morair Leverhulme Eilean Leòdhais. Ach cha b’ e sin deireadh na sgeòil dha anns na h-Eileanan Siar, oir bha e fhathast na uachdaran air Na Hearadh. Agus bha e dhen bheachd gum b’ urrainn dha an aon seòrsa de phlana a bh’ aige airson Steòrnabhagh a chur an sàs anns an t-Òb, ann an ceann a deas Na Hearadh. Gu dearbh, ’s e Leverburgh a th’ air a’ bhaile sin fhathast ann am Beurla.

Thòisich Leverhulme air an obair-leasachaidh air cidhe an t-Òib, agus anns a’ bhaile fhèin, agus chuir e airgead mu choinneamh pròiseactan airson rathaidean a thogail. Ach cha do mhair an obair sin fada oir chaochail e anns a’ Chèitean, naoi deug is còig ar fhichead (1925). Seachdain as dèidh a bhàis, thug bòrd-stiùiridh ùr na companaidh, Lever Brothers, òrdugh seachad gu feumadh an obair anns an t-Òb sgur, ach a-mhàin air taighean ùra a bha faisg air a bhith deiseil.

Cha robh ùidh sam bith aig càch air a’ bhòrd anns na h-Eileanan Siar. Gu dearbh, bha droch bheachd aig feadhainn aca orra. Thuir an cathraiche ùr ri Leòdhasach a bha càirdeach do Leverhulme tro phòsadh: “S e an rud a b’ fheàrr a b’ urrainn dhut dèanamh leis na h-eileanan agad – an cur fodha anns a’ Chuan Siar airson ceithir uairean a thìde, agus an uairsin an togail suas a-rithist.” Cha robh spèis sam bith aige do mhuinntir nan eilean.

Tha e coltach nach robh mac Leverhulme mòran na b’ fheàrr. Thathar ag aithris gu robh e uaireigin a’ coimhead air map air balla, map de dh’Alba, a bha as aonais nan Eilean Siar. “S e sin,” thuir e, “am map as fheàrr de dh’Alba a chunnaic mi a-riamh.”

Nas lugha na sia mìosan as dèidh bàs Leverhulme, chaidh Na Hearadh air a’ mhargaidh, aig rùp ann an Lunnainn. Cha robh e air a reic ann an aon chnap, ge-tà, ach ann am pìosan agus cha d’ fhuair e prìs mhath idir. Tha e coltach gu robh cuid, a bha ag iarraidh oighreachd airson sealg, amharasach mun t-suidheachadh as dèidh na thachair do Leverhulme ann an Leòdhas.

Dh’fhalbh na togalaichean mòra aig port an t-Òib airson còig mìle not – cuibhreann bheag de na chosg iad airson a thogail anns a’ chiad dol a-mach. Cheannaich an sgrìobhadair Compton MacCoinnich na h-Eileanan Mòra. Agus chaidh Caisteal Amhuinnsuidhe a reic, cuide ri Loids Àird a’ Mhùlaidh, Taigh-òsta Na Hearadh agus sia mìle acaire de thalamh airson ... uill ... dè tha sibh a’ smaoinichadh...? Dà mhìle not. Seadh, agus thathar ag iarraidh còrr is ceithir gu leth millean not airson oighreachd Cheann a Tuath Na Hearadh, a’ gabhail a-staigh Caisteal Amhuinnsuidhe, an-diugh.

Bidh luchd-eachdraidh ag argamaid gu sìorraidh buan air buaidh Leverhulme air Leòdhas agus Na Hearadh. An e droch rud neo deagh rud a bh’ ann gun do dh’fheuch e ri tionnsgal

mòr a chruthachadh anns na h-eileanan? An e an dòigh anns an do dh'fhàg e Leòdhas na dhearbhadh air misneachd nan eileanach nach gabhadh mùchadh le duine sam bith, ge bith dè cho beartach 's a bha e? No an robh e na dhearbhadh air a' chasaid, a chualas bho mhòran, nach b' urrainn do chroitreachd agus dòigh-beatha ùr nodha a bhith beò còmhla?

Agus dè thachradh nan robh na h-eileanaich air an còraichean-fearainn a leigeil seachad, agus nan robh an gnìomhachas aig Leverhulme air tuiteam as a chèile tro thìde co-dhiù? Mmm. Uill, tha aon rud cinnteach. Chan fhaic sinn a leithid tuilleadh anns na h-Eileanan Siar.

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Faclan na seachdaine: thrèig: *quit, abandoned*; cathraiche: *chairman*; an Cuan Siar: *the Atlantic*; rùp: *auction*; sealg: *hunting*; na h-Eileanan Mòra: *the Shiant Islands*; Loids Àird a' Mhùlaidh: *Ardvourlie Lodge*; beartach: *wealthy*; dearbhadh: *proof*; casaid: *accusation*; chualas: *was heard (passive)*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: gum b' urrainn dha an aon seòrsa de phlana a bh' aige airson Steòrnabhagh a chur an sàs: *that he could put in place the same sort of plan he had for Stornoway*; chuir e airgead mu choinneamh pròiseactan: *he supplied money for projects*; seachdain as dèidh a bhàis: *a week after his death*; cha robh ùidh sam bith aig càch: *the others had no interest*; 's e an rud a b' fheàrr a b' urrainn dhut dèanamh: *the best thing you could do*; a bha càirdeach do Leverhulme tro phòsadh: *who was related to Leverhulme by marriage*; a bha as aonais nan Eilean Siar: *which was without the Western Isles*; cha robh e air a reic ann an aon chnap: *it wasn't sold in one piece*; as deidh na thachair do Leverhulme ann an Leòdhas: *after what happened to Leverhulme in Lewis*; gu sìorraidh buan: *for ever and ever*; gun do dh'fheuch e ri tionnsgal mòr a chruthachadh: *that he tried to create a big industry*; misneachd nan eileanach nach gabhadh mùchadh: *the courage of the islanders which would not be quenched*; nach b' urrainn do chroitreachd agus dòigh-beatha ùr nodha a bhith beò còmhla: *that crofting and a modern way of life could not co-exist*; nan robh na h-eileanaich air an còraichean-fearainn a leigeil seachad: *if the islanders had relinquished their land rights*; chan fhaic sinn a leithid tuilleadh: *we'll never see his like again*.

Puing-ghràmail na seachdaine: *I would like to explain the place name an t-Òb (Leverburgh, in the south of Harris) this week because, if you are unfamiliar with it, it seems to provide a grammatical conundrum. Òb means a "small, relatively land-locked bay"; it is masculine and it occurs in the nominative case, as would be expected, preceded by a t- (cf an t-eilean, an t-òrd). It first appears in the Litir in the dative case – anns an t-Òb. In such a situation, we would normally drop the initial t-, getting anns an Òb (cf anns an eilean, air an òrd). But this is not what the people of Harris say. They say anns an t-Òb, ie it does not follow the rules. So we retain the t- in the spelling in the dative. The genitive case is even more obtuse. It appears in the Litir as cidhe an t-Òib and port an t-Òib (the quay and harbour of Leverburgh respectively). So the t- is retained in the genitive (cf loch an eilein, ceann an ùird). It is however slenderised, as would be expected, although the pronunciation of the slenderised vowel is a little unusual ("uhn TÈB"). Why does it not follow the rules? My guess is that its origin, as a loan-word from the old Norse hóp, may be the reason.*

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine: cha b' e sin deireadh na sgeòil dha: *that wasn't the end of the story for him*.

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