

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 **

Rugadh Marsaili Ceanadach-Fhriseal, Marsaili nan Òran, ann an ochd-deug, caogad 's a seachd (1857), mar Mharsaili Ceanadach, nighean don t-seinneadair ainmeil, Daibhidh Ceanadach. Bhuineadh sinnsearan nan Ceanadach do Ghaidhealtachd Siorrachd Pheairt, ach ghluais iad gu baile Pheairt far an do thogadh Daibhidh. Nuair a bha còignear cloinne aig Daibhidh agus an dàrna bean aige, Ealasaid Fhriseal, ghluais an teaghlach a Dhùn Eideann, far an do chuir Daibhidh an gnìomh an dòchas a bh' air a bhith aige bho bha e òg – a bhith-beò a dhèanamh le bhith a' seinn agus a' teagasg seinn.

Airson trì bliadhna, fhad 's a bha Marsaili na pàiste, bha iad a' fuireach ann an Lunnainn, far an do choisinn Daibhidh cliù dha fhèin mar sheinneadair. Cha robh Gàidhlig aige, ach bha e measail air òrain Albannach anns a' Bheurla, agus chuir e roimhe dhol air adhart le bhith a' seinn, gu proifeasanta, òrain Albannach a-mhàin. Bha e ag amas air ùine mhòr a chur seachad thall thairis, am measg sliochd nan Albannach, agus a' seinn dhaibh.

Fhad 's a bha a pàrantan ann am Aimeireagaidh a Tuath – airson mìosan – dh'fhuirich Marsaili agus trìuir pheathraichean aice còmhla ri an seanmhair ann am Peairt. An uair sin, chaidh iad a Dhùn Eideann far an do dh'ionnsaich Marsaili ceòl, an toiseach air a' phiàna. Dh'fhàs i sgileil gu leòr airson am piàna a chluich fhad 's a bhiodh a h-athair a' seinn, agus chaidh iad air chuairt còmhla gu ruige Sealtainn, Arcaibh, Gallaibh, Inbhir Pheofharain agus Inbhir Nis.

Nuair a bha iad ann an Siorrachd Rois, chaidh iad gu seirbheis eaglais a bh' air a cumail a-muigh ann an slag gu tuath air Inbhir Pheofharain. Bha na ceudan anns a' choitheanal, agus bha an t-seirbheis ann an Gàidhlig. Cha robh Marsaili ach trì bliadhna deug a dh'aois. Rachadh còrr is trithead bliadhna seachad mus tòiseachadh i air an obair aice leis na Gaidheil, ach cò aige tha fios nach tug an là sin buaidh air choreigin oirre.

Ann an ochd-deug, seachdad 's a dhà (1872), chaidh an teaghlach air chuairt a dh'Astràilia agus New Zealand – cuairt mhòr a mhair trì bliadhna. Agus cha robh e uile gu lèir tlachdmhor. Chaidh iad ann am bàta-siùil agus nuair a bha iad ann an uisgeachan tropaigeach thàinig ciùineas air a' mhuir.

An uair sin, chaidh iad gu deas, gu crìos nan siantan siara – a tha barrachd air ceathrad ceum fo chrios meadhan na cruinne. Bha i cho fiadhaich ann a sin 's gu robh cuid dhen luchd-siubhail dhen bheachd nach ruigeadh iad Astràilia idir. Gu dearbh, dh'aidich seann bhoireannach à Alba gun do chuir i fo-aodach ùr oirre gus am biodh i glan nuair a ruigeadh i nèamh!

Uile gu lèir bha iad trì mìosan aig muir gun a dhol air tìr, mus do ràinig iad Melbourne. Cha robh Marsaili is a teaghlach diomhain fhad 's a bha iad a' seòladh, ge-ta. A h-uile là chumadh iad ris a' cheòl aca, oir bha iad air piàna beag a thoirt leotha air bòrd.

Ann am Melbourne fhuair iad fàilte mhòr bho na h-Albannaich is eile a chaidh a dh'èisteachd riutha. Ach taobh a-muigh nam bailtean mòra, cha robh cùisean furasta do luchd-siubhail, mar a chì sinn anns an Litir an ath-sheachdain. Chan e dìreach gu robh droch

rathaidean ann ach gu robh droch dhaoine ann cuideachd. Fhad 's a bha iad ann am Melbourne chaidh iad a Phrìosan Phentonville far am fac' iad fear ainmeil air a chumail ann an ceids, mar a sgrìobh Marsaili, "coltach ri ainmhidh fiadhaich". Cò bh' ann? Cò, ach Ned Cealaidh!

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Faclan na seachdaine: seinneadair: *singer*; Daibhidh Ceanadach: *David Kennedy*; piàna: *piano*; Inbhir Pheofharain: *Dingwall*; slag: *a hollow (in the landscape)*; coitheanal: *congregation*; fo-aodach: *underwear*; nèamh: *heaven*; dìomhain: *idle*; ceids: *cage*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: bhuineadh sinnsearan nan Ceanadach do Ghaidhealtachd Siorrachd Pheairt: *the ancestors of the Kennedys belonged to the Perthshire Gaidhealtachd*; a bhith beò a dhèanamh le bhith a' seinn: *to make his living by singing*; fhad 's a bha Marsaili na pàiste: *when Marjory was a child*; òrain Albannach a-mhàin: *only Scottish songs*; bha e ag amas air: *he was intending to*; am measg sliochd nan Albannach: *among the descendants of Scots*; rachadh còrr is trithead bliadhna seachad: *more than 30 years would pass*; cò aige tha fios: *who knows*; nach tug an là sin buaidh air choreigin oirre: *that that day didn't have an effect of some sort on her*; air chuairt a dh'Astràilia: *on a tour of [to] Australia*; a mhair trì bliadhna: *which lasted 3 years*; gu crios nan siantan siara: *to the latitude of the westerly storms (ie the "roaring forties")*; fo chrios meadhan na cruinne: *below the equator*; nach ruigeadh iad Astràilia: *that they wouldn't reach Australia*.

Puing-ghràmar na seachdaine: a bh' air a bhith aige bho bha e òg: *that he had had since he was young. The 'air' here is the ancient preposition iar, meaning "after" or "behind" – think of it as meaning literally "that he was after having". It is the Gaelic equivalent to the use of 'had' in English to form the pluperfect tense. The verb in the pluperfect refers to an action which took place before the other past actions in a sentence. In the Litir, David had had (note the pluperfect) the hope since his childhood that he would make his living singing; the more recent past verbs are ghluais and [far an do] chuir. Here is another example: bha Uilleam air am bàta a thogail gu math, agus 's e sin a chum beò iad (William had built the boat well, and it was that which kept them alive). Also note that the preposition bho is here equivalent to the English for (meaning "since"), as it is in many common phrases. Is fhada bho nach fhaca mi thu (I haven't seen you for a long time). Is iomadh bliadhna bho dh'fhàg mi Glaschu (it's many years since I left Glasgow).*

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine: cha robh e uile gu lèir tlachdmhor: *it wasn't altogether pleasurable. Uile gu lèir: completely, totally, altogether.*

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