

## *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](mailto:roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk) \**

Ann an naoi-deug 's a seachd (1907), chruinnich Mairsili Cheanadach-Fhriseal grunn òran ann am bùth Mhìcheil MhicNìll air cidhe Bhagh a' Chaisteil ann am Barraigh. Am measg sin, bha 'Latha dhomh am Beinn a' Cheathaich' air an do chuir i an t-ainm '*Kishmul's Galley*'. Fhuair i am fonn an uair sin co-dhiù. 'S ann sa bhliadhna as dèidh sin, nuair a thill i a Bharraigh, a fhuair i na faclan bho Anna NicIain, tidsear anns an eilean.

Bha e follaiseach dhi, ge-tà, nan robh i a' dol a leantainn le bhith a' cruinneachadh òrain Ghàidhlig, gum biodh cruaidh fheum aice air neach-deasachaidh. Mhol an t-Ollamh MacFhiongain, Proifeasair na Ceiltis ann an Oilthigh Dhùn Eideann, an t-Urramach Coinneach MacLeòid, a rugadh is a thogadh ann an Eige, dhi, agus dh'aontaich Mgr MacLeòid a cuideachadh.

Thòisich iad ann an naoi deug 's a h-ochd (1908) nuair a chuir Marsaili faclan ga ionnsaigh a chruinnich i aig a' chèilidh ann am Bàgh a' Chaisteil. Bha Mgr MacLeòid gu math eòlach air a' chànan agus air a' chultar bho làithean òige ann an Eige. Bha stòras iongantach de bheul-aithris aig piuthar athar, Seònaid NicLeòid, às an Eilean Sgitheanach. Agus 's ann airson a bha an t-uallach dèanamh cinnteach gu robh na faclan ceart.

Ach rinn e fad a bharrachd na sin. Bhiodh e a' sgrìobhadh òrain, no pàirtean de dh'òrain. Bhiodh e ag eadar-theangachadh òrain eileanach bho Ghàidhlig gu Beurla, ged is i Marsaili a chuireadh an dreach mu dheireadh orra. Chuir iad ri chèile cruinneachadh mòr de a leithid "*Sea Sorrow*", "*Heartling of my Heart*", "*The Birlinn of the White Shoulders*" agus "*The Harris Love Lament*". Uaireannan bhiodh an t-eadar-theangachadh gu math faisg air na bh' ann bho thùs. Uaireannan cha bhiodh iad coltach ri chèile idir.

Agus thachair eadar-theangachadh air an rathad eile cuideachd. Mar eisimpleir, chuala Marsaili òran aig seann bhoireannach ann am Beinn a' Bhaoghla. Faisg air an taigh aice, air a' mhachair, thòisich triall bainnse là eile, agus thàinig fonn an òrain air ais do Mharsaili. Sgrìobh i faclan Beurla as ùr dha, mu dheidhinn na chunnaic i – agus chuir i an tiotal air "*Benbecula Bridal*". 'S ann as dèidh sin, a chruthaich Coinneach MacLeòid òran, leis an aon fhonn, agus air an dearbh chuspair – "An Triall Bannse".

'S dòcha gur e an t-òran as ainmeile a rinn Coinneach MacLeòid – "*Road to the Isles*". Bha e fhèin is Marsaili anns an taigh aice ann an naoi deug 's a còig-deug (1915) turas, cuide ri Calum MacIain à Barraigh. Chluich Calum port dhaibh air fheadan – a bha e air ionnsachadh bho cheàrd anns an eilean aige. Dh' iarr Marsaili air a' mhinistear faclan a chur ris airson nam balach Albannach a bha a' sabaid anns an Fhraing agus nochd "*Road to the Isles*" goirid as dèidh sin.

Ged a dh'obraich iad gu dlùth ri chèile air tìr-mòr, far an robh Mgr MacLeòid na mhinistear mus robh e ann an Giogha, chaidh faisg air fhichead bliadhna seachad mus deach iad a-mach gu na h-Eileanan Siar còmhla. Cha robh an uair sin ach trì bliadhna air fhàgail aig Marsaili, oir chaochail i ann an naoi-deug is deich ar fhichead (1930).

A' coimhead air ais air a beatha an-diugh, faodaidh sinn faighneachd - dè an rud a bu luachmhoir' a rinn i – na h-òrain a dh'ath-chruthaich i fhèin is Coinneach MacLeòid, na clàran de mhuinntir nan eilean a' seinn, a chaidh a ghlèidheadh le Sgoil Eòlais na h-Alba, no an t-sanasachd a rinn i don t-saoghal mhòr de chultar na Gaidhealtachd? Bidh a bheachd fhèin aig gach Gaidheal air a sin.

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**Faclan na seachdainne:** Anna NicIain: *Annie Johnson*; Beinn a' Bhaoghla: *Benbecula*; Giogha: *(the Isle of) Gigha*; chaochail i: *she died*; a dh'ath-chruthaich i: *which she recreated*; Sgoil Eòlais na h-Alba: *The School of Scottish Studies*; an t-sanasachd: *the advertising*.

**Abairtean na seachdainne:** chruinnich X grunn òran: *X collected a few songs*; fhuair i am fonn an uair sin co-dhiù: *she got the tune then, at least*; gum biodh cruaidh fheum aice air fear-deasachaidh: *that she would have great need of an editor*; Proifeasair na Ceiltis: *the Professor of Celtic*; dh'aontaich Mgr MacLeòid a cuideachadh: *Mr MacLeod agreed to help her*; nuair a chuir X faclan ga ionnsaigh: *when X sent him words*; bho làithean òige: *from the days of his youth*; bha stòras iongantach de bheul-aithris aig piuthar athar: *his father's sister had an amazing store of oral tradition*; bhiodh e ag eadar-theangachadh òrain eileanach: *he would translate island songs*; a chuireadh an dreach mu dheireadh orra: *who would finalise them*; mu dheidhinn na chunnaic i: *about what she saw*; leis an aon fhonn: *with the same tune*; agus air an dearbh chuspair: *and on the same topic*; ged a dh'obraich iad gu dlùth ri chèile: *although they worked closely together*; a' coimhead air ais air a beatha: *looking back on her life*; faodaidh sinn faighneachd: *we may ask*; dè an rud a bu luachmhoir a rinn i: *what is the most valuable thing she did*; bidh a bheachd fhèin aig gach Gaidheal air a sin: *each Gael will have his own opinion on that*.

**Puing-ghràmar na seachdainne:** Chluich Calum port dhaibh air fheadan: *Calum played them a tune on his chanter*. *If you had heard this in conversation would you have been puzzled by fheadan which sounds like "ET-un"? You might not have realised it was a word beginning with "f" followed by a vowel, which goes silent after lenition. The lenition is caused by the masculine possessive adjective "a" which effectively disappears (except for the lenition) when the noun begins with a vowel or silent consonant. So feadan, a chanter, or am feadan, the chanter, becomes fheadan, his chanter (or a feadan, her chanter). This is a relatively common situation which is easily picked up in the written form of the language but not so easily in conversation. Here are some other examples where the "f" sound disappears under lenition in the same circumstance: chaill e fhradharc (he lost his sight); chuir e fhàinne air a' bhòrd (he put his ring on the table); dh'fhàg e fhaclair air a' bhus (he left his dictionary on the bus).*

**Gnàths-cainnt na seachdainne:** (Dh'iarr Marsaili air a' mhinistear) faclan a chur ris: *(Marjory asked the minister) to put words to it*.

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