

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 * This is Litir 241.*

Ann an ochd ceud deug, dà fhichead 's a seachd (1847), chaidh Iain Stiùbhart Blackie air a' chiad chuairt aige air a' Ghaidhealtachd. Thòisich e ann an Inbhir Nis is Ros an Ear, agus dh'fhalbh e an uair sin gu ruige An Gearasdan, Bail' a' Chaolais agus An t-Òban. Shreap e Beinn Nibheis agus choisich e air feadh Ghleanna Comhainn. Chaidh e ann a chionn 's gu robh e a' fulaing droch shlàinte, agus ghabh e gràdh mòr mòr air bòidhchead nàdarrach na Gàidhealtachd.

Thill e a dh'Obar Dheathain, agus e air ùrachadh. Ach, an dèidh greis, thàinig e fo uallach a-rithist. Cha robh a shuidheachadh a' còrdadh ris agus, ann an ochd ceud deug, leth-cheud 's a h-aon (1851), chuala e mu bhàs Proifeasair na Greugais ann an Oilthigh Dhùn Èideann. Rinn e tagradh airson na dreuchd, agus bha e soirbheachail. Bha a bhean air leth toilichte oir bha i air fàs sgìth de dh'Obar Dheathain.

Chòrd e ri Blackie a bhith an sàs ann an sgoilearachd na Greugais aig an ìre as àirde. Agus thug a dhreuchd ùr cothrom dha leantainn le iomairt a bha e air a chur roimhe nuair a bha e na oileanach – a' toirt an aghaidh air luchd-teagaisg nan oilthighean a bha a' labhairt na seann Ghreugais ann an dòigh cheàrr (na bheachdsan).

Thàinig piseach air Blackie ann an Dùn Èideann. Ghabh e cuairt don Ghrèig, far an do rinn e rannsachadh air cruth na talmhainn a bharrachd air litreachas. Bha ùidh mhòr aige ann an geòlas (no eòlas-chreag) agus, nuair a thill e a Dhùn Èideann, sgrìobh e don gheòlaiche ainmeil, Sir Ruairidh MacCalmain, mu dheidhinn na dh'ionnsaich e anns a' Ghrèig.

Ach bha aon ghnòthach mòr a' feitheamh ris fhathast – a' Ghàidhlig. 'S ann tràth anns na trì ficheadan a thachair Blackie oirre – ann an Ros an Iar. Bha e ann an Ceann Loch Iù, a' gabhail làithean-saora. Bha gille a' cur diollaid air each taobh a-muigh an taigh-òsta, agus iad a' dèanamh deiseil airson falbh don mhonadh ann an Toirbheartan. Dh'fhaighnich am proifeasair dhen ghille gu dè a' Ghàidhlig a bh' air “horse” agus fhreagair e “each”. Agus mhothaich Blackie sa mhionaid don chàirdeas eadar “each” agus an Laideann air a shon – “equus”. Dh'fhosgail a' cheist shimplidh sin, agus a freagairt, saoghal ùr dha.

Anns an leabhar aige *The Language and Literature of the Scottish Highlands*, sgrìobh Blackie gun d' fhuair e oideachadh traidiseanta, mar a fhuair a h-uile gille ann an Alba, anns an do dh'ionnsaich e mu chultaran is dùthchannan is cànanan eile, gun a bhith a' cluinntinn guth mun stòras phrìseil a bh' aig muinntir na h-Alba air an stairsnich fhèin.

Agus sgrìobh e gu robh e air beachdan a chluinntinn bho chuid de luchd na Beurla “gun tug Dia prìomhachas do na Sasannaich”. Nan cuirte às do na Ceiltich gus nach biodh Eireannach ann an Eirinn no Gaidheal air Gaidhealtachd na h-Alba, bhiodh an fheadhainn sin toilichte. Anns na bliadhnaichean a bh' air fhàgail aige air uachdar na talmhainn, rinn Blackie barrachd na cha mhòr duine sam bith eile airson am beachd truagh sin atharrachadh.

Ach cha robh e an aghaidh nan Sasannach no an aghaidh luchd na Beurla. Bha e an aghaidh aineolas. “Thathar a' faighneachd,” sgrìobh e, “carson a bu chòir taic a thoirt do chànan a tha a' bàsachadh agus a bhios marbh an ceann beagan bhliadhnaichean mura tèid taic a thoirt dhi a dh'aona-ghnòthach?” Sia fichead 's a seachd bliadhna as dèidh sin, tha cuid ann an Alba, gu mì-fhortanach, fhathast a' cur na ceist sin.

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Faclan na seachdainne: Ros an Ear: *Easter Ross*; An Gearasdan: *Fort William*; Bail' a' Chaolais: *Ballachulish*; An t-Òban: *Oban*; soirbheachail: *successful*; sgoilearachd: *scholarship*; iomairt: *campaign*; geòlas, eolas-chreag: *geology*; Ros an Iar: *Wester Ross*; Ceann Loch Iù: *Kinlochewe*.

Abairtean na seachdainne: shreap e Beinn Nibheis: *he climbed Ben Nevis*; air feadh Ghleanna Comhainn: *throughout Glencoe*; thill e a dh'Obair Dheathain, agus e air ùrachadh: *he returned to Aberdeen refreshed*; cha robh a shuidheachadh a' còrdadh ris: *he was not enjoying his situation*; a bha e air a chur roimhe: *that he had decided upon*; a' toirt an aghaidh air luchd-teagaisg: *confronting teachers*; cruth na talmhainn: *the form of the land*; sgrìobh e don gheòlaiche ainmeil, Sir Ruairidh MacCalmain: *he wrote to the famous geologist, Sir Roderick Murchison*; 's ann tràth anns na trì ficheadan a thachair Blackie oirre: *it was early in the sixties (1860s) that Blackie happened upon her (Gàidhlig is feminine)*; airson falbh don mhonadh ann an Toirbheartan: *to go on the hill (ie hillwalking) in Torridon*; dh'fhosgail a' cheist sin saoghal ùr dha: *that question opened a new world to him*; gun d' fhuair e oideachadh traidiseanta: *that he got a traditional instruction [ie education]*; gun a bhith a' cluinntinn guth mun stòras phrìseil: *without hearing a word about the precious riches*; air an stairsnich fhèin: *on their own doorstep*; gun tug Dia prìomhachas do: *that God gave the prime place to*; nan cuirte às do na Ceiltich: *if the Celts would be [ie could be] got rid of*; airson am beachd truagh sin atharrachadh: *to change that deplorable opinion*; bha e an aghaidh aineolas: *he was against ignorance*; thathar a' faighneachd: *it is asked*; a bhios marbh an ceann beagan bhliadhnaichean: *which will be dead within a few years*; sia fichead 's a seachd bliadhna às dèidh sin: *127 years after that*; tha cuid fhathast a' cur na ceist sin: *some still ask that question*.

Puing-ghràmar na seachdainne: mhothaich Blackie sa mhionaid: *Blackie noticed immediately. You will all know the feminine noun mionaid ("minute") which is very similar to the English. However be careful of its idiomatic use. Gaelic learners often get confused about "sa mhionaid" (ie "anns a' mhionaid"), thinking it means "in a minute". It does not. Literally it is "in the minute" but idiomatically it means "right now". Consider this conversation (which starts with a mother shouting to her daughter who is upstairs) and note the difference between ann am mionaid and anns a' mhionaid: "An tig thu a-nuas, Eilidh? (will you come down, Helen?); "Thig ann am mionaid" (Yes, in a minute)... mother waits angrily and shouts up the stairs, "Eilidh, thig sa mhionaid. Tha cabhag orm." (Helen, come immediately. I am in a hurry).*

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdainne: mhothaich Blackie don chàirdeas eadar "each" agus an Laideann air a shon: *Blackie noticed the relationship between "each" and the Latin for it. Note the preposition "do" which goes with mothachadh. Tha mi a' mothachadh don a h-uile rud (I am noticing everything).*

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