

# 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 [rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk) \* This is Litir 261*

Tràth anns an naoidheamh linn deug, bha doilearan Spàinnteach a’ cuairteachadh ann an Steòrnabhagh. Is dòcha nach eil sin na iongnadh oir bhiodh maraichean bho air feadh na Roinn Eòrpa a’ dol ann, agus tha fhios gun tug iad airgead leotha. Ach fhuair na doilearan seo ann air sàilleamh eucoir a ghabh àite ann am meadhan a’ chuain. Seo mar a thachair e a rèir an leabhair, *Tales and Traditions of the Lews*, le Dòmhnall Dòmhnallach nach maireann, leabhar a tha làn naidheachdan inntinneach a Leòdhas.

Dh’fhàg an soitheach, an *Jane*, anns an robh naochad tunna de chuideam, Gibraltar anns a’ Chèitean, ochd ceud deug is aon ar fhichead (1821). Bha i a’ deanamh air Brasail. B’ e fear Sasannach, Tòmas MacIain, an sgiobair oirre agus bha criubha oirre de sheachdnar, nam measg còcaire Frangach air an robh François Gautiez mar ainm. Is bha airgead mòr aca air bòrd – còrr is trithead ’s a h-ochd mìle doilear-airgid Spàinnteach.

Bha na doilearan ann am pocannan beaga canabhais. Bha na pocannan air an stòradh ann am min-sàibh ann an ochd cisteachan ann an toll na luinge. Thathar ag ràdh “gur math an còcaire an t-acras”, ach is dona an còcaire a dh’fhàsas sanntach, saoilidh mi – co-dhiù, ma tha e air bòrd soitheach anns a bheil airgead mòr.

Fhad ’s a bha iad air an t-slighe thar a’ Chuain Siar, thòisich an còcaire, Gautiez, air beachdachadh air an *Jane* a ghabhail thairis, airson greim fhaighinn air an airgead. Fhuair e taic bhon mheite, fear Heaman à Sasainn. Ach bha fear eile, fear Mac Pheadrais, fada an aghaidh ar-a-mach sam bith.

Oidhche a bha seo, bha Mac Pheadrais aig an stiùir fhad ’s a bha Heaman os cionn sgioba na faire. Thug Heaman ionnsaigh air Mac Pheadrais, agus thilg e am maraiche eile far na luinge don chuan. Fhad ’s a bha sin a’ tachairt, mhuirt Gautiez an sgiobair le gunna, agus e na leabaidh.

Chaidh feadhainn eile a ghlasadh anns an taigh-thoisich ach chan eil Dòmhnall Dòmhnallach ag innse dhuinn gu dè thachair dhaibh. Co-dhiù, bha an soitheach aig àm an ar-a-mach dìreach pìos beag gu tuath air a’ chrios mheadhain. Bha i faisg air seachdain seòlaidh gu siar air Na h-Eileanan Cainèiridh. Càite an rachadh iad, ma-thà? Cha b’ urrainn dhaibh cumail a dol a Bhrasail.

Airson adhbhar air choreigin, roghnaich iad thighinn a dh’Alba. Agus b’ e a’ chiad àite far an deach iad air tìr – Eilean Bharraigh far an do cheannaich am meite biadh agus eathar fosgailte.

Ghearr luchd an ar-a-mach tuill ann an slige an *Jane* airson a cur fodha. Ach cha deach i fodha. Chaidh iad air bòrd an eathair len airgead mòr, agus dh’fheuch iad ri

faighinn air falbh gu tìr-mòr. Ach dh'èirich stoirm agus cha do rinn iad adhartas a dh'ionnsaigh tìr-mòr. Chaidh iad gu tuath agus thill iad gu tìr anns na h-Eileanan Siar – ann an Leòdhas, faisg air Suardail anns an Rubha.

Ach, obh obh, bha an *Jane* air an dearbh shlighe a ghabhail agus chaidh ise air na creagan aig Ceann Tholastaidh, gu tuath air an Rubha. Chaidh na maraichean a cheasnachadh mun ghnòthach amharasach, agus fhuair fear na cusbainn ann an Steòrnabhagh, fear MacIomhair, aithris fhìrinneach bho fhear dhiubh.

Chaidh an cur an greim agus chaidh an toirt air falbh gu ruige Lìte, faisg air Dùn Eideann, far an deach an crochadh. Ach fhuair cuid de na doilearan aca ma sgaoil ann an Steòrnabhagh, agus thathar ag aithris gu robh iad a' dol bho làimh gu làimh airson iomadh bliadhna.

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**Faclan na seachdaine:** doilear-airgid: *silver dollar*; Steòrnabhagh: *Stornoway*; cuan: *ocean*; Tòmas MacIain: *Thomas Johnson*; min-sàibh: *sawdust*; meite: *mate (nautical)*; ar-a-mach: *mutiny*; maraiche: *seaman*; Na h-Eileanan Cainèiridh: *The Canary Isles*; Ceann Tholastaidh: *Tolsta Head*; cusbainn: *customs*; Lìte: *Leith*.

**Abairtean na seachdaine:** tha fhios gun tug iad airgead leotha: *of course, they took money with them*; air sàilleamh eucoir: *because of a crime*; bha criubha oirre de sheachdnar: *there was a crew of seven on her*; ann am pocannan beaga canabhais: *in small canvas bags*; ochd cisteachan ann an toll na luinge: *eight chests in the ship's hold*; is dona an còcaire a dh'fhàsas sanntach: *the cook is bad who grows greedy*; thar a' Chuain Siar: *across the Atlantic*; bha MacPheadrais aig an stiùir: *Paterson was at the wheel*; sgioba na faire: *the watch-crew*; chaidh feadhainn a ghlasadh anns an taigh-toisich: *some were locked in the forecabin*; gu tuath air a' chrios mheadhain: *north of the equator*; seachdain seòlaidh: *a week's sailing*; roghnaich iad thighinn a dh'Alba: *they chose to come to Scotland*; cha deach i fodha: *she did not sink*; faisg air Suardail anns an Rubha: *close to Swordale in Point*; far an deach an crochadh: *where they were hanged*.

**Puing-ghràmar na seachdaine:** Chaidh iad air bòrd an eathair len airgead mòr: *they went on board the boat with their fortune. I hope the word len here does not confuse you, because you won't find it in an old dictionary, like Dwelly's. In his day, and much later, it was written as two separate elements, ie le 'n airgead mòr. It is perhaps easier in this form to understand that it means "with their" and that is a combination of the preposition le and the third person plural possessive article an (here reduced to an "n" following the vowel of le). In modern orthography based upon the Gaelic Orthographic Conventions, or GOC (an updated version of which is due for publication any day now), the number of apostrophes have been reduced, and here is a good example. The two elements are now combined into len, or lem before a labial consonant (b, f, m, p). Similarly le 'm (with my) and le 'd (with your) can be rendered as lem and led respectively, although the other forms, le a h- (with her), le ar (with our) and le ur (with your, pl.) have retained their historical forms*

**Seanfhacal na seachdaine:** Thathar ag ràdh "gur math an còcaire an t-acras": *it is said that "hunger is a good cook". This is an old Gaelic proverb – is math an còcaire an t-acras – which has an equivalent in many European languages. And food does taste better when you're hungry!*

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