

# 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.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk) \* This is Litir 292.*

Nuair a nochd am bàta-smùid, an *Comet*, air Abhainn Chluaidh airson a’ chiad turais ann an ochd ceud deug ’s a dhà-dheug (1812), bha Eanraig Bell gu math toilichte. Is esan a chruthaich an soitheach.

Rugadh Bell ann an Tòrr Fhitheachan ann an Lodainn an Iar. Dh’obraich e ann an diofar dhreuchdan, agus ann an diofar àiteachan, mus do thòisich e air bàtaichean-smùid a dhealbh. Cha do ghabh Roinn a’ Chabhlaich Rìoghail ris na smuaintean aige agus bhruidhinn e ri feadhainn ann an dùthchannan thall thairis. Am measg sin bha fear Fulton anns Na Stàitean Aonaichte. Ann an ochd ceud deug ’s a seachd (1807), bha bàtaichean-smùid a’ seòladh air aibhnichean mòra Ameireagaidh a Tuath.

Bliadhna às dèidh sin, ghluais Bell gu Baile Eilidh air Abhainn Chluaidh. Bha a bhean a’ ruith taigh-òsta agus amar-snàimh anns a’ bhaile. ’S e neach-gnothaich air leth math a bh’ innte, agus tha e coltach gun do chuir ise airgead mu choinneimh a’ phròiseict airson an *Comet* a thogail ann an Glaschu.

Cha robh an soitheach uabhasach mòr. Cha robh innte ach trithead ’s a trì troighean de dh’fhad, agus bha i car coltach ri bàt-iasgaich, ach a-mhàin gu robh dà roth mòr air gach taobh dhith. Ach bha droch bheachd aig cuid oirre. Bha i salach is fuaimneach. Agus cha robh i mòr gu leòr, no làidir gu leòr, airson a dhol fada aig muir. Air là math ciùin air Abhainn Chluaidh, ruigeadh i astar de shia mìle mara san uair. Ann an ochd ceud deug is ochd-deug (1818), shaoil Eanraig Bell gu robh an t-àm ann an t-seirbheis a leudachadh – agus am bàta a leudachadh leis. Bha an *Comet* gu bhith a’ seòladh eadar Glaschu is An Gearasdan. Chaidh a gearradh ann an dà leth, agus chaidh sia troighean a bharrachd de dh’fhad a chur innte. Is chaidh einnsean na bu mhò a chur innte.

A bharrachd air an sgiobair, bhiodh criutha de sheachdnar air bòrd agus b’ e fear dhiubh sin am pìobaire. Uaireannan bhiodh an luchd-siubhail a’ dannsadh air bòrd gu ceòl na pìoba – airson an cumail fhèin blàth!

Air a’ chiad là dhen turas chun a’ Ghearasdain, bhiodh an *Comet* a’ dol bho Ghlaschu gu ruige Canàl a’ Chrìonain. Chuireadh an luchd-siubhail seachad an oidhche ann a sin. Air an làrna-mhàireach, bhiodh an soitheach a’ fàgail a’ chanàil is a’ tionndadh gu tuath.

Bha an leabhar fiosrachail, *Lumsden’s Steam Boat Companion*, a’ toirt rabhadh seachad mun chaolas ceithir mìle gu tuath air beul a’ chanàil. B’ e sin an *Doras Mòr*. “Nuair a bhios i a’ lionadh agus a’ tràghadh, gu h-àraidh aig àm an

reothairt,” sgrìobh ùghdar an leabhair, “tha an sruth an seo uabhasach luath, is uaireannan cho làidir ’s nach dèan soitheach a’ chùis na aghaidh.” Bhiodh an *Comet* a’ dol tron Doras leis an t-sruth.

Ach cha deach cùisean gu math dhi anns an Dùbhlachd ochd ceud deug is fichead (1820). Bha dà thubaist bheag aice, is chaidh beagan millidh a dhèanamh oirre. Bha i slaodach agus, nuair a ràinig i an Doras Mòr, bha i air dheireadh. Bha an tìde-mhara a’ tionndadh na h-aghaidh.

Bha gèile ann agus bha i a’ cur sneachd. Dh’fheuch an sgiobair ri adhartas a dhèanamh ann an saobh-shruth. ’S e sin fear de na sruthan faisg air a’ chladach, a tha a’ ruith an aghaidh an t-strutha mhòir. Bhuail an *Comet* anns na creagan agus bhris i ann an dà leth – dìreach far an deach a leudachadh dà bhliadhna roimhe. Gu fortanach, fhuair a h-uile duine gu tìr, ach b’ e sin an deireadh don *Chomet*.

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**Faclan na seachdaine:** Abhainn Chluaidh: *The River Clyde*; Eanraig Bell: *Henry Bell*; Tòrr Fhitheachan: *Torphichen*; Lodainn an Iar: *West Lothian*; thall thairis: *overseas*; Baile Eilidh: *Helensburgh*; salach: *dirty*; fuaimneach: *noisy*; an làrna-mhàireach: *the next day*; an reothairt: *spring tide*.

**Abairtean na seachdaine:** dh’obraich e ann an diofar dhreuchdan: *he worked in different professions*; mus do thòisich e air bàtaichean-smùid a dhealbh: *before he started to design steamboats*; cha do ghabh Roinn a’ Chabhlaich Rìoghail ris na smuaintean aige: *The Admiralty did not accept his ideas*; aibhnichean mòra Ameireagaidh a Tuath: *the great rivers of North America*; bhathar a’ creidsinn: *it was believed*; taigh-òsta agus amar-snàimh: *a hotel and swimming baths*; gun do chuir ise airgead mu choinneimh a’ phròiseact: *that she funded the project*; bha droch bheachd aig cuid oirre: *some had a poor opinion of her*; ruigeadh i astar de shia mìle mara san uair: *she would reach a speed of six knots*; gu robh an t-àm ann an t-seirbheis a leudachadh: *that it was time to extend the service*; chaidh sia troighean a bharrachd de dh’fhad a chur innte: *six extra feet of length were put in her*; criutha de sheachdnar: *a crew of seven*; nuair a bhios i a’ lìonadh agus a’ tràghadh: *when the tide is flowing and ebbing*; bha an tìde-mhara a’ tionndadh na h-aghaidh: *the tide was turning against her (tìde-mhara is an alternative to seòl-mara in last week’s Litir)*; bha gèile ann agus bha i a’ cur sneachd: *it was blowing a gale and snowing*; dh’fheuch an sgiobair ri adhartas a dhèanamh ann an saobh-shruth: *the skipper tried to make progress in an eddy current*; an aghaidh an t-strutha mhòir: *against the main current*; far an deach a leudachadh dà bhliadhna roimhe: *where she was [had been] extended two years before*; b’ e sin an deireadh do X: *that was the end of X*.

**Puing-chànain na seachdaine:** cha robh innte ach trithead ’s a trì troighean de dh’fhad: *she was only 33 feet long. You will notice, in relation to boats that, while the words bàta and soitheach are (generally speaking) masculine, boats are conceptually feminine in Gaelic, at least while at sea. This should be easy to deal with as the situation is similar in English, where the pronoun “she” is often used in relation to boats and ships. So, in the Litir you will see the third person singular feminine prepositional pronoun innte (“in her”) appear as it does above (literally: “there was not in her but 33 feet of length”). Can you see any other third person*

*singular feminine prepositional pronoun referring to the Comet in the Litir? There are four – dhith (the preposition de), aice (the preposition aig), dhi (the preposition do) – and one other. See if you can find it.*

**Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine:** bha i air dheireadh: *she was late, behind schedule.*

*\* Tha “Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh” air a maoineachadh le Seirbheis nam Meadhanan Gàidhlig*