

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 at roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk * This is Litir 336. Note that Roddy also broadcasts a simplified version – An Litir Bheag – on Monday evenings at 7.00 pm. This is also available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 32 corresponds to Litir 336.*

Anns a’ Mhàrt ochd ceud deug, ceathrad ’s a h-ochd (1848), chuir feadhainn ann am Baile Anna ann an Ceap Breatainn, agus an sgìre mun cuairt air, athchuinge gu Sir John Harvey, Iar-riaghladair Alba Nuaidh. Bha iad ag iarraidh taic bhon riaghaltas. Cha robh cùisean a’ dol gu math dhaibh. **Bha iad gann de bhiadh agus gann de shìol.** Dh’iarr iad air an iar-riaghladair min-arbhair-Innseanaich a chur thuca, agus sìol coirce.

Seo pàirt de litir a chaidh a sgrìobhadh anns a’ *Chape Breton Spectator*: “Chan eil sìol de sheòrsa sam bith aig barrachd na aon duine às gach còig ceud. Mura faighear grèim air sìol, ann an dòigh air choreigin, bidh e cinnteach gum bi gort mhòr ann san ath gheamhradh. Chan e a-mhàin gun deach an sìol a chleachdadh airson daoine a chumail beò ach gun deach an crodh is na laoigh a spadadh air an dearbh adhbhar.

“Tha mòran a-nise às aonais an dà chuid, crodh is caoraich, agus às aonais sìol no biadh; mar sin tha e cinnteach, mura tèid rudeigin a dhèanamh gu luath, gum faigh feadhainn bàs le cion a’ bhìdh... Carson nach toirear airgead bho na daoine a th’ air tuarastal mòr is a chuireas aodach purpaidh spaideil orra is a ghabhas biadh mòr, agus iad beò air saothair nan daoine bochda...? Tha mòran aig a bheil bathar a’ beachdachadh air a bhith a’ falbh chun nan Stàitean [Aonaichte] as t-fhoghar gus nach caill iad na th’ aca don fheadhainn acrach.”

Tuigidh sibh gu robh a’ chùis èiginneach. Chan e sin a-mhàin ach an do mhothaich sibh dè a’ bhliadhna a bh’ ann? Ochd ceud deug, ceathrad ’s a h-ochd (1848). Sgrìobh Tormod MacLeòid do charaid gu robh gaiseadh a’ bhuntàta ann agus gu robh sin a’ toirt droch bhuaidh air daoine thall ’s a-bhos. Chunnaic e, mar a bhiodh dùil, làmh an Tighearna anns a’ ghnòthach.

Bha beagan dòchais ann do chuid, ge-tà, an cois obair Iain Rothaich. Bha esan a’ reic fiodha bho na coilltean. Bha an luchd-obrach aige a’ faighinn tuarastal math. Tha e coltach gu robh e deònach fiodh a cheannach bho dhaoine. **Bha sin air airgead a chur nam pòcaidean.** Ach chuir Tormod MacLeòid stad air sin. Dh’iarr Tormod air muinntir an àite sgrù a bhith a’ dèiligeadh ri Iain Rothach. Carson? Uill, bha Tormod dhen bheachd gu robh an Rothach air a bhith ri cùl-mhùtaireachd. Bha e, a rèir Thormoid, a’ toirt branndaidh a-steach gu mì-laghail. ’S e peacadh a bha sin agus, eadhon ged a

bha an sluagh acrach, dh'iarr Tormod orra gun a dhol faisg air bùth an Rothaich.

Mun àm sin, nuair a bha a' ghort aig a h-àird fhuair Tormod litir agus parsail à Astràilia. 'S ann bho mhac, Dòmhnall, a bha iad. Bha Dòmhnall air a dhol a dh'fhuireach ann an Astràilia, far an robh e na dheasaiche air pàipear-naidheachd. Chuir e grunn lethbhreacan dhen phàipear an cois a' pharsail. Leugh Tormod iad, agus thog iad aire. Bha an talamh math is bha an aimsir math. Thòisich mòran dhen daoine òga ann an Ceap Breatainn air beachdachadh air a dhol a dh'Astràilia.

Ach bha Tormod seasgad 's a h-ochd bliadhna a dh'aois. Bha a' bhean, Màiri, nach robh a' cumail gu math, còrr is seasgad. Aig aois mar sin, an robh iadsan dha-rìribh deiseil gus falbh thar a' chuain aon turas eile? Chì sinn de rinn iad an ath-sheachdain.

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Faclan na Litreach: min-arbhair-Innseanaich: *maize flour*; sìol coirce: *oat seed*; gort: *famine*; tuarastal: *salary*; cùl-mhùtaireachd: *smuggling*; peacadh: *sin*; deasaiche: *editor*.

Abairtean na Litreach: chuir feadhainn athchuinge gu Iar-riaghladair Alba Nuaidh: *some of the people sent a petition to the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia*; cha robh cùisean a' dol gu math dhaibh: *things weren't going well for them*; barrachd na aon duine às gach còig ceud: *more than one person in five hundred*; mura faighear grèim air sìol, ann an dòigh air choreigin: *unless seed is, by some means, secured*; air an dearbh adhbhar: *for the same reason*; tha mòran às aonais crodh is caoraich: *many are without cattle and sheep*; gum faigh feadhainn bàs le cion a' bhìdh: *some will die from starvation*; carson nach toirear airgead bho: *why not take money from?*; agus iad beò air saothair nan daoine bochda: *who live by the labour of the poor*; gus nach caill iad na th' aca: *so they don't lose what they have*; gaiseadh a' bhuntàta: *the potato blight*; thall 's a-bhos: *here and there*; chunnaic e làmh an Tighearna anns a' ghnothach: *he saw the Lord's hand in the matter*; chuir Tormod MacLeòid stad air sin: *Norman MacLeod put a stop to that*; dh'iarr X air Y sgar a bhith a' dèiligeadh ri Iain Rothach: *X asked Y to stop dealing with John Munro*; a' toirt branndaidh a-steach gu mì-laghail: *importing brandy illegally*; gun a dhol faisg air bùth an Rothaich: *not to go near Munro's shop*; nuair a bha a' ghort aig a h-àird: *when the famine was at its worst*; thòisich mòran dhen daoine òga air beachdachadh air a dhol a dh'Astràilia: *many of the young people started to think about going to Australia*; bha a' bhean, nach robh a' cumail gu math, còrr is seasgad: *his wife, who did not keep well, was more than sixty*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: **Bha sin air airgead a chur nam pòcaidean:** *that would have put money in their pockets*. Bha here is actually (as the English translation tells you) a conditional form of the verb "to be". I might have said "bhiodh sin air airgead a chur..." Note that bha, which you will know well from simple sentences like bha mi sgìth and nuair a bha mi òg, can also occur in the conditional, although it is uncommon in some places. Other examples: bha Iain air a bhith pòsta fichead bliadhna an-diugh fhèin, ach gun do chaochail e an-uiridh (John would have been married twenty years today,

except that he died last year); bha an t-each sin air buannachadh nan robh marcaiche na b' fheàrr air a bhith air (that horse would have won had it had a better jockey). Note in the latter example that bha might be replaced by bhiodh and nan robh by nam biodh.

Gnàths-cainnt na Litreach: Bha iad gann de bhiadh agus gann de shìol:
they were short of food and short of seed.

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

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