

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

A special programme, in the form of a “letter”, designed for 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, Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 435. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 131 corresponds to Litir 435.

Bha Iain MacIlleDhuibh – no John Lamont – gu math ainmeil mar reuladair anns an naoidheamh linn deug. Mar a dh’innis mi dhuibh an t-seachdain sa chaidh, bha e à sgìre Ghàidhealach ann an Siorrachd Obar Dheathain, ach choisinn e a chliù anns a’ Ghearmailt. Tha mòran eòlach air anns an dùthaich sin – agus air feadh an t-saoghail – mar “Johann von Lamont”.

Aig aois dhà-dheug, fhuair Iain deagh chothrom airson a chuid foghlaim adhartachadh. Aig an àm ud, bha colaiste Chaitligeach Albannach aig Ratisbon ann am Babhàiria. Chaidh fear de na manaich à Ratisbon gu ruige Alba, feuch balaich a lorg airson a bhith nan oileanaich anns a’ cholaiste. Fhuair Iain MacIlleDhuibh fear de na h-àiteachan ann.

Chuir Iain seachad beagan bhliadhnaichean ann an Ratisbon, a’ faighinn foghlam anns na cuspairean Clasaigeach, Feallsanachd agus Diadhachd. Bha e fìor mhath air Matamataig. Aig a’ cheann thall, cho-dhùin e nach robh e airson a bhith na shagart. Dh’fhàg e a’ cholaiste agus chaidh e gu ionad-foghlaim saidheansail ann am Munich far an do dh’ionnsaich e tuilleadh mu shaidheans is reul-eòlas.

Rinn e adhartas proifeiseanta gu luath. Taobh a-staigh dà bhliadhna, bha e na neach-cuideachaidh don Phroifeasair Soldener aig an Reul-lann ann am Bogenhausen faisg air Munich. Nuair a chaochail am proifeasair còig bliadhna às dèidh sin, chaidh Iain a dhèanamh na Stiùiriche na àite. B’ e tiotal na dreuchd aige – Reuladair Rìoghail Bhabhàiria.

Bha prosbaig mhòr aige – an dàrna tè a bu mhotha san t-saoghal aig an àm sin. Thug e sùil air reul-bhadan, no *constellations*. Thug e sùil air deargan-doireannan. Sin a’ Ghàidhlig a th’ air *nebulae* – deargan-doireannan – mar gum biodh, na “stoirmean dearga”. Dh’fhoillsich e grunn mhapaichean de na rionnagan agus “Mìosachan Reul-eòlasach”. Chlàir e còrr is fichead mìle rionnag a ghabhas faicinn bho Mhunch le prosbaig, ach nach gabh faicinn idir leis an t-sùil gun taic.

Dh’fhàs e beartach. Nuair a bha Sagart Bhràigh Mhàrr thall sa Ghearmailt ann an ochd ceud deug, ceathrad ’s a dhà (1842), chaidh e a chèilidh air. Chuir e iongnadh air an t-sagart cho math dheth ’s a bha Iain, agus an taigh aige làn àirneis luachmhor. Ach ’s dòcha nach robh mòran aige air an cosgadh e a chuid airgid. Bha beatha shàmhach shìmplidh aige, cha do phòs e riamh, agus chan eil e soilleir an do rinn e mòran siubhail na ùine fhèin – air ais a dh’Alba no a dh’àiteachan eile.

Ann an ochd ceud deug, caogad ’s a dhà (1852), fhuair e dreuchd eile – Proifeasair an Reul-eòlais ann an Oilthigh Mhunch. Às dèidh sin, dh’fhoillsich e tràchdas mu dhubhadh na grèine. Rinn e obair mhòr cuideachd air a’ phlanaid Uranus. B’ esan a chiad duine a dh’obraich a-mach cuideam Uranus. Rinn e sin le bhith a’ tomhas gluasad nan gealaichean timcheall na

planaid. Rinn e obair air Saturn cuideachd agus chunnaic e Neaptuin dà thuras, ach cha do dh'aithnich e aig an àm gur e planaid a bh' innte.

Fhuair Iain ballrachd ann an Acadamaidhean Rìoghail Bhabhàiria is Dhùn Èideann, Acadamaidhean na Bruiseil, Upsala is Prag agus buidhnean acadamaigeach eile. Bha e na Ridire ann am buidhnean urramach anns a' Bhatican, san Ostair agus san t-Suain. Agus gu sònraichte bha e na Ridire ann am Babhàiria – agus 's e sin a leig leis “von” a chur ri ainm. Bho Iain MacIlleDhuibh, John Lamont, dh'èirich Johann von Lamont – agus chan eil a sgeul deiseil fhathast. A bharrachd air reul-eòlas, bha e cliùiteach airson na rinn e ann an **iùil-tharraing** agus dealan – is bheir sinn sùil orra sin an ath thuras.

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Faclan na Litreach: reuladair: *astronomer*; Feallsanachd: *Philosophy*; Diadhachd: *Divinity*; Matamataig: *Mathematics*; reul-eòlas: *astronomy*; reul-lann: (*astronomical*) *observatory*; reul-bhad: *constellation*; deargan-doireann: *nebula*; ballrachd: *membership*; dealan: *electricity*.

Abairtean na Litreach: ainmeil mar reuladair anns an naoidheamh linn deug: *famous as an astronomer in the 19th Century*; choisinn e a chliù anns a' Ghearmailt: *he won his reputation in Germany*; deagh chothrom airson a chuid foghlaim adhartachadh: *a good opportunity to advance his education*; bha colaiste Chaitligeach Albannach ann am Babhàiria: *there was a Scottish Catholic college in Bavaria*; fear de na manaich: *one of the monks*; gu ruige Alba, feuch balaich a lorg airson a bhith nan oileanaich: *to Scotland to try to find boys to be students*; chodhùin e nach robh e airson a bhith na shagart: *he decided he didn't want to become a priest*; chaidh Iain a dhèanamh na Stiùiriche na àite: *Iain was made Director in his place*; an dàrna tè a bu mhotha san t-saoghal: *the second biggest [telescope] in the world*; Miosachan Reul-eòlasach: *Astronomical Calendar*; chlàir e fichead mìle rionnag a ghabhas faicinn bho: *he recorded twenty thousands stars that can be seen from*; nach gabh faicinn idir leis an t-sùil gun taic: *that cannot be seen with the unaided eye*; chaidh e a chèilidh air: *he went to visit him*; làn àirneis luachmhor: *full of valuable furniture*; air an cosgadh e a chuid airgid: *on which he would spend his money*; chan eil e soilleir an do rinn e mòran siubhail na ùine fhèin: *it's not clear if he did much travel in his own time*; tràchdas mu dhubhadh na grèine: *a treatise about the solar eclipse*; le bhith a' tomhas gluasad nan gealaichean: *by measuring the movement of the moons*; bha e na Ridire: *he was a Knight*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: iùil-tharraing: *magnetism. The English and Gaelic for “magnetism” might seem to have nothing in common, the English being derived from Magnesia, the genitive form of Magnes, an ancient mineral-rich region in the classical world (the element “magnesium” gets its name from the same place). But you may be aware of another old English term for a magnet or piece of magnetic rock which could be used in a compass – a “lodestone”. This means a “guiding stone” and it is a direct equivalent to the Gaelic clach-iùil (a magnet). Iùil means “guidance, direction” (a neach-iùil is a “guide” eg a mountain guide). Tarraing means “attract” so iùil-tharraing (note the slenderisation of iùil) means “guiding attraction” which is a pretty good summary of the phenomenon as it was traditionally observed, and employed, while navigating at sea.*

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: 's e sin a leig leis “von” a chur ri ainm: *that's what allowed him to add “von” to his name.*

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