

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 440. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 136 corresponds to Litir 440.

O chionn beagan bhliadhnaichean chaidh mi a champachadh ann an Cnòideart, air cladach Loch Shubhairne. Choisich mi a-mach gu eilean a bha an ìre math ceangailte ri tìr-mòr – le muineal de mhorghan. Agus ’s e an t-ainm a th’ air – *Eilean a’ Mhuineil*.

Chan eil duine a’ fuireach anns an àite sin an-diugh ach bha mi a’ smaoinichadh dhomh fhìn aig an àm gur iongantach mura b’ e sin tìr ghaisgeach uaireigin. ’S e sin an seòrsa àite a th’ ann – eadar beinn is muir – mar a tha mòran de thaobh an iar na Gàidhealtachd. **Tìr nam Beann, ’s nan Gleann, ’s nan Gaisgeach.**

Uill, fhuair mi a-mach nach robh mi fada ceàrr, oir rugadh an gaisgeach Gàidhealach, Finan MacDonald, anns an dearbh àite. Bha tuathanas ann am “Muineal” agus bha athair Fhinan na thuathanach ann. Agus cò bh’ ann am Finan MacDonald? Uill, bha e ainmeil, am measg eile, airson sabaid le tarbh-allaidh, no *bison*, le a làmhan a-mhàin, agus a bhith fhathast beò aig an deireadh.

Chan eil mi buileach cinnteach dè an dreach Gàidhlig a bh’ air ainm oir ’s ann ann am Beurla a bha a h-uile cunntas a leugh mi air. Canaidh mi Fionghan MacDhòmhnail ris ach dh’fhaodainn a bhith ceàrr, is ma tha fiosrachadh air a’ ghnòthach aig duine sam bith agaibh, bu mhath leam cluinntinn bhuaibh.

Rugadh Fionghan ann an seachd ceud deug, ochdad ’s a dhà (1782). Dh’fhàg e Alba, cuide ri a theaghlach, nuair a bha e na bhalach òg, agus chaidh e a dh’Ameireagaidh a Tuath. Nuair a thàinig e gu ìre, bha e sia troighean is ceithir òirlich a dh’àirde, le falt fada ruadh agus feusag mhòr. Timcheall air ochd ceud deug ’s a ceithir (1804), fhuair e obair aig Companaidh an Iar-thuath a bha an sàs ann am malairt nam bian.

Mar a thachair le mòran Ghàidheal eile, fhuair e a-steach air treubh de dhùthchasaich Ameireaganach, agus phòs e tè dhiubh. Uaireannan bhiodh e a’ taobhadh le aon treubh de thùsanaich an aghaidh treubh eile, agus a’ sabaid às an leth.

Rinn e obair le cuid de luchd-rannsachaidh, leithid Dhaibhidh MhicThòmais, a bha a’ dèanamh mhapaichean, agus thathar ag ràdh gum b’ e Fionghan a’ chiad duine – co-dhiù duine Eòrpach – a chaidh **tarsainn nam beanntan mòra Creagach** – na *Rockies* – trì tursan. Bha cuid dhen bheachd nach e sgoilear a bh’ ann agus gum b’ fheàrr leis obair chunnartach – a’ gabhail a-steach sabaid – seach obair pàipeir. Ach tha e coltach gun robh trì cànanan aige gu fileanta – Gàidhlig, Beurla is Fraingis – agus gun robh comas aige ann an cuid de na cànanan dùthchasach a bharrachd.

Rinn Fionghan obair rannsachaidh anns na beanntan is aibhnichean airson an lus-eòlaiche Albannaich, Daibhidh Dùbhghlas. Chruinnich Dùbhghlas tòrr lusan nach robh

aithnichte anns an Roinn Eòrpa. Bha Giuthas an Dùbhghlasaich am measg sin. Fhuair Daibhidh bàs ann an Hawaii. Thuit e do shloc anns an robhar a' glacadh crodh fiadhaich. Chaidh a mharbhadh le tarbh a bh' anns an t-sloc.

Ach **cha b' ionann e** do Fhionghan MacDhòmhnaill. Nuair a bha e ceathrad 's a còig bliadhna a dh'aois, chaidh a thilgeil far eich. Bha tarbh-allaidh mòr an tòir air. Thionndaidh Fionghan. Rinn an tarbh is Fionghan carachd le chèile. Chaidh an dithis a ghoirteachadh ach mhair iad beò. Gu dearbh, bha Fionghan beò airson fichead 's a ceithir bliadhna às dèidh sin. Tha cuid ag ràdh nach robh duine eile – roimhe no às a dhèidh – air tighinn beò tro shabaid le tarbh-allaidh mòr dhen t-seòrsa sin.

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Faclan na Litreach: Loch Shubhairne: *Loch Hourn*; tarbh-allaidh: *bison (bull)*; lus-eòlaiche: *botanist*.

Abairtean na Litreach: chaidh mi a champachadh ann an Cnòideart: *I went camping in Knoydart*; ceangailte ri tìr-mòr: *linked to the mainland*; muineal de mhorghan: *a neck of shingle*; gur iongantach mura b' e sin tìr ghaisgeach uaireigin: *that it would be surprising if that weren't a land of heroes at one time*; anns an dearbh àite: *in the very place*; le a làmhan a-mhàin: *with his bare hands*; a h-uile cunntas a leugh mi air: *every account I read of [on] him*; dh'fhaodainn a bhith ceàrr: *I might be wrong*; bu mhath leam cluinntinn bhuaibh: *I'd like to hear from you*; cuide ri a theaghlach: *along with his family*; Companaidh an Iar-thuath: *The North-west Company*; malairt nam bian: *the fur trade*; fhuair e a-steach air treubh de dhùthchasaich Ameireaganach: *he got friendly with a tribe of native Americans*; phòs e tè dhiubh: *he married one of them*; a' sabaid às an leth: *fighting on their behalf*; thathar ag ràdh: *it is said*; gum b' fheàrr leis obair chunnartach: *that he preferred dangerous work*; nach robh aithnichte anns an Roinn Eòrpa: *which weren't known in Europe*; Giuthas an Dùbhghlasaich: *The Douglas Fir (species)*; thuit e do shloc anns an robhar a' glacadh crodh fiadhaich: *he fell into a pit in which wild cattle were being caught*; chaidh a mharbhadh le tarbh: *he was killed by a bull*; chaidh a thilgeil far eich: *he was thrown from his horse*; bha tarbh-allaidh mòr an tòir air: *a large bull bison was pursuing him*; rinn X is Y carachd le chèile: *X and Y wrestled with each other*; chaidh an dithis a ghoirteachadh ach mhair iad beò: *both were injured but they survived*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: **Tìr nam Beann, 's nan Gleann, 's nan Gaisgeach:** *the land of the mountains, the glens and the heroes. Old sayings like this preserve the traditional grammatical forms, in this case the genitive plurals of beinn, gleann and gaisgeach which, with a slight variation in beinn, are the same as the nominative singular. But notice tarsainn nam beanntan mòra Creagach (the genitive plural following tarsainn). Here the adjectives have their effect on the situation, at least in modern Gaelic, with beanntan being the same as the nominative plural form. It would seem a bit old-fashioned to say tarsainn nam beann mòra Creagach, although it wouldn't be wrong. But we would still say tarsainn nam beann (across the mountains), without the adjective being present.*

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: **cha b' ionann e:** *it was not the same. The present tense (it is not the same) would be chan ionann e.*

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

