

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.macleaen@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 483. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 179 corresponds to Litir 483.

O chionn beagan is dà bhliadhna bha mi ann an New Zealand, no Sealan Nuadh, a’ dèanamh prògram telebhisein airson a’ BhBC. B’ e cuspair a’ phrògram am fear-poilitigs Sir Iain MacCoinnich. Chòrd e rium a bhith a’ leantainn stòiridh a bheatha eadar an t-àite san do thogadh e agus an t-àite san do dh’fhàs e cliùiteach. Ri a linn, b’ esan an dàrna fear a bu chudromaiche is a bu chumhachdaiche ann an Sealan Nuadh.

Rugadh e air oighreachd Àird Rois, faisg air Alanais ann an Ros an Ear, ann an ochd ceud deug, trithead ’s a naoi (1839). Aig an àm sin bha a’ Ghàidhlig làidir ann an Ros an Ear agus ’s e Gàidhlig a bh’ aig Iain mar chiad chànan. **Bha e na Ghàidheal do chridhe.**

Nuair a bha e còig bliadhna a dh’aois chunnaic e rudeigin a bha a’ dol a dh’atharrachadh a bheatha gu tur. Bha e còmhla ri athair anns a’ Chròic. Tha eaglais ainmeil an sin far an robh muinntir Ghleann Chailbhaidh a’ gabhail fasnachadh – anns a’ chladh ri taobh na h-eaglaise – às dèidh gun deach am fuadachadh bhon dachannan. Sgrìob feadhainn dhiubh an ainmean ann an glainne uinneagan na h-eaglaise. Agus chithear na sgrìoban sin fhathast.

Cò nar measg nach fhàs feargach nuair a chì sinn a leithid an-diugh? A’ chiad turas a chunnaic mise na h-uinneagan sin, feumaidh mi aideachadh gun robh fearg orm. Ciamar a b’ urrainn do dh’uachdaran a bhith cho an-ìochdmhor? Uill, chunnaic Iain MacCoinnich an t-ana-ceartas, chan ann còrr math is ceud bliadhna às dèidh làimh, ach nuair a bha e a’ tachairt.

Choisich e fhèin is athair seachad air an eaglais agus chunnaic Iain na daoine anns a’ chladh, agus iad a’ fulang dòrainn – ged nach do rinn iad dad ceàrr. Bha a chuimhne air an tachartas sin gu bhith aige fad a bheatha. Agus thug i buaidh mhòr air fheallsanachd phoilitigeach. Bha Iain airson a bhith cinnteach nach tachradh fuadaichean de a leithid ann an Sealan Nuadh. Agus, mar sin, bha e an sàs gu mòr ann an ceist ath-leasachadh an fhearainn anns an dùthaich sin.

Bha athair Iain na thuathanach. Nuair a bha Iain na dheugaire, bha iad ann am Baile an Dùin. Tha an taigh aca na sheasamh fhathast. Gheibhear seallaidhean math’ às de Bheinn Uais.

Cha robh Iain ’s a theaghlach cho bochd ri feadhainn eile. Ach chaill e a mhàthair nuair a bha e òg. Agus bha leanabh aige le boireannach òg anns an sgìre nuair a bha e naoi bliadhna deug a dh’aois. Dh’iarr Iain air **màthair na h-ìghne** a dhol a Shealan Nuadh còmhla ris. Ach dhiùlt i. Ge-tà, ghabh e ris gu poblach gur ann leis-san a bha an nighean, agus ghabh ise a chinneadh-san. B’ e Johan MacKenzie a bh’ oirre ann am Beurla, ged nach urrainn dhomh a ràdh an e Johan no Seonag a bh’ oirre ann an Gàidhlig. Gheall Iain gu

poblach gun toireadh e ceithir notaichean gach bliadhna airson deich bliadhna mar thaic-airgid dhi. Agus rinn e sin.

Phòs Iain tèile às an sgìre ann an ochd ceud deug is seasgad (1860). Bha Anna Rothach sia bliadhna na bu shine na Iain, agus bha i mòran na bu lugha. Bha esan sia troighean is ceithir òirlich a dh'àirde. Cha robh ise eadhon còig troighean a dh'àirde! Ach tha e coltach, ann an gnothaichean na dachaigh, gun robh i gu math cinnteach aiste fhèin. Innsidh mi dhuibh an ath-sheachdain mar a dh'èirich dhaibh nuair a ràinig iad Sealan Nuadh.

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Faclan na Litreach: Sealan Nuadh: *New Zealand (but a Gaelicized form of the English is also widely used)*; Sir Iain MacCoinnich: *Sir John McKenzie [the spelling in NZ where he is best known]*; Àird Rois: *Ardross*; Alanais: *Alness*, Ros an Ear: *Easter Ross*; A' Chròic: *Croick*; Gleann Cailbhidh: *Glencalvie*; ana-ceartas: *injustice*; Baile an Dùin: *Baldoon*; dhiùlt: *refused*; Anna Rothach: *Ann Munro*.

Abairtean na Litreach: b' e cuspair a' phrògram am fear-poilitigs: *the subject of the programme was the politician*; stòiridh a bheatha: *the story of his life*; an t-àite san do thogadh e: *the place in which he was raised*; san do dh'fhàs e cliùiteach: *in which he became famous*; ri a linn: *in his day*; an dàrna fear a bu chudromaiche: *the second most important man*; a bha a' dol a dh'atharrachadh a bheatha gu tur: *that was going to completely change his life*; a' gabhail fàsghadh anns a' chladh: *taking shelter in the graveyard*; às dèidh gun deach am fuadachadh: *after they were evicted*; chithear na sgrìoban: *the scratchings can be seen*; feumaidh mi aideachadh gu robh fearg orm: *I must admit that I was angry*; ciamar a b' urrainn do dh' uachdaran a bhith cho an-ìochdmhor?: *how could a landlord be so merciless?*; a' fulang dòrainn: *suffering anguish*; thug i buaidh mhòr air fheallsanachd phoilitigeach: *it had a great impact on his political philosophy*; nach tachradh fuadaichean: *that clearances wouldn't happen*; ath-leasachadh an fhearainn: *land reform*; gheibhear seallaidhean math' às de Bheinn Uais: *good views are obtained from it of Ben Wyvis*; bha leanabh aige le boireannach òg: *he had a child with a young woman*; ghabh e ris gu poblach gur ann leis-san a bha X: *he admitted publicly that X was his*; ghabh i a shloinneadh-san: *she took his surname*; na bu shine: *older*; mòran na bu lugha: *much smaller*; sia troighean is ceithir òirlich: *six feet and four inches*; cinnteach aiste fhèin: *assertive, certain of herself*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Dh'iarr Iain air **màthair na h-ìghne** a dhol a Shealan Nuadh còmhla ris: *John asked the girl's mother to go to New Zealand with him*. Nighean can mean either "girl" or "daughter" (originally it was "daughter"), and it has two alternative genitive singular forms – [na] nighinne and [na h-]ìghne. The second form, which often comes across as strange to Gaelic learners, is a relic of the original nominative form of the noun – inghean (iníon in Irish Gaelic and inneen in Manx, both meaning "daughter"). The "corruption" of inghean (as Macbain describes it in his etymological dictionary) is probably a result of the effect of the terminal "n" on the singular article on the initial vowel in the noun ie an inghean became an nighean, which is now the standard nominative form.

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: Bha e na Ghàidheal do chridhe: *he was a Gael to his core [lit. his heart]*.

* Tha "Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh" air a maoineachadh le MG ALBA