

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 rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 485. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 181 corresponds to Litir 485.

Bha Sir Iain MacCoinnich na Mhinistear airson an Fhearainn ann an Sealan Nuadh anns an deichead mu dheireadh dhen naoidheamh linn deug. Rinn e cinnteach nach biodh fearann na dùthcha ann an làmhan uachdaran mòra. Ach, anns an Eilean mu Thuath, bha tòrr dhen fhearann ann an làmhan nan daoine dùthchasach, na Maori.

Thug an Riaghaltas achdan ùra a-steach. Leig sin leotha fearann a cheannach bho na Maori. Chaill na Maori còrr is trì millean acaire. Cheannaich an Riaghaltas am fearann aig prìs ceithir tastain is sia sgillinn gach acaire. Ach nuair a reic iad e, bha dà not air gach acaire. Rinn an Riaghaltas prothaid às. Thug iad taic-airgid do na tuathanaich bheaga ùra. Cha tug iad taic-airgid mar sin do na Maori, ge-tà.

Dhuinn fhìn an-diugh, tha e doirbh a thuigsinn mar a bha cuid de Ghàidheil cruaidh air na daoine dùthchasach anns na coloinidhean Breatannach. Bha na Gàidheil a’ fulang call fearainn aig an taigh ach thug iad fearann air falbh o dhaoine dùthchasach ann an dùthchannan eile. Cha b’ e sin an t-àm a b’ fheàrr nar n-eachdraidh.

Ged a chunnaic Iain MacCoinnich le shùilean fhèin buaidh nam fuadaichean ann an Alba, thug e fearann mòr air falbh bho na Maori. Bha e a’ smaoinichadh gun robh na daoine geala na b’ fheàrr mar thuathanaich. Bha e a’ smaoinichadh nach robh na Maori a’ dèanamh gu leòr leis an fhearann. Agus bha e feumach air taic phoilitigeach bho dhaoine Eòrpach ann an sgìrean dùthchail anns an Eilean mu Thuath.

Tha e doirbh Iain MacCoinnich a chomharrachadh mar neach-poilitigs. Bha e radaigeach air ceist an fhearainn. Ach bha e caomhnach ann an dòighean eile. Bha e an aghaidh boireannaich a bhith a’ bhòtadh – ged a bha Sealan Nuadh air thoiseach air a chòrr dhen t-saoghal a thaobh sin. Bha e onarach, ach dh’fhaodadh e a bhith droch-nàdarrach is connsachail. Nuair a dh’fhàsadh e feargach sa phàrlamaid, thigeadh a’ Ghàidhlig gu bhilean. Cha robh fios aig muinntir Hansard dè bha e ag ràdh!

Nuair a chaidh am Prìomhaire a Lunnainn, bha MacCoinnich aig stiùir na dùthcha. Ach cha robh e a’ cumail gu math. Chaidh e fhèin a Lunnainn ann an ochd ceud deug, naochad ’s a naoi (1899) **airson a dhol fo lannsa**. Fhad ’s a bha e a’ dol am feabhas, chaidh e air ais don t-seann dachaigh aige ann am Baile an Dùin. Thachair e ri seann chàirdean agus chaidh fàilte chridheil a chur air.

Thill e a Shealan Nuadh ach bha e a’ fulang le aillse. Leig e dheth a dhreuchd mar bhall pàrlamaid ann an naoi ceud deug (1900). Bliadhna às dèidh sin, bha Diùc na Cùirn is Iorc ann an Sealan Nuadh. Stad an trèana aige faisg air dachaigh MhicCoinnich. **Bhuilich**

an Diùc inbhe ridire air MacCoinnich. Nuair a chaochail MacCoinnich beagan seachdainean às dèidh sin, 's e “Sir Iain” a bh' air.

Bha tiodhlacadh mòr aige, coltach ri seann tiodhlacadh nan ceann-cinnidh Gàidhealach, le còmhlán pìoba aig a cheann. Chaidh carragh-cuimhne a chur suas dha ach cha robh e air a thogail gu math agus thuit e às a chèile. Ann an naoi ceud deug, fichead 's a naoi (1929) chaidh carragh ùr a chur suas air mullach cnuc ris an canar Puketapu. Ma tha sibh a' siubhal an rathaid mhòir eadar Christchurch agus Dùn Èideann, chì sibh an carragh-cuimhne os cionn baile beag ris an canar Palmerston. Fhad 's a sheasas e, cha tèid Sir Iain MacCoinnich a-mach à cuimhne nan daoine ann an Sealán Nuadh.

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Faclan na Litreach: Sir Iain MacCoinnich: *Sir John McKenzie*; Sealán Nuadh: *New Zealand*; Eilean mu Thuath: *North Island*; achdan: *acts*; radaigeach: *radical*; caomhnach: *conservative*, Baile an Dùin: *Baldoon*; Diùc na Cùirn is Iorc: *the Duke of Cornwall and York*; carragh-cuimhne: *memorial, monument*.

Abairtean na Litreach: nach biodh fearann na dùthcha ann an làmhan uachdaran mòra: *that the country's land wouldn't be in the hands of big landlords*; leig sin leotha fearann a cheannach: *that allowed them to buy land*; trì millean acaire: *three millean acres*; ceithir tastain is sia sgillinn: *four shillings and sixpence*; rinn an Riaghaltas prothaid às: *the Government mad a profit from it*; tuathanaich bheaga ùra: *new small farmers*; cruaidh air na daoine dùthchasach anns na coloinidhean Breatannach: *hard on the indigenous people in the British colonies*; cha b' e sin an t-àm a b' fheàrr nar n-eachdraidh: *that wasn't the best time in our history*; ged a chunnaic X le shùilean fhèin buaidh nam fuadaichean: *although X saw with his own eyes the effect of the clearances*; tha e doirbh X a chomharrachadh mar neach-poilitigs: *it is difficult to categorize X as a politician*; dh'fhaodadh e a bhith droch-nàdarrach is connsachail: *he could be bad-tempered and argumentative*; nuair a dh'fhàsadh e feargach sa phàrlamaid, thigeadh a' Ghàidhlig gu bhilean: *when he got angry in [the] parliament, Gaelic would come to his lips*; bha X aig stiùir na dùthcha: *X was in charge of the country*; fhad 's a bha e a' dol am feabhas: *while he was recovering*; bha e a' fulang le aillse: *he was suffering from cancer*; leig e dheth a dhreuchd: *he resigned*; coltach ri seann tiodhlacadh nan ceann-cinnidh: *like the old funerals of the clan chiefs*; le còmhlán pìoba aig a cheann: *with a pipe band at its head*; thuit e às a chèile: *it collapsed*; fhad 's a sheasas e, cha tèid X a-mach à cuimhne nan daoine: *as long as it stands, X won't be forgotten by the people*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: airson a dhol fo lannsa: *to get a medical operation. Literally this means "to go under a scalpel". Gaelic learners often ask how to speak about a medical operation. There is a direct borrowing from modern English – opairèisean ("fhuir e opairèisean") – and you'll find it in the most modern dictionaries. But there is a much older borrowing – lannsa – originally a lance but also a lancet (scalpel). Bha mi fo lannsa is a nice idiomatic way of saying "I had an operation". A surgeon is a lannsair ie somebody who uses a scalpel. Lannsaiche is usually used for a "lancer".*

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: Bhuilich an Diùc inbhe ridire air MacCoinnich: *the Duke knighted [bestowed the status of knight on] McKenzie*.

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