

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 486. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 182 corresponds to Litir 486.

O chionn beagan mhìosan bha mi ann an Ceann Loch Chille Chiarain ann an Cinn Tìre. Bha mi anns an ionad-choimhearsnachd ùr anns a’ bhaile. Ri taobh an ionaid tha carragh-cuimhne mòr ann don Ridire Uilleam MacFhionghain. Feumaidh mi aideachadh nach robh mòran fios agam mu dheidhinn aig an àm sin.

Began seachdainean an dèidh sin, bha mi a’ cèilidh air caraidean air a’ Chomraich. Thug iad a-mach leabhar mu dheidhinn sgoil gu math inntinneach agus rudeigin ainmeil. Sgoil phrìobhaideach le ceangal làidir don Ghàidhealtachd. Chaidh iomadh Gàidheal òg tro a dorsan.

’S e an t-ainm air an leabhar “*Keil School – a History*” agus chaidh a sgrìobhadh le Barrach – fear Ruairidh MacAsgaill a thogadh ann an Eòlaigearraidh. Bha esan na sgoilear aig *Keil School* anns na tritheadan.

Agus dè an ceangal a th’ ann eadar an leabhar agus an carragh-cuimhne ann an Ceann Loch Chille Chiarain? Uill, mura b’ e Uilleam MacFhionghain, cha robh an sgoil air a bhith ann idir. Agus bha an carragh-cuimhne uaireigin ann an àrainn na sgoile, ged a bha e roimhe sin ann an Afraga. Airson a’ chùis a mhìneachadh, feumaidh mi innse dhuibh an toiseach mu bheatha Uilleim MhicFhionghain. Dh’èirich e gu bhith na dhuine air leth beartach is cliùiteach.

Rugadh e ann an ochd ceud deug, fichead ’s a trì (1823) ann an Ceann Loch Chille Chiarain. Bha na sinnsirean aige à Eilean Arainn agus bha athair na ghèidsear. B’ e Uilleam am fear a b’ òige ann an teaghlach mòr. Bha trì duine deug de chloinn ann. Fhuair e trèanadh mar ghrosair ach cha robh e riarachtaiche le bhith ag obair ann am bùth agus rinn e air Glaschu.

Às dèidh greis ag obair ann an oifis anns a’ bhaile sin, dh’fhalbh e do na h-Innseachan. Bha sin ann an ochd ceud deug, ceathrad ’s a seachd (1847) nuair a bha e fichead ’s a ceithir bliadhna a dh’aois. Chuir e fhèin is caraid à Ceann Loch Chille Chiarain companaidh malairt air chois ann an Calcutta. Bha oifisean aca **an dà chuid** ann an Calcutta is Glaschu.

Bha e gu math comasach mar fhear-gnothaich. Fhuair e cùmhnantan riaghaltais airson am post a ghiùlain eadar Bengal agus Burma, agus bha na longan aige a’ dol cho fada ri Singapore agus Persia. Bha e deimhinne gur e **soithichean-smùide** an dòigh air adhart, seach soithichean-seòlaidh, agus bha e ceart. Ann an ochd ceud deug, seasgad ’s a dhà (1862), chaidh a’ chompanaidh aige ainmeachadh às ùr mar *The British India Steam Navigation Company*.

Bha aire Uilleim a’ gluasad air falbh bho na h-Innseachan is a dh’ionnsaigh taobh sear Afraga. Fhuair e eòlas air Sultan Zanzibar. Chuir e companaidh ùr air chois – *The Imperial*

British East Africa Company. Bha a' chompanaidh a' riaghladh sgìre mhòr ann an Afraga an Ear. Tro thìde cheannaich Riaghaltas Bhreatainn an dùthaich sin bhuapa agus chruthaich iad *British East Africa* às.

Cha b' e gnothaichean malairteach a-mhàin a bha cudromach do dh'Uilleam. Bha taobh mòr aige don Eaglais Shaoir agus thug e taic-airgid don Eaglais nuair a bha iad a' cur miseanaraidhean a dh'ionnsaigh meadhan Afraga. Bha e eòlach air an luchd-rannsachaidh, Livingstone is Stanley, agus thug e taic mhòr do Stanley nuair a bha e a' rannsachadh ann an Afraga. Sgrìobh Stanley ann an iomradh-bàis do dh'Uilleam gun do chuir e seachad a bheatha air fad a' dèanamh rudan matha. Cha do ràinig mi *Keil School* fhathast, ach ruigidh anns an ath Litir.

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Faclan na Litreach: Ceann Loch Chille Chiarain: *Campbeltown*; Cinn-Tìre: *Kintyre*; ionad-coimhearsnachd: *community centre*; grosair: *grocer*; fear-gnothaich: *businessman*; Na h-Innseachan: *India*; miseanaraidhean: *missionaries*, iomradh-bàis: *obituary*.

Abairtean na Litreach: tha carragh-cuimhne mòr ann don Ridire Uilleam MacFhionghain: *there is a large monument to Sir William MacKinnon*; bha mi a' cèilidh air caraidean: *I was visiting friends*; chaidh a sgrìobhadh le Barrach – fear Ruairidh MacAsgaill a thogadh ann an Eòlaigearraidh: *it was written by a man from Barra – one Roddy MacAskill who was raised in Eoligarry*; mura b' e X, cha robh an sgoil air a bhith ann idir: *if it hadn't been for X the school would never have existed*; ann an àrainn na sgoile: *in the grounds of the school*; feumaidh mi innse dhuibh an toiseach: *I must tell you to begin with*; dh'èirich e gu bhith na dhuine air leth beartach is cliùiteach: *he rose to become an extremely wealthy and well-known man*; bha na sinnsirean aige à Eilean Arainn: *his ancestors were from the Isle of Arran*; bha athair na ghèidsear: *his father was an exciseman*; chuir e fhèin is caraid companaidh malairt air chois: *he and a friend set up a trading company*; cùmhnantan riaghaltais airson am post a ghiùlain: *government contracts to carry the mail*; a dh'ionnsaigh taobh sear Afraga: *towards East Africa*; tro thìde cheannaich Riaghaltas Bhreatainn an dùthaich sin bhuapa: *eventually the British Government bought that country from them*; gnothaichean malairteach a-mhàin: *only commercial matters*; bha taobh mòr aige don Eaglais Shaoir: *he was very supportive of the Free Church*; bha e eòlach air an luchd-rannsachaidh: *he knew the explorers*; gun do chuir e seachad a bheatha air fad a' dèanamh rudan matha: *that he spent his entire life doing good*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Bha e deimhinne gur e **soithichean-smùide** an dòigh air adhart: *he was certain that steam vessels were the way ahead*. Smùid means smoke or vapour. One might say of a smoking fire that is not burning well – “tha e a' cur smùide”. “Tha i a' smùideadh thall!” might have been the Gaelic equivalent of the “thar she blows!” of the English-speaking whalermen [if any ex-whalers read this column, I'd love to know some of the terminology they used]. Smùid was used in its genitive form smùide (as an adjective) to describe the industrial inventions of the 19th Century which produced smoke as a by-product. Thus a steam-train is a trèana-smùide and a steamship or steamboat is a long-smùide, soitheach-smùide or bàta-smùide.

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: Bha oifisean aca **an dà chuid** ann an Calcutta is Glaschu: *they had offices in both Calcutta and Glasgow*.

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