

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 509. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 205 corresponds to Litir 509.

Rugadh Pàdruig Moireasdan ann an Griomasaigh ann an ochd ceud deug, ochdad 's a naoi (1889). Air an latha mu dheireadh dhen Chèitean naoi ceud deug 's a h-aon-deug (1911), bha e ag obair air bòrd bàta ann am Beal Feirste. Agus chunnaic e le a shùilean fhèin an soitheach mòr, an Titanic, a' dol air bhog. Tha mi a' dol a leigeil le Pàdruig innse na thachair air an latha sin, an ìre mhath na fhaclan fhèin. 'S e an t-ainm air an stòiridh aige *Manadh air an Titanic*:

An suidheachadh air an robh sinne ag obrachadh air a' bhàta: nuair a bha sinn ga nighe sìos sa mhadainn, bha sinn an uair sin a' gabhail biadh sinn fhìn 's bha an còrr dhen latha againn gu ceithir uairean feasgar. Dh'fhaodamaid a dhol a chadal no dhol gu tìr...

Ach an latha seo – latha leainseadh na Titanic – cha deach duine a leabaidh no gu tìr. Bha sluagh a' bhail' uileag a' tionndadh sìos gu bruaich na h-aibhneadh. B' e sin an taobh air an robh sinn dhen abhainn cuideachd: 's ann air an taobh mu ar coinneamh a bha an gàrradh-iarainn far an deach is' a thogail agus 's ann às a bhiodh i a' slaighdeadh a-mach dhan tè a bha gu bhith na màthair dhi – an cuan mòr.

Bha iad cho tiugh mu choinneamh a' ghàrraidh 's a' bhàta, sìos taobh na h-aibhneadh. Bha sinne shìos ann a shiud cuideachd ... a dhà no trì an siud 's a dhà no trì an àit' eile. Bhathar a' feitheamh gun fhacal airson greis mhath de dh'ùine, a' cluinnteil glagadaich taobh eile na h-aibhneadh agus a' faicinn gluasadan sluaigh agus mòran de shluagh air gach taobh dhen ghàrradh a bharrachd air na bha staigh ann...

Agus chuala sinn an seo ann am Beurla “*There she goes! There she goes!*” Bha dìreach a' chiad ghluasad aice, a' dol gu na seirbheis airson 'n do rinneadh i.

Bha dà bhodach bheag Èireannach, fear aca cha mhòr nach robh e a' suathadh na mo ghualainn dheas. Bha companach an tacsas ris-san air an taobh a deas dheth, pìob ghoirid chrèadhach **am beul gach fir aca** 's currac dà-bhil' orr'. Chan eil cuimhn' a'm dè 'n seòrsa clò ach 's e clò a bha sna seacaidean a bh' orra, ge b' e dè bha sna briogaisean.

Dh'fhalbh am bàta sin cho sèimh 's cho brèagha ri dad a b' urrainn dhòmhsa no dhan sgiobadh againn fhaicinn. Chaidh i dhan mhuir. Chuir na

cuideaman stad, chuir iad stad oirre nuair a bha i **air flod**. Ach thionndaidh am bodach beag a b' fhaisge dhòmhsa ri chompanach 's thug e a phìob às a bheul. Thuirt e mar seo:

"Mark my word, Pat," ars' esan, "she'll be an unlucky ship."

'S bha i sin, an Titanic, 's b' e siud an latha a chaidh a leinseadh. Bha sinn' a' bruidhinn ùineachan is ùineachan nuair a thill sinn air ais dhan bhàt' againn fhìn. B' e siud an còmhradh againn airson làithean: gu dè chunnaic am bodach. Saoil an robh ciall aige no toiniseg aig an rud a thuirt e ri chompanach, *"Mark my word, Pat, she'll be an unlucky ship."*

'S ann mì-shealbhach a bha i.

Ma tha ùidh agaibh anns na stòiridhean aig Pàdrùig Moireasdan, chuir Comann Coimhearsnachd Ghriomasaigh cruinneachadh tarraingeach dhiubh ann an clò a-rithist o chionn ghoirid. 'S e an t-ainm air an leabhar *Thugam agus Bhuam*. Agus sin e bhuams' an-dràsta.

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Faclan na Litreach: Beal Feirste: *Belfast*; manadh: *omen, supernatural warning*; slaighdeadh: *sliding*; tiugh: *thick [densely packed]*; glagadaich: *chatter*.

Abairtean na Litreach: Rugadh Pàdrùig Moireasdan ann an Griomasaigh: *Peter Morrison was born in Grimsay*; le a shùilean fhèin: *with his own eyes*; a' dol air bhog: *being launched*; ga nighe sìos sa mhadainn: *washing her down in the morning*; dh'fhaodamaid a dhol a chadal no dhol gu tìr: *we could go to sleep or go on [to] land*; latha leinseadh na Titanic: *the day of the Titanic's launch*; bha sluagh a' bhail' uileag [uile] a' tionndadh sìos gu bruaich na h-aibhneadh: *the entire population of the city were going down to the river bank*; mu ar coinneamh a bha an gàrradh-iarainn far an deach is' a thogail: *opposite us was the shipyard where she was built*; dhan tè a bha gu bhith na màthair dhi – an cuan mòr: *to the thing that was going to be her mother – the great ocean*; bhathar a' feitheamh gun fhacal: *it was awaited silently*; gu na seirbheis airson 'n do rinneadh i: *to the service for which she was made*; cha mhòr nach robh e a' suathadh na mo ghualainn dheas: *he was almost touching my right shoulder*; bha companach an tacsas ris-san: *he had a companion beside him*; 's currac dà-bhil' [dà-bhileach] orr': *[with] a twin-peaked [deerstalker's] cap on them*; 's e clò a bha sna seacaidean: *the jackets were tweed*; ge b' e dè bha sna briogaisean: *whatever their trousers were [happened to be made of]*; bha sinn' a' bruidhinn ùineachan is ùineachan: *we were speaking for a long time*; saoil an robh ciall aige no toiniseg aig an rud a thuirt e: *I wonder if he made sense or if there was sense in what he said*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: pìob ghoirid chrèadhach [ann] **am beul gach fir aca:** *[with] a short clay pipe in the mouth of each of them*. Gach commands a noun in the singular so "both [individuals] of them" would be gach fear aca. But fear is here in the genitive or possessive case. As it is singular, it takes the form fir (eg bonaid an fhir, *the man's hat*, bonaid fir, *a man's hat*). Many Gaelic speakers

today would say ann am beul gach fear aca but Pàdruig Moireasdan's Gaelic was of an older variety and would cling more closely to traditional grammatical usage.

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: nuair a bha i **air flod:** *when she was **floating** (the Gaelic term may be derived from Old Norse, rather than English).*

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