

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 521. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 217 corresponds to Litir 521.

Bu mhath leam stòiridh innse dhuibh an t-seachdain seo – seann stòiridh à beul-aithris. ’S e an t-ainm air *Iain Dubh Leòdhasach, an Seòladair*.

B’ e mac iasgair a bh’ ann an Iain Dubh. Nuair a bha e na bhalach beag, **bhàthadh** athair. An dèidh sin, thogadh e le bràthair athar. Bha iad a’ fuireach faisg air an Acarsaid Mhòir ann an Leòdhas. ’S e Cala Steòrnabhaigh a chanas sinn ris an àite an-diugh.

Air feasgar àraidh chunnaic Iain long bhrèagha a’ tighinn **fo aodach slàn** a-staigh don chala. Chan fhac’ e riamh sealladh cho bòidheach. Leum e a-staigh na bhàt’-iasgaich fhèin agus, mus do ràinig acair na luinge an grunn, bha e air bòrd oirre. Dh’fheòraich an sgiobair dheth am bu mhath leis a bhith na sheòladair. Fhreagair Iain Dubh nach robh nì air bith air an t-saoghal a b’ fheàrr leis.

“Thalla dhachaigh, ma-tà,” ars’ an sgiobair, “agus faigh cead d’ athar. Thigibh le chèile an seo a-màireach.” Bha an sgiobair deònach leigeil le Iain seòladaireachd ionnsachadh bhuaithe. Thuirt Iain nach robh athair beò ach gun iarradh e cead bràthair athar.

Thill e moch an ath latha. Dh’innis e don sgiobair gun d’ fhuair e cead o bhràthair athar falbh leis an luing.

“Agus an tuir e dad riut mu mhuinntireas a ghabhail?” ars’ an sgiobair. “O, thubhairt,” fhreagair Iain Dubh. “Tha agam ri bhith air bòrd na luinge fad còig bliadhna airson seòladaireachd ionnsachadh.”

“Agus dè thuirt e riut mu thuarastal?” dh’fhaighnich an sgiobair.

“Thuirt gun robh agam ri bonn-a-sia fhaighinn aig ceann a’ chiad mhìos agus dà bhonn-a-sia aig ceann an dara mìos, a’ dùblachadh mar sin gach mìos gu deireadh nan còig bliadhna.”

Rinn an sgiobair gàire. Gun smaoineachadh air a’ bhargan, thuirt e, “Gheibh thu sin, a laochain.” Agus chaidh Iain a cheangal ris an luing le bann-ceàirde. Air an ath latha, sheòl an long a-mach às a’ phort. Chaidh i air turas-cuain do dhùthchannan fad’ air falbh. Aig ceann ceithir bliadhna thill i a Shasainn. Ràinig i am port dham buineadh i.

Thàinig an fheadhainn leis an robh an long air bòrd. Chuir iad fàilte air an sgiobair, agus thug iad sùil air an luing. Bha Iain Dubh air fàs na ghille gasta agus na sheòladair air leth. Ach fhathast cha d’ fhuair e sgillinn de a thuarastal, ach a-mhàin tastan no dhà airson cosg anns na puirt san robh e a’ tadhal. Agus cha do rinn an sgiobair an t-sùim a dh’fheumadh e pàigheadh aig deireadh nan còig bliadhna.

Dh'fhaighnich fear dhen fheadhainn leis an robh an long cà' d' fhuair iad an seòladair òg a bha cho math air obair. "Fhuair ann an Eilean Leòdhais," fhreagair an sgiobair.

"Feumaidh gu bheil thu a' toirt tuarastal math dha," thuirt a' chiad fhear, "oir 's e seòladair cho tapaidh 's a chunnaic mi riamh."

"Uill," ars' an sgiobair, "cha tug mi tuarastal sam bith dha fhathast. Dh'iarr e fhèin gum biodh e ceangailte còig bliadhna, agus gum faigheadh e bonn-a-sia aig ceann a' chiad mhìos agus dà bhonn-a-sia aig ceann an dara mìos, a' dùblachadh mar sin gach mìos."

"An do smaoinich thu riamh dè rinn thu?" thuirt am fear leis an robh an long. "Gheall thu don ghille tuilleadh nas fhiach an long fhèin agus na choisinn i on chiad latha a chaidh i gu muir!"

Chunnaic an sgiobair gun robh sin fìor. Dè bha a' dol a thachairt do dh'Iain Dubh? Tha an stòiridh a' leantainn an ath-sheachdain.

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Faclan na Litreach: An Acarsaid Mhòr: *the great anchorage*; Cala Steòrnabhaigh: *Stornoway Harbour*; seòladaireachd: *seamanship*; sgiobair: *captain*; tuarastal: *wages*.

Abairtean na Litreach: Iain Dubh Leòdhasach, an Seòladair: *Black-haired John of Lewis, the Sailor*; thogadh e le bràthair athar: *he was brought up by his father's brother*; mus do ràinig acair na luinge an grunn: *before the ship's anchor struck the bottom*; nach robh nì air bith air an t-saoghal a b' fheàrr leis: *that there was nothing in the world he'd like better*; faigh cead d' athar: *get your father's permission*; an tuirt e dad riut mu mhuinntireas a ghabhail?: *did he say anything to you about taking an engagement?*; tha agam ri bhith air bòrd na luinge fad còig bliadhna: *I have to be on board the ship for five years*; dà bhonn-a-sia aig ceann an dara mìos: *two halfpennies at the end of the second month*; a' dùblachadh mar sin gach mìos: *doubling like that every month*; gheibh thu sin, a laochain: *you'll get that, lad*; chaidh Iain a cheangal ris an luing le bann-ceàirde: *John was bound to the ship by a deed of indenture*; am port dham buineadh i: *the port to which she belonged*; an fheadhainn leis an robh X: *the ones who owned X*; bha X air fàs na ghille gasta: *X had grown to be a fine lad*; gheall thu tuilleadh nas fhiach X: *you promised more than X is worth*; na choisinn i: *than she [has] earned*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: long bhrèagha a' tighinn fo aodach slàn a-staigh don chala. *a beautiful ship, under full sail, coming into the harbour. I imagine some of you will not have heard this use of the word aodach. It usually refers to clothing (eg aodach oidhche), but can be garments of any sort, including bed coverings (aodach leapa). It can also refer to cloth. So the Gaelic expression here is an equivalent to the English "under full canvas". Although we have a word canabhas (which derives from English, the English term in turn having originated in French), the traditional way of referring to a sail is with seòl (plural siùil) or, when speaking in general of the sails being carried, aodach. Although the common Gaelic word for a reef in a sail is the same as the English (riof, plural riofachan), a yacht carrying a reefed sail would be described as "fo aodach ìosal".*

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: bhàthadh athair: *his father was drowned*. This is a passive verbal form.

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