

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.maclea@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 553. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 249 corresponds to Litir 553.

Tha mi cinnteach gun cuala sibh mu Chatrìona Uaibhreach, Ban-ìmpire na Ruis. 'S dòcha gu bheil sibh nas eòlaiche oirre mar *Catherine the Great*. Bha i os cionn na Ruis aig deireadh an ochdamh linn deug. Bha i cumhachdach agus tha e coltach gun robh i air leth measail air na fir, ma tha sibh gam thuigsinn.

Thathar ag ràdh gun robh i measail air lusan cuideachd agus, anns an leabhar aice *Seeds of Blood and Beauty: Scottish Plant Explorers*, tha Ann Lindsay ag ràdh gun d' fhuair an Gàidheal, Iain Friseal, cùmhnant bho Chatrìona airson lusan a chruinneachadh dhi ann an Ameireagaidh.

Chan e a-mhàin gun tug Friseal lusan Ameireaganach don Ruis (agus a Bhreatainn) ach thug e cuideachd lusan Ruiseanach a dh' Ameireagaidh. Am measg sin bha an siridh ris an canar *Tartarian Cherry* – air a bheil daoine gu math measail anns na Stàitean Aonaichte fhathast. Nuair a bha e thall – ann an Tennessee, Kentucky is Ohio – lorg e *Rhododendron catawbiense*. Thug e sin dhachaigh leis a Bhreatainn – agus bha fèill mhòr air.

Air an turas sin bha Iain còmhla ri a mhac, air an robh Iain cuideachd. Air an rathad dhachaigh, chaidh iad a Chiùba. Ach bha Ciùba ann an làmhnan na Spàinne agus bha an Spàinn agus Breatainn ri cogadh an aghaidh a chèile. Cha robh na Frisealaich airson leigeil a-mach gur e Breatannaich a bh' annta. Fhuair iad grèim air ceadan-siubhail fuadain Ameireaganach. Ach chaidh cùisean ceàrr orra bhon toiseach.

Chaidh an long aca air sgeir agus, fad sia latha, chùm iad grèim air sprùilleach na luinge. Thog long Spàinneach iad. Ach, anns an tubaist, chaill iad na ceadan-siubhail Ameireaganach aca, agus cha b' urrainn dhaibh dearbhadh gun robh iad “Ameireaganach”. Dh'innis iad eachdraidh bhreugach do theachdaire Ameireaganach ann an Ciùba. Ghabh esan rithe mar an fhìrinn agus chaidh leigeil leotha cumail a dol gu Havana.

Fhad 's a bha Iain air taobh thall a' chuain, dh'atharraich cùisean gu mòr anns an Ruis. Bha a' Bhan-ìmpire Catrìona fon fhòid. Bha Friseal an dùil gun robh an t-Ìmpire ùr – Pòl – mac Catrìona – ag iarraidh nan lusan aige. Ach cha robh Pòl air an rìgh-chathair fada. Bha e air a mhurt ann an ochd ceud deug 's a h-aon (1801). B' e an t-Ìmpire ùr an gille aige, Alasdair. Cha robh Alasdair deònach airgead a thoirt do Fhriseal airson na chruinnich e de lusan. Chuir Friseal seachad

mìosan anns an Ruis, feuch airgead fhaighinn bho na h-ùghdarrasan. Aig a' cheann thall, fhuair e glè bheag agus dh'fhuiling a shlàinte gu mòr.

Aig aois caogad 's a seachd, bha Iain Friseal ann an staing a thaobh airgead. Bhiodh aige ri dhol air ais a dh'Ameireagaidh aon turas eile, airson lusan ùra a chruinneachadh a bhiodh e a' reic. Nuair a bha e thall, **thuit e far each. Cha tàinig piseach** air a shlàinte agus chaochail e beagan mhìosan às dèidh sin ann an ochd ceud deug is aon-deug (1811) ann an Lunnainn.

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Faclan na Litreach: Iain Friseal: *John Fraser*; Na Stàitean Aonaichte: *The United States*; lus-eòlaiche: *botanist*.

Abairtean na Litreach: Catrìona Uaibhreach, Ban-ìmpire na Ruis: *Catherine the Great, Empress of Russia*; gun robh i air leth measail air na fir, ma tha sibh gam thuigsinn: *that she was very keen on men, if you know what I mean*; chan e a-mhàin gun tug Friseal lusan Ameireaganach don Ruis: *it wasn't just that Fraser took American plants to Russia*; bha fèill mhòr air: *it was very well received*; còmhla ri a mhac, air an robh Iain cuideachd: *along with his son who was also called John*; bha Ciùba ann an làmhnan na Spàinne: *Cuba was in Spanish hands*; bha an Spàinn agus Breatainn ri cogadh an aghaidh a chèile: *Spain and Britain were at war against each other*; airson leigeil a-mach gur e Breatannaich a bh' annta: *to let it be known that they were Britons*; ceadan-siubhail fuadain Ameireaganach: *false American passports*; chaidh cùisean ceàrr orra bhon toiseach: *things went wrong for them from the start*; chaidh an long aca air sgeir: *their ship struck a rock/reef*; cha b' urrainn dhaibh dearbhadh: *they couldn't prove*; eachdraidh bhreugach: *a false account*; ghabh esan rithe mar an fhìrinn: *he accepted it as the truth*; chaidh leigeil leotha cumail a dol: *they were allowed to continue*; air taobh thall a' chuain: *on the far side of the ocean*; fon fhòid: *buried (dead)*; cha robh Pòl air an rìgh-chathair fada: *Paul was not on the throne long*; bha e air a mhurt: *he was murdered*; airson na chruinnich e de lusan: *for the plants he (had) gathered*; dh'fhuiling a shlàinte: *his health suffered*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: **thuit e far each:** *he fell off a horse. In previous Litrichean I've given the examples thuit fear far an eich a bha e a' marcachd (a man fell from the horse he was riding) and leum am mèirleach far eich (the robber leapt from his horse), with the noun each in its genitive singular form eich. The difference in the current example is that there is no article. While the compound preposition far commands a noun in the genitive case, in modern Gaelic this is only seen following a (definite) article. There is no article in the example in the current Litir. With the example leum am mèirleach far eich the article is understood because there is a hidden possessive adjective present (ie "his" horse, rather than "a" horse).*

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: **Cha tàinig piseach** air a shlàinte: *his health did not improve.*

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

