

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.macleaen@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 554. Note that there is also a simplified version called *An Litir Bheag* which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 250 corresponds to Litir 554.*

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh an t-seachdain sa chaidh mu Iain Friseal a bha ainmeil airson lusan a chruinneachadh thall thairis. Rugadh e ann an seachd ceud deug is caogad (1750). Ceithir bliadhna às dèidh sin rugadh Gàidheal eile a bha gu bhith ainmeil airson obair dhen aon seòrsa. B’ esan **Gilleasbaig Mèinnearach** – Archibald Menzies. Bha e à sgìre Obar Pheallaidh ann an Siorrachd Pheairt.

Bha athair Ghilleasbaig na ghàirnealair ann an Caisteal nam Mèinnearach. ’S ann le Sir Raibeart Mèinnearach a bha an caisteal. B’ esan a thug an learag a-steach a dh’Alba – craobh a tha pailt an-diugh. Bha lusan is craobhan de dh’iomadh seòrsa anns na gàrraidhean aige.

Nuair a bha e timcheall air fichead bliadhna a dh’aois, fhuair e obair ann an Dùn Èideann anns an Lios Luibheach Rìoghail. Nuair a bha e ceithir air fhichead, fhuair Gilleasbaig cothrom dhol timcheall na Gàidhealtachd airson lusan a chruinneachadh. Lorg e lusan ùra a chaidh a chur ris an leabhar le Lightfoot – *Flora Scotica*.

Rinn Gilleasbaig cùrsa lus-eòlais le ceannard an Liosa Luibhich – am Proifeasair Hope. An dèidh sin, rinn e cùrsa dotaireachd. An ceann greis fhuair e obair anns a’ Chabhlaich Rìoghail. Cha b’ fhada gus an robh e anns na h-Innseachan an Iar, a’ sabaid an aghaidh nam Frangach. Chaidh e an uair sin a dh’Ameireagaidh a Tuath agus thòisich e air lusan a chruinneachadh.

Sgrìobh Mèinnearach gu tric don lus-eòlaiche ainmeil, Sir Iòsaph Banks, ann an Lunnainn. Agus thug Banks taic dha. Fhuair an t-Albannach dreuchd air bòrd long a bha a’ dol timcheall *Cape Horn gu ruige an Cuan Sèimh*. Thàinig e dhachaigh le cruinneachadh iongantach de lusan is sìl a chuir e gu Banks agus don Lios Luibheach Rìoghail ann an Dùn Èideann. An uair sin rinn e deiseil airson turas-mara mòr eile – an triop seo le fear a bha a’ dol a dh’fhàgail ainm air fear de phrìomh bhailtean Chanada – Seòras Vancouver.

Air an turas seo, a mhair trì bliadhna, chuir Gilleasbaig ùine seachad air tìr ann an Astràilia, Tahiti, Hawaii agus taobh an iar Ameireagaidh a Tuath, far an do chruinnich e mòran lusan a dh’fhàsadh cumanta ann an gàrraidhean Bhreatainn. Agus chruinnich e, a rèir choltais, sìl de chraobh a tha air leth annasach. Bidh sibh uile eòlach oirre oir tha i a’ fàs ann an gàrraidhean air feadh Bhreatainn. Innsidh mi dhuibh ann am mionaid dè a’ chraobh a th’ ann.

Chuir Gilleasbaig seachad a’ chuid mhòr dhen chòrr de a bheatha ann an Lunnainn agus na h-Innseachan an Iar. Thug e buaidh mhòr air na bh’ ann de lusan à thall thairis a bha a’ fàs anns an Roinn Eòrpa. Agus tha mòran lusan air an ainmeachadh às a dhèidh,

leithid an genus *Menziesia*, agus *Arbutus menziesii*, *Chimaphila menziesii*, *Nemophila menziesii*, *Penstemon menziesii*, *Tolmiea menziesii* agus *Nothofagus menziesii*.

Agus a' chraobh ainmeil a thug e dhuinn? Uill, air an turas le Vancouver, bha Gilleasbaig aig cuirm ann an Chile còmhla ri Riaghladair na dùthcha, Ambrosio O' Higgins. Air bòrd na dinnearach, bha truinnsear de chnothan ruadha – le cumadh corraig orra – nach fhaca e riamh roimhe. Chuir e feadhainn na phòcaid agus thug e dhachaigh iad. 'S e sìl a bh' annta de *Araucaria araucana*, craobh ris an canar ann am Beurla – *the monkey puzzle tree*. An robh fios agaibh gur e Gàidheal a thug a' chraobh sin a Bhreatainn?

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Faclan na Litreach: Gilleasbaig Mèinnearach: *Archibald Menzies*; Obar Pheallaidh: *Aberfeldy*; Siorrachd Pheairt: *Perthshire*; gàirnealair: *gardener*; Caisteal nam Mèinnearach: *Castle Menzies*.

Abairtean na Litreach: a thug an learag a-steach a dh'Alba: *that introduced the larch to Scotland*; de dh'iomadh seòrsa anns na gàrraidhean aige: *of many types in his gardens*; anns an Lios Luibheach Rìoghail: *in the Royal Botanic Gardens*; a chaidh a chur ris an leabhar le Lightfoot: *which were added to Lightfoot's book*; cùrsa lus-eòlais le ceannard an Liosa Luibhich: *a botany course with the head of the Botanic Gardens*; an ceann greis fhuair e obair anns a' Chabhlach Rìoghail: *after a while he got work in the Royal Navy*; cha b' fhada gus an robh e anns na h-Innseachan an Iar: *it wasn't long until he was in the West Indies*; dreuchd air bòrd long: *a position on board a ship*; cruinneachadh iongantach de lusan is sìl: *an amazing collection of plants and seeds*; turas-mara mòr eile: *another great voyage*; bha a' dol a dh'fhàgail ainm air fear de phrìomh bhailtean Chanada: *who was going to leave his name on one of Canada's major cities*; a mhair trì bliadhna: *which lasted three years*; a dh'fhàsadh cumanta: *which would become common*; a' chuid mhòr dhen chòrr de a bheatha: *most of the rest of his life*; thug e buaidh mhòr air na bh' ann de lusan à thall thairis a bha a' fàs anns an Roinn Eòrpa: *he had a big influence on the plants from overseas which were growing in Europe*; aig cuirm còmhla ri Riaghladair na dùthcha: *at a banquet along with the country's Governor*; bòrd na dinnearach: *the dinner table*; truinnsear de chnothan ruadha – le cumadh corraig orra: *a plate of brown nuts – the shape of a finger*; nach fhaca e riamh roimhe: *that he'd never seen before*; chuir e feadhainn na phòcaid: *he put some in his pocket*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Gilleasbaig Mèinnearach: *Archibald Menzies*. *One of the great mysteries of our bilingual society is how Gilleasbaig and Archibald came to be considered as equivalents! But I'm not going to tackle that just now. What interests me here is the Gaelic for Menzies – Mèinnearach. The name is thought to be of Norman French origin – from Mesnières in Normandy. But like other clans of Norman origin, they became Gaelicized and Scotticized. In 1249 Sir Robert de Meyneris (sometimes spelled Meyners) became Lord Chamberlain of Scotland. It's easy to see that Meyners would be Mèinnearach in Gaelic. In fact the Gaelic in some ways preserves more faithfully the original name than does the modern anglicized form.*

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: gu ruige an Cuan Sèimh: *to the Pacific Ocean*.

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