

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.maclean@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 583. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 279 corresponds to Litir 583.

A rèir beul-aithris ann an Eilean Leòdhais, thuirt fear ainmeil na faclan a leanas o chionn còrr is ceithir cheud bliadhna: “**Nam bithinn air deic luinge far am bu duilich do fhear seasamh, stiùireadh na mara gu tric, cha bhodach mise dhut, a mhacain.**” Nise, chan eil mi buileach cinnteach mun Ghàidhlig – agus co-dhiù tha i uile-gu-lèir ceart. Ach sin mar a thathar ag aithris na cùise. Agus cò bha anns an duine nach robh toilichte gun do ghabh fear eile “bodach” air? Niall MacLeòid. Thuirt e na faclan sin ann an Dùn Èideann air an treas latha dhen Ghiblean sia ceud deug is trì-deug (1613). Bha an crochadair a’ feitheamh ris.

Aig deireadh an t-siathamh linn deug agus toiseach an t-seachdamh linn deug, chaidh buidheann de Ghoill à Fìobh gu ruige Steòrnabhagh. Bha iad ag amas air tuineachas a dhèanamh, agus Leòdhas a dhèanamh Gallta agus dìleas don Rìgh, Seumas VI. Sheas Niall MacLeòid, Niall Odhar, agus Leòdaich eile, nan aghaidh. Thug iad ionnsaigh air dùn nam Fìobhach. Rinn iad sgrios air, agus chuir iad na Fìobhaich air ais gu tìr-mòr. Bhiodh cuid a’ tomhas Nèill mar eucoireach. Ach, mura b’ e Niall agus a chàirdean, am biodh Eilean Leòdhais air a Ghàidhlig a chall o chionn fhada?

Bha an riaghaltas ann an Dùn Èideann mì-thoilichte. Thug iad cead do cheann-cinnidh Clann ’ic Coinnich Chinn Tàile a dhol an tòir air Niall às leth a’ Chrùin. Chaidh Niall agus buidheann de luchd-taice a dh’fhuireach ann an eilean beag Bhearsaigh far cladach an iar Leòdhais.

Fhad ’s a bha Niall ann am Bearasaigh, **fhuair e a-steach air** spùinneadair Sasannach. As t-samhradh sia ceud deug is deich (1610), nochd an long, am *Priam*, ann an uisgeachan taobh an iar Leòdhais. B’ e Peter Love an sgiobair oirre. Bha Love, a rèir aithris, a “Lewis” eile – Lewes ann an Sussex. Bha stòras mòr aige de rudan luachmhor air bòrd.

Thug Niall comraich do Love. Ach rinn e brath air. Chuir e Love agus a chriutha ann an grèim agus thug e seachad iad don riaghaltas. Bha MacLeòid an dòchas maitheanas fhaighinn bhon riaghaltas airson na rinn e air na Fìobhaich. Ach cha d’ fhuair. Agus chaidh Love a chrochadh gu bàs ann an Lìte ann an sia ceud deug is deich (1610).

A rèir beul-aithris, dh’fhàg Niall Bearasaigh nuair a chuir Clann ’ic Coinnich mnathan is càirdean an fheadhainn anns an eilean air sgeir a bhiodh air a còmhdachadh leis an làn. Chaidh Niall gu ruige Na Hearadh far an do chuir e e fhèin ann an làmhan a’ chinn-chinnidh, Ruairidh MacLeòid. Bha Ruairidh a’ dol a thoirt Nèill a Lunnainn airson

coinneachadh ris an Rìgh. Ach nuair a ràinig iad Glaschu, dh'iarradh air Ruairidh Niall a thoirt a Dhùn Èideann, agus rinn e sin.

Thàinig latha a' chrochaidh. Bha Niall dhen bheachd gun tigeadh òrdugh maitheanais aig a' mhionaid mu dheireadh. Cha robh e ann an cabhaig an ròp fhaighinn timcheall amhaich. Bha fear de na crochadairean mì-fhoighidneach. "Come on, Bodach," thuirt e, "we haven't got all day." Dh'èigh MacLeòid, "Nam bithinn air deic luinge far am bu duilich do fhear seasamh, stiùireadh na mara gu tric, cha bhodach mise dhut, a mhacain." Ach an tàinig maitheanas aig a' mhionaid mu dheireadh? Innsidh mi dhuibh anns an ath Litir.

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Faclan na Litreach: crochadair: *hangman*; Leòdaich: *MacLeods*; Bearasaigh: *Berisay*; uisgeachan: *waters*; comraich: *sanctuary*; Lìte: *Leith*.

Abairtean na Litreach: bha an crochaire a' feitheamh ris: *the hangman was waiting for him*; chaidh buidheann de Ghoill à Fìobh gu ruige Steòrnabhagh: *a band of Lowlanders from Fife went to Stornoway*; ag amas air tuineachas a dhèanamh: *aiming to set up a colony*; Leòdhas a dhèanamh Gallta: *to make Lewis Lowland in character*; bhiodh cuid a' tomhas Nèill mar eucoireach: *some would reckon Neil a criminal*; mura b' e X: *if it weren't for X*; thug iad cead do cheann-cinnidh Clann 'ic Coinnich Chinn Tàile dhol an tòir air Niall: *they gave permission to the clan chief of the Mackenzies of Kintail to pursue Neil*; às leth a' Chrùin: *on behalf of the Crown*; bha stòras mòr aige de rudan luachmhor air bòrd: *he had a big store of valuable items on board*; an dòchas maitheanas fhaighinn bhon riaghaltas: *hoping to receive a pardon from the government*; airson na rinn e air na Fìobhaich: *for what he did to the Fifers*; nuair a chuir X mnathan is càirdean an fheadhainn anns an eilean air sgeir: *when X put the wives and relations of those on the island on a skerry*; air a còmhdachadh leis an làn: *covered by the high tide*; gu ruige Na Hearadh far an do chuir e e fhèin ann an làmhan a' chinn-chinnidh: *to Harris where he put himself in the hands of the clan chief*; dh'iarradh air Ruairidh Niall a thoirt a Dhùn Èideann: *Ruairidh was asked to take Neil to Edinburgh*; gun tigeadh òrdugh maitheanais: *that an order of pardon would come*; ann an cabhaig an ròp fhaighinn timcheall amhaich: *in a hurry to get the rope around his neck*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Nam bithinn air deic luinge far am bu duilich do fhear seasamh, stiùireadh na mara gu tric, cha bhodach mise dhut, a mhacain: *this means, "If I were on the deck of a ship where it was difficult to stand, often navigating the sea, I wouldn't be an old man to you, laddie." I feel that the quote is possibly incorrect. I think it likely that what he really said was, "Nam bithinn air deic luinge far am bu dual dhomh a bhith a' seasamh, a' stiùireadh na mara gu tric, cha [bu] bhodach mise dhut, a mhacain." This would mean "If I were on the deck of a ship where I would be accustomed to stand, often navigating the sea, I wouldn't be an old man to you, laddie." Any thoughts from a reader?*

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: fhuair e a-steach air spùinneadair Sasannach: *he got pally with an English pirate*.

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