

# 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](mailto:roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk). This is Litir 601. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 297 corresponds to Litir 601.*

Bha triùir an sàs gu mòr ann a bhith a’ toirt a’ Bhìobaill gu Gàidheil na h-Alba ann an Gàidhlig. B’ iad sin Robert Boyle, mac Iarla Chorcaigh à Èirinn, Seumas Kirkwood, ministear a bha uaireigin a’ fuireach ann an Siorrachd Pheairt, agus Raibeart Kirk, ministear ann an Obar Phuill anns na Tròiseachan. Thug Kirk a-mach am Bìoball Èireannach ann an clò Ròmanach airson Gàidheil na h-Alba ann an sia ceud deug is naochad (1690).

Ach bha an Eaglais fhathast slaodach ann a bhith gan sgaoileadh. Feumaidh gun robh Kirkwood a’ fàs searbh dhen nàimhdeas a bh’ ann don Ghàidhlig. Aig deireadh nan naochadan, dh’fhoillsich e iris airson cleachdadh na Gàidhlig ann an creideamh a bhrosnachadh. ’S e an tiotal a bh’ oirre *An Answer to the Objection against Printing the Bible in Irish as being prejudicial to the designe of extirpating the Irish language out of the Highlands of Scotland*. Tha an tiotal ag innse mòran mu shuidheachadh na Gàidhlig aig an àm.

Ach cha do dh’fhàs cùisean mòran na b’ fheàrr. Tron chiad leth dhen ochdamh linn deug cha robh àite sam bith aig a’ Ghàidhlig ann am foghlam. Dhiùlt Ard-sheanadh na h-Eaglaise dàrna iris dhen Bhìoball Èireannach a chur an clò. Agus, ged a bha cuid de mhinistearan a’ cleachdadh a’ Bhìobaill sin anns a’ chùbaid, bha an Eaglais an aghaidh a bhith ga chleachdadh ann an sgoiltean.

’S i a’ bhuidheann a bu mhotha a bha an urra ri foghlam air a’ Ghàidhealtachd an SSPCK – *Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge*. Aig an toiseach bha iad fada an aghaidh na Gàidhlig. ’S dòcha gu bheil e a cheart cho math gun do chaochail Seumas Kirkwood goirid mus do thòisich na sgoiltean aca. Bha Boyle agus Kirk le chèile marbh mu thràth.

Tro thìde, ge-tà, dh’atharraich an SSPCK. Dh’èirich dragh, ged a bha clann anns na sgoiltean aca a’ leughadh na Beurla, nach robh iad a’ tuigsinn na bha iad a’ leughadh. Agus ghabh an Comunn ris gum biodh a’ Ghàidhlig feumail ann a bhith a’ cuideachadh le ionnsachadh na Beurla.

Ann an seachd ceud deug, ceathrad ’s a h-aon (1741) chaidh leabhar ainmeil fhoillseachadh. B’ e sin am faclair aig Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair – *Leabhar a Theagasc Ainmminn*. Ann am Beurla ’s e an t-ainm a bh’ air *A Galick*

*and English Vocabulary with An Appendix of the Terms of Divinity in the said Language.*

Tha an leabhar sin prìseil dhuinn an-diugh mar chruinneachadh de dh'fhaclan Gàidhlig. Ach, aig an àm sin, rinn an SSPCK soilleir gun robh e “*intended as a means to Introduce the English Language more Universally into the Highlands and Islands.*”

**Bha iad dhen aon bharail** trì bliadhna deug às dèidh sin. Bhathar a' foillseachadh iris ùr dhen Tiomnadh Nuadh Èireannach ann an Alba. Leum an SSPCK a-steach. Bha iad ag iarraidh a dhèanamh dà-chànanach, le aon duilleag ann an Gàidhlig agus an duilleag mu a coinneimh ann am Beurla. Ach bha am pròiseact air a dhol ro fhada airson sin a dhèanamh.

Mar sin, chuir an SSPCK romhpa eadar-theangachadh ùr a dhèanamh dhen Tiomnadh Nuadh – ann an Gàidhlig na h-Alba. Chaidh an obair a thoirt do dh'Alasdair MacPhàrlain às an Arar. Ach, mar a ch'è sinn an ath-sheachdain, 's e ministear à Siorrachd Pheairt a chuireadh crìoch oirre.

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**Faclan na Litreach:** trìuir: *three people*; slaodach: *slow, tardy*; Ard-sheanadh: *General Assembly*; Tiomnadh Nuadh: *New Testament*.

**Abairtean na Litreach:** mac Iarla Chorcaigh à Èirinn: *a son of the Earl of Cork, from Ireland*; ministear a bha uaireigin a' fuireach ann an Siorrachd Pheairt: *a minister who was at one time living in Perthshire*; Obar Phuill anns na Tròiseachan: *Aberfoyle in the Trossachs*; am Bìoball Èireannach ann an clò Ròmanach: *the Irish Bible in Roman type*; deireadh nan naochadan: *the end of the nineties*; iris airson cleachdadh na Gàidhlig ann an creideamh a bhrosnachadh: *a pamphlet to encourage the use of Gaelic in religion*; cha do dh'fhàs cùisean mòran na b' fheàrr: *things didn't get much better*; ged a bha cuid de mhinistearan a' cleachdadh a' Bhìobaill sin anns a' chùbaid: *although some ministers were using that Bible in the pulpit*; a bu mhotha a bha an urra ri foghlam: *that was the main provider of education*; le chèile marbh mu thràth: *both dead already*; nach robh iad a' tuigsinn na bha iad a' leughadh: *that they weren't understanding what they were reading*; ann a bhith a' cuideachadh le ionnsachadh na Beurla: *in assisting with learning English*; agus an duilleag mu a coinneimh ann am Beurla: *and the page opposite it in English*; chuir X romhpa eadar-theangachadh ùr a dhèanamh: *X decided to make a new translation*; chaidh an obair a thoirt do dh'Alasdair MacPhàrlain às an Arar: *the work was given to Alasdair MacFarlane from Arrochar*; 's e ministear à Siorrachd Pheairt a chuireadh crìoch oirre: *it was a minister from Perthshire that would finish it*.

**Puing-chànain na Litreach:** *The Education (Scotland) Act of 1872 is rightly seen as having a calamitous effect on the status and place of the Gaelic language in public life in Scotland. But the churches, most notably the Church of Scotland, in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries, in refusing to countenance the production of a popular and readable version of the Scriptures in Gaelic for decades, deserve similar*

*castigation. Two figures mentioned in the Litir should be honoured as “gaisgich” – heroes of Gaelic Scotland, for their perseverance in bringing Gaelic translations of the Scriptures – albeit initially in Irish Gaelic – to the congregations of the Gàidhealtachd. These are Rev Robert Kirk and Rev James Kirkwood (both Episcopalian ministers). They worked tirelessly for the language and its speakers and both likely went to the grave in a state of exhaustion because of their endeavours in continually fighting against a hostile religious and educational establishment. We would do well to remember them today, as the struggle for our language continues, albeit in a slightly more supportive milieu.*

**Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: Bha iad dhen aon bharail:** *they were of the same opinion.*

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