

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Roualeyn George Gordon-Cumming

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 721. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 417 corresponds to Litir 721.

Tha sinn fhathast anns a’ Ghleann Mhòr an t-seachdain seo. Bu mhath leam innse dhuibh mu fhear ainmeil a **chuir seachad nam bliadhnaichean mu dheireadh aige** ann an Cille Chuimein, taobh Loch Nis. Bha e ainmeil mar an ‘sealgair-leòmhann’.

B’ e an duine Roualeyn George Gordon-Cumming. Bha e na fhear-siubhail agus na fhear-spòrs. Tuigidh sibh nach robh a theaghlach gann de dh’airgead. Bha tàthan eadar ‘Gordon’ is ‘Cumming’.

B’ e Roualeyn George an dàrna mac aig Uilleam Gòrdan Gordon-Cumming, fear a bha am measg nan uaislean mòra. Rugadh an gille ann an ochd ceud deug is fichead (1820), agus fhuair e a chuid foghlaim aig Eton. Nuair a bha e ochd-deug, dh’fhalbh e do na h-Innseachan far an robh e an sàs ann an Eachraidh Aotrom Mhadras. Ach cha do chòrd an aimsir anns na h-Innseachan ris agus thill e dhachaigh.

Bha aon rud air còrdadh ris anns na h-Innseachan, ge-tà – sealg. Chaidh e an uair sin a dh’Ameireagaidh a Tuath, far an robh e a’ dèanamh **tuilleadh seilg**.

Ann an ochd ceud deug, ceathrad ’s a trì (1843), chaidh Gordon-Cumming a dh’Afraga. Thòisich e anns a’ Cheap ach cha b’ fhada gus an robh e ann am meadhan na mòr-thìr, a’ sealg agus a’ sealg. Bha an dùthaich sin làn bheathaichean mòra aig an àm sin. Chuir Gordon-Cumming seachad còig bliadhna ann an Afraga agus sgrìobh e leabhar *Five Years of a Hunter: Life in the Far Interior of South Africa*. Dh’fhàs e ainmeil air a shàillibh.

Bha pàirtean dhen chunntas aige doirbh a chreidsinn do chuid, ged a sgrìobh Daibhidh Mac Dhùn Lèibhe gun gabhadh a h-uile pàirt dheth a chreidsinn. Thuirt an Cuimeanach gun do leum e a-steach gu linne turas anns an robh each-aibhne a bh’ air a ghoirteachadh. Le sgian, gheàrr e eagan ann an cliathaich a’ chreutair. Chuir e iallan leathair tro na lùban agus, le taic bho a chompanaich, tharraing e an t-each-aibhne a-mach às an uisge.

Rinn Gordon-Cumming dealbhan dubh-is-geal airson an leabhair. Sin e ann am fear dhiubh le sgian, a’ toirt ionnsaigh air an each-aibhne leòinte – beathach mòr fiadhaich. Sin e a-rithist ann an dealbh eile, cuide ri fear dubh Afraganach, agus iad a’ feuchainn ri nathair mhòr fhada a tharraing a-mach às na creagan le bhith a’ greimeachadh air a h-earball.

Ghlèidh e cuid de na closaichean is cinn a fhuair e. Bha iad air an sealltainn don phoball anns a’ Mhòr-thaisbeanadh ann an Lunnainn ann an ochd ceud deug, caogad ’s a h-aon (1851). Chaidh an cruinneachadh aige – ‘The South Africa Museum’ – a thoirt timcheall Bhreatainn. Mu dheireadh, chaidh a thoirt do thalla ann

an Cille Chuimein, far an cuireadh Gordon-Cumming seachad na h-ochd bliadhna mu dheireadh de a bheatha.

Aig an àm sin, bha tòrr luchd-turais a' siubhal tro Chille Chuimein, agus iad air bàtaichean anns a' Chanàl Chailleannach eadar an Gearasdan agus Inbhir Nis. Bhiodh Gordon-Cumming a' nochdadh air bruaichean a' chanàil nuair a bhiodh bàta a' tighinn a-steach, agus èideadh Gàidhealach air, le gobhar na chois. Bhiodh e a' brosnachadh dhaoine gus a dhol a choimhead air an taisbeanadh aige de shealg ann an Afraga, aig prìs tastain.

Agus 's ann an Cille Chuimein a thàinig eachdraidh iongantach gu crìch, ann an ochd ceud deug, seasgad 's a sia (1866) aig aois dìreach ceathrad 's a sia.

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Faclan na Litreach: Cille Chuimein: *Fort Augustus*; sealgair-leòmhann: *hunter of lions*; tàthan: *hyphen*; Na h-Innseachan: *India*; Eachraidh Aotrom Mhadras: *Madras Light Cavalry*; Ameireagaidh a Tuath: *North America*; an Cuimeanach: *Cumming*; iallan leathair: *leather thongs*; lùban: *loops*; leòinte: *wounded*; cloaichean: *animal carcasses*; Am Mòr-thaisbeanadh: *The Great Exhibition*; An Canàl Cailleannach: *The Caledonian Canal*.

Abairtean na Litreach: anns a' Ghleann Mhòr: *in the Great Glen*; tuigidh sibh nach robh a theaghlach gann de dh'airgead: *you'll understand that his family wasn't short of money*; cha do chòrd an aimsir ris: *he didn't enjoy the weather*; thòisich e anns a' Cheap: *he started in the Cape*; cha b' fhada gus an robh e ann am meadhan na mòr-thìr: *it wasn't long until he was in the middle of the continent*; dh'fhàs e ainmeil air a shàillibh: *he became famous on the strength of it*; bha pàirtean dhen chunntas aige doirbh a chreidsinn do chuid: *some people found parts of his account difficult to believe*; ged a sgrìobh Daibhidh Mac Dhùn Lèibhe gun gabhadh a h-uile pàirt dheth a chreidsinn: *although David Livingstone wrote that it could all be believed*; each-aibhne a bh' air a ghoirteachadh: *a hippopotamus that was injured*; gheàrr e eagan ann an cliathaich a' chreutair: *he cut notches in the creature's side*; a' feuchainn ri nathair mhòr fhada a tharraing a-mach às na creagan: *trying to pull a large long snake out of the rocks*; le bhith a' greimeachadh air a h-earball: *by grasping its [her] tail*; agus èideadh Gàidhealach air, le gobhar na chois: *wearing Highland garb and accompanied by a goat*; bhiodh e a' brosnachadh dhaoine: *he would be encouraging people*; gus a dhol a choimhead air an taisbeanadh aige de shealg ann an Afraga: *to go and see his exhibition of hunting in Africa*; aig prìs tastain: *at the cost of a shilling*; a thàinig eachdraidh iongantach gu crìch: *that his amazing story came to an end*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: far an robh e a' dèanamh **tuilleadh seilg**: *where he was doing more hunting*. Sealg 'hunting' is a feminine noun which has several forms in the genitive singular viz. seilg, seilge and sealga. All three forms can be seen in Scottish place-names eg Cnoc na Seilg 'the hill of the hunting', Srath na Seilge 'the strath of the hunting' and Allt na Sealga 'the burn of the hunting'.

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: a chuir seachad nam bliadhnaichean mu dheireadh aige: *who spent his final years*.

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