

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

An SS Ferret (1)

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.macleam@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 740. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 436 corresponds to Litir 740.

Air mo bheulaibh an-dràsta, tha pìos à seann phàipear-naidheachd Astràilianach. 'S e an ceann-latha a th' air – Disathairne an deiceamh latha fichead (30mh) dhen Iuchar ochd ceud deug, ochdad 's a h-aon (1881). 'S e *The Australasian Sketcher* ainm a' phàipeir.

Tha an t-alt mu shoitheach a bha car ainmeil aig an àm sin. Ged a bha i ann an Astràilia, bhiodh mòran ann an Alba eòlach oirre. Gu dearbh, bhiodh mòran às na h-eileanan agus taobh siar na Gàidhealtachd air a bhith a' seòladh oirre. Tha mi a' dol a dh'innse dhuibh stòiridh iongantach an SS Ferret.

Bidh mòran agaibh eòlach air an rathad-iarainn a tha a' dol eadar Inbhir Pheofharain agus Caol Loch Aillse. Nuair a thogadh an toiseach e, ge-tà, cha do ràinig e an Caol. Air sàillibh duilgheadasan ionmhais, stad an loidhne aig an t-Sròm aig beul Loch Carrann. Às a sin, bha soithichean ag aiseag daoine is bathar a-mach do na h-eileanan. Mhair an suidheachadh mar sin fad seachd bliadhna fichead, eadar ochd ceud deug is seachdad (1870) agus ochd ceud deug, naochad 's a seachd (1897) – nuair a dh'fhosgail an loidhne chun a' Chaoil fhèin.

Am measg nan soithichean a bha ag obair a-mach às an t-Sròm, bha an SS Ferret. **'S e soitheach-smùide a bh' innte.** Bha i air a togail ann an Glaschu mar bhàta-bathair a bhiodh ag aiseag stuth timcheall Linne Chluaidh. Bha còrr is trì cheud tunna de chuideam innte. Cheannaich companaidh rèile às a' Ghàidhealtachd i. An toiseach bha i air a cur gu feum nuair a bhathar a' togail drochaid rèile Linne Tatha. An uair sin chaidh i chun na Gàidhealtachd fhèin.

Carson, ma-thà, a bha a leithid de shoitheach co-cheangailte ri cùis-chùirte ann an Astràilia? Uill, air sàillibh 's gun deach a goid.

Thòisich an gnothach anns an Dàmhair ochd ceud deug is ochdad (1880). Aig an àm sin, bha am Ferret na laighe aig tàmh ann an Grianraig. Chaidh triùir chun na feadhainn leis an robh i, feuch a faighinn air mhàl airson turas-mara don Mhuir Mheadhan-tirich. B' e Seumas Stiùbhart MacEanraig an ceannard aca. Thuirte gun robh an turas airson a mhnà a bha tinn. Agus thug e a' chreidsinn air an fheadhainn leis an robh am Ferret gun robh gu leòr aige san sporan a leigeadh leis pàigheadh air a son. Thuirte gun robh e càirdeach do Phrìomh Mhorair a' Chabhlaich Rìoghail. Cha robh fios aig an fheadhainn leis an robh am Ferret, ge-tà, gun robh dà ainm eile aig MacEanraig – Seumas Mac a' Ghobhainn agus Seumas Bernard.

Bha dithis eile ann an co-fheall leis – Iòsaph Mac an Fhùcadair no Uallas, agus Eideard Carlyon no Wright no Leigh. Chaidh aontachadh gum biodh iad a' faighinn a'

Ferret air mhàl airson sia mìosan. Thug iad seic seachad mar phàigheadh airson a' chiad mhìos (**ged a b' e tè 'rubair' a bh' innte!**) Agus bha iad ag obair tro chompanaidh luingeis ann an Lunnainn air an robh Henderson & Co – ged nach e fìor chompanaidh a bh' innte nas motha!

Tuigidh sibh, às dèidh a h-uile càil, gun do rinn am Ferret a slighe gu Astràilia. Ach ciamar, agus cò rinn aithneachadh oirre fada bho a dachaigh ann an Alba? Innsidh mi dhuibh tuilleadh dhen stòiridh an-ath-sheachdain.

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Faclan na Litreach: àlainn: *beautiful*; Linne Chluaidh: *The Firth of Clyde*; MacEanraig: *Henderson*; co-fheall: *conspiracy*; Mac an Fhùcadair: *Walker*; Uallas: *Wallace*.

Abairtean na Litreach: Air mo bheulaibh an-dràsta: *in front of me just now*; tha an t-alt mu shoitheach: *the article is about a vessel, ship*; bhiodh mòran às na h-eileanan agus taobh siar na Gàidhealtachd air a bhith a' seòladh oirre: *many from the islands and the western Highlands would have been sailing on her*; an rathad-iarainn a tha a' dol eadar Inbhir Pheofharain agus Caol Loch Aillse: *the railway line that runs between Dingwall and Kyle of Lochalsh*; nuair a thogadh an toiseach e, ge-tà, cha do ràinig e an Caol: *when it was first built, however, it didn't reach Kyle*; air sàillibh duilgheadasan ionmhais: *because of financial difficulties*; ag aiseag daoine is bathar a-mach: *ferrying people and goods out*; mhair an suidheachadh mar sin: *the situation remained like that*; chun a' Chaoil fhèin: *to Kyle itself*; a-mach às an t-Sròm: *out of Strome*; bha i air a cur gu feum nuair a bhathar a' togail drochaid rèile Linne Tatha: *it was used when the Tay Rail Bridge was being built*; air sàillibh 's gun deach a goid: *because she was stolen*; na laighe aig tàmh ann an Grianaig: *lying unused in Greenock*; air mhàl airson turas-mara don Mhuir Mheadhan-tìrìch: *on rent for a cruise to the Mediterranean*; airson a mhnà a bha tinn: *for his wife who was ill*; thug e a' chreidsinn air an fheadhainn leis an robh am Ferret gun robh gu leòr aige san sporan: *he caused those who owned the Ferret to believe he had enough money*; càirdeach do Phrìomh Mhorair a' Chabhlaich Rìoghail: *related to the First Lord of the Admiralty*; tro chompanaidh luingeis ann an Lunnainn: *through a shipping company in London*; ged nach e fìor chompanaidh a bh' innte nas motha: *although that wasn't a real company either*; cò rinn aithneachadh oirre fada bho a dachaigh?: *who recognised her far from her home*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: 's e soitheach-smùide a bh' innte: *it was a steam vessel (steamship)*. Smùid means 'smoke, vapour' and is what we use for referring to machines which emit a column of smoke from the exhaust funnel eg trèana-smùide 'steam train'. It is also used for 'intoxication' eg bha an smùid air 'he was drunk'. But a soitheach-smùide is not a drinking vessel or 'booze cruise'!

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: ged a b' e tè 'rubair' a bh' innte: *although it (fem) was a 'rubber' one [ie a bouncing cheque]*.

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