

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

An SS Ferret (2)

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.macleon@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 741. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 437 corresponds to Litir 741.

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mun SS Ferret a bha uaireigin a’ frithealadh nan eilean à Port an t-Sròim, aig ceann an rathaid-iarainn faisg air a’ Phloc. Bha triùir fhoillearan fo cheannas Sheumais MhicEanraig air am Ferret a thoirt air mhàl airson turas-mara, **ma b’ fhior**, don Mhuir Mheadhan-tìrich. Ach ’s e mèirle a bha fa-near dhaibh.

Dh’fhastaich iad dithis eile, cheannaich iad biadh is fion agus sheòl iad a-mach à Glaschu. Ann an Cardiff, cheannaich iad gual agus thug iad bean MhicEanraig air bòrd. ’S ann dìreach às dèidh làimh a fhuair iad a-mach nach robh airgead aig MacEanraig a phàigheadh airson nan rudan a cheannaich e.

Rinn iad air Gibraltar, agus sheòl iad tron chaolas. Rinn iad sin tron latha a dh’aona-ghnothach gus am faiceadh na maoir-chladaich iad. Ach, air an oidhche sin, thionndaidh iad, agus sheòl iad a-mach tron chaolas a-rithist anns an dorchadas, gun solas sam bith laiste. Bha MacEanraig an dòchas gum biodh daoine a’ smaoinichadh gun deach am Ferret fodha ann am badeigin sa Mhuir Mheadhan-tìrich, le call a h-uile duine air bòrd.

Nuair a bha iad a-muigh sa Chuan Siar, dh’innis MacEanraig do chàch gun robh e air turas dìomhair às leth feachdan-airm nan Stàitean Aonaichte, agus gun robh e a’ cur a sheann-bheatha air a chùlaibh. Thuir e gur ann leis-san a bha an soitheach, agus gum marbhadh e duine sam bith nach rachadh le a phlana.

Dh’atharraich iad coltas an t-soithich. Bha an luidhear air atharrachadh bho bhuidhe gu dubh, bha na bàtaichean-teasairginn air an atharrachadh bho ghorm gu geal. Chaidh an taigh-cuibhle a thogail às ùr **na b’ fhaisge air deireadh na luinge**. Agus rud sam bith a chuireadh am Ferret ann an aithne dhaoine, bha iad air an tilgeil thar a’ chliathaich.

Chaidh ainm ùr a chur oirre – am Bantam, ainm aig long car coltach a bha mu-thrath air Clàr Lloyds. Thug MacEanraig air a’ chriutha innse do dhuine sam bith a chuireadh a’ cheist orra, gun robh iad air seòladh à Singapore.

Rinn iad air Brasail, far an tug iad luchd air bòrd de chofaidh airson a dhol a Mharseille. Ach cha deach iad a Mharseille. Dh’atharraich iad ainm an t-soithich a-rithist – gu India. Chaidh iad gu Cape Town far an do reic MacEanraig an cofaidh airson trì mìle deug not.

An uair sin, lean iad orra gu Astràilia, agus ràinig iad Melbourne anns a’ Ghiblean ochd ceud deug, ochdad ’s a h-aon (1881). Dh’innis MacEanraig do dh’ùghdarrasan Astràilia gur ann à Bermuda a thàinig e. Bha e a-nise dusan mìle mìle à Alba, agus bha e an dùil ’s an dòchas gun robh e air a’ chùis a dhèanamh.

Bha fios aig an fheadhainn leis an robh am Ferret, Companaidh Rèile na Gàidhealtachd, gun robh MacEanraig na eucoireach agus gun robh e ri foill. Ach cha robh fios aca ca' robh an long. Cha b' urrainn dhaibh dad a dhèanamh ach fiosrachadh a sgaoileadh, agus a bhith an dòchas gum biodh cuideigin le fradharc geur ga h-aithneachadh.

Agus 's dòcha gun robh còir aig MacEanraig aithneachadh gur e an t-àite a bu choltaiche anns am biodh Albannach ag obair ann an Astràilia – na calaidhean. Agus, mar a chluinneas sibh an-ath-sheachdain, bha Albannach le fradharc geur a' coimhead an 'India' nuair a bha i a' seòladh a-steach gu cala ann am Melbourne.

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Faclan na Litreach: dh'fhastaich: *hired*; thionndaidh: *turned*; coltas: *appearance*; bàtaichean-teasairginn: *lifeboats*; cala, calaidhean: *harbour, harbours*.

Abairtean na Litreach: a bha uaireigin a' frithealadh nan eilean à Port an t-Sròim: *which was at one time servicing the islands from Strome*; triùir fhoillearan fo cheannas Sheumais MhicEanraig: *three fraudsters under the leadership of James Henderson*; 's e mèirle a bha fa-near dhaibh: *their intent was theft*; thug iad bean MhicEanraig air bòrd: *they took Henderson's wife on board*; 's ann dìreach às dèidh làimh a fhuair a-mach: *it was just afterwards that it was found out*; a phàigheadh airson nan rudan a cheannaich e: *to pay for the things he [had] bought*; sheòl iad tron chaolas: *they sailed through the narrows*; a dh'aona-ghnothach gus am faiceadh na maoir-chladaich iad: *deliberately so that the coastguards would see them*; gun solas sam bith laiste: *without any light on*; gun deach am Ferret fodha ann am badeigin sa Mhuir Mheadhan-tìrìch: *that the Ferret went down somewhere in the Mediterranean*; le call a h-uile duine air bòrd: *with the loss of everyone on board*; a-muigh sa Chuan Siar: *out in the Atlantic*; do chàch gun robh e air turas dìomhair às leth feachdan-airm nan Stàitean Aonaichte: *to the others that he was on a secret journey on behalf of the armed forces of the United States*; a' cur a sheann-bheatha air a chùlaibh: *turning his back on his old life*; gur ann leis-san a bha an soitheach: *that he owned the vessel*; gum marbhadh e duine sam bith nach rachadh le a phlana: *that he would kill anybody that wouldn't go along with his plan*; rud sam bith a chuireadh am Ferret ann an aithne dhaoine: *anything from the Ferret that people would recognise*; thar a' chliathaich: *over the side*; thug X air a' chriutha : *X forced the crew*; dh'atharraich iad ainm an t-soithich a-rithist: *they changed the name of the vessel again*; gun robh e ri foill: *that he was involved in deceit*; ca' robh an long: *where the ship was*; gum biodh cuideigin le fradharc geur ga h-aithneachadh: *that some sharp-eyed person would recognise her*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Chaidh an taigh-cuibhle a thogail às ùr **na b' fhaisge air deireadh na luinge**: *the wheelhouse was rebuilt closer to the stern of the ship. In a ship, like a car, we use toiseach for the front, or bow, and deireadh for the rear, or stern.*

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: Bha X air am Ferret a thoirt air mhàl airson turas-mara, **ma b' fhìor**: *X had chartered the Ferret for a cruise, to all intents and purposes.*

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