

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Tubaist-mhara aig Uilleam Mac an t-Sagairt

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 763. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 459 corresponds to Litir 763.

Bha mi a’ bruidhinn an t-seachdain sa chaidh mun mheas a th’ agam air obair an neach-ealain ainmeil, Uilleam Mac an t-Sagairt. Bha Uilleam, a bhuineadh do Cheann Tìre, am measg ginealach de pheantairean Albannach a bha cianail tàlantach. ’S iad na seallaidhean mara aige as motha a tha a’ còrdadh rium.

Bhiodh Uilleam a’ tilleadh a Cheann Tìre gu tric. Bhiodh e uaireannan a’ falbh a-mach ann an eathar – an seòrsa, tha mi cinnteach, a chithear anns na dealbhan aige. Aon turas, anns an Lùnastal ann an ochd ceud deug, ochdad ’s a naoi (1889), bha e ann an cunnart a bheatha a chall.

Bha Uilleam agus a bhean Marsaili ag iasgach ann an eathar ann an Loch Chille Chiarain. Cuide riutha, bha an dithis mhac agus caraid dhaibh, Tòmas Young. ’S e latha brèagha brèagha a bh’ ann. Ged nach robh e ag obair, tha mi an dùil gun robh Uilleam a’ cuimhneachadh gach nì le sùil an neach-ealain.

Thàinig bàta-smùide a-mach à cala Cheann Locha – mar a chanadh na Gàidheil ri Ceann Loch Chille Chiarain. ’S e am *Meteor* an t-ainm a bh’ oirre. Bhuineadh i do Lìte. Bha eathar Mhic an t-Sagairt air acair faisg air beul an locha agus bha bàt’-iasgaich meadhanach faisg oirre. Ach bha pailteas rùim ann airson a’ *Mheteor* a bhith a’ faighinn seachad oirre.

Bha Uilleam agus a chompanaich air an dòigh ’s air an socair, ag iasgach. Ach mhothaich iad gun robh am *Meteor* a’ dèanamh gu dìreach orra agus nach do dh’atharraich i a cùrsa. Nuair a bha i mu **shia fichead slat** bhuapa, sheas Uilleam agus Tòmas an-àirde. Smèid iad agus dh’èigh iad gu h-àrd. Chunnaic iad dithis fhear air bòrd a’ *Mheteor*. Bha iad ag obair aig a’ bheul-mhòr. Bha Mac an t-Sagairt cinnteach mar sin gun robh cuideigin air bòrd a’ *Mheteor* air am faicinn.

Ach fhathast **lean am bàta-smùide air a cùrsa**. Bha a-nise an t-eagal air Uilleam agus a chompanaich. Chunnaic iad treas fear air bòrd a’ *Mheteor*. Bha iad ag èigheachd ach cha do rinn e diofar sam bith. Bhuail am *Meteor* gu cruaidh anns an eathar, ga sgàineadh ann an dà leth. Thuit a h-uile duine air an eathar don mhuir, agus lean am *Meteor* thairis orra.

’S ann an uair sin a chunnaic sgioba a’ *Mheteor* gun robh rudeigin ceàrr. Stad iad am bàta agus chunnaic iad còignear anns an uisge. Chuir iad geòla thar a’ chliathaich agus thog iad a h-uile duine gu sgiobalta. Gu fortanach cha robh duine aca air a ghoirteachadh. Bha iad fliuch, fuar is rudeigin feargach, ach cha robh cùisean na bu mhiosa na sin.

‘Carson fon ghrèin a rinn thu sin?’ dh’fhaighnich Mac an t-Sagairt dhen sgiobair, Gilleasbaig Grassam. Dh’aidich Grassam nach robh neach-faire air a bhith aige.

Thàinig a’ chùis gu cùirt as t-Sultain. Bha na h-iasgairean a bha faisg air làimh air a h-uile càil fhaicinn. Thug iad fianais seachad gun robh sgioba a’ *Mheteor* air an soitheach a làimhseachadh ann an dòigh chunnartach. Fhuair Gilleasbaig Grassam trì mìosan sa phrìosan agus fhuair a mheit dà mhìos. Agus, gu fortanach, bha Uilleam Mac an t-Sagairt beò airson còrr is fichead bliadhna eile airson leantainn leis an obair a tha ga fhàgail am measg nam peantairean Gàidhealach a b’ ainmeile a bh’ ann riamh.

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Faclan na Litreach: Uilleam Mac an t-Sagairt: *William MacTaggart*; eathar: *boat*; a chithear: *which can be [are] seen*; Loch Chille Chiarain: *Campbeltown Loch*; Ceann Loch Chille Chiarain: *Campbeltown*; Lìte: *Leith*; fianais: *evidence*.

Abairtean na Litreach: mun mheas a th’ agam air obair an neach-ealain ainmeil: *about the admiration I have for the work of the well-known artist*; a bhuineadh do Cheann Tìre: *who belonged to Kintyre*; am measg ginealach de pheantairean Albannach a bha cianail tàlantach: *among a generation of Scottish painters who were incredibly talented*; ’s iad na seallaidhean mara aige as motha a tha a’ còrdadh rium: *I like his seascapes the best*; ann an cunnart a bheatha a chall: *in danger of losing his life*; bha bàt’-iasgaich meadhanach faisg oirre: *a fishing boat was in reasonable proximity to them*; bha pailteas rùm ann airson X a bhith a’ faighinn seachad oirre: *there was plenty of room for X to get past her*; air an dòigh ’s air an socair, ag iasgach: *fishing in a happy and relaxed manner*; nach do dh’atharraich i a cùrsa: *she didn’t change her course*; smèid iad agus dh’èigh iad gu h-àrd: *they waved and shouted loudly*; ag obair aig a’ bheul-mhòr: *working at the gunwale*; gun robh cuideigin air am faicinn: *that somebody had seen them*; bhuail X gu cruaidh anns an eathar, ga sgàineadh ann an dà leth: *X hit the boat hard, cutting it in two*; chuir iad geòla thar a’ chliathaich agus thog iad a h-uile duine gu sgiobalta: *they put a dinghy over the side and they quickly picked up everybody*; dh’aidich X nach robh neach-faire air a bhith aige: *X admitted he hadn’t had anybody on lookout*; bha na h-iasgairean air a h-uile càil fhaicinn: *the fishermen had seen everything*; gun robh X air an soitheach a làimhseachadh ann an dòigh chunnartach: *that X had handled the vessel in a dangerous manner*; fhuair a mheit dà mhìos: *his mate received two months*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: mu **shia fichead slat** bhuapa: *about a hundred and twenty yards away from her*. We still use slat, in addition to meatair, for measurements of distance, but notice that after fichead, or multiples of fichead, that the noun goes in the singular case. And note that we can, traditionally, continue to count in twenties between 100 and 200. So 140 is seachd fichead (an alternative to ceud is dà fhichead or ceud is ceathrad).

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: lean am bàta-smùide air a cùrsa: *the steamship continued on its [her] course*.

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