

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Am Pinguin

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 821. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 517 corresponds to Litir 821.

Chaidh triùir à Eilean beag **Sgalpaigh** – agus ochdnar à Leòdhas – a mharbhadh nuair a chaidh soitheach Gearmailteach a chur fodha anns an Dàrna Cogadh. Tha an eachdraidh air leth duilich, ach bha iad nam prìosanaich aig na Gearmailtich air bòrd soitheach air an robh ‘Pinguin’ mar ainm. Bha am Pinguin na shoitheach-cealgach – long-cogaidh a bha a’ toirt a’ chreidsinn gur e soitheach-carago a bh’ innte.

Ged a bha am Pinguin a’ coimhead coltach ri soitheach-carago, bha i làn armachd. Bha sia gunnaichean mòra (ceud gu leth mìlemeatair) oirre, ceithir gunnaichean an aghaidh itealain, dà thiùb airson toirpeadan, dà itealan bheag agus na ceudan de mhèinnean-mara. Ach bha an armachd gu lèir a-mach à sealladh. Bha na gunnaichean air an còmhdachadh le siotaichean iarainn air cliathaich an t-soithich.

Chan e sin a-mhàin, ach bhite a’ toirt a’ chreidsinn gun do bhuin am Pinguin do dhùthaich eile. Bhiodh i a’ cur suas bratach Ghearmailteach dìreach nuair a bha i deiseil gus ionnsaigh a thoirt air soitheach eile. Agus bha comharraidhean Feachd Rìoghail an Adhair air na h-itealain aice, a’ toirt a’ chreidsinn gun robh iad Breatannach. Bha i airidh air a h-ainm – ‘soitheach-cealgach’!

Tràth sa chogadh, chaidh iarraidh air an sgiobair am Pinguin a thoirt gu ceann a deas a’ Chuain Siar, don Chuan Innseanach agus timcheall costa Astràilia. Bha riaghaltas na Gearmailt ag iarraidh cron a dhèanamh air luingeas Breatannach anns na ceàrnaidhean sin. Agus, eadar na soithichean-cealgach agus na bàtaichean-aiginn anns a’ Chuan Siar, bha iad gu math soirbheachail anns a’ chiad dà bhliadhna dhen chogadh ann a bhith a’ cur luingeas Breatannach fodha. B’ e am Pinguin an soitheach-cealgach a bu shoirbheachaile aca.

Anns an Lùnastal naoi ceud deug is ceathrad (1940) lorg am Pinguin an tancair ‘British Commander’ faisg air ceann a deas Afraga. Bhuail i sligean innte agus thug caiptean a’ Bhrithish Commander an t-òrdugh an soitheach a thrèigsinn. Chuir am Pinguin an tancair fodha, thog i an criudha agus dh’fhalbh i ag astar. Thachair a leithid sin iomadach turas.

Corra uair cha robh aice ri ionnsaigh a thoirt. Anns an Dùbhlachd naoi ceud deug is ceathrad (1940), ghabh i thairis an cabhlach Nirribheach a bha an sàs ann an sealg nam mucan-mara far South Georgia. Cha do loisg i slige sam bith orra.

Leis gun robh am Pinguin cho soirbheachail, aig amannan bha na ceudan de phrìosanaich-cogaidh air bòrd oirre. Bha fios aig na Breatannaich, nan cuireadh iad fodha i, gum faigheadh seòladairean Breatannach bàs. Ach cha robh roghainn aca. Bha i a’ dèanamh uiread de sgrios ’s gun robh aca ri a cur fodha.

Thàinig an deireadh air an ochdamh latha dhen Chèitean, naoi ceud deug, ceathrad 's a h-aon (1941), nuair a bha HMS Cornwall **an tòir oirre**. Bha am Pinguin a' toirt a' chreidsinn gur e soitheach-caragò Nirribheach a bh' innte. Mu dheireadh, thog i bratach Ghearmailteach agus loisg i air a' Chornwall. Bhuail slige bhon Chornwall ann an stòras armachd a' Phinguin agus spreadh i. Taobh a-staigh beagan diogan bha i air a dhol fodha. Chaill còrr is trì cheud Gearmailteach am beatha, agus còrr is dà cheud prìosanach-cogaidh. Nam measg bha aon duine deug à Leòdhas agus Sgalpaigh.

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Faclan na Litreach: triùir: *three people*; ochdnar: *eight people*; soitheach-cealgach: *commerce raider* ['*deceitful vessel*']; bàtaichean-aiginn: *submarines*; soirbheachail: *successful*; luingeas: *shipping*; criudha: *crew*; prìosanaich-cogaidh: *prisoners of war*.

Abairtean na Litreach: nuair a chaidh soitheach Gearmailteach a chur fodha: *when a German vessel was sunk*; tha an eachdraidh air leth duilich: *the story is tragic*; bha iad nam prìosanaich: *they were prisoners*; long-cogaidh a bha a' toirt a' chreidsinn gur e soitheach-caragò a bh' innte: *a warship that was posing as a cargo vessel*; ceithir gunnaichean an aghaidh itealain: *four anti-aircraft guns*; dà thiùb airson toirpeadan: *two torpedo tubes*; na ceudan de mhèinnean-mara: *hundreds of mines*; bha an armachd gu lèir a-mach à sealladh: *all of the armaments were out of sight*; air an còmhdachadh le siotaichean iarainn air cliathaich an t-soithich: *covered by iron sheets on the side of the vessel*; bhite a' toirt a' chreidsinn gun do bhuin X do dhùthaich eile: *it would be pretended that X belonged to another country*; dìreach nuair a bha i deiseil gus ionnsaigh a thoirt air: *only when he was ready to attack*; comharraidhean Feachd Rìoghail an Adhair: *Royal Air Force markings*; gu ceann a deas a' Chuain Siar, don Chuan Innseanach agus timcheall costa Astràilia: *to the south Atlantic, the Indian Ocean and around the coast of Australia*; an t-òrdugh an soitheach a thrèigsinn: *the order to abandon ship*; an cabhlach Nirribheach a bha an sàs ann an sealg nam mucan-mara: *the Norwegian whaling fleet*; gum faigheadh seòladairean Breatannach bàs: *that British sailors would die*; bha i a' dèanamh uiread de sgrios 's gun robh aca ri a cur fodha: *it was doing so much damage that they had to sink it*; bhuail slige bhon Chornwall ann an stòras armachd a' Phinguin agus spreadh i: *a shell from the Cornwall hit the armaments store of the Pinguin and it exploded*; taobh a-staigh beagan diogan: *within a few seconds*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Sgalpaigh: Scalpay (Harris). *Is this the way you would spell Scalpay in Gaelic? Some might prefer Scalpaigh or even Scalpaidh but the Litir follows the Gaelic Orthographic Conventions (GOC) 2009. They recommend Sgalpaigh. The –ay island names, originating in Norse, are written –aigh in Gaelic eg Barraigh (not Barraidh), except in Argyll where they end in –a eg Colbhasa (Colonsay) because that is how they are pronounced there. Scarp in Gaelic is (An) Sgarp, not Scarp, Sg being preferred to Sc.*

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: nuair a bha HMS Cornwall **an tòir oirre**: *when HMS Cornwall was in pursuit of her*.

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