

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

MacMhuirich agus MacIain

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 836. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 532 corresponds to Litir 836.

Chan eil mi cinnteach, nuair a chaidh an t-Oll. Somhairle MacIain a thiodhlacadh ann an Abaid Westminster ann an seachd ceud deug, ochdad 's a ceithir (1784), an deach a bhata daraich a thiodhlacadh na chois. Bha e air a bhith iomchaidh nan deach, oir bhiodh e a' dol a laighe na sheann aois leis a' bhata san leabaidh ri a thaobh.

Carson? Uill, bha an t-eagal air, bha e ag ràdh, ro Sheumas MacMhuirich no 'Ossian MacPherson' mar a th' aig cuid air. Bha MacMhuirich air sgrìobhadh gu MacIain, a' maoidheadh air. B' e litreachas a bh' air cùl an eas-aonta.

Bha mi aig co-labhairt mu MhacMhuirich ann an Ceann a' Ghiùthsaidh as t-Earrach am-bliadhna. 'S ann à Bàideanach a bha MacMhuirich, agus thog e taigh mòr ann. Bha e gu math ainmeil air feadh na Roinn Eòrpa, agus gu math beartach leis.

Bha mi a' faighneachd de na sàr-eòlaichean a bha an làthair an do thachair MacMhuirich is MacIain ri chèile riamh. Bha iad a' fuireach ann an Lunnainn aig an aon àm. Bha caraidean anns a' chumantas aca. Ach cha robh freagairt aig gin de na h-eòlaichean dhomh. Bha iad an amharas gur ann tro litrichean a chumadh an naimhdeas a' dol. Agus 's e a bha guineach, a rèir choltais.

Smaoinich mi – nach biodh e math nan sgrìobhadh cuideigin sgileil dealbh-chluich mu dheidhinn coinneamh eadar an dithis! Saoil am biodh i sradagach, no am biodh an dithis a' gabhail deoch-slàinte do chèile?! Dithis uaislean no dithis thrustairean? No an dà chuid eadhon? Bidh beachd agaibh fhèin, tha fhios.

'S dòcha nach e fear dòigheil a bh' ann an Somhairle MacIain, ach tha e coltach gun robh e ceart mu na sgrìobhaidhean aig MacMhuirich. Bha an t-Albannach a' cumail a-mach gun robh na dh'fhoillsich e air a chruthachadh le Oisean (agus nach iomadh rud a thachair **bho linn Oisein!**) Ach tha e coltach gur e MacMhuirich fhèin a sgrìobh a' chuid a bu mhotha dheth, ged a bha e stèidhichte air beul-aithris a bha fhathast beò air bilean an t-sluaigh.

Cha chreid mi gun cuala MacIain a' bheul-aithris sin nuair a bha air chuairt air a' Ghàidhealtachd ann an seachd ceud deug, seachdad 's a trì (1773). Agus cha tuigeadh e a leithid co-dhiù. Bha e a' coimhead airson làmh-sgrìobhainnean a dhearbhadh nach robh MacMhuirich air na sgrìobhaidhean a chruthachadh. Agus cha d' fhuair e lorg air gin.

Nuair a thill e dhachaigh, thuir e gur e slaightear a bh' ann am MacMhuirich agus gun robh na leabhraichean aige foilleil. Dh'èirich naimhdeas eadar an dithis a mhair fichead bliadhna gus an do chaochail MacIain ann an seachd ceud deug, naochad 's a ceithir (1794). Chaochail MacMhuirich dà bhliadhna an dèidh sin.

Nach annasach e, ma-thà, gun robh an dithis air an cur cha mhòr còmhla **an dèidh am bàis**. Tha iad le chèile air an tiodhlacadh ann an Oisean nam Bàrd ann an Abaid Westminster, dìreach trì ceumannan-coise deug air falbh bho chèile. Chan eil mi an dùil gun tug MacIain a bhata leis oir cha bhiodh fios aige gum biodh a nàmhaid a' dol don uaigh anns an aon àite. Ach 's dòcha gu bheil e iomchaidh gu bheil MacMhuirich air a thiodhlacadh an sin. Bàrd Oisein, mar gum bitheadh, ann an Oisean nam Bàrd.

* * * * *

Faclan na Litreach: An t-Oll. Somhairle MacIain: *Dr Samuel Johnson*; Abaid Westminster: *Westminster Abbey*; Ceann a' Ghiùthsaidh: *Kingussie*; Bàideanach: *Badenoch*; sàr-eòlaichean: *experts*; guineach: *venomous*; dealbh-chluich: *play*; deoch-slàinte: *toast (drink)*; Oisean nam Bàrd: *Poets' Corner*.

Abairtean na Litreach: an deach a bhata daraich a thiodhlacadh na chois?: *was his oaken stick buried with him?*; bha e air a bhith iomchaidh nan deach: *it would have been fitting if it had*; bhiodh e a' dol a laighe na sheann aois leis a' bhata san leabaidh ri a thaobh: *he would go to bed in his old age with the stick next to him in bed*; bha an t-eagal air ro Sheumas MacMhuirich: *he was scared of James MacPherson*; a' maoidheadh air: *threatening him*; an amharas gur ann tro litrichean a chumadh an naimhdeas a' dol: *suspected that the enmity was maintained through letters*; dithis uaislean no dithis thrustairean?: *two gentlemen or two rogues?*; no an dà chuid eadhon: *or even both*; a' cumail a-mach gun robh na dh'fhoillsich e air a chruthachadh le Oisean: *maintaining that what he published was created by Ossian*; stèidhichte air beul-aithris a bha fhathast beò air bilean an t-sluaigh: *based on oral tradition that was still alive on the lips of the people*; cha tuigeadh e a leithid co-dhiù: *he wouldn't understand the like anyway*; gur e slaightear a bh' ann am X agus gun robh na leabhraichean aige foilleil: *that X was a fraudster and that his books were fraudulent*; nach annasach e: *isn't it strange*; trì ceumannan-coise deug air falbh bho chèile: *thirteen paces away from each other*; gum biodh a nàmhaid a' dol don uaigh anns an aon àite: *that his enemy would be going to the grave in the same place*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: gun robh an dithis air an cur cha mhòr còmhla **an dèidh am bàis**: *that the pair were put almost together after their death*. Bàs is inflected to bàis (genitive singular) following the compound preposition an dèidh, and am is the third person plural possessive article, standing for 'their'.

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: agus nach iomadh rud a thachair **bho linn Oisein**: *haven't a lot of things happened since Ossian's time*. This is a good idiom and still widely used. **Bho linn Oisein** means a very long time ago. Cha chualas a leithid bho linn Oisein 'the like has not been heard in living memory (and a lot further back!)

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