

# Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

## **'Iain Spàinnteach' (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](mailto:rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk). This is Litir 907. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 603 corresponds to Litir 907.*

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Iain Spàinnteach, Iain MacDhòmhnail à Cnòideart. Thachair e ri fear ann an Toirbheartan a bha an làthair nuair a chaidh mìle not a ghoid bhuaithe. Tha Iain ag innse dhuinn gun do chuir e an duine air a dhruim dìreach agus gun do theich e air ais don dùthaich aige fhèin.

Chuir e ri chèile buidheann de chòignear ghaisgeach agus thill iad do thaigh Chailein Deirg ann an dùthaich 'ic Coinnich. Ach b' aithne do Chailean **fàth a thurais** agus bha ceathrad fear armaichte aige. 'Tha an t-airgead air a chaitheamh,' thuirt e ri Iain.

'Ma tha an t-airgead air a chaitheamh,' ars Iain, 'tha duais ann dhaibhsan a chaith e.'

'Dè an duais?' dh'fhaighnich Cailean.

'A' chroich,' fhreagair Iain.

Leis a sin, dh'èirich slugh Chailein. Bha iad a' maoidheadh air Iain agus tharraing e a ghunna agus a bhiodag. Ach fhuair e fhèin 's a chompanaich air falbh gun dòrtadh-fala.

Thàinig lighiche ainmeil a thadhail air Iain ann an Cnòideart. Bha iad ag iasgach nuair a thàinig soitheach cogaidh faisg orra. Dh'iarr an lighiche air Iain a thoirt a-mach don t-soitheach, feuch bathar medigeach a cheannach bhuaipa. Bha aig Iain ri bhith a' toirt a' chreidsinn nach robh Beurla aige, agus gur e sgalag a bh' ann.

Gu mì-fhortanach dha, b' e an soitheach am *Porcupine*, fo stiùir a' Chaiptein Fheargasdain, fear a bha ainmeil airson a bhrùidealachd an aghaidh nan Seumasach. Bha e cinnteach gur e Seumasach cliùmhòr a bh' ann an Iain agus chuir e an grèim e. 'Chì thu Lunnainn fhathast,' thuirt am Fearghasdanach.

'S iomadh baile mòr Eòrpach a chunnaic mi mu-thràth,' fhreagair Iain ann an deagh Bheurla.

Nuair a ràinig iad Caol Mhuile, chaidh Iain a chur a-null gu soitheach cogaidh eile. Ach, an àite a dhol a Lunnainn, thàinig òrdugh bhon riaghaltas Iain a chur a **Ghearasdan Inbhir Lòchaidh**. Chaidh a chur air bòrd eathair airson a dhol ann.

Bha an criutha Èireannach. Dh'inns iad do Iain ann an Gàidhlig na h-Èireann, nan teicheadh e orra sa Ghearasdan, gun losgadh iad air ach gun dèanadh iad cinnteach nach buaileadh peilear ann. Dh'inns iad dha cuideachd gum b' e am fear a bhrath e an Caipitean Ailean Dòmhnallach, Ailean a' Chnuic, às an Eilean Sgitheanach. Bha e fhèin is Iain Spàinnteach air a dhol a-mach air a chèile roimhe air gnothach pearsanta.

Cha do ghabh Iain a chothrom, ge-tà, agus bha e sa phrìosan anns a' Ghearasdan airson naoi mìosan. Goirid an dèidh sin, bha e ann an Gleann Eilg agus thachair e ri Ailean a' Chnuic. 'Tha fios agam carson a bhrath thu mi,' ars Iain. 'Thuirt mi gun robh thu nad

ghealtair. Uill, tha mi ag ràdh an dearbh rud a-rithist, agus gu bheil thu nad bhleigeard a bharrachd!’

Bha Ailean dhen bheachd gun robh Iain a’ dol ga mhurt agus theich e don ghearasdan ann an Gleann Eilg a bha làn shaighdearan aig an àm. Cha do dh’fhàg e an gearasdan an dèidh sin gun dithis shaighdearan a bhith na chois.

Ach cha do mhuirt Iain Spàinnteach e. Phòs e, chaidh e a dh’fhuireach ann an Cnòideart agus ann an seachd ceud deug, seachdad ’s a trì (1773), chaidh e a dh’Ameireagaidh a Tuath, far an do chuir e seachad an còrr de a bheatha.

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**Faclan na Litreach:** Iain Spàinnteach: *Spanish John*; Cnòideart: *Knoydart*; Toirbheartan: *Torridon*; a’ maoidheadh air: *threatening him*; armaichte: *armed*; a’ chroich: *the gibbet*; soitheach cogaidh: *warship*; cliùmhor: *renowned*; Caol Mhuile: *The Sound of Mull*; Ailean a’ Chnuic: *Allan of Knock*; gealtair: *coward*.

**Abairtean na Litreach:** a bha an làthair nuair a chaidh mìle not a ghoid bhuaithe: *who was present when a thousand pounds were stolen from him*; gun do chuir e an duine air a dhruim dìreach: *that he put the man flat on his back*; tha an t-airgead air a chaitheamh: *the money is spent*; tha duais ann dhaibhsan a chaith e: *there is a reward for those who spent it*; tharraing e a ghunna agus a bhiodag: *he drew his gun and dirk*; gun dòrtadh-fala: *without bloodshed*; thàinig lighiche ainmeil a thadhail air: *a famous physician came to visit*; feuch bathar medigeach a cheannach bhuapa: *to try to buy medical supplies from them*; a’ toirt a’ chreidsinn nach robh Beurla aige: *pretending he spoke no English*; gur e sgalag a bh’ ann: *that he was a servant*; a bhrùidealachd an aghaidh nan Seumasach: *his brutality against the Jacobites*; ’s iomadh baile mòr Eòrpach a chunnaic mi: *it’s many a European city I’ve seen*; air bòrd eathair: *on board a boat*; nan teicheadh e orra: *if he ran away from them*; gun dèanadh iad cinnteach nach buaileadh peilear ann: *that they’d ensure no bullet hit him*; gum b’ e am fear a bhrath e: *that the man who betrayed him was*; air a dhol a-mach air a chèile: *had fallen out with each other*; gun dithis shaighdearan a bhith na chois: *without two soldiers accompanying him*; far an do chuir e seachad an còrr de a bheatha: *where he spent the rest of his life*.

**Puing-chànain na Litreach:** thàinig òrdugh bhon riaghaltas Iain a chur a **Ghearasdan Inbhir Lòchaidh**: *an order came from the government to send John to Fort William (literally ‘the Inverlochy Garrison’). This is the full Gaelic name of Fort William although we usually only call it ‘An Gearasdan’. But there were and are other ‘gearasdain’ including the barracks at Glenelg, which are mentioned in the Litir (the building is now a ruin). Note that Lochaber folk prefer the traditional spelling gearasdan, whereas GOC recommends gearastan. I have kept with the traditional spelling here because of the reference to the place name.*

**Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach:** b’ aithne do Chailean **fàth a thurais**: *Colin knew the purpose of his journey.*

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