

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

An Canàl Cailleannach

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 962. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 658 corresponds to Litir 962.

A bheil turas nas tlachdmhoire ann an Alba na turas-bàta tron Chanàl Chailleannach? Ma thà, bidh e gu math math tlachdmhor nam bheachd. Chaidh mi tron Chanàl as t-samhradh, agus abair gun do chòrd e rium. Bha an t-slighe brèagha air fad agus thachair mi ri daoine a bha gu math laghach. Bha gu leòr ann à dùthchannan eile a bharrachd air Alba. Bha aon chupall air tighinn à Nirribhidh. Bha iad air an t-slighe chun nan Eilean Cainèiridh. Às a sin, **bha iad a’ dol a dhèanamh air a’ Charibbean**. Bha iad gu bhith air falbh airson bliadhna. Cha robh sinne ach a’ cur seachad trì latha tron chanàl airson ar bàta a thoirt gu taobh siar na h-Alba.

Tha an Canàl Cailleannach gu math eachdraidheil. ’S iongantach mura robh daoine a’ beachdachadh air a leithid thar nan linntean. Nuair a chaidh Calum Cille gu ruige Inbhir Nis anns t-siathamh linn, sheòl e cuid mhath dhen t-slighe air na lochan anns a’ Ghleann Mhòr. ’S iongantach mura tuirt e ris fhèin – nach biodh e math nam biodh faoighteach ann airson mo thoirt ann am bàta air a’ chòrr dhen t-slighe, seach a bhith a’ coiseachd eadar na lochan. Ge-tà, nam biodh e air sin a dhèanamh, ’s dòcha nach robh cothrom air a bhith aige smachd a thoirt air Niseag ann an Abhainn Nis!

Ach cha deach càil a dhèanamh airson smuain mar sin adhartachadh chun an ochdamh linn deug. B’ e Seumas Watt a rinn a’ chiad shuirbhuidh airson canàl tron Ghleann Mhòr ann an seachd ceud deug, seachdad ’s a trì (1773). Ach ’s ann trithead bliadhna an dèidh sin a chaidh achd tron Phàrlamaid airson maoinachadh a chur mu choinneimh a’ phròiseict. Thug an riaghaltas cead don einnseanair, Tòmas Telford, an canàl a dhealbhadh agus rinn e sin cuide ri fear Uilleam Jessop gus an do chaochail Jessop ann an ochd ceud deug is ceithir-deug (1814). An uair sin, rinn Telford an còrr leis fhèin.

Bha Telford am measg an luchd-einnseanairidh a b’ ainmeile ri a linn. Rugadh e ann an seachd ceud deug, caogad ’s a seachd (1757) ann an Eskdale ann an Siorrachd Dhùn Phris. **Chaochail athair** nuair a bha Tòmas na leanabh agus bha an gille òg air a thogail le a mhàthair ann am bochdainn. Dh’ionnsaich e clachaireachd an toiseach, ach chuir e roimhe a bhith na ailtire agus chaidh e a Lunnainn agus an uair sin gu Shropshire.

Ann an seachd ceud deug, naochad ’s a trì (1793) chaidh Telford an sàs ann an dealbhachadh chanàlaichean. Am measg sin bha amaran-uisge ann an Sasainn agus sa Chuimrigh a bh’ air an dèanamh de dh’iarann. Tha iad fhathast mar phàirt de shiostam nan canàlaichean an-diugh. An uair sin am pròiseact mòr – an Canàl Cailleannach, a thug còrr is fichead bliadhna.

Bhathar an dòchas nach toireadh am pròiseact ach seachd bliadhna, seach fichead. Agus bha iad an dùil gun cosgadh e ceithir cheud is seachdad mìle not. Aig a' cheann thall, chosg e naoi ceud mìle not.

Ach chanainn gum b' fhiach a h-uile sgillinn. Tha goireas againn a tha air leth. Taobh a-staigh trì latha, thug e mi bhon chosta sear don chladach an iar tro chridhe na Gàidhealtachd. Mo bheannachd aig Tòmas Telford agus gach duine a thug an Canàl Cailleannach gu bith.

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Faclan na Litreach: nas tlachdmhoire: *more pleasurable*; turas-bàta: *boat trip*; An Canàl Cailleannach: *Caledonian Canal*; eachdraidheil: *historic*; einnseanair: *engineer*; an còrr: *the rest*; Siorrachd Dhùn Phris: *Dumfriesshire*; amaran-uisge: *aqueducts*.

Abairtean na Litreach: thachair mi ri daoine a bha gu math laghach: *I met people who were really nice*; bha aon chupall air tighinn à Nirribhidh: *one couple had come from Norway*; air an t-slighe chun nan Eilean Cainèiridh: *on the way to the Canary Isles*; 's iongantach mura robh daoine a' beachdachadh air a leithid thar nan linntean: *it's likely that people considered the matter over the centuries*; sheòl e cuid mhath dhen t-slighe air na lochan anns a' Ghleann Mhòr: *he sailed a good part of the way on the lochs in the Great Glen*; nam biodh faoighteach ann: *if there were a canal*; a rinn a' chiad shuirbhidh: *who made the first survey*; airson maoineachadh a chur mu choinneimh a' phròiseict: *to allocate funding to the project*; am measg an luchd-einnseanairidh a b' ainmeile ri a linn: *among the most famous engineers of his day*; bha an gille òg air a thogail le a mhàthair ann am bochdainn: *the young lad was raised by his mother in poverty*; dh'ionnsaich e clachaireachd: *he learned masonry*; chuir e roimhe a bhith na ailtire: *he determined to be an architect*; an sàs ann an dealbhachadh chanàlaichean: *involved in the design of canals*; a bh' air an dèanamh de dh'iarann: *that were made of iron*; bhathar an dòchas nach toireadh am pròiseact ach seachd bliadhna: *it was hoped the project would only take seven years*; bha iad an dùil gun cosgadh e X: *they expected it to cost X*; thug e mi bhon chosta sear don chladach an iar tro chridhe na Gàidhealtachd: *it took me from the east coast to the western seashore through the heart of the Highlands*; a thug an Canàl Cailleannach gu bith: *who brought the Caledonian Canal into existence*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Chaochail athair nuair a bha Tòmas na leanabh: *his father died* when Thomas was a baby. Note that when a noun that starts with a vowel is commanded by the third person possessive article (a 'his') it is not written, to avoid a vowel repetition which is not said in speech. For 'his father and mother' we would say 'athair 's a mhàthair'.

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: bha iad a' dol a dhèanamh air a' Charibbean: *they were going to make for [go to] the Caribbean*.

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