

# Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

## Tì agus Raibeart Fortune

*Each week the West Highland Free Press publishes the text for Ruairidh 's "Letter to Gaelic Learners" on BBC Radio nan Gàidheal (103.5-105 FM). Broadcasts are as follows: 10.00 pm on Sunday, following the Gaelic Learners' programme 'Beag air Bheag', with a repeat at 10.30 pm on Wednesday. This is Litir 1,016. There is also a simpler version – An Litir Bheag – which is broadcast at 4.03 pm each Sunday. Litir Bheag 712 corresponds to Litir 1,016. The Litir is also available at [www.bbc.co.uk/litir](http://www.bbc.co.uk/litir) and [www.learnghaelic.scot/litir](http://www.learnghaelic.scot/litir).*

Tha cuimhne agam fhathast air a' chiad turas a fhuair mi cupa cofaidh air a' Chomraich. Bha mi a' tadhal air seann bhoireannach a bha càirdeach dhomh agus thuir i rium, 'An gabh thu **copan teatha**, a Ruairidh?' Mus d' fhuair mi cothrom freagairt a thoirt seachad, dh'atharraich i a beachd. 'No dè mu dheidhinn cofaidh? Am b' fheàrr leat cofaidh?'

Bha sin anns na seachdadan agus, roimhe sin, chan eil cuimhne agam air cofaidh fhaicinn air a' Chomraich, gun luaidh air òl, co-dhiù am measg nan seann Ghàidheal. Bhiodh mo sheanmhair a' gabhail tì – no teatha – fad an latha **o mhoch gu dubh**. Uaireannan cha chuireadh i na duilleagan ann am poit. Bhiodh i gan cur ann an cupa, 's chuireadh i uisge goileach orra. Agus an ceann dà mhionaid bhiodh 'teatha nan ceàrd' aice, mar a chanadh i fhèin.

Tha e doirbh a bhith a' smaoinneachadh air Alba às aonais tì. Tha i cho bitheanta. Ach bha uair ann nuair nach robh an tì, air a bheil sinn eòlach an-diugh, anns an Roinn Eòrpa idir. A-nise, tha feadhainn ga fàs ann an Alba fhèin.

Bha mi ann an Lios Mòr an-uiridh agus, far an robh sinn a' fuireach, bhathar a' fàs tì air a' chroit. Tì dhonn agus tì bhàn. Cha d' fhuair mi blas dhiubh, ach chan eil adhbhar agam a bhith a' smaoinneachadh nach biodh iad math, blasta. Tha feadhainn ga fàs gu coimeirsealta ann an Alba, leithid ann an Siorrachd Pheairt.

Bha grunn Albannach an sàs ann a bhith a' brosnachadh gnìomhachas fàs na tì o chionn fhada. Mar eisimpleir – Raibeart Fortune. Ann am meadhan an naoidheamh linn deug, bha esan ann an Sìonaidh, far an do ghoid e lusan tì airson Companaidh Bhreatannach nan Innseachan an Ear.

Bha sin an aghaidh an lagh agus bha an obair aig Fortune gu math cunnartach. Chaidh e timcheall ann an riochd marsantach Sìneach, ag innse do dhaoine gun robh e às an fhìor cheann a tuath, agus chaidh e fad air falbh bho na puirt-mhara far an robh cead aig Eòrpaich a bhith. Uaireannan, bhiodh e air falbh airson trì mìosan agus chaidh e gu àiteachan far nach robh Eòrpach air a bhith ann roimhe.

Cheannaich e lusan tì agus fhuair e iad gu Hong Kong. Às a sin, chaidh iad chun nan Innseachan. Ach cha b' urrainn do Fortune sùil a chumail orra an uair sin, agus chaill e mòran dhiubh air bòrd nan long. Uile-gu-lèir, thathar a' dèanamh dheth gun do ghoid e trì mìle deug lus agus deich mìle sìol.

An toiseach, 's e tì uaine a bha Fortune a' cruinneachadh. Ach bha fèill mhòr air tì dhubh, agus rinn e oidhirp mhòr gus lusan agus sìol a chruinneachadh dhen tì

dhuibh ann am Fujian. Anns a' Ghearran ochd ceud deug, caogad 's a h-aon (1851) dh'fhàg e Shanghai airson a dhol do na h-Innseachan. A bharrachd air lusan is sìol, thug e leis sguad de thuathanaich Shìneach aig an robh na sgilean is eòlas airson tì dhubh fhàs. Bha beatha ùr gu bhith aca anns an Hiomalaithea anns na h-Innseachan. Agus bha gnìomhachas mòr ùr gu bhith aig na h-Innseachan – gnìomhachas a mhaireas chun an latha an-diugh.

Co-dhiù, tha an t-àm agam falbh airson cupa tì fhaighinn – no saoil an gabh mi cofaidh?

\* \* \* \* \*

**Faclan na Litreach:** na seachdadan: *the [19]70s*; mo sheanmhair: *my grandmother*; teatha nan ceàrd: *travellers' tea, historically known as 'tinkers' tea'*; Lios Mòr: *Lismore*; gu coimeirsealta: *commercially*.

**Abairtean na Litreach:** tha cuimhne agam fhathast air a' chiad turas a fhuair mi cupa cofaidh air a' Chomraich: *I [can] still remember the first time I got a cup of coffee in Applecross*; a' tadhal air seann bhoireannach a bha càirdeach dhomh: *visiting an old woman who was related to me*; dh'atharraich i a beachd: *she changed her opinion*; am b' fheàrr leat?: *would you prefer?*; chan eil cuimhne agam air cofaidh fhaicinn, gun luaidh air òl: *I can't remember seeing coffee, not to mention drinking it*; chuireadh i uisge goileach orra: *she would put boiling water on them*; tha feadhainn ga fàs: *some people grow it*; chan eil adhbhar agam a bhith a' smaoinichadh nach biodh iad math, blasta: *I have no reason to think they wouldn't be good and flavoursome*; ann a bhith a' brosnachadh gnìomhachas fàs na tì o chionn fhada: *in encouraging the tea-growing industry a long time ago*; far an do ghoid e lusan tì airson Companaidh Bhreatannach nan Innseachan an Ear: *where he stole tea plants for the British East India Company*; chaidh e timcheall ann an riochd marsantach Sìneach: *he went around disguised as a Chinese merchant*; gun robh e às an fhìor cheann a tuath: *that he was from the far north*; bho na puirt-mhara far an robh cead aig Eòrpaich a bhith: *from the sea ports where Europeans were permitted to be*; chaidh iad chun nan Innseachan: *they went to India*; uile-gu-lèir, thathar a' dèanamh dheth gun do ghoid e trì mìle deug lus: *in total, it's reckoned he stole thirteen thousand plants*; thug e leis sguad de thuathanaich Shìneach aig an robh na sgilean is eòlas airson tì dhubh fhàs: *he took with him a team of Chinese farmers who had the skills and knowledge to grow black tea*.

**Puing-chànain na Litreach:** An gabh thu **copan teatha?**: *will you take a cup of tea? Interestingly not everybody uses the same Gaelic for 'cup' or 'tea'; there are dialectal differences. 'Cup' can be copan, cupan or cupa [pl. copannan, cupannan, cupaichean] and 'tea' can be tì or teatha. All terms are mutually intelligible, of course. You can remain dialectally neutral and ask somebody, 'an gabh sibh srùbag?' If they say, 'gabhadh', then you can enquire, 'dè b' fheàrr leibh?' and, if it is tea, they will use either teatha or tì.*

**Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach:** o mhoch gu dubh: *all day long* ['from early to dark'].

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