

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Raibeart Armstrong (1)

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 1,096. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 792 corresponds to Litir 1,096.

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Raibeart Armstrong à Siorrachd Pheairt a chuir faclair Gàidhlig ri chèile ann an ochd ceud deug, fichead 's a còig (1825). Bha athair, air an robh Raibeart mar ainm cuideachd, na mhaighstir-sgoile anns a' Cheannmhor aig ceann an ear Loch Tatha. An dèidh dha sgoil athar fhàgail, chaidh Raibeart don oilthigh, an toiseach ann an Dùn Èideann, agus an uair sin ann an Cill Rìmhinn. Thàinig e a-mach mar sgoilear air leth de Sheann Ghreugais agus Laidinn.

An dèidh dha ceumnachadh, bha Raibeart na oide aig Archibald Butter à Fas Choille, faisg air Baile Chloichridh. Bha e cho measail air Butter 's gun do ghabh e ainm an duin-uasail air fhèin. Bha e aithnichte a-nise mar 'R. A. Armstrong' – *Robert Archibald*. Ann an Gàidhlig, ghabh e 'Raibeart Gilleasbuig Armstrong' air fhèin.

Bha Armstrong a-nise deiseil airson a bhith na mhinistear, agus chaidh e cho fada 's gun do dh'fhoillsich e dà shearmon. Ge-tà, an àite a bhith a' cur a-staigh airson a bhith na mhinistear paraiste, dh'fhalbh e a Lunnainn. Bha e airson sgoil a chur air dòigh, anns am biodh e ag oideachadh mic dhaoin-uaisle.

Bha e a' fuireach an toiseach ann an Chelsea. An dèidh sin, bha e ann an ceàrnaidhean eile dhen chathair-bhaile. Airson còrr is fichead bliadhna, bha e a' ruith an *South Lambeth Grammar School*. Bha Armstrong gu math soirbheachail mar neach-teagaisg agus maighstir-sgoile. 'S iomadh gille a fhuair oideachadh bhuaithe, agus a chaidh air adhart gu dreuchd cudromach.

Fhad 's a bha Raibeart ann an Lunnainn, chuala e gun robh Comunn Gàidhealach na h-Alba – *The Highland Society of Scotland* – am beachd faclair Gàidhlig a chur ri chèile. Bha iad air triùir sgoilearan fhadastadh airson na h-obrach. Uill, bha ar laoch, Raibeart, dhen bheachd gun dèanadh esan faclair a cheart cho math, agus a cheart cho luath, riutha.

Bha e trang leis an obair làitheil aige, agus cha robh cus ùine aige airson faclair a chur ri chèile. Ach, a dh'aindeoin sin, rinn e adhartas math. Ge-tà, nuair a bha e air a dhol cho fada ris an litir 'M', chaidh togalach an fhoillsicheir a losgadh gu làr. B' fheudar do Raibeart an obair aige a thòiseachadh às ùr.

Bha e gu math dìcheallach, agus chaidh am faclair aige fhoillseachadh ann an ochd ceud deug, fichead 's a còig (1825). Agus **ciamar a bha dol don triùir sgoilearan** aig Comunn Gàidhealach na h-Alba? Obh obh ... bha trì bliadhna eile gu bhith ann mus nochdadh am faclair acasan!

Bha fèill air faclair Armstrong, a rèir choltais. Bha e gu math mòr. Bha còrr is mìle duilleag ann. Bha caibideil ann mu ghràmar na Gàidhlig. Agus b' e a' chiad fhaclair Gàidhlig a thug sùil air bunachas fhaclan.

Sgrìobh an *Literary Gazette* gum bu chòir don a h-uile cànanaiche anns an Roinn Eòrpa lethbhreac fhaighinn, oir bha Armstrong air a shùil a thoirt air seachdadh cànan, agus mar sin gun robh an obair aige airidh air moladh mòr. Sgrìobh an *Athenaeum* gun robh e na b' fheàrr na faclair sam bith eile a bhuineadh do na cànanan Ceilteach. Agus chaidh Armstrong ainmeachadh mar am Faclairiche Gàidhlig Rìoghail do **Rìgh Seòras IV** dhan robh an leabhar aige air ainmeachadh. Ach cha robh cùisean buileach rèidh dha, mar a chì sinn an-ath-sheachain.

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Faclan na Litreach: Siorrachd Pheairt: *Perthshire*; Cill Rìmhinn: *St Andrews*; aithnichte: *known, recognised*; Lunnainn: *London*; dìcheallach: *conscientious*; obh obh: *oh dear*; na cànanan Ceilteach: *the Celtic languages*.

Abairtean na Litreach: Bha athair ... na mhaighstir-sgoile anns a' Cheannmhor aig ceann an ear Loch Tatha: *his father ... was a schoolmaster in Kenmore at the eastern end of Loch Tay*; sgoilear air leth de Sheann Ghreugais agus Laidinn: *a fine scholar of Ancient Greek and Latin*; an dèidh dha ceumnachadh, bha Raibeart na oide: *after graduating, Robert was a tutor*; deiseil airson a bhith na mhinistear: *ready to be a minister*; chaidh e cho fada 's gun do dh'fhoillsich e dà shearmon: *he went as far as to publish two sermons*; anns am biodh e ag oideachadh mic dhaoin-uaisle: *in which he would be instructing the sons of gentlemen*; bha e ann an ceàrnaidhean eile dhen chathair-bhaile: *he was in other parts of the city*; soirbheachail mar neach-teagaisg agus maighstir-sgoile: *successful as a teacher and schoolmaster*; chuala e gun robh X am beachd faclair Gàidhlig a chur ri chèile: *he heard that X was intending to put together a Gaelic dictionary*; bha iad air triùir sgoilearan fhadadh airson na h-obrach: *they had hired three scholars for the work*; bha ar laoch dhen bheachd gun dèanadh esan faclair a cheart cho math, agus a cheart cho luath, riutha: *our 'hero' reckoned he could create just as good a dictionary, and just as quick as them*; chaidh togalach an fhoillsicheir a losgadh gu làr: *the publisher's building was burned to the ground*; bha còrr is mìle duilleag ann: *it contained more than a thousand pages*; bha X air a shùil a thoirt air seachdadh cànan: *X had looked at seventy languages*; cha robh cùisean buileach rèidh dha: *things weren't entirely harmonious for him*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: chaidh Armstrong ainmeachadh mar am Faclairiche Gàidhlig Rìoghail do **Rìgh Seòras IV** dhan robh an leabhar aige air ainmeachadh: *Armstrong was named as Gaelic Lexicographer Royal to King George IV to whom they book was dedicated. It is rather the tendency for us today to use the term Deòrsa for royal personages, even though George is more commonly Seòras. Why, then, did I choose Seòras on this occasion? Because Armstrong did! In his dedication, he wrote: 'CHUM A MHORALACHD RIOGHAIL, SEÒRUS IV.'*

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: *ciamar a bha dol don triùir sgoilearan?: how were the three scholars getting on?*

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