

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Raibeart Armstrong (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. This is Litir 1,097. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 793 corresponds to Litir 1,097.

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Raibeart Armstrong a chruthaich faclair Gàidhlig ann an ochd ceud deug, fichead 's a còig (1825). Bha fèill air an fhaclair. Bha rudan aige, ge-tà, a tha a' coimhead annasach an-diugh, gu h-àraidh mar a bha earrann aige air na daoine a nochdas ann an dàin Oisein – co-dhiù na dàin a 'chruthaich' Seumas Bàn, no 'Ossian MacPherson'.

Bha beachd inntinneach aig Armstrong air siostam litreachaidh na Gàidhlig. Bha e a' leantainn an t-siostaim aig dithis sgoilearan. B' iad sin an t-Oll. Urr. Iain Stiùbhart à Lus, a dh'eadar-theangaich an Seann Tiomnadh, agus an t-Oll. Urr. Iain Mac a' Ghobhainn à Ceann Loch Cille Chiarain a sgrìobh sailm.

Ge-tà, bha aon riaghailt litreachaidh a' cur dragh air. B' e sin '**caol ri caol agus leathann ri leathann**'. Bha Armstrong a' cumail a-mach gur e siostam Èireannach a bh' ann, agus gun do ghabh na Gàidheil Albannach ris ro luath. Bha e dhen bheachd gun robh e a' cur am falach nan ceanglaichean eadar faclan Gàidhlig agus feadhainn ann an cànanan eile.

Gu mì-fhortanach dha, nochd faclair Gàidhlig eile dìreach trì bliadhna an dèidh an fhaclair aige fhèin. B' e sin an *Dictionarium Scoto-Celticum* aig Comunn Gàidhealach na h-Alba. 'S iongantach mura rinn sin cron air an uiread de na faclairean aige fhèin a chaidh a reic.

Chaidh dà urram a bhuileachadh air – Faclairiche Gàidhlig Rìoghail don Rìgh agus dotaireachd à Oilthigh Chill Rìmhinn. Ach cha robh tuarastal sam bith co-cheangailte ri fear seach fear dhiubh sin. Chuir Armstrong mòran dhen airgead aige fhèin a-steach don fhaclair, agus chaill e tòrr.

Nuair a leig e dheth a dhreuchd ann an ochd ceud deug, leth-cheud 's a dhà (1852), bha an suidheachadh ionmhais aige cugallach. Bha e pòsta, le triùir nighean. Gu fortanach, bha caraidean aige anns an riaghaltas, agus fhuair e peinnsean poblach luach seasgad not (£60). **Air dha bàs fhaighinn** ann an Surraidh ann an ochd ceud deug, seasgad 's a seachd (1867), fhuair a bhantrach peinnsean luach leth-cheud not (£50) bhon Bhanrigh.

Thòisich mi air an t-sreath seo mu Raibeart Armstrong, le bhith ag innse dhuibh mu alt anns an iris 'An Gàidheal' o chionn faisg air ceud bliadhna. Bha an t-ùghdar ag innse dhuinn gun robh oileanaich ceud bliadhna roimhe air Siorrachd Pheairt ainmeachadh mar an t-àite a b' fheàrr airson na Gàidhlig agus a dualchais. Anns an alt, chaidh Peairteach cliùiteach Gàidhealach eile ainmeachadh – an t-Urr. Alasdair Stiùbhart. Sgrìobh esan an leabhar '*Elements of Gaelic Grammar*'.

Bha fèill air an leabhar sin aig an àm. Tha lethbreac dhen dàrna eagraan agam fhìn, a nochd ann an clò ann an ochd ceud deug 's a dhà-dheug (1812). Ach nochd ceathramh eagraan dheth ann an ochd ceud deug, ochdad 's a sia (1886).

Cò bh' ann an Alasdair Stiùbhart? Rugadh e sa mhansa ann am Blàr Athall ann an seachd ceud deug, seasgad 's a ceithir (1764). Bha athair cliùiteach airson cho math 's a bha a' Ghàidhlig aige. Bha e fìor mhath mar shearmonaiche. Chaochail e ann an seachd ceud deug is ochdad (1780).

Tha e coltach nach deach Alasdair a sgoil. Fhuair e a chuid foghlaim aig an taigh, agus aig uncail dha. Ach abair gun robh comas inntinn aige. Cluinnidh sibh tuilleadh mu dheidhinn an-ath-sheachdain.

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Faclan na Litreach: riaghailt litreachaidh: *spelling rule*; Faclairiche Gàidhlig Rìoghail: *Gaelic Lexicographer Royal*; a bhantrach: *his widow*; lethbreac: *copy*; eagraan: *edition*.

Abairtean na Litreach: Bha fèill air an fhaclair: *the dictionary was well received*; a tha a' coimhead rudeigin annasach an-diugh: *that look a bit strange today*; mar a bha earrann aige air na daoine a nochdas ann an dàin Oisein: *that he had a section on the characters that appear in the poems of Oisean (Ossian)*; a' leantainn an t-siostaim aig dithis sgoilearan: *following the system of two scholars*; an t-Oll. Urr. Iain Stiùbhart à Lus, a dh'eadar-theangaich an Seann Tiomnadh: *the Rev. Dr. John Stewart of Luss, who translated the Old Testament*; an t-Oll. Urr. Iain Mac a' Ghobhainn à Ceann Loch Cille Chiarain a sgrìobh sailm: *the Rev. Dr. John Smith of Campbeltown who wrote psalms*; 's iongantach mura rinn sin cron air: *that probably damaged, lessened*; an uiread de na faclairean aige fhèin a chaidh a reic: *the number of his own dictionaries that were sold*; chaidh dà urram a bhuileachadh air: *two marks of esteem were bestowed upon him*; dotaireachd à Oilthigh Chill Rìmhinn: *a doctorate from the University of St Andrews*; cha robh tuarastal sam bith co-cheangailte ri fear seach fear dhiubh sin: *there was no income whatsoever connected to either of those*; bha an suidheachadh ionmhais aige cugallach: *his financial circumstances were poor*; pòsta, le trìuir nighean: *married, with three daughters*; fhuair e peinnsean poblach: *he got a civil list pension*; chaidh Peairteach cliùiteach Gàidhealach eile ainmeachadh: *another renowned Gaelic speaking Perthshire man was named*; rugadh e sa mhansa ann am Blàr Athall: *he was born in the manse in Blair Atholl*; fìor mhath mar shearmonaiche: *excellent as a preacher*; abair gun robh comas inntinn aige: *by gosh, he had a sharp mind*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: **caol ri caol agus leathann ri leathann:** *slender to slender and broad to broad*. This is a basic Gaelic spelling rule which is often known today as leathann ri leathann is caol ri caol; it is usually referred to by its Gaelic name, even when speaking English. It means that, on either side of a consonant or consonant group, both vowels should be either broad (a, o, u) or slender (e, i). Armstrong was not a massive fan. He wrote, '... we ought to write deanaibh, not deanibh ... This mode of spelling is a modern invention ... introduced by the Irish, and adopted by the Gael, with ... more precipitation than propriety.' Despite his misgivings, Armstrong adhered to the rule!

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: Air dha bàs fhaighinn ann an Surreidh: *after he died in Surrey*.

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