

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

M.E.M. Donaldson (1)

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: 2:55pm on Sunday as part of BBC Radio nan Gàidheal's hour-long learning zone, following the Gaelic Learners' programme 'SpeakGaelic Extra', with a repeat at 10.30 pm on Wednesday. This is Litir 1,292. There is also a simpler version – An Litir Bheag – which is broadcast at 2:30pm each Sunday. Litir Bheag 988 corresponds to Litir 1,292. The Litir is also available at www.bbc.co.uk/litir and www.learnghaelic.scot/litir. Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learnghaelic.scot.

Anns an Litir mu dheireadh, bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Loch nan Dùbhrachan ann an Slèite san Eilean Sgitheanach. Sgrìobh M.E.M. Donaldson mu dheidhinn anns an leabhar aice *'Wanderings in the Western Highlands and Islands'*. Bha Donaldson na h-ùghdar agus bha i ainmeil airson dealbhan a thogail le camara.

Bha, agus tha, daoine eòlach oirre mar M.E.M. Donaldson, ged as e an t-ainm slàn a bh' oirre – Mary Ethel Muir Donaldson. Chuir i seachad mòran tìde air Gàidhealtachd na h-Alba, ach rugadh i ann an ceann a deas Shasainn. Bha a h-athair na Albannach a bh' air a bhith a' fuireach ann an Astràilia. Bha an teaghlach an sàs ann an luingeas agus bha airgead gu leòr aca.

Rugadh M.E.M. – no 'Mem' mar a ghabh feadhainn oirre – ann an Surrey ann an ochd ceud deug, seachdad 's a sia (1876). Tràth anns an fhicheadamh linn, ghluais i gu tuath cuide ris a' bhana-chompanach aice, an tè-ealain, Iseabail Bonus. Chòrd a' Ghàidhealtachd riutha. Thog iad taigh ann an Àird nam Murchan agus thòisich Mem air dealbhan a thogail le camara.

Tha mi an dùil gu bheil sibh eòlach air dà dhealbh ainmeil a thog Mem Donaldson. Ann am fear dhiubh, tha croitear ann an Eilean Eige. Tha e na shuidhe le tairisgeir thairis air a ghlùinean. **Tha piseag air a ghlùn dheis** agus tha cù na chois air an taobh eile. 'S e an t-ainm a bh' air an duine Lachlann MacAsgaill.

Tha an dealbh eile eadhon nas ainmeile, **saoidh mi**. 'S e an t-ainm a th' air *'Girl with Firewood, Morar 1910'*. Anns an dealbh tha nighean aois dusan bliadhna le ultach-droma de bhiorain-teine. Tha i air rathad oighreachd ri taobh loch ann am Mòrar. 'S e an t-ainm a bh' air an nighinn Cairistiona NicMharais. Chaochail i anns na h-ochdadan agus bha còrr is fichead ogha aice.

Anns na dealbhan aice, bha Mem Donaldson ag innse dhuinn mun Ghàidhealtachd mar a bha i aig an àm ud. Agus gu sònraichte mu na Gàidheil a bhuineadh don dùthaich. Chleachd i na dealbhan aice anns na leabhraichean a sgrìobh i.

An-diugh, tha na dealbhan aice air an stòradh ann an dà àite. Tha feadhainn ann an Taigh-tasgaidh Nàiseanta na h-Alba. Agus tha cruinneachadh mòr – còrr is mìle dealbh – ann an Taigh-tasgaidh Inbhir Nis. Ma tha ùidh agaibh anns na dealbhan aice, tha feadhainn ri am faicinn air làrach-lìn 'Am Baile'.

Tha gu leòr de na dealbhan (a tha uile dubh-is-geal) a' sealltainn seallaidhean agus bòidhchead na Gàidhealtachd. Ach tha dealbhan ann de dhaoine agus an taighean – taighean-tughaidh nam measg. Tha seann bhàtaichean is seann chairtean ann, seann chladhan agus Caisteal Eilean Donain mus robh e air a chàradh. Is toigh leam na dealbhan a thog i de na clachairean a bha a' togail an taigh aice. Tha i a' sealltainn mar a bha iad a' sgoltadh nan clach agus gan càrnadh air a chèile airson na ballachan a thogail.

Anns an leabhar aice '*Wanderings in the Western Highlands and Islands*', tha dealbh aig Mem Donaldson de neach-iùil nam beann a bha gu math ainmeil ri a linn. Bidh tuilleadh agam airsan agus air an leabhar sin anns an ath Litir.

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Faclan na Litreach: Àird nam Murchan: *Ardnamurchan*; Eilean Eige: *the Isle of Eigg*; Lachlann MacAsgaill: *Lachlan MacAskill*; Mòrar: *Morar*; Cairistìona NicMharais: *Christina MacVarish*; Taigh-tasgaidh Nàiseanta na h-Alba: *The National Museum of Scotland*; làrach-lìn: *website*; taighean-tughaidh: *thatched houses*; neach-iùil nam beann: *mountain guide*.

Abairtean na Litreach: Bha X na h-ùghdar; *X was an author*; bha i ainmeil airson dealbhan a thogail le camara: *she was famous for her photography*; ged as e an t-ainm slàn a bh' oirre: *although her full name was*; bha an teaghlach an sàs ann an luingeas: *the family was involved in shipping*; mar a ghabh feadhainn oirre: *as some people called her*; cuide ris a' bhana-chompanach aice, an tè-ealain, Iseabail Bonus: *along with her companion, the artist, Isobel Bonus*; chòrd a' Ghàidhealtachd riutha: *they enjoyed the Highlands*; na shuidhe le tairisgeir thairis air a ghlùinean: *sitting with a peat-cutting iron across his knees*; tha piseag air a ghlùn dheis: *there is a kitten on his right knee*; tha cù na chois air an taobh eile: *a dog is next to him on the other side*; nighean aois dusan bliadhna le ultach-droma de bhiorain-teine: *a girl of twelve years of age with a load of kindling on her back*; Caisteal Eilean Donain mus robh e air a chàradh: *Eilean Donan Castle before it was repaired*; o fhad is farsaing: *from far and wide*; mar a bha iad a' sgoltadh nan clach agus gan càrnadh air a chèile: *how they were splitting the stones and putting them on top of each other*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: **Tha piseag air a ghlùn dheis:** *there is a kitten on his right knee*. Glùn is a feminine noun so in the dative singular, with the article, it traditionally slenderises. Thus we get air a' ghlùn 'on the knee'. The definite article is here replaced by the third person singular masculine possessive article so we get air a ghlùn 'on his knee' without the apostrophe. Air a glùn would be 'on her knee' (without the lenition). The adjective deas 'right' follows the noun in being lenited and slenderised – thus we get air a ghlùn dheis 'on his right knee'.

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: Tha an dealbh eile eadhon nas ainmeile, **saoidh mi:** *the other photograph is even more famous, I reckon.*

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