

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Josephine Tey

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 1,329. There is also a simpler version – An Litir Bheag – which is broadcast at 2:30pm each Sunday. Litir Bheag 1,025 corresponds to Litir 1,329. The Litir is also available at www.bbc.co.uk/litir and www.learnghaelic.scot/litir. Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learnghaelic.scot.

Bha Josephine Tey am measg nan sgrìobhadairean a b' ainmeile a thogadh air a' Ghàidhealtachd. Bha i na nobhailiche agus bha i ainmeil air feadh na Rìoghachd Aonaichte. Rugadh i ann an Inbhir Nis ann an ochd ceud deug, naochad 's a sia (1896).

Sgrìobh Josephine ann am Beurla. Cha robh Gàidhlig aice. Cha robh i a' **taobhadh ris** a' Ghàidhlig, a rèir choltais. Bha sin a dh'aindeoin 's gun robh Gàidhlig aig a h-athair mar chiad chànan.

Cha robh ann an 'Josephine Tey' ach ainm-pinn. 'S e an t-ainm ceart a bh' oirre – Ealasaid Nic an Tòisich. Bha a caraidean eòlach oirre mar *Beth MacKintosh*. Thàinig an t-ainm 'Josephine' bho a màthair. Bhuineadh ise do dh'Inbhir Nis, ged a bha cuid de a sinnsirean à Sasainn. Chaochail i nuair a bha i car òg.

Thogadh athair Ealasaid, Cailean Mac an Tòisich, faisg air Sìldeag ann an Ros an Iar. Bha na daoine aige nan croitearan ann am bailtean beaga a **tha fàs an-diugh**. Bha an suidheachadh eaconamach ann an Sìldeag truagh. Ghluais teaghlach Chailein a dh'Inbhir Nis. Dh'fhosgail iad bùth a bha a' reic glasaich, measan agus flùraichean. Tro thìde, 's e Cailean a bhiodh a' ruith na bùtha. Bha i air Sràid a' Chaisteil.

Dh'fhàg Ealasaid Inbhir Nis airson a dhol gu *Physical Training College* ann am meadhan Shasainn. Bha i cuideachd a' fuireach greis anns a' cheann a deas. Ghabh i gràdh mòr air Sasainn.

Bha i a' teagasg greis ann an Àrd-sgoil an Òbain. Bha an sgoil gu math Gàidhealach, ach tha e coltach nach do chòrd sin ri Ealasaid. Thill i a dh'Inbhir Nis, far an robh i a' cumail an taighe airson a h-athar. Bha esan na bhantrach. Ghabh i an cothrom a bhith a' sgrìobhadh – bàrdachd, sgeulachdan goirid agus nobhailean. Bha i a' sgrìobhadh fon ainm-pinn 'Gordon Daviot'. Bha i gu math measail air Daviot, no Deimhidh, taobh a-muigh Inbhir Nis.

Bha i airson dealbh-chluich a sgrìobhadh a bhiodh a' nochdadh air an àrd-ùrlar ann an taobh an iar Lunnainn. Tràth anns na tritheadan, bha i air leth soirbheachail, gu h-àraidh le trì dealbh-chluichean – *The Laughing Woman*, *Queen of Scots* agus, gu sònraichte *Richard of Bordeaux*. Choisinn John Gielgud cliù dha fhèin anns an fhear mu dheireadh sin. B' esan am prìomh chleasaiche ann. Bhiodh e fhèin agus Ealasaid nan deagh charaidean fad beatha Ealasaid.

An dèidh a' Chogaidh, cha robh dealbh-chluichean cho mòr air aire dhaoine 's a bha roimhe. Rinn Ealasaid ath-chruthachadh oirre fhèin mar sgrìobhadair nobhailean

eucorach agus dìomhaireachd. Ghabh i ‘Josephine Tey’ oirre fhèin. Tha cuid dhen bheachd gun robh i am measg nan sgrìobhadairean a b’ fheàrr a bh’ ann riamh de a leithid de nobhail. B’ e an nobhail a b’ ainmeile aice ‘*The Daughter of Time*’.

Bha Ealasaid car priobhaideach. Cha deach i an sàs gu mòr ann am beatha Inbhir Nis. Bha, mar gum biodh, dà bheatha aice – an tè aig an taigh agus tè eile ann an Lunnainn am measg a caraidean anns a’ *West End*.

Chaochail i le aillse ann an taigh a peathar ann an Sasainn ann an naoi ceud deug, caogad ’s a dhà (1952). Cha robh fios aig mòran de a caraidean gun robh i eadhon tinn.

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Faclan na Litreach: ainm-pinn: *nom de plume, pen-name*; Ealasaid Nic an Tòisich: *Elizabeth MacKintosh*; ainm-baistidh: *given (first) name*; car òg: *somewhat young*; Sìldeag: *Shieldaig*; Sràid a’ Chaisteil: *Castle Street*; Àrd-sgoil an Òbain: *Oban High School*; aillse: *cancer*.

Abairtean na Litreach: Bha i na nobhailiche: *she was a novelist*; a dh’aindeoin ’s gun robh Gàidhlig aig a h-athair mar chiad chànan: *despite her father having Gaelic as a first language*; ged a bha cuid de a sinnsirean à Sasainn: *although some of her forebears were from England*; ghluais teaghlach Chailein a dh’Inbhir Nis: *Colin’s family moved to Inverness*; bùth a bha a’ reic glasraich, measan agus flùraichean: *a shop that was selling vegetables, fruit and flowers*; a’ fuireach greis anns a’ cheann a deas: *living for a while in the south*; ghabh i gràdh mòr air Sasainn: *she developed a great love for England*; nach do chòrd sin ri Ealasaid: *that Beth didn’t enjoy that*; a’ cumail an taighe airson a h-athar: *keeping house for her father*; a bhiodh a’ nochdadh air an àrd-ùrlar ann an taobh an iar Lunnainn: *that would appear on stage in the West End*; b’ esan am prìomh chleasaiche ann: *he was the leading actor in it*; cha robh dealbh-chluichean cho mòr air aire dhaoine ’s a bha roimhe: *plays were not so much under people’s attention as they had been*; sgrìobhadair nobhailean eucorach agus dìomhaireachd: *a writer of crime and mystery novels*; cha deach i an sàs gu mòr ann am beatha Inbhir Nis: *she didn’t get heavily involved in the life of Inverness* cha robh fios aig mòran de a caraidean gun robh i eadhon tinn: *many of her friends didn’t even know she was ill*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: bailtean beaga a tha fàs an-diugh: *villages that are uninhabited today. You would have to listen very carefully to such a statement to make sure you didn’t misunderstand*; bailtean beaga a tha a’ fàs would mean ‘villages that are growing’ with virtually the opposite meaning to the phrase that does not contain the verbal particle. The two versions of fàs come from different roots. The adjective meaning ‘empty, unoccupied’ shares a common root with English ‘waste’ and is related to the noun fàsach ‘desert, wilderness’. The verbal noun shares a root with English wax (as waxing or growth of the moon) and means ‘growing, increasing, developing’.

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: Cha robh i a’ taobhadh ris a’ Ghàidhlig: *she wasn’t favourable towards Gaelic*.

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