

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Iain MacMhathain à Sildeag (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 1,343. There is also a simpler version – An Litir Bheag – which is broadcast at 2:30pm each Sunday. Litir Bheag 1,039 corresponds to Litir 1,343. The Litir is also available at www.bbc.co.uk/litir and www.learn Gaelic.scot/litir. Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learn Gaelic.scot.

An cuala sibh riamh mu *Operation Tabarin*? B' e sin ainm-còd airson pròiseact diomhair anns an Dàrna Cogadh. Chuir Breatainn sgioba don Antartaig. Cha robh iad armaichte. Bha iad ann airson agairt Bhreatainn air tìrean ann an ceann a deas a' Chuain Siar a neartachadh – gu sònraichte Na h-Eileanan Fàclannach agus na h-eileanan beaga a bha ceangailte riutha, **ann an sealladh Bhreatainn, co-dhiù.**

Nise, chan eil mi cinnteach a bheil mi ga fhuaimneachadh dòigheil. *Operation Tabarin* no *Operation Tabarin*? T-A-B-A-R-I-N. Thàinig an t-ainm bho *Bal Tabarin* – club-oidhche ainmeil ann am Paris. Mar sin, tha mi a' dol a chleachdadh an fhuaimneachaidh Fhrangaich.

Carson a tha mi ag innse dhuibh mu *Operation Tabarin*? Tha, a chionn 's gun robh Gàidheal mar phàirt dheth. B' esan Iain MacMhathain. Bhuineadh e do Shildeag ann an Ros an Iar. Dh'ionnsaich mi mu dheidhinn bhon leabhar '*John Matheson: Antarctic Seafarer*' le Iain MacIllInein, a bhuineas do Shildeag.

Ann an naoi ceud deug, ceathrad 's a trì (1943), chuir riaghaltas Bhreatainn plana air dòigh airson feadhainn a chur don Antartaig. Bha iad airson ionadan-rannsachaidh a chur air dòigh anns am biodh daoine a' fuireach **fad an t-siubhail**. Bha dragh ann nach robh Argentina no Chile a' gabhail ris gur ann le Breatainn a bha na tìrean Fàclannach.

A bharrachd air sin, bha cogadh a' dol. Bha dragh air riaghaltas Bhreatainn gum biodh cuid de dhùthchannan a' feuchainn ri pàirtean dhen Antartaig a ghabhail dhaibh fhèin an dèidh a' chogaidh. Le bhith a' cur sgioba do na h-àiteachan sin, bha Breatainn an dùil stad a chur air càil dhen t-seòrsa.

Bha a h-uile rud mu *Operation Tabarin* diomhair. Dh'fhàg iad Breatainn as t-Samhain naoi ceud deug, ceathrad 's a trì (1943). Chaidh iad an toiseach gu *Port Stanley* anns na h-Eileanan Fàclannach. Lean iad orra an uair sin gu *Deception Island* a th' anns na h-Eileanan Sealtainneach a Deas.

Dh'fhàg iad còignear air an eilean sin. Bha iad gu bhith ann airson mìosan – gu dearbh, fad geamhradh a' chinn a deas. Bha Iain MacMhathain – a bha aithnichte do luchd na Beurla mar 'Jock Matheson' – am measg na feadhna sin. B' esan an aon duine dhen chòignear a bh' air a bhith anns an Antartaig roimhe – agus innsidh mi dhuibh beagan mu dheidhinn eachdraidh mar mharaiche anns an ath Litir.

Bha *Deception Island* air leth math mar acarsaid. 'S e caldara a th' ann – seann bholcàno. Tha e ann an cumadh cearcaill. Aig aon cheann dheth, tha caolas beag ann a leigeas le soithichean-mara faighinn a-steach. Ach a-mhàin sin, tha an acarsaid air a cuairteachadh le talamh an eilein. 'S e àite air leth fàbharach a th' ann do mharaichean. Ach tha aon duilgheadas ann – tha a' bholcàno fhathast beò agus bidh i a' spreadhadh bho àm gu àm!

Rinn an còignear an dachaigh ann an seann togalach a bha le sealgairean mhucan-mara. Lean càch orra gu ruige *Port Lockroy* air *Wiencke Island*. Tha sin air Leth-eilean na h-Antartaig. Innsidh mi dhuibh mar a chaidh dhaibh agus na thàinig à *Operation Tabarin* an-ath-sheachdain.

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Faclan na Litreach: ainm-còd: *code-name*; Na h-Eileanan Fàclannach: *The Falkland Islands*; club-oidhche: *nightclub*; Iain MacMhathain: *John ('Jock') Matheson*; còignear: *five people*; caldara: *caldera*; caolas: *narrow channel*; Leth-eilean na h-Antartaig: *The Antarctic Peninsula*.

Abairtean na Litreach: pròiseact diomhair anns an Dàrna Cogadh: *a secret project during the Second [World] War*; chuir Breatainn sgioba don Antartaig: *Britain sent a team to Antarctica*; airson agairt Bhreatainn air tìrean ann an ceann a deas a' Chuain Siar a neartachadh: *to strengthen Britain's claim on lands in the South Atlantic*; a bheil mi ga fhuaimneachadh dòigheil: *am I pronouncing it correctly*; a bhuineas do Shildeag: *who belongs to Shildaig*; làn fiosrachaidh a bha ùr dhòmhsa: *full of information that was new to me*; a' gabhail ris gur ann le Breatainn a bha na tìrean Fàclannach: *accepting that Britain possessed the Falkland Islands dependencies*; bha Breatainn an dùil stad a chur air càil dhen t-seòrsa: *Britain wanted to stop anything of the like*; bha iad gu sònraichte airson 's nach biodh an nàimhdean a' togail càil ann: *they were particularly keen that their enemies would not build anything there*; fad geamhradh a' chinn a deas: *through the southern winter*; a bha aithnichte do luchd na Beurla mar: *who was known to English-speakers as*; am measg na feadhna sin: *among those*; mu dheidhinn eachdraidh mar mharaiche: *about his history as a mariner*; air leth math mar acarsaid: *really good as an anchorage*; ann an cumadh cearcaill: *in the shape of a circle*; ach a-mhàin sin, tha an acarsaid air a cuairteachadh le talamh an eilein: *apart from that, the anchorage is surrounded by the island's land-mass*; bidh i a' spreadhadh bho àm gu àm: *it erupts from time to time*; seann togalach a bha le sealgairean mhucan-mara: *an old building that had been owned by whalers*; lean càch orra gu ruige X: *the others continued to X*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: ann an sealladh Bhreatainn, co-dhiù: *in the view of Britain, at least*. You will probably be aware that countries are generally grammatically feminine so one might expect the genitive form of Breata(i)nn 'Britain' to be (na) Breatainn(e). However, where country names exist without the article, they generally take on a masculine guise in the genitive form by being lenited. Thus we have Riaghaltas Bhreatainn 'the British Government'; muinntir Shasainn 'the people of England'; muinntir Shìona(idh) 'the people of China'. Note, however, that Brittany is A' Bhreatainn Bheag, which includes the article; thus it retains its feminine guise in the genitive case, as in muinntir na Breatainne Bige 'the people of Brittany'.

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: anns am biodh daoine a' fuireach fad an t-siubhail: *in which people would live permanently/all the time*.

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