

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Iain MacMhathain à Sildeag (2)

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 1,344. There is also a simpler version – An Litir Bheag – which is broadcast at 2:30pm each Sunday. Litir Bheag 1,040 corresponds to Litir 1,344. 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 mi ag innse dhuibh mu *Operation Tabarin* agus Iain MacMhathain. Bhuineadh Iain do bhaile beag croitearachd ris an canar Bad Callda faisg air Sildeag ann an Ros an Iar.

Nuair a dh'fhàg e an sgoil, chaidh e a dh'obair mar iasgair agus maraiche. Bha e aig muir anns a' Chiad Chogadh. Airson greis bha e air bòrd an HMS Hyderabad. 'S e *Q-ship* a bh' innte.

Bha na *Q-ships* a' coimhead coltach ri longan-carago ach bha iad làn ghunnaichean is armachd fhalaichte. Nuair a thigeadh bàt'-aiginn Gearmailteach an-àirde airson ionnsaigh a thoirt oirre, bhiodh na gunnaichean aice a' nochdadh agus bhiodh i a' toirt ionnsaigh air a' bhàt'-aiginn. 'S e a-mhàin fìor dheagh mharaichean a fhuair obair air bòrd *Q-ship*.

Anns na ficheadan, bha Iain ag obair mar mharaiche don *Hudson Bay Company* ann an Canada. Aig deireadh nam ficheadan fhuair e obair air bòrd an *Discovery* – long ainmeil a bh' air a cleachdadh le Scott agus Shackleton anns an Antartaig. Tha an *Discovery* a-nise air ais **far an deach a togail** – ann an Dun Dè.

Ghiùlain an *Discovery* luchd-rannsachaidh bho Bhreatainn, Astràilia agus Sealann Nuadh don Antartaig. Bha iad fo cheannas an Astràilianaich, Sir Dùghlas Mawson. 'S iongantach mura robh cothrom aig Iain Gàidhlig a bhruidhinn nuair a bha e air bòrd. Bha a' Chiad Oifigear, Coinneach MacCoinnich, à Tiriodh agus bha Gàidhlig aige. Fhuair Coinneach àrdachadh dreuchd. Air an dàrna turas aig a' *Discovery*, bha e na sgiobair oirre.

Thairis air an dà thuras, shiubhail an *Discovery* fichead mìle mìle thar a' chuain. Rinn an luchd-saidheans air bòrd obair mhòr shaidheansail. Bha Iain MacMhathain sgileil mar mharaiche ach bha e gu sònraichte ainmeil airson siùil a chàradh agus a dhèanamh. Dhèanadh e rud sam bith le canabhas agus snàthad mhòr.

Ma tha sibh airson tuilleadh fhaighinn a-mach mu eachdraidh Iain, mholainn dhuibh an leabhar '*John Matheson – Antarctic Seafarer*' le Iain MacIllInnein. Ach bu toigh leam an Litir a chrìochnachadh le bhith a' tilleadh gu *Operation Tabarin*. Chuir Iain agus ceathrar eile seachad geamhradh fada air *Deception Island*. Aon latha bha Iain agus fear-saidheans a bhuineadh do dh'Arcaibh – Bill Flett – air leathad cas, sneachdach. Thuit Flett agus thòisich e air sleamhnadh aig astar, **an comhair a chinn**,

a dh'ionnsaigh chreagan aig bonn an leathaid. Leum Iain air agus ghabh e grèim air ceann an fhir eile, ga shàbhaladh bho na creagan.

An dèidh bliadhna, ghluais a' bhuidheann gu Hope Bay air Leth-eilean na h-Antartaig. Nuair a bha iad an sin, rinn Iain na ficheadan de bhrògan canabhais airson nan con aca. Agus rinn e bàta de chanabhas a ghabhadh togail le slaod mar frèam. Bhiodh sin air a thoirt le daoine nuair a bha iad air tursan-rannsachaidh. Nam biodh an deigh-mhara a' briseadh fhad 's a bha daoine oirre, bhiodh deagh chothrom aig an sgioba faighinn gu sàbhailteachd.

Thàinig *Operation Tabarin* gu ceann ann an naoi ceud deug, ceathrad 's a sia (1946). Bha e na bhunait don *British Antarctic Survey* – buidheann le còig ceud duine ag obair dhaibh an-diugh, agus trì ionadan-rannsachaidh aca anns an Antartaig.

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Faclan na Litreach: Iain MacMhathain: *John ('Jock') Matheson*; Sildeag: *Shieldaig*; Dùn Dè: *Dundee*; Leth-eilean na h-Antartaig: *The Antarctic Peninsula*; Iain MacIllInnein: *Iain MacLennan*; sàbhailteachd: *safety*.

Abairtean na Litreach: coltach ri longan-carago: *looking like cargo ships*; làn ghunnaichean is armachd fhalaichte: *full of guns and hidden armaments*; nuair a thigeadh bàt'-aiginn Gearmailteach an-àirde airson ionnsaigh a thoirt oirre: *when a German submarine surfaced to attack her*; 's iongantach mura robh cothrom aig Iain Gàidhlig a bhruidhinn nuair a bha e air bòrd: *I would imagine that John had an opportunity to speak Gaelic when he was on board*; bha a' Chiad Oifigear, Coinneach MacCoinnich, à Tiriodh: *the First Officer, Kenneth MacKenzie, was from Tiree*; air an dàrna turas, bha e na sgiobair oirre: *on the second voyage, he was her skipper*; ainmeil airson siùil a chàradh agus a dhèanamh: *well-known for repairing and making sails*; dhèanadh e rud sam bith le canabhas agus snàthad mhòr: *he would ['could'] do anything with canvas and a big needle*; fear-saidheans a bhuineadh do dh'Arcaibh: *a scientist who belonged to Orkney*; thòisich e air sleamhnadh aig astar: *he began to slide at speed*; a dh'ionnsaigh chreagan aig bonn an leathaid: *towards rocks at the base of the slope*; na ficheadan de bhrògan canabhais airson nan con aca: *twenties ['dozens'] of canvas shoes for their dogs*; bàta de chanabhas a ghabhadh togail le slaod mar frèam: *a canvas boat that could be constructed using a sled as a frame*; nam biodh an deigh-mhara a' briseadh: *if the sea-ice were breaking*; bha e na bhunait do X: *it was the basis of X*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: air ais far an deach a togail: *back where she was built*. With far we use the interrogative form of the verb e.g. far an robh mi a-raoir 'where I was last night' rather than far a bha mi a-raoir. Far am bi mi fhìn, 's ann a bhios mo dhòchas 'where I will be, [that's] where my hope is' (a well-known Gaelic song). Also, note a togail because a ship is conceptually feminine and we are saying 'where she was built', employing the feminine third person singular possessive pronoun which does not lenite the verb noun togail. For 'that's where I was raised', I might say sin far an deach mo thogail. The first person singular possessive pronoun mo causes lenition of togail.

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: an comhair a chinn: *head first*.

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