

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

*A special programme, in the form of a “letter”, written and compiled by Roddy Maclean, and specifically aimed at 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, Roddy can be contacted at rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk * This is Litir 339. Note that Roddy also broadcasts a simplified version – An Litir Bheag – on Monday evenings at 7.00 pm. This is also available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 35 corresponds to Litir 339.*

Eadar Melbourne agus na raointean òir ann am Ballarat agus Bendigo, bha na rathaidean cunnartach. Bhiodh mèirlich a’ feitheamh aig oir nan rathaidean. Nuair a bhiodh òr aig mènneadair, bhiodh e a’ reic sin do dh’oifis air an raon. Gheibheadh e cuidhteas – ’s e sin bileag a bha ag ainmeachadh luach an òir. Bheireadh am mènneadair an cuidhteas gu Roinn an Ionmhais ann am Melbourne, far am faigheadh e airgead air a shon.

Ach dh’fhaodadh duine sam bith an t-airgead fhaighinn nan robh cuidhteas òir aige. Agus ’s e goid nam bileagan a bha fa-near do na mèirlich. Uaireannan bhiodh iad a’ murt a’ mhènneadair airson am pìos pàipeir luachmhor fhaighinn.

Turas a bha seo, bha an t-Urr Tormod MacLeòid air an rathad eadar Melbourne agus na raointean òir. Thachair e ri buidheann de mhèirlich. Ach cha robh cuidhteas òir aige. Is cha robh airgead aige. Bha esan ann mar mhinistear, a’ cumail cheanglaichean beò eadar na daoine aige a bha a-nise gu math sgapte.

Thuig na mèirlich gu robh e bochd, is cha do rinn iad cron air. Gu dearbh, thug iad cuireadh dha thighinn air ais don champa aca airson na h-oidhche. **Ghabh e ris a’ chuireadh** oir bha cothrom aige facal an Tighearna a sgaoileadh am measg nam mèirleach. Fad uairean a thìde, thug e trod dhaibh mun dòigh-bheatha olc aca. Is iongantach mura robh iad gu math toilichte soraidh a leigeil leis sa mhadainn!

’S e fear treun a bh’ ann an Tormod. Ach bha dòrainn a’ feitheamh ris. Bha a theaghlach fhathast a’ fuireach ann am Baile nan Teantaichean. Bha an t-uisge aca salach agus **bhris am fiabhras breac a-mach**. Taobh a-staigh sia seachdainean, bha an triùir mhac as òige aig Tormod marbh. ’S e buille chruaidh a bh’ ann agus is beag an t-iongnadh gun do cho-dhùin Tormod is càch Astràilia fhàgail.

Bha iad air aithrisean a chluinntinn mu New Zealand. Bha talamh math ann – freagarrach airson àiteachas. Agus cha robh òr ann. Cha bhiodh olc ann mar a chunnaic iad ann an Astràilia, co-cheangailte ri gnìomhachas an òir. Sgrìobh Tormod gu Riaghladair na dùthcha, Sir Seòras Grey. Bhrosnaich esan iad a dhol ann.

Cha robh an soitheach am *Margaret* aca tuilleadh. Ach bha an *Highland Lass* ann. Chaidh an *Highland Lass* a reic agus chaidh soitheach eile a cheannach – an *Gazelle*. As t-Sultain, ochd ceud deug, leth-cheud ’s a trì (1853), sheòl an *Gazelle* à Adelaide le còrr is ceud duine air bòrd – daoine à Ceap Breatainn a bh’ air a bhith ann an Astràilia a Deas. Dh’fheumadh Tormod agus muinntir Bhictoria feitheamh gus an tilleadh i.

Chaidh an *Gazelle* a dh’Auckland. Nuair a bha i gu tuath air a’ bhaile, chunnaic na daoine air bòrd àite a bha air leth math air tìr. Bha iad ag iarraidh fearann fhaighinn ann. Cha b’ e sin beachd Shir Sheòrais Grey, ge-tà. Mhol esan fearann na b’ fhaide deas anns an Eilean mu Thuath, no anns an Eilean mu Dheas far nach robh na Maori cho pailt.

Ach cha robh na h-Albannaich air a shon. Chaidh buidheann dhiubh gu tuath airson an cladach a rannsachadh. Lorg iad fearann math ri taobh Abhainn Waipu. Rinn iad tagradh airson an fhearainn, agus chaidh sanas a chur anns a' phàipear-naidheachd. Ach goirid às dèidh sin, nochd sanas eile sa phàipear bho fhear, Seumas Busby. “S ann leamsa a tha am fearann sin,” thuirt e, “agus cha bu chòir do dhuine sam bith eile gnothach sam bith a ghabhail ris, às aonais cead bhuamsa.”

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Faclan na Litreach: raointean òir: *goldfields*; mèinneadair: *miner*; cuidhteas: *receipt*; Roinn an Ionmhais: *Department of the Treasury*; sgapte: *scattered*; Baile nan Teantaichean: “*Canvastown*”; pailt: *numerous*.

Abairtean na Litreach: bhiodh mèirlich a' feitheamh aig oir nan rathaidean: *robbers [bushrangers] would wait at the sides of the roads*; bhiodh e a' reic sin do dh'oifis air an raon: *he would sell that to an office on the field*; luach an òir: *the value of the gold*; 's e goid nam bileagan a bha fa-near do X: *X were intent on stealing the pieces of paper*; a' cumail cheanglaichean beò eadar na daoine aige: *keeping the links between his people alive*; cha do rinn iad cron air: *Donald they didn't harm him*; bha cothrom aige facal an Tighearna a sgaoileadh: *he had an opportunity to spread the word of the Lord*; thug e trod dhaibh: *he scolded them*; is iongantach mura robh iad toilichte: *I reckon they were pleased*; soraidh a leigeil leis: *to farewell him*; bha dòrainn a' feitheamh ris: *tragedy was awaiting him*; bha an triùir mhac as òige aig Tormod marbh: *Norman's three youngest sons were dead*; is beag an t-iongnadh: *it's hardly surprising*; co-cheangailte ri gnìomhachas an òir: *connected to the gold industry*; bhrosnaich esan iad a dhol ann: *he encouraged them to go there*; cha robh X aca tuilleadh: *they no longer had X*; dh'fheumadh X feitheamh gus an tilleadh i: *X would have to wait until she returned*; na b' fhaide deas: *further south*; lorg iad fearann math: *they found good land*; rinn iad tagradh: *they made an application*; 's ann leamsa a tha am fearann sin: *that land belongs to me*; cha bu chòir do dhuine sam bith gnothach a ghabhail ris: *nobody should interfere with it*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: **bhris am fiabhras breac a-mach:** *typhoid fever broke out. The idiom here might seem to be English in form, but it is widely established in Gaelic. There are a couple of things worth noting about names of diseases in Gaelic. The words fiabhras, galar and tinneas are all masculine, as are the compounds derived from them, but where a disease has a non-compound name, it is generally feminine eg a' ghriùrach (measles). Smallpox is a' bhreac (the adjective breac, as in the famous Ailean Breac, usually referred to the person being pock-marked by this disease). Typhoid fever, which causes spotting on the skin as well as fever, is am fiabhras breac. Chickenpox is a' bhreac-òtraich, literally “the dunghill pox”.*

Gnàths-cainnt na Litreach: **Ghabh e ris a' chuireadh:** *he accepted the invitation.*

* Tha “*Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh*” air a maoinachadh le Seirbheis nam Meadhanan Gàidhlig