

## AG05: Agallamh le Mira Byrne, Neach-ionnsachaidh

Interview with Mira Byrne, Gaelic Learner

Presenter: Sarah Cruickshank



### MIRA:

Cuide rium an-dràsta tha Mira Byrne, a rugadh agus a thogadh anns a' Ghearmailt, agus a thòisich air Gàidhlig ionnsachadh aig sia bliadhna deug. Fàilte, Mira. Nise, innis dhuinn ciamar a fhuair thu a-mach mu dheidhinn Gàidhlig agus ciamar a thòisich thu a bhith ag ionnsachadh Gàidhlig.

### MIRA:

Chan eil mi buileach cinnteach, an fhìrinn innse. 'S e ceist a th' ann a bhios a h-uile duine a' faighneachd dhomh. Tha mi a' smaoinichadh ... Tha cuimhne agam nuair a bha mi gu math, math òg, 's dòcha, chan eil fhios' agam, còig bliadhna a dh'aois, sia bliadhna a dh'aois, rud mar sin, bha teip aig m' athair aig an àm sin, agus 's e teip le Capercaillie a bh' ann, agus b' àbhaist dhomh èisteachd ris fad na h-ùine. Bha e a' còrdadh rium cho mòr. Agus tha mi a' smaoinichadh, 's dòcha gur e sin an toiseach tòiseachaidh a bh' ann. Bha ùidh agam anns a' chànan, ach cha robh mi ga thuigsinn.

### SARAH:

'S e sin a thug a' chiad bhlas dhut ma-thà. Dè a rinn thu an uairsin?

### MIRA:

Tha cuimhn' 'am, bha mi ann an Glaschu airson Celtic Connections, agus bha bùth-obrach ann. Rinn mi bùth-obrach seinn sa Ghàidhlig agus fhad 's a bha mi ann, bha tè ann à Dun Bhreatainn, far an robh mi a' fuireach aig an àm, agus thuir i gum biodh fèis a' dol, seachdain no cola-deug às dèidh làimh, agus gum biodh clasaichean Gàidhlig agus clasaichean ciùil agus a leithid ann. 'S mar sin, chaidh mi ann dìreach airson faighinn a-mach dè bha dol agus sin mar a thòisich mi.

### SARAH:

Agus sin a thug a' chiad blas dhut air Gàidhlig?

### SARAH:

With me now is Mira Byrne, who was born and raised in Germany, and who began to learn Gaelic at the age of sixteen. Welcome, Mira. Now, tell us how you found out about Gaelic and how you began to learn Gaelic.

### MIRA:

I'm not quite sure, to be honest. It's a question everybody asks me. I think ... I remember when I was very, very young, perhaps, I don't know, five years old, six years old, something like that, my father had a tape at that time, and it was a tape of Capercaillie, and I used to listen to it all the time. I enjoyed it very much. And I think, perhaps that's what got me started. I was interested in the language, but I didn't understand it.

### SARAH:

So that's what gave you your first taste. What did you do then?

### MIRA:

I remember being in Glasgow for Celtic Connections, and there was a workshop there. I did Gaelic singing workshop and while I was there, there was a woman from Dumbarton, which was where I was living at the time, and she told me that there was a festival a week or a fortnight later, and that there would be Gaelic classes, music classes and so on. So I went along there just to find out what was going on and that's how I got started.

### SARAH:

And that gave you your first taste of Gaelic?

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**MIRA:**

'S e.

**SARAH:**

Dè a rinn thu bhon uairsin, às dèidh dhut tòiseachadh air na clasaichean sin?

**MIRA:**

Uill, dh'fhàg mi an sgoil. Dh'obraich mi airson bliadhna agus bha mi airson rud eile a dhèanamh, 's bheachdaich mi air dol dhan oilthigh, ach cha robh mi buileach cinnteach dè bha mi a' dol a dhèanamh. Agus cho-dhùin mi Gàidhlig a dhèanamh mar phàirt dhen cheum agam, chan e Gàidhlig a-mhàin, aig an àm sin. Bha mi a' dol a dhèanamh eachdraidh agus, uill, Gàidhlig cuideachd dìreach airson faicinn an còrdadh e rium, agus, uill, sin mar a chùim mi a' dol.

**SARAH:**

Às dèidh siud, ghabh thu bliadhna a-mach, mar gum bitheadh, agus chaidh thu a Bheinn na Faoghla. Ciamar a chuidich sin ann a bhith a' leasachadh do Ghàidhlig?

**MIRA:**

Bha e fìor, fìor mhath airson mo Ghàidhlig gu h-àraid, chanainn-sa, ach dhòmhsa cuideachd. 'S e ... Cha chanainn-sa gu robh e an-còmhnaidh furasta. 'S e suidheachadh gu tur eadar-dhealaichte a bh' ann, ach bha e math a bhith ann an coimhearsnachd far a bheil daoine fhathast a' bruidhinn na Gàidhlig gu làitheil agus cuideachd a' faighinn an cothrom, 's dòcha, a bhith ann an coimhearsnachd far a bheil blas caran coltach ri chèile aig a h-uile duine agus thug e blas dhomh, chan ann bhon chànan a-mhàin, ach cuideachd beatha Ghàidhealach. Bhuail thu a-siud air blas.

**MIRA:**

Yes.

**SARAH:**

What have you done since then, since you started those classes?

**MIRA:**

Well, I left school. I worked for a year and I wanted to do other things, and I considered going to university, but I wasn't quite sure what I wanted to study. And I decided to study Gaelic as part of my degree, rather than Gaelic alone, at that time. I was going to study history and, well, Gaelic too just to see if I enjoyed it, and, well, that's how I went on.

**SARAH:**

After that, you took a year out, as it were, and went to Benbecula. How did that help you to improve your Gaelic?

**MIRA:**

It was very, very good for my Gaelic especially, I'd say, and for myself too. It was ... I wouldn't say it was always easy. It was a completely different situation, but it was good to be in a community where people still speak Gaelic on a daily basis and also to have the opportunity, perhaps, to be in a community where most of the people have a similar accent and it gave me a taste, not only of the language, but also of Highland life.

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**SARAH:**

Nise an robh duilgheadasan sam bith eile agad nuair a bha thu ag ionnsachadh Gàidhlig?

**MIRA:**

Ann an dòigh, 's dòcha an duilgheadas as motha a bh' agam 's ann nach eil àite sam bith far a bheil Gàidhlig a-mhàin, 's mar sin, tha e an còmhnaidh cho furasta tionndadh air ais dhan a' Bheurla. Chanainn-sa gur e sin an duilgheadas as motha, nach urrainn dhut a dhol a dh'àite sam bith agus tha feum agad a' Ghàidhlig a chleachdadh. Ann an dòigh, tha e an urra riut fhèin dol a-mach agus bruidhinn na Gàidhlig 's a' chiad dol a-mach.

**SARAH:**

Às dèidh a' bhliadhna ann am Beinn na Faoghla, dè a rinn thu an uairsin?

**MIRA:**

Nuair a chaidh mi a dh'Uibhist, bha mi an dùil tilleadh gu Oilthigh Obar Dheathain às dèidh làimh, ach, mu dheireadh thall, fhuair mi a-steach gu Oilthigh Ghlaschu, agus chuir mi crìoch air a' cheum agam ann an Glaschu. Bha mi an sàs anns a' Chomann Oiseanach aig an oilthigh, 's bhitheamaid a' dol a-mach airson dinnear agus na rudan àbhaisteach, do chèilidhean 's rudan mar sin, agus cuideachd, bha mi a' seinn le Còisir Bhaile Ghobhainn, agus bha iadsan deònach gu leòr bruidhinn riumsa sa Ghàidhlig, 's bha rudan mar sin fìor-mhath.

**SARAH:**

Bhon uairsin, a bheil thu a' cleachdadh Gàidhlig gu làitheil agus a bheil amasan agad Gàidhlig a chleachdadh san àm ri teachd?

**SARAH:**

You touched on accent there. Now, did you have any problems when you were learning Gaelic?

**MIRA:**

In a way, perhaps the greatest problem I had was that there isn't anywhere where only Gaelic is spoken, so, as a result, it's always so easy to revert to speaking English. I'd say that was the greatest problem, that you can't go anywhere where you have to use Gaelic. In a way, it's up to yourself to go out and speak Gaelic from the beginning.

**SARAH:**

After the year on Benbecula, what did you do then?

**MIRA:**

When I went to Uist, I had planned to return to Aberdeen University afterwards, but, in the end, I was admitted to Glasgow University, and I completed my degree in Glasgow. I was involved in the Ossianic Society at university, and we used to go out to dinner and all the usual things, to cèilidhs and things like that, and also, I sang with Govan Gaelic Choir, and they were quite happy to speak to me in Gaelic, and things like that were great.

**SARAH:**

Since then, do you use Gaelic on a daily basis and do you have any plans to use Gaelic in the future?

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### MIRA:

Tha. Cheumnaich mi an uiridh agus chur mi a-steach do sgeama ceumnachaidh CNAG, agus fhuair mi obair aig an t-Sabhail Mhòir, agus sin far a bheil mi fhathast, agus bidh mi a' cleachdadh a' Ghàidhlig a mhòr-chuid dhen latha, agus gach latha an seo. Chan eil mi buileach cinnteach dè na h-amasan a th'agam fhathast, dè tha mi a' dol a dhèanamh ann an deich bliadhna, ach tha mi an dùil gum bi mi an sàs anns an t-saoghal Ghàidhlig ann an dòigh air choreigin.

### SARAH:

Dè cho cudromach sa tha e dhut a bhith a' cleachdadh Gàidhlig gach latha ann a bhith a' leasachadh na sgilean cànan agad?

### MIRA:

Tha e gu math, math cudromach, chanainn-sa. Chanainn-sa ... Uill, tha ... 'S urrainn dhut cànan ionnsachadh gu ìre bho leabhar no rud mar sin, ach cha bhi thu riamh buileach fileanta gus am bi thu ga chleachdadh gu làitheil, agus tha e ... Uill, ged a tha mi fileanta gu leòr a-nise, tha mi gu math mothachail, gu h-àraid nuair a bhios mi a' bruidhinn ri Gàidheil air an leithid a th' agam fhathast ri ionnsachadh, 's mar sin, chanainn-sa gur e rud cudromach a th' ann a bhith a' cleachdadh a' Ghàidhlig gu làitheil, agus cuideachd, a bhith a' bruidhinn ri daoine aig a bheil Gàidhlig bho thùs agus a' cluinntinn am blas aca agus cuideachd na h-abairtean a th' aca agus rudan mar sin.

### SARAH:

Mìle taing, Mira, airson bruidhinn rinn.

### MIRA:

'S e do bheatha.

### MIRA:

Yes. I graduated last year and applied to the CNAG graduate scheme, and found a job at Sabhal Mòr, and I'm still there, and I use Gaelic throughout most of the day and every day here. I'm not quite sure what my plans are yet, what I hope to be doing in ten years' time, but I'm sure I'll be involved in the Gaelic world in some way.

### SARAH:

How important is it for you to use Gaelic every day as a way to improve your skills in the language?

### MIRA:

It's very, very important, I'd say. I'd say ... Well there ... You can learn a language to a degree from a book or something like that, but you will never become fluent until you are using it on a daily basis and it's ... Well, although I am quite fluent now, I am very conscious, especially when I'm speaking to Gaels (native speakers) of just how much I still have to learn, and so I'd say that it's very important to use Gaelic on a daily basis, and also to speak to people whose mother tongue is Gaelic and to listen to their accents and their turns of phrase and things like that.

### SARAH:

A thousand thanks, Mira, for speaking to us.

### MIRA:

You're welcome.