

# Litir do Luchd-Ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

*Each week the **West Highland Free Press** publishes the text for Roddy Maclean's "Letter to Gaelic Learners" which is broadcast at approximately 1150 every Friday morning on **BBC Radio nan Gaidheal (103-105 FM)**\**

A bheil sibh a' gabhail tlachd – mar a tha mise – bho thòimhseachain? Tha mi'n dòchas gu bheil, oir 's e sin cuspair na litreach an t-seachdainn-sa. Bha mi a' tadhal air duine is aithne dhomh ann an Geàrrloch turas, agus dh'innis e dhomh thòimhseachan a chòrd rium glan. 'S ann às a sgìre sin fhèin a bha e – à Ros an Iar. Co-dhiù, bha mi air dìochuimhneachadh mu dheidhinn gus an tàinig mi tarsainn air a-rithist, dìreach an t-seachdainn 's a chaidh.

Bha mi ann an leabharlann, a' toirt sùil air seann phàipearan-naidheachd. Agus ann am fear aca, a bha còrr is sia fichead (120) bliadhna a dh'aois, leugh mi an dearbh thòimhseachan, an ìre mhath mar a chuala mi e. Aig deireadh na litreach, bheir mi dhuibh e, agus faodaidh sibh smaoinichadh air – mus toir mi am fuasgladh dhuibh an ath sheachdainn!

'S e tuiteamas a bh'ann gun do lorg mi an thòimhseachan sin, agus feadhainn eile a bha anns an dearbh cholbh anns a' phàipear-naidheachd. Bha mi a' coimhead airson rudeigin gu tur eadar-dhealaichte. Ach sin mar a tha e – dhomhsa co-dhiù – nuair a choimheadas mi air seann phàipearan-naidheachd. 'S dòcha nach lorg mi an rud a bha mi a' sireadh, ach gheibh mi rudeigin air choreigin a chòrdas rium.

Bha na thòimhseachain anns an *Inverness Courier*, ann an colbh Beurla air an robh an t-ìosal "*Nether-Lochaber*". Thug mi greis mus d'fhuair mi a-mach cò an t-ùghdar. 'S e ministear na h-eaglais a bh'ann – an t-Ollamh Urramach Alasdair Stiùbhart - agus bha e na shar-Ghàidheal, a-rèir choltais. Mhìnich e anns a' cholbh aige mar a fhuair e an thòimhseachan a leanas.

Bha e na leas, feasgar a bha seo, a' togail ùbhlan far craoibhe nuair a thàinig boireannach seachad. Le gàire, thuir i ris a' mhinistear – nan toireadh esan ùbhlan dhi, gun innseadh ise dhasan thòimhseachan nach b'urrainn dha fuasgladh fhaighinn air a shon. 'S e duine còir spòrsail a bh'ann, agus thug e ùbhlan dhi. Agus 's e seo na thuir i:

Chunnaic fear gun sùilean ùbhlan air a' chraoibh  
Cha tug e ùbhlan dhith, 's cha do dh'fhàg e ùbhlan oirre.

Canaidh mi sin a-rithist:  
Chunnaic fear gun sùilean ùbhlan air a' chraoibh  
Cha tug e ùbhlan dhith, 's cha do dh'fhàg e ùbhlan oirre.

Ciamar a dh'fhaodadh sin a bhith? Uill, 's e seo am fuasgladh, agus chì sibh gur ann a' cleas leis na faclan "sùilean" agus "ùbhlan" a bha i. Cha robh ach aon shùil aig an duine; bha e leth-shùileach. Mar sin 's e fear gun "sùilean" a bh'ann, ged a bha fradharc aige. Agus cha robh air a' chraoibh ach dà ùbhal. Thug e aon ubhal dhith; mar sin cha tug e "ùbhlan" dhith. Agus dh'fhàg e aon ubhal oirre; mar sin cha robh "ùbhlan" oirre - dìreach ubhal.

Aaa, uill, 's dòcha gu robh i airidh air na h-ùbhlan. Chan ann tric a bhios fear neo tè a' deanamh cleas air ministear! Co-dhiù, chan ann mi-thoilichte a bha Maighstir Stiùbhart. Thòisich a' chùis deasbad air tòimhseachain Ghàidhlig air duilleagan an *Inverness Courier*, le mòran Ghàidheal a' sgrìobhadh don ùghdar, ag innse dha tuilleadh thòimhseachan.

Agus tha sin gam thoirt air ais do thòimhseachan mo charaid ann an Geàrrloch. Agus seo e:

Chaidh biadh gu dithis  
Aig ceann Loch Maruibh'.  
Dh'ith am biadh an dithis,  
'S chaidh am biadh dhachaigh a-rithist.

Seo e a-rithist:  
Chaidh biadh gu dithis  
Aig ceann Loch Maruibh'.  
Dh'ith am biadh an dithis,  
'S chaidh am biadh dhachaigh a-rithist.

Dè bh'ann anns a' bhiadh, agus dè bh'ann anns an dithis?! Bheir mi am fuasgladh dhuibh an ath sheachdainn. Chun an uairsin, is mise, le meas....

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**Faclan na seachdainne:** tlachd: *pleasure*; tòimhseachan, tòimhseachain: *riddle, riddles*; cuspair: *subject*; a' tadhal: *visiting*; Geàrrloch: *Gairloch*; Ros an Iar: *Wester Ross*; gu tur: *completely, entirely*; a' sireadh: *seeking*; colbh: *column*; ùghdar: *author*; fuasgladh: *solution*; gàire: *laugh, smile*; còir: *decent, good*; sporsail: *sporting, fun-loving*; leth-shùileach: *one-eyed*; deasbad: *debate*; dh'ith: *ate*.

**Abairtean na seachdainne:** is aithne dhomh: *I know, recognise*; bha mi air diochuimhneachadh mu dheidhinn: *I had forgotten about it*; 's e tuiteamas a bh'ann gu ...: *it was by chance that ...*; rudeigin air choreigin: *something or other*; an t-Ollamh Urramach Alasdair Stiùbhart: *the Reverend Doctor Alexander Stewart (notice the order of the titles is the reverse of the English)*; gun sùilean: *without eyes*; cha tug e ùbhlan dhith: *he did not take apples off her (craobh is feminine)*; cha do dh'fhàg e ùbhlan oirre: *he did not leave apples on her*; ciamar a dh'fhaodadh sin a bhith?: *how could that be?*; airidh air: *deserving of*; a' deanamh cleas air: *playing a trick on*.

**Puing ghràmair na seachdainne:** Nuair a choimheadas mi: *when I look*. This “as” or “eas” ending on the verb is known as the Relative Future and is used in various ways eg after nuair (*when*), ma (*if*), ged a (*although*). Nuair a leigeas mi a’ chraobh, cha bhi an leas cho dorch (*when I fell the tree, the garden will not be so dark*); ma bhios esan ann, chan fhuirich mi (*if he is there, I won’t stay*); ged a chanas e gu bheil e sgith, chan e an fhìrinn a th’aige (*although he says he is tired, he is not speaking the truth*). Note that this structure is only used in affirmative statements. If you are trying to make a negative statement, eg “although he will not be there...” a different structure is used. We will look at this in a later letter.

**Tòimhseachan na seachdainne:** The translation of the last riddle given is as follows: Food went to two at the head of Loch Maree, the food ate the two and the food went home again. With a little lateral thinking you should be able to work it out before I give the solution next week!

***If you have any opinions on “Litir do Luchd-Ionnsachaidh”, Roddy would like to hear from you. Please write to him at BBC, 7 Culduthel Road, Inverness IV2 4AD or at [roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk)***

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