

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" on **BBC Radio nan Gaidheal (103-105 FM)**.*

*The programme is broadcast at 11.50 every Friday morning, and repeated at 7.30 pm the following Monday.**

An do cheannaich sibh pacaid de “Bhleideagan Arbhair” anns an uine bhig a dh’fhalbh? O – gabhaibh mo lethsgheil. Nach eil fios agaibh de th’ann ann am Bhleideagan Arbhair? A uill, cha robh fios neo agamsa gus an cuala mi aig pàist’ e. Bha e a’ bruidhinn mun stuth a chuireas tu ann am bobhla airson do bhraicist. Bha e a’ ciallachadh *Corn Flakes*. Ach ’s dòcha gun can mise dìreach *Corn Flakes* fhèin.

An do mhothaich sibh a-riamh gu bheil rudeigin air gach pacaid de *Chorn Flakes*, co-dhiù nuair nach eilear a’ sanasachd airson *Star Wars* neo gnothach dhen t-seòrsa. ‘S e eun a th’ann – coileach. Ach carson a tha a’ chompanaidh a tha a’ deanamh *Corn Flakes – Kelloggs* – a’ cur a leithid de dh’eun air na pacaidean aca? Uill, chuala mi stòiridh mu dheidhinn sin agus innsidh mi dhuibh i ann am mionaid.

Ach an toiseach, tha mi airson innse dhuibh mu dheidhinn mo chuairt o chionn ghoirid don Chuimrich. Bha mi anns a’ cheann a tuath, ann an Snowdonia mar a theirear anns a’ Bheurla, agus abair thusa gu bheil an dùthaich sin brèagha. Ach a-bharrachd air a’ bòidhchead, tha an sgìre gu math inntinneach do Ghàidheil na h-Alba. Chì sinn, ann a sin, mar a dh’fhaodadh suidheachadh na Gàidhlig a bhith ann an Alba nan robh sinne cho làidir mu dheidhinn ar cànan ‘s a tha na Cuimrich mu dheidhinn a’ chànain aca fhèin.

Chuala mi an t-uabhas Chuimris air a bruidhinn air na sràidean agus ann am bùthan. Bha i ri fhaicinn air soighnichean da-chànanach air feadh an àite. Agus far nach robh muinntir an àite ag aontachadh ris an litreachadh air na soighnichean Cuimreach, bha iad air peant a chur thairis orra. ’S cinnteach gum biodh iad gu math trang air na soighnichean Gàidhlig ann an Alba!

Tha a’ Chuimris agus a’ Ghàidhlig gu math eadar-dhealaichte o chèile, agus cha b’urrainn dhomh bun neo bàrr a dheanamh dhen chòmhradh a chuala mi. Ach chunnaic mi corra fhacal, an siud ’s an seo, air soighnichean agus air a’ mhap, a bha a’ toirt faclan Gàidhlig gu mo chuimhne. Mar eisimpleir, canaidh iad *traeth* airson tràigh, *craig* airson creag, *afon* airson abhainn agus *mawr* airson mòr. Canaidh iad *moel* airson maol, *amser* airson aimsir, nuair a tha i a’ ciallachadh “tìm” co-dhiù agus, far a chanas sinne “prìomh”, canaidh iadsan *prif*.

Ach thog aon fhacal m’aire gu h-àraidh. B’e sin am facal aca airson “coileach” – *ceiliog*. Nuair a chunnaic mi sin, smaoinich mi gu robh e car coltach ris an fhacal Gàidhlig. *Ceiliog*, coileach. Ach a-bharrachd air a sin, thug e air ais do mo chuimhne an stòiridh a chuala mi, ann am badeigin, o chionn fhada, mun Chorn Flakes. Agus ma ’s math mo chuimhne, seo mar a chuala mi e.

Bha Mgr Kellogg a' coimhead airson dealbh a chuireadh air a' phacaid nuair a chruthaich e *Corn Flakes* o chionn fhada. Bha Cuimreach ag obair dha, agus thuirt esan ri Kellogg, "Carson nach cuir sibh coileach oirre?"

"Carson fon ghrèin a chuirinn coileach oirre," dh'fhaighnich am fear eile.

"Uill," thuirt an Cuimreach, "tha an t-ainm Kellogg uabhasach fhèin coltach ris an fhacal airson coileach anns a' chànan againn fhèin – *ceiliog*. Mar sin, bhiodh e glè shnog nan cuireadh sibh dealbh de choileach air a' phacaid."

Dh'aontaich Kellogg ris agus 's e coileach a th'air a' phacaid fhathast. Ma 's breug bhuam e, 's breug thugam e!

Fàgaidh mi sibh le smuain eile mu dheidhinn eòin agus cànan nan Cuimreach. Tha eun ann a tha dubh is geal, agus air a bheil ainm ann am Beurla a thàinig gu dìreach bhon Chuimris. Dè th'ann? Innsidh mi sin dhuibh an ath sheachdain.

* * *

Faclan na seachdain: pacaid: *packet*; bleideagan arbhair: *lit. corn flakes (but most people would say "corn flakes")*; pàiste: *child*; bobhla: *bowl*; bracaist: *breakfast*; coileach: *cock-erel*; stòiridh: *story*; soighne, soighnichean: *sign, signs*; da-chànanach: *bilingual*; ag aontachadh: *agreeing*; litreachadh: *spelling*; aire, m'aire: *attention, my attention*; gu dìreach: *directly*; a' Chuimris: *the Welsh language*.

Abairtean na seachdain: anns an ùine bhig a dh'fhalbh: *in the recent past (lit. in the little time that departed)*; cha robh fios neo agamsa: *I didn't know either*; co-dhiù nuair nach eilear a' sanasachd X: *at least when X is not being advertised*; mo chuairt don Chuimrich: *my trip to Wales*; mar a theirear: *as it is called*; abair thusa gu bheil X brèagha: *an idiomatic translation would be "X is wonderfully beautiful" (the use of "abair" in this way is very common)*; a bharrachd air a bòidhchead: *in addition to her beauty (sgìre is fem.)*; mar a dh'fhaodadh X a bhith: *as X could be*; an siud 's an seo: *here and there*; bha i ri fhaicinn: *it (fem.) was to be seen*; ma 's math mo chuimhne: *if my memory serves me correctly*; nuair a chruthaich e X: *when he invented X*; carson fon ghrèin a chuirinn X oirre?: *why on earth (lit. under the sun) would I put X on it (fem.)*; uabhasach fhèin coltach ri: *very like*; cànan nan Cuimreach: *the language of the Welsh*.

Puing ghràmair na seachdain: Ann am badeigin: *in some place (which the speaker may be unable or unwilling to identify)*. The terminal -eigin in Gaelic words, meaning "some" is an extremely useful one. Bad is a place; badeigin is some place. Other examples are àiteigin (some place), cuideigin (some person), rudeigin (something). A lack of knowledge of the exactness of the thing, person, place can be strengthened with the use of "air choreigin" (or other). Thus we get latha air choreigin (some day or other), cuideigin air choreigin (somebody or other), togalach air choreigin (some building or other). Bhri cuideigin an uinneag (someone broke the window) Cò? (who?) Chan eil fhios a'm – 's dòcha bleigeard air choreigin (I don't know – probably some lout or other). It is important to note two things about -eigin. Firstly, the initial syllable is short – it is not like èiginn which means "emergency, difficulty". Secondly, in the case of "badeigin, rudeigin, (air) choreigin" we have compound words, made of two elements, which do not follow the usual "leathann ri leathann, caol ri caol" spelling rule; airson is another example of such a word.

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine: Cha b'urrainn dhomh bun neo bàrr a dheanamh dhen chòmhradh: *I couldn't make head or tail of the conversation.* Bun (*bottom*) and bàrr (*top*) are opposites and often appear together in figures of speech of this nature. Chan eil bun neo bàrr aig a sheanachas: *his story makes no sense.*

* "*Litir do Luchd-Ionnsachaidh*" is funded by Comataidh Craolaidh Gàidhlig