

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.**

Fàilte oirbh, a chàirdean, gu Litir trì deug ar fhichead neo, anns an t-siostam ùr, trichead 's a trì (33). Tha mi 'n dòchas gu bheil sibh uile gu dòigheil, sunndach. Chan eil fhios a' m dè cho math 's a tha ur cuimhne ach, anns an Litir mu dheireadh agam, latha ron Nollaig, chuir mi ceist oirbh. Cò e an seann ghaisgeach Gaidhealach a bha leis a' chearrag neo, mar a chanas iad anns an sgìre aige fhèin, a bha *ciotach*? Agus a th'air a chuimhneachadh airson sin.

Uill, 's i an fhreagairt *Colla Ciotach* neo, ann am Beurla, *Colkitto*. Rugadh Colla Ciotach ann an Aontrom, ann an ceann a tuath na h-Eireann, anns a' bhliadhna coig ceud deug, trì fichead 's a deich, neo còig ceud deug is seachdad (1570). Bha e na bhall de Chlann Dòmhnail agus thugadh e, na òige, a dh'Eilean Cholasa ann an Earra-Ghaidheal. Agus thogadh e ann an Colasa.

Anns an leabhar "Colkitto!", tha an t-ùghdar, Kevin Byrne, a tha a' fuireach ann an Colasa, a' deanamh dheth gur dòcha nach ann ciotach a bha Colla ma tha sinn a' smaoinichadh gu bheil am facal a' ciallachadh dìreach *left-handed*, ach gu robh e comasach air claidheamh a thogail le a dhà làimh. Bha e a cheart cho math le a làimh chli 's a bha e le a làimh dheis. *Ambidextrous* mar a chanas iad ann am Beurla.

Co-dhiù, cha robh cùisean sìtheil air Ghàidhealtachd aig toiseach an t-seachdamh linn deug nuair a bha Seumas a-Sia (VI) na Rìgh agus, an dèidh strì mhòr, thug an Rìgh Colasa do Ghilleasbaig Caimbeul, seachdamh Iarla Earra-Ghaidheal. Cha b'e sin deireadh na strì, ge-tà, agus ann an sia ceud deug 's a còig-deug (1615), thug na Caimbeulaich ionnsaigh air na Dòmhnallaich ann an caisteal ann an Ìle. Bha Colla Ciotach am broinn a' chaisteil.

Chaill na Dòmhnallaich am batail, ach fhuair Colla air falbh air an oidhche ann an bàta beag cuide ri fichead duin' eile. Bha am bàta, ge-tà, ag ao-dion agus b'fheudar dhaibh stad airson greis air tìr. Fhuair na Caimbeulaich greim air sianar dhen sgioba ann a sin, ach fhuair Colla air falbh a-rithist.

Airson greis chum Colla a dol air feadh nan eilean, a' togail chreach, agus a' toirt ionnsaigh air na Caimbeulaich. A-rèir a' chiad Phroifeasair de Cheilteis ann an Oilthigh Dhun Eideann, Dòmhnall MacFhiongain, a bhuineadh do Cholasa, "bha e cho tèoma leis a' ghunna is a bha leis a' chloidheamh." Mu dheireadh, ge-tà, chaidh cùisean na aghaidh, agus thàinig e gu rèite leis an riaghaltas nach dèanadh e an tuilleadh aimhreit, nan leigeadh iad leis dhol dhachaigh a Cholasa.

Chaidh e dhachaigh ach bha nàmhaid aige anns an eilean – fear Calum Mac a’ Phì, ceann-cinnidh Clann Ic a’ Phì ann an Colasa. A-rèir beul-aithris, chaidh Colla agus feadhainn eile a bhuineadh do Chlann Dòmhnail an tòir air Mac a’ Phì agus b’fheudar dha dhol am falach mar a b’fheàrr a b’urrainn dha. Tha cuimhn’ aig muinntir Cholasa fhathast air cuid de na h-àiteachan far an deach e am falach am measg nan creag. Tha an t-aon ainm orra uile – *Leab’ Fhalaich Mhic a’ Phì*, sin *Leabaidh Fhalaich Mhic a’ Phì*, an *Leabaidh* far an deach Mac a’ Phì am falach.

Agus tha cuimhn’ aig muinntir an eilein cuideachd air an àite far an do chuireadh Mac a’ Phì gu bàs, le Colla Ciotach agus a chàirdean. Anns an ath litir, bheir sinn sùil a-rithist air Colla, agus air a mhac, a tha cuideachd gu math ainmeil ann an eachdraidh na Gàidhealtachd, Alasdair Mac Cholla. Chun an uairsin, slàn leibh.

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Faclan na seachdaine: gu dòigheil, sunndach: *in good temper and good spirits*; leis a’ chearrag: *left-handed*; ciotach: *left-handed, ambidextrous*; Aontrom: *Antrim*; Colasa: *Colonsay (traditionally, the spelling was Colbhasa, but the people of the island today prefer Colasa)*; Earra-Ghaidheal: *Argyll*; ùghdar: *author*; claidheamh: *sword*; Iarla: *Earl*; Caimbeul: *Campbell*; batail: *battle*; ag ao-dion: *leaking*; sianar: *six people*; sgioba: *crew, party*; teòma: *skilful, adept*; nàmhaid: *enemy*; Calum Mac a’ Phì: *Malcolm MacFie (or MacDuffie)*; am falach: *hidden*; slàn leibh: *cheerio, farewell*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: agus a th’air a chuimhneachadh airson sin: *and is remembered for that*; bha e na bhall de Chlann Dòmhnail: *he was a member of Clan Donald*; na òige: *in his youth*; bha e a cheart cho math le a làimh chli ’s a bha e le a làimh dheis: *he was just as good with his left hand as he was with his right hand*; thug X ionnsaigh air Y: *X attacked Y*; b’fheudar dhaibh stad: *they had to stop*; a’ togail chreach: *plundering*; Proifeasair de Cheilteis: *Professor of Celtic*; a bhuineadh do Cholasa: *who belonged to Colonsay*; bha e cho teòma leis a’ ghunna is a bha e leis a’ chlaidheamh: *he was as adept with a (the) gun as he was with a (the) sword*; thàinig e gu rèite nach deanadh e an tuilleadh aimhreit, nan leigeadh iad leis dhol dhachaigh: *he came to an agreement that he would cause no further trouble if they let him go home*; mar a b’fheàrr a b’urrainn dha: *as best he could*; Leab’ Fhalaich Mhic a’ Phì: *(lit.) MacFie’s (or MacDuffie’s) Hiding Bed*.

Puing ghràmair na seachdaine: Thogadh e ann an Colasa: *he was raised (brought up) in Colonsay. Do you remember Litir 19 (Sept 24) in which we looked at using chaidh with the verbal noun to make past passives? Here is another way, and it’s a bit neater. Take the root of the verb, lenite it and add –adh or –eadh (according to the spelling rule). So tog becomes thogadh. Thogadh mi ann an Glaschu (I was raised in Glasgow). Breab becomes bhreabadh. Bhreabadh mi da thuras (I was kicked twice). Similarly, cur (a’ cuir) becomes chuireadh eg far an do chuireadh Mac a’ Phì gu bàs (where MacFie was put to death). With the regular verbs, finding the root is straightforward, but it can be more complicated with irregular verbs. Beir (a’ breith) becomes rugadh eg rugadh Colla Ciotach ann an Aontrom (Colkitto was born in Antrim); thoir (a’ toirt) becomes thugadh eg thugadh e a Cholasa (he was taken to Colonsay). Don’t worry – you will learn most of these irregular cases simply by exposure to the language, although a Gaelic grammar book is a useful item on every learner’s bookshelves.*

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine: Bha Colla Ciotach am broinn a' chaisteil: *Colkitto was in the castle. Broinn is the dative of brù, a belly, and am broinn literally means "in the belly of" (with the following noun in the genitive). This phrase is commonly heard, but it is important only to use it where you mean that something is physically inside something else. It cannot be used for something which is conceptually "inside" something else. eg Bha mi am broinn an taighe; bha i am broinn a' charbaid. But if you want to say, for example, "inside a week from now" you should not say "am broinn seachdain bhon a seo"; you would have to say "taobh a-staigh seachdain bhon a seo".*

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