

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. It is also available on the internet at www.bbc.co.uk/alba **

Bhiodh na seann daoine air a' Ghaidhealtachd ag ràdh, "nuair a thèid thu air chèilidh air madadh-allaidh, thoir do chù leat." Deagh chomhairle, chanainn, agus bidh sibh a' tuigsinn gu robhar a' bruidhinn air barrachd na dìreach madadh-allaidh. Bha iad a' cleachdadh a' mhadaidh-allaidh mar shamhla de chunnart, ged a tha deasbad ann co-dhiù tha iad dha-rìreabh cunnartach do dhaoine.

Bha na seann Ghaidheil eòlach gu leòr air a' mhadadh-allaidh, agus e cumanta air feadh na Gaidhealtachd o shean. Ach cuin' a chaidh am fear mu dheireadh a mharbhadh? Agus càite? Agus cò rinn an gnothach? Uill, leis an fhìrinn innse, cha bhi fios againn le cinnt air a sin a-chaidh. Tha beul-aithris bho ghrunn àiteachan mu dheidhinn agus bu mhath leam sùil a thoirt air stòiridh bho dhà àite.

Bha fear Ruairidh MacIlleathain na bhàillidh air oighreachd Ard Rois faisg air Alanais ann an Ros an Ear agus thug e seachad òraid mu dheidhinn Sgìre Rois Chuithne aig Comunn Gàidhlig Inbhir Nis ann an ochd ceud deug, ceithir fichead 's a sia. Nise, le ainm mar sin, tha fhios gu robh e onarach 's nach innseadh e breug sam bith! Co-dhiù, bha esan dhen bheachd gu robh am madadh-allaidh mu dheireadh ann an Alba air a mharbhadh anns an sgìre sin aig toiseach an ochdamh linn deug. Agus seo mar a thachair e.

Bha cailleach a-muigh aig ceithir uairean sa mhadainn air Latha na Bliadhn' Uire. Bha i a' dol gu taigh a nàbaidh airson greideal fhaighinn. Cha robh greideal aice fhèin agus bha i airson bonnach a dhèanamh dhi fhèin. Nuair a bha i a' tilleadh dhachaigh, chunnaic i am madadh-allaidh ann am meadhan an rathaid, a' sgròbadh na talmhainn. Ghabh i eagal, ach an àite ruith air falbh, thug i sgleog don mhadadh-allaidh air a dhruim leis a' ghreideal. An uairsin ruith i air falbh.

Dh'innis i do fheadhainn eile dè bh' air tachairt agus thàinig iad a-mach airson a cuideachadh. Bha am madadh-allaidh air a ghoirteachadh agus cha b' urrainn dha ruith air falbh. Agus rinn na daoine dochann air gus an d'fhuair e bàs.

Uill, 's dòcha gu bheil sin fìor, ach tha e car coltach ri sgeulachdan eile mu bhàs a' mhadaidh-allaidh mu dheireadh. Tha ainmean-àite a' cur taic ris, ge-tà. Chaidh am preas far an do thachair e ainmeachadh mar Phreas a' Mhadaidh, agus tha cnoc faisg air an àite air a bheil Cnoc a' Mhadaidh fhathast, far an robh saobhaidh aig a' mhadadh-allaidh, a rèir Ruairidh MhicIlleathain.

Ach tha sgeulachd eile ann a tha gu math inntinneach mu bhàs a' mhadaidh-allaidh mu dheireadh, is tha sin à Siorrachd Inbhir Nis. Bha fear MacCuidhein a' fuireach aig ceann shuas Shrath Eireann anns a' Mhonadh Liath. B' e Mac an Tòisich a cheann-cinnidh.

Dh'iarr Mac an Tòisich air na fir aige tighinn cruinn airson cur às do mhadadh-allaidh dubh a bh' air dithis chloinne a mharbhadh. Thàinig iad uile cruinn aig an àm a chaidh iarraidh orra, ach a-mhàin aon duine – MacCuidhein. Bha e fadalach, agus cha robh an ceann-cinnidh toilichte.

Mu dheireadh, nochd MacCuidhein agus fhuair e trod bho Mhac an Tòisich airson a bhith fadalach. “Ciod i a' chabhag?” dh'fhaighnich MacCuidhein. Bha sàmhchair ann airson tiotan, agus mus tuirt an ceann-cinnidh càil eile, dh'fhosgail MacCuidhein a chuid aodaich agus thug e a-mach ceann dubh fuilteach a' mhadaidh-allaidh mu dheireadh ann an Alba. “Sin e dhuibh,” thuirt MacCuidhein agus thilg e air an talamh e aig casan Mhic an Tòisich.

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Faclan na seachdainne: cumanta: *common*; o shean: *in olden times*; a-chaidh: *ever*; bàillidh: *factor*; oighreachd Ard Rois: *Ardross estate*; Sgìre Rois Chuithne: *the Parish of Rosskeen*; greideal: *girdle*; bonnach: *bannock*; Preas a' Mhadaidh: *the wolf's thicket*; saobhaidh: *animal's den*; Srath Eireann: *Strathdearn*; ceann-cinnidh: *clan chief*; trod: *a scolding*; sàmhchair: *silence*; tiotan: *moment*; fuilteach: *bloody*; thilg e: *he threw*.

Abairtean na seachdainne: deagh chomhairle, chanainn: *good advice, I would say*; bidh sibh a' tuigsinn gu robhar a' bruidhinn air barrachd na dìreach madadh-allaidh: *you will understand that more than just a wolf was being talked about*; mar shamhla de chunnart: *as a symbol of danger*; cuin' a chaidh am fear mu dheireadh a mharbhadh?: *when was the last one killed?*; tha fhios gu robh e onarach 's nach innseadh e breug sam bith: *I'm sure he was honest and that he would not tell a lie (given that his name was Ruairidh MacIlleathain!)*; a' sgròbadh na talmhainn: *scraping the ground (note that talmhainn is the genitive singular of talamh, employed here as it is the object of a verbal noun)*; thug i sgleog do X: *she gave X a clout*; rinn na daoine dochann air gus an d'fhuair e bàs: *the people beat it until it died (masc.)*; thàinig iad uile cruinn aig an àm a chaidh iarraidh orra: *they all gathered together at the time requested of them*; ciod i a' chabhag?: *what's the hurry?*; dh'fhosgail MacCuidhein a chuid aodaich: *Macqueen opened his clothing*; sin e dhuibh: *there it is for you*.

Puing ghràmair na seachdainne: mu dheireadh, nochd MacCuidhein agus fhuair e trod bho Mhac an Tòisich airson a bhith fadalach: *in the end, Macqueen arrived and was scolded by Mackintosh for being late. Do you understand the subtle differences between the Gaelic words and expressions which equate to “late” in English? There is a degree of overlap between them, but I shall attempt to simplify the picture. If it is late at night, it is anmoch, which is the opposite of moch, early. He came home late (ie after midnight): thàinig e dhachaigh anmoch. Note that there is a hidden vowel in anmoch: it is pronounced “AN-a-moch”. If you wish to say that somebody is late for an appointment or meeting or event, even if the hour of the day is not late, the best word to use is fadalach. Mackintosh's men probably gathered in the morning and Macqueen was fadalach. If you are “running late”, in other words you are behind schedule in general terms, it is best to say that you are air dheireadh. Tha mi duilich, ach tha mi air dheireadh le m' obair agus bidh mi fadalach (I'm sorry, but I'm behind with my work and I will be late). And a word of warning in using a dictionary. If you see a reference, for example, to “the late Donald MacLeod” (ie deceased), make sure you say nach maireann and not fadalach, anmoch or air dheireadh!*

Sean-fhacal na seachdainne: nuair a thèid thu air chèilidh air madadh-allaidh, thoir do chù leat: *when you go to visit a wolf, take your dog with you; ie be prepared for whatever circumstances you may meet!*

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Roddy is very grateful for all the messages, questions and letters he has received from listeners/readers. He can be contacted at roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk or BBC, 7 Culduthel Road, Inverness IV2 4AD.