

Litir do Luchd-Ionnsachaidh le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

*A special programme, in the form of a “letter”, written and compiled by Roddy Maclean, and specifically aimed at Gaelic learners who already have some knowledge of the language. A short vocabulary and comments on points of grammar and figures of speech are included with the text. If you have comments, Roddy can be contacted by e-mail at roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk**

A bheil sibh eòlach air an fhacal “maoim”? Ma tha sinn a’ bruidhinn air daoine, tha e a’ ciallachadh eagal mòr agus mar a bhios daoine a’ teicheadh, agus an t-eagal orra. “Biodh maoim air do naimhdean” – *let your enemies flee in fear.*

Faodaidh eagal buaidh mhòr a thoirt air daoine. Agus tha e doirbh smachd a thoirt air. Tha seanfhacal againn a tha a’ toirt iomradh air a sin: *Triùir a thig gun iarraidh – gaol, eud is eagal.*

Ach uaireannan ’s e maoim a tha ag adhbharachadh maoim. Feumaidh mi mìneachadh. Tha am facal maoim cuideachd a’ ciallachadh mar a bhios rudeigin a’ dòrtadh neo a’ taomadh gu h-obann air rudeigin eile. Agus tha sinn a’ cleachdadh an fhacail le faclan eile, leithid *sliabh* neo *talamh*. Canaidh sinn *maoim-slèibhe* neo *maoim-talmhainn* airson *mudslide* neo *landslide*.

Agus dè chanadh sibh airson *avalanche*? Tha e inntinneach gur e facal Frangach – *avalanche* – a thathar a’ cleachdadh ann am Beurla. Tha facal Gàidhlig againn air a shon, ge-tà – *maoim-sneachda*. Tha e a’ dèanamh ciall, nach eil? Agus nach cuireadh maoim-sneachda maoim oirbhse?

Ach bu mhath leam sùil a thoirt air maoimean-talmhainn de sheòrsa sònraichte – *maoimean-mòintich* – neo, mar a chanas iad ann am Beurla, *migratory bogs*. Bha tè ainmeil ann an Eirinn, faisg air Luimneach, anns a’ bhliadhna sia ceud deug, ceithir fichead ’s a seachd-deug (1697), a thachair an dèidh uisge trom.

Ghluais a’ mhòinteach air fad sìos am bruach, a’ toirt leatha pàircean far am biodh crodh ag ionaltradh, agus chum i a’ dol gus an do stad i air làna aig a’ bhonn. Mu dheireadh, bha an làna air a chòmhdachadh le mòine is poll anns an robh sia troighean deug de dhoimhneachd.

Agus bha maoim-talmhainn dhen aon seòrsa ann an Alba, anns an iar-dheas, ann an àite ris an canar Mòinteach Shalmhaigh, neo *Solway Moss*, anns an ochdamh linn deug. Ann an seachd ceud deug, trì fichead ’s a h-ochd (1768) chunnaic am fear-siubhail is sgrìobhadair, Tòmas Pennant, an t-àite. Bha e gu math brèagha, shaoil e. Ach ceithir bliadhna as dèidh sin, chaidh e ann a-rithist, agus bha e doirbh dha creidsinn gur e an aon àite a bh’ ann.

Bha meudachd de mhìle is sia ceud acaire anns a' mhòintich sin, agus bha i os cionn srath breàgha, anns an robh talamh torrach. Bha a' mhòinteach gu math fliuch is bog, ach bha uachdar cruaidh oirre a chum slàn i. Gu mi-fhortanach, ge-tà, bhuain feadhainn mòine innte, agus bhris iad an t-uachdar. Thàinig uisge trom agus, air an oidhche, chuala tuathanach anns an t-srath fuaim mòr annasach os cionn an taigh' aige.

Fhuair e lanntair, chaidh e a-mach agus chunnaic e uisge dubh a' sruthadh sìos am bruach. Thuig e gur e maoin-slèibhe a bh' ann agus ruith e timcheall, a' toirt rabhadh do nàbaidhean. Chaidh a' mhòine is am poll thairis air achaidhean is taighean gu luath agus b' fheudar do fheadhainn faighinn a-mach tro mhullach an taigh' aca.

Dh'fhalbh mu thrì cheud acaire dhen mhòintich air an oidhche sin, agus chòmhdaich i ceithir cheud acaire dhen t-srath. Bha crodh gu leòr air a mharbhadh, ach fhuair na daoine aon bhò a-mach gu sàbhailte, ged a bha i suas gu a h-amhaich ann am poll airson trì fichead uair a thìde. Bha i fallain gu leòr as dèidh làimh, ach cha d'rachadh i faisg air uisge airson a chòrr de a beatha.

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Faclan na seachdaine: maoin: *terror,panic,flight,sudden eruption (as of water)*; a' teicheadh: *fleeing*; a' dòrtadh: *pouring,spilling*; a' taomadh: *pouring,overflowing*; sliabh (gen. slèibhe): *mountain,moor,high ground*; talamh (gen. talmhainn): *earth,ground,soil*; Luimneach: *Limerick*; ag ionaltradh: *grazing*; shaoil e: *he thought*; torrach: *fertile*; lanntair: *lantern*; rabhadh: *warning*; nàbaidhean: *neighbours*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: faodaidh eagal buaidh mhòr a thoirt air daoine: *fear can have a big effect on people*; tha e doirbh smachd a thoirt air: *it is difficult to control*; ghluais a' mhòinteach air fad: *the whole moss (bog) moved*; chum i a' dol gus an do stad i air lèana aig a' bhonn: *it (fem.) kept going until it stopped on a meadow at the bottom*; anns an robh sia troighean deug de dhoimhneachd: *which was 16 feet deep (in which there were 16 feet of depth)*; bha e doirbh dha creidsinn gur e an aon àite a bh' ann: *it was difficult for him to believe it was the same place*; bha meudachd de X acaire anns a' mhòintich: *the moss was X acres in size*; bha uachdar cruaidh oirre a chum slàn i: *it (fem.) had a hard upper surface which kept it intact*; bhuain feadhainn mòine innte: *some people cut peats there*; bha crodh gu leòr air a mharbhadh: *plenty of cattle were killed*; ged a bha i suas gu a h-amhaich ann am poll: *although she was up to here neck in mud*; cha d'rachadh i faisg air uisge airson a' chòrr de a beatha: *she wouldn't go close to water for the rest of her life*.

Puing ghràmair na seachdaine: *You may have noticed that the Gaelic for landslide is maoim-slèibhe, even though, in theory, it ought to be maoim-shlèibhe. The theoretical point of view is given by the general rule as explained by Gillies in his The Elements of Gaelic Grammar (1896): “When two Nouns combine to form a Compound Noun the first is declined regularly. The second has the Genitive form always and in all the cases. It may be Singular or Plural. If it is Singular, it takes the Aspiration [lenition] of an Adjective in agreement with the first Noun – if Plural it takes the Aspirate throughout.” On that basis, maoim being a feminine word and thus leniting [aspirating] an associated adjective, we should say maoim-shlèibhe, maoim-thalmhainn and maoim-shneachda. The fact that we don’t simply shows how sometimes (as happens in all languages) the grammatical “rules” are ignored. A word of similar construction and application is crith-thalmhainn (earthquake). This one does follow the rule. Crith is feminine and the compound noun is crith-thalmhainn (with the second, singular, element lenited), and not crith-talmhainn. Note however that “earthquakes” is crithean-talmhainn without the lenition, as would be expected according to the rule. The plural forms of the compound nouns containing maoim also follow the rule – maoimean-slèibhe, maoimean-talmhainn and maoimean-sneachda.*

Seanfhacal na seachdaine: *Triùir a thig gun iarraidh – gaol, eud is eagal: three that come unbidden – love, jealousy and fear.*

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