

# *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 [rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk) \**

Air a’ mhìos ’s a chaidh, bha mi ann an Ile. Suarach cho math ’s a bha an t-sìde ach, a dh’aindeoin sin, chòrd an t-eilean rium glè mhath. Bha na daoine uabhasach fhèin laghach, agus choinnich mi ri buidheann de luchd-ionnsachaidh na Gàidhlig a bhios ag èisteachd ris a’ phrògram seo. Mo dhùrachd dhaibh, ma tha iad ag èisteachd an-dràsta.

Cluinnear tric mu “Ile ghorm an fheadir”. ’S dòcha gum bi sibh eòlach air an òran – “’S ann an Ile Bhòidhich”. Tha e a’ tòiseachadh mar seo leis an t-seist:

*’S ann an Ile, ’n Ile, ’n Ile  
’S ann an Ile rugadh mi,  
’S ann an Ile, ’n Ile, ’n Ile  
’S ann an Ile bhòidhich*

’S e gu leòr a tha sin bhuamsa, ach ’s dòcha gun gabh sibh fhèin an còrr nuair a tha an Litir seachad! Co-dhiù, tha a’ chiad rann a’ tòiseachadh mar seo:

*’S ann an Ile ghuirm an fheadir, a rugadh mi ’s a thogadh mi...* An Ile ghuirm an fheadir. Carson a tha am facal ag atharrachadh bho *ghorm* gu *ghuirm*? Uill, air sgàth ’s gu bheil *Ile* boireann agus gu bheil am facal anns an tuiseal tabhartach neo *dative case*. Agus bidh faclan boireann singilte anns an tuiseal sin air an caolachadh.

Chan urrainn dhuinn *Ile* a chaolachadh ach ’s urrainn dhuinn am buadhair a chaolachadh, agus ’s e sin a tha a’ tachairt. Tha “Ile ghorm” ag atharrachadh gu “an Ile ghuirm”. Agus tha am facal “feur”, neo “feur” mar a chanas na h-Ilich, anns an tuiseal ghineadach – *an fheadir*.

Co-dhiù, gu leòr de ghràmair. Dè mu dheidhinn an fhacail – *gorm*? Tha luchd-ionnsachaidh tric ag ionnsachadh gu bheil e co-ionann ri *blue* ann am Beurla. Agus an uairsin cluinnidh iad rudan mar *Ile ghorm an fheadir*, agus bidh fìor dhroch bheachd aca air coltas Ile! Uill, chan eil am feur ann an Ile *blue*, ach tha e *gorm*. ’S e is coireach airson sin gu bheil *gorm* cuideachd a’ ciallachadh dath an fheadir. Chan e dath an fheadir ann an leithid Astràilia as t-samhradh, far a bheil e a’ fàs donn le tart is teas, ach dath an fheadir ann an dùthchannan mar Alba is Eirinn.

Tha na dathan Gàidhlig uaireannan a’ cur dragh air luchd-ionnsachaidh, ach tha mi a’ smaoinichadh gu bheil e cudthromach a bhith a’ cuimhneachadh, ged a chì a h-uile sluagh an aon speictream, gu bheil iad a’ briseadh a’ speictream an àirde ann an diofar dhòighean. Agus tha *gorm* nas fharsaing na *blue*. Tha e a’ gabhail a-steach uaine dhorch. Agus barrachd na sin.

Bha mi a' leughadh bàrdachd Ghàidhlig an oidhche roimhe agus thàinig mi tarsainn air dàn a sgrìobh a bhana-bhàrd ainmeil, Sìleas Nighean Mhic Raghnaill, neo Sìleas na Ceapaich, a bha beò anns an t-seachdamh agus an ochdamh linn deug. 'S e an t-ainm air an dàn *Còmhradh ris a' Bhàs*. Agus seo na chanas am boireannach òg ris a' Bhàs:

*“Gu dè ghruaim a chuir mi ort,  
Nuair a thàinig thu cho coimheach garg  
'S nach do ghormaich snàithn' dhe m'fhalt?”*

Chleachd Sìleas an gnìomhair “gormachadh” airson “going grey”. Mar sin, tha gorm cuideachd a' ciallachadh *grey* agus canaidh daoine *each gorm* airson each a tha dubh-ghlas. Ach, anns an fhreagairt aige, tha am Bàs a' cleachdadh facal eile airson *grey* mar a tha e ann am falt. Ma tha sibh òg 's dòcha nach bi fios agaibh dè th' ann fhathast – ach tha làn fhios agam fhèin bho bhith a' coimhead anns an sgàthan gach latha! Innsidh mi dhuibh dè th' ann an ath sheachdain.

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**Faclan na seachdainne:** choinnich mi ri: *I met*; bòidheach: *beautiful*; tuiseal tabhartach: *dative case*; gineadach: *genitive*; feur, feòir: *grass, of grass*; dath: *colour*; uaine dhorch: *dark green*; dubh-ghlas: *dark grey*; sgàthan: *mirror*.

**Abairtean na seachdainne:** a dh'aindeoin sin, chòrd an t-eilean rium glè mhath: *despite that I greatly enjoyed (being on) the island*; uabhasach fhèin laghach: *extremely nice*; mo dhùrachd dhaibh: *my best wishes to them*; bidh X air an caolachadh: *X will be slenderised (see below)*; bidh fìor dhroch bheachd aca: *they will have a really bad opinion*; far a bheil e a' fàs donn le tart is teas: *where it becomes brown with drought and heat*; ged a chì a h-uile sluagh an aon speictream: *although every people (ie linguistic group) sees the same spectrum*; gu bheil iad a' briseadh a' speictream an àirde ann an diofar dhòighean: *that they break the spectrum up in different ways (a' briseadh an àirde is an English idiom but is now so common that it has become part of the modern language)*; gu dè ghruaim a chuir mi ort?: *what sorrow have I caused you?*; nuair thàinig thu cho coimheach garg, 's nach do ghormaich snàithn' dhe m'fhalt: *that you came so fierce and cruel, though not a hair of my head has turned grey*.

**Puing ghràmair na seachdainne:** 'S ann an Ile ghuirm an fheòir a rugadh mi 's a thogadh mi: *it was in green Islay of the grass that I was born and raised*. Gorm becomes ghuirm because of two changes – sèimheachadh or lenition of the adjective following a feminine noun (Ile) and caolachadh or slenderisation of the final vowel (in this case the only one) in the adjective following a feminine noun in the dative singular. The noun would also be slenderised if it were not already slender. Another example would be anns an eaglais ghil, not anns an eaglais gheal but note that these “rules” are not universally adhered to in modern Gaelic. You will be familiar with rugadh and thogadh, but it is worth noting that this formation, known as the past tense of the indicative mood of the passive voice, can be applied to many other verbs (although it was once more common than it is today). For example, instead of chaidh sin a dhèanamh (that was made), you can say rinneadh sin. It is neater and will earn you good marks from your Gaelic teacher! If you are interested in delving more deeply into such grammatical matters, Colin Mark's “Gaelic Verbs” (Roinn nan Cànanan Ceilteach, Oilthigh Ghlaschu 1986) takes a systematic approach and is a useful addition to the learner's library.

**Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine:** Suarach cho math 's a bha an t-sìde: *the weather was pretty poor*. Suarach means “trifling” or “contemptible”. 'S e gnothach suarach a bh' ann (*it was a shabby affair*). Suarach cho math ... means *that something was poor*. Suarach cho math 's a bha mi air ball-coise nam òige (*I was a pretty useless footballer in my youth*).

\* “*Litir do Luchd-Ionnsachaidh*” is funded by Comataidh Craolaidh Gàidhlig