

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 **

Tha òran ainmeil ann am measg mòran òran matha a sgrìobh a bhana-bhàrd chliùiteach às an Eilean Sgitheanach – Mairi Mhòr nan Oran. 'S e an t-ainm a th' air “Eilean a' Cheò” agus tha e mu dheidhinn an Eilein Sgitheanaich. Tha e a' tòiseachadh mar seo: *Ged tha mo cheann air liathadh, le deuchainnean is bròn...* Agus tha sin a' toirt freagairt dhuinn airson na ceist a chuir mi oirbh aig deireadh na Litreach mu dheireadh – dè an dath as coltaiche ann an Gàidhlig ri grey ann am Beurla, co-dhiù ann am falt?

Bha mi a' dol a ràdh “falt sheann daoine”. Ach an uairsin chuimhnich mi i an coltas a th' air m' fhiasaig a-nise, agus mar a tha bàrr mo chinn ag atharrachadh cuideachd! Cha tig an aois leatha fhèin! A bheil sibh eòlach air an t-seanfhalac sin? *Cha tig an aois leatha fhèin.* Cha tig, gu dearbh. Thig rudan eile na cois, leithid falt liath.

Ach bithibh rud beag faiceallach leis a' ghnìomhair “liathadh”, 's nach dèan sibh ceangal eadar ceann a th' air liathadh agus aran a th' air liathadh. Bidh aran a' liathadh le aois cuideachd, ach air sgàth 's gum bi a' chlàimh-liath a' fàs air. Dè th' ann an clàimh-liath? *Mould!* Ged a chanadh tu gu bheil falt air ceann duine a' liathadh, chan e a' chlàimh-liath is coireach!

Thathar ag ràdh gum bithear a' toirt urram do dhuine na sheann aois. Chan eil mi cinnteach a bheil sin cho fìor 's a bha e uaireigin, ach chan eil teagamh nach eil cuid de dhaoine a' fàs nas toilichte, nas tarraingiche is nas laghaiche le aois. Agus, gun teagamh sam bith, tha iad nas eòlaiche air iomadach rud. Ach, air an làimh eile, ged a tha daoine eile a' toirt urram dhaibh, tha iad an dùil gum bi seann duine ciallach stuama. Agus canaidh iad “is miosa amaideachd na h-aois na amaideachd na h-òige.” Tha amharas agam gun tuir a' chlann agam fhìn sin rium turas neo dha!

Ach tha rudan ann a dh'fhàsas, gu cinnteach, nas fheàrr le aois. Fìon, mar eisimpleir. Agus uisge-beatha. Mar a thuir mi an t-seachdain 's a chaidh, bha mi ann an Ile as t-samhradh seo, agus chan eil àite nas fheàrr air an t-saoghal na sin airson uisge-beatha. Tha ochd taighean-staile anns an eilean, agus tha uisge-beatha Ile ainmeil air feadh an t-saoghail.

Chaidh mi air chuairt ann am fear de na taighean-staile airson faicinn mar a tha an t-uisge-beatha air a dhèanamh. Chan e gum bi mi ag òl mòran dheth, tha sibh a' tuigsinn, ach tha ùidh agam anns a' ghnìomhachas is mar a tha e ag obair. Co-dhiù, 's e sin an lethsgheil a bh' agam is a th' agam! Chaidh mi timcheall agus chunnaic mi a h-uile nì. Am measg sin, chunnaic mi teine anns am bithear a' losgadh mòine. Bidh toit na mònach, neo smùid na mònach, a' teasachadh is a' marbhadh na bracha – sin an t-eòrna a th' air a bhrachadh. Agus bidh e cuideachd a' cur fàileadh is blas na mònach air a' bhraich agus, mu dheireadh thall, anns an uisge-beatha.

Aig deireadh ar cuairt, bha cothrom aig na h-inbhich dràm dhen uisge-beatha, neo mac-na-bracha mar a chanas iad, fheuchainn. Bha mo nighean ro òg airson a leithid, ach bha i faisg orm agus dh'fheuch i fàileadh an uisge-bheatha. "O", thuirt i, "nach e a tha smùideach." An uairsin choimhead i orm le gàire. "An e sin is coireach," dh'fhaighnich i, "gu bheil sinn ag ràdh gu bheil an smùid air duine nuair a dh'òlas e cus?!"

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Faclan na seachdainne: cliùiteach: *renowned*; Mairi Mhòr nan Oran: *Big Mary of the Songs (Mary MacPherson, the Skye poetess)*; fiasag: *beard*; faiceallach: *careful*; clòimh-liath: *mould (as grows on bread)*; ciallach stuama: *sensible and temperate*; uisge-beatha: *whisky*; taigh-staile: *distillery*; toit na mònach, smùid na mònach: *peat smoke*; fàileadh: *smell*; blas: *flavour*; mac-na-bracha: *malt whisky (lit. son of the malt)*; gàire: *smile*.

Abairtean na seachdainne: am measg mòran òran matha: *among many good songs*; ged tha mo cheann air liathadh le deuchainnean is bròn: *although my head has grown grey with hardships and sadness*; mar a tha bàrr mo chinn ag atharrachadh: *how the top of my head (as opposed to my beard) is changing*; gum bithear a' toirt urram do dhuine na sheann aois: *that respect will given to a man in his old age*; chan eil teagamh nach eil cuid de dhaoine a' fàs ..: *there is no doubt that some people become..*; is miosa amaideachd na h-aois na amaideachd na h-òige: *the folly of age is worse than the folly of youth*; mar a tha an t-uisge-beatha air a dhèanamh: *how the whisky is made*; a' teasachadh is a' marbhadh na bracha: *heating and killing the malt*; an t-eòrna a th' air a bhrachadh: *the barley which is malted*; bha cothrom aig na h-inbhich dràm fheuchainn: *the adults had an opportunity to try a dram*; dh'fheuch i fàileadh an uisge-bheatha: *she smelled the whisky*; nach e a tha smùideach: *isn't it smoky?*

Puing ghràmair na seachdainne: Chan e a' chlàimh-liath is coireach: *(the) mould is not responsible. The adjective coireach derives from the noun coire (fault, guilt, blame). The verb is coireachadh (blaming, censuring). Coireach frequently appears an idiomatic form, employing the assertive verb, is. eg Cò is coireach airson seo? (who is responsible/to blame for this?). An tu fhèin is coireach? (are you responsible?). Cha mhi, 's e Seumas is coireach (no, James is to blame). In the past tense it becomes bu choireach eg cò bu choireach? (who is responsible?), an ise a bu choireach (is she to blame?), is iad uile a bu choireach (they are all to blame). Dè bu choireach nach do ghlas thu an doras? (what caused you not to lock the door?). At the end of the Litir, you will see "an e sin is coireach ... gu bheil sinn ag ràdh gu bheil an smùid air duine nuair a dh'òlas e cus?!" (is that why .. we say that somebody has the "smùid" on him when he drinks too much?!). This is a common idiomatic way of saying that somebody is under the influence of alcohol eg tha an smùid air (he is drunk).*

Seanfhacal na seachdainne: Cha tig an aois leatha fhèin: *age does not come by herself (ie she brings a lot of unwelcome attributes along with her!). This is a very common phrase. You might use it in an ironic way about yourself if you are getting forgetful or if you have, say, a chronic bad back or arthritis.*

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Roddy enjoys hearing from listeners/readers of his programme. So far, he has had e-mails from the USA, Canada, Australia, Israel, Ireland and England, in addition to Scotland. Can you add to the list of countries?