

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 **

Dè a’ Ghàidhlig a th’ agaibh airson “*lunch*”? Ceist dhoirbh, nach e? Chan eil aon fhacal ann a chleachdas a h-uile duine. Chithear tric am facal “*lòn*”, gu h-àraidh aig co-labhairtean Gàidhlig. ’S e fìor sheann fhacal Gàidhlig a th’ ann agus, ann am faclair Dwelly, mar eisimpleir, thathar ag innse dhuinn gur e sin a bh’ aig na Gaidheil o shean airson a’ bhìdh a dh’itheadh iad dìreach aon trup sa latha. Agus seallaibh air na faclan *bracaist*, *dìnnear* is *suipear*. Thàinig iad uile bhon Bheurla air sgàth ’s nach robh a leithid aig na Gaidheil o shean ann.

Ach ’s e an duilgheadas a th’ ann le *lòn*, gu bheil e cuideachd a’ ciallachadh biadh anns an fharsaingeachd agus, mar a chanar ann am Beurla, *diet*. Ma chluinneas sibh *lòn*, chan urrainn dhuibh a bhith cinnteach gu bheil e a’ ciallachadh biadh rudeigin aotrom timcheall meadhan latha mar a bhios *lunch* a’ ciallachadh, mar is trice.

Mura h-e rud uabhasach sean a th’ anns an *dìnnear* air a’ Ghaidhealtachd, tha an *lunch* fada nas òige. Nuair a thàinig *dinner* a-steach don Ghàidhlig mar *dìnnear* bha e a’ ciallachadh, mar bu trice, a’ bhìdh a ghabhadh daoine timcheall meadhan latha. B’ e sin *àm dìnnearach* neo *tràth dìnnearach*. Agus ’s e sin, gu dearbh, a tha e a’ ciallachadh fhathast do mhòran de sheann daoine air a’ Ghaidhealtachd. Canaidh iad *teatha* ris a’ bhiadh a ghabhas iad mu chòig uairean feasgar.

Ach tha an saoghal air atharrachadh. An latha an-diugh, tha a’ chuid mhòr a’ gabhail biadh mòr feasgar, as dèidh dhaibh tighinn dhachaigh airson na h-oidhche. Nach e sin an *dìnnear*? Ann am meadhan an latha, chan eil iad a’ gabhail ach ceapaire neo rola neo rudeigin aotrom. An *lunch*.

Bha an gnothach seo a’ cuairteachadh nam cheann nuair a fhuair mi lorg air leabhran beag o chionn ghoirid anns an taigh agam, leabhran a bh’ aig m’ athair airson ùine mhòir, agus nach fhaca mi airson bliadhnaichean. Eistibh ris an tiotal agus tuigidh sibh nach deach fhoillseachadh an-dè: *The Tourist’s Handbook of Gaelic and English Phrases: with pronunciation*. Nuair a chaidh a sgrìobhadh, bha mòran air a’ Ghaidhealtachd aig nach robh Beurla choilionta. Uill, tha mòran an-diugh, gu mì-fhortanach, aig nach eil Gàidhlig choilionta.

Chaidh an iris agam fhìn a chur an clò ann an naoi ceud deug, is naoi ar fhichead (1929), ach tha mi a’ smaoinneachadh gun deach an leabhran fhoillseachadh an toiseach leth-cheud bliadhna roimhe sin, ann an ochd ceud deug, trì fichead ’s a naoi-deug (1879). Tha earrann ann air a bheil “*Luncheon on the Hill*.” Bha e air a bhith feumail do na h-uaislean airson

bruidhinn ris an fheadhainn a bha gan cuideachadh nuair a bha iad a' sealg anns a' mhonadh.

Tha abairtean feumail ann mar “*come hither*” – *trobhad seo* – agus “*we will have a rest*” – *gabhaidh sinn anail*. Ach làigh mo shùil air an abairt seo: “*we will have luncheon*” – *gabhaidh sinn ar greim-nòin*. Uill, 's toil leam e. Tha e gu math nàdarrach, leis gum bi daoine tric a' cleachdadh “greim” airson biadh nach eil ro mhòr. Canaidh sinn rudan mar “an gabh thu greim?” nuair a tha sinn a' tabhann biadh do chuideigin. Agus 's dòcha gum bi cuimhn' agaibh air an fhacal *nòin*, a tha car coltach ri *noon* ann am Beurla. Thug sinn sùil air ann an Litir dà fhichead 's a còig (45) anns a' Mhàrt.

Agus cò sgrìobh an leabhran beag seo? Uill, sàr-bhana-bhàrd a bha uaireigin gu math ainmeil am measg nan Gaidheal – Màiri NicEalair. Bheir sinn sùil air a beatha an ath sheachdain.

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Faclan na seachdainne: bracaist: *breakfast*; suipear: *supper*; ceapaire: *sandwich* (*but the English is often used*); rola: (*bread*) *roll*; earrann: *section*; a' tabhann: *offering*; sàr-bhana-bhàrd: *a first-class poetess*; Màiri NicEalair: *Mary MacKellar*.

Abairtean na seachdainne: chithear tric X: *X is often seen*; thathar ag innse dhuinn gur e sin a bh' aig na Gaidheil o shean: *we are told that that is what the Gaels had (said) in olden times*; mar is trice: *usually*; tha an saoghal air atharrachadh: *the world has changed*; tha a' chuid mhòr a' gabhail biadh mòr feasgar: *the majority have their main meal in the evening*; tuigidh sibh nach deach fhoillseachadh an-dè: *you will understand it was not published yesterday*; bha mòran aig nach robh Beurla choilionta: *there were many who did not speak perfect English*; chaidh an iris agam fhìn a chur an clò: *my own edition was printed*; tha mi a' smaoinichadh gun deach an leabhran fhoillseachadh an toiseach: *I think the booklet was first published*; bha e air a bhith feumail do na h-uaislean: *it would have been useful to the gentry*; làigh mo shùil air an abairt seo: *my eye rested on this phrase*; an gabh thu greim?: *will you take a bite to eat?*

Puing ghràmair na seachdainne: *This week's text concerns the Gaelic for “lunch”. In the time of Edward Dwelly, the compiler of the famous Gaelic-English dictionary (I hope you all have a copy!), even the concept of a “dinner” (dìnnear), as part of a day of multiple meals, was a “modern introduction”. The Gael of old, in common with many other peoples, had one meal per day, called the lòn. But neither dìnnear nor lòn are time-specific, and they are not precisely equivalent to the modern lunch. One way around this is in Gaelic is to employ compound nouns which bring in the time element. A modern example is biadh meadhan-latha (midday food). Two older words are biadh-nòin (noon food) and greim-nòin (lit. a noon bite). There is a nice symmetry in the use of greim-nòin, as the word “lunch” in English derives from nuncheon (through luncheon), and ultimately from the Middle English none (noon) and schench (drink). And, as we saw in Litir 45 (31 March 2000), the English noon and the Gaelic nòin both originate from the same Latin word, nona.*

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdainne: Gabhaidh sinn anail: *we will have a rest*.

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