

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

An t-seachdain 's a chaidh, thug mi an tòimhseachan seo dhuibh:

*Is àirde e na taigh an Rìgh  
Is mìne e nan sìoda*

'S e toit a th' ann – toit a tha èirigh gu h-àrd bho shimilear. Ach, mar a thuirt mo nighean rium, tha freagairt eile ann – neul anns an adhar, agus cha b' urrainn dhomh dhol as àicheadh sin

A bheil sibh eòlach air an fhacal “taod”? Tha e a' ciallachadh “ròp” neo “teadhair” – ròp a th' air a chur gu feum airson beathach a cheangal ri rudeigin. Nochdaidh e tric ann an seanfhaclan, agus seo eisimpleir – *Nuair as teinne an taod, 's ann as dualtaiche dha bhriseadh.*

Uaireannan bidh daoine a' cur seanfhaclan an lùib sgeulachdan, neo cleachdaidh iad abairt ann an sgeulachd a tha car coltach ri seanfhacal a tha aithnichte don mhòr-shluagh. Seo agaibh seann sgeulachd à Ros an Iar a tha a' dèanamh sin. Anns an t-seann aimsir, nan robh obair mhòr aig feadhainn ri dhèanamh anns an sgìre sin, is mura robh luchd-taic gu leòr aca, chanadh iad “is truagh nach eil sguad Coill' a' Chaolais againn”. 'S e a bh' ann an Coill' a' Chaolais clachan faisg air Loch Dùghaill, eadar Ach nan Seileach agus Loch Carrann, agus seo mar a thàinig an abairt sin gu bith.

Bha fear, air an robh Donnchadh mar ainm, uaireigin a' fuireach ann an Coill' a' Chaolais. Latha a bha seo, bha e a' treabhadh na talmhainn aige le cas-chrom. Thuirt e ris fhèin gum b' fheàrr leis gu robh an obair dèante. Cha mhòr gu robh na faclan a-mach às a' bheul aige, nuair a nochd bodachan beag ri thaobh, le cas-chrom bheag air a ghualainn fhèin. “Tha mi a' tighinn airson cobhair a dhèanamh ort, a Dhonnchaidh,” thuirt e.  
“Is mi a tha taingeil d'fhaicinn,” fhreagair Donnchadh.

Nuair a bhiodh sguad ag obair còmhla le casan-croma, bha e na chleachdadh gun tòiseachadh am fear leis an robh am fearann gach sgrìob. Chanadh iad “put” ris an fhàd a bhiodh a' chas-chrom a' tionndadh, agus bha facal sònraichte aca airson a' chiad phut' air gach sgrìob – “am put fuaraidh”. Bha aig Donnchadh ri gach put fuaraidh a dhèanamh.

Cho luath 's a bha e air a' chiad phut fuaraidh a dhèanamh, chaidh e air adhart don ath sgrìob, agus ghabh e iongnadh. Bha am bodachan beag air a shàil, deiseil airson an còrr dhen sgrìob a threabhadh. Bha e cho luath 's gu robh e air a' chiad sgrìob a chrìochnachadh

ann am priobadh-sùla. Agus bha e cianail fhèin èasgaidh, ag èigheachd, “Am put fuaraidh, a Dhonnchaidh, am put fuaraidh”, agus e deiseil airson na h-ath-sgrìob.

Chum gnothaichean a dol mar seo, le Donnchadh a’ tòiseachadh gach sgrìob, agus am fear beag air a shàil, ag èigheachd, “Am put fuaraidh, a Dhonnchaidh, am put fuaraidh.” Cha b’ fhada gus an robh an obair crìochnaichte. Choimhead Donnchadh air an achadh a bh’ air ùr-threabhadh agus bha e cho sona ris an Rìgh. Dh’fhaighnich e dhen bhodachan gu dè an duais a bha e ag iarraidh airson a chuid obrach.

“Aon ghad guailne dhen arbhar,” fhreagair an duine beag.

“Cha mhòr ghabhas sin,” arsa Donnchadh, agus cha do smaoinich e càil e a bharrachd mu dheidhinn.

Chaidh an t-earrach is an samhradh seachad agus, latha a bha seo, dhìrich Donnchadh cnoc airson sealladh fhaighinn dhen àite. Mar a tha fios againn, ’s iad cnuic na h-àiteachan as fheàrr leis na sìthichean. Agus, an ath-sheachdain, innsidh mi dhuibh na thachair as t-fhoghar ann an Coill’ a’ Chaolais.

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**Faclan na seachdaine:** toit: *smoke*; similear: *chimney*; neul: *cloud*; teadhair: *a rope, halter, tether*; Ach nan Seileach: *Achnashellach*; Loch Carrann: *Lochcarron*; cas-chrom: *the old foot-plough of the Gael. (It lit. means “crooked spade” but is always referred to by its Gaelic name, even in English)*; gualann: *shoulder*; sgrìob: *furrow made by a cas-chrom*; am put fuaraidh: *the first sod turned by a cas-chrom at the beginning of a “sgrìob”*; priobadh-sùla: *a blinking of an eye*; èasgaidh: *enthusiastic, zealous*; ag èigheachd: *shouting*; duais: *reward*; dhìrich e: *he climbed*.

**Abairtean na seachdaine:** cha b’ urrainn dhomh dhol as àicheadh sin: *I couldn’t deny that*; a tha aithnichte don mhòr-shluagh: *which is known to the population*; nan robh obair mhòr aig X ri dhèanamh: *if X had to do a lot of work*; is truagh nach eil sguad Coill’ a’ Chaolais againn: *it’s a pity we don’t have the Coill’ a’ Chaolais squad*; bha e a’ treabhadh na talmhainn aige: *he was ploughing his land*; gum b’ fheàrr leis gu robh an obair dèante: *that he wished the work were done*; airson cobhair a dhèanamh ort: *to help you*; is mi a tha taingeil d’fhaicinn: *lit. it’s me that is pleased to see you*; cha b’ fhada gus an robh an obair crìochnaichte: *it wasn’t long before the work was finished*; a bh’ air ùr-threabhadh: *that was newly ploughed*; aon ghad guailne dhen arbhar: *the amount of corn that can be carried on a person’s shoulder*; cha mhòr ghabhas sin: *that won’t take much*; ’s iad cnuic na h-àiteachan as fheàrr leis na sìthichean: *smallish hills are the places the fairies like best*.

**Puing ghràmair na seachdaine:** Bha am bodachan beag air a shàil: *the wee old man was at his heel. Can you tell the difference, when listening to Gaelic, between sàil (a heel) and sàl (the sea or salt water)? It is all to do with the very important Gaelic “l”s which I last mentioned in Litir 46 (07.04.00). When preceded by a narrow vowel, as in sàil, the “l” is slender (a little like “lute” in English); when preceded by a broad vowel as in sàl, the “l” is broad – a bit like the “ll” in “Oor Wullie” as pronounced by a person from western central Scotland. Try these sounds with your Gaelic teacher or a fluent speaker. The complication comes from the fact that sàl slenderises in the genitive case to either sàil or sàile and that sàil works in the opposite way – it changes to sàl or sàlach in the genitive! But if you understand how the grammar works, you should have no problems, as long as you remember that sàil (heel) is a feminine noun and that sàl (sea) is masculine. So we would say tha an t-sàil mòr (the heel is big) and tha an sàl fuar (the sea is cold); meudachd na*

sàl(ach) (*the size of the heel*) and coltas an t-sàil(e) (the look of the sea). *You will meet with the phrase “thar sàile” (over sea) in poetry and song; the preposition thar takes the genitive case.*

**Seanfhacal na seachdaine:** Nuair as teinne an taod, 's ann as dualtaiche dha bhriseadh: *when the rope is at its tightest, it is most likely to break.*

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