

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 **

Saoil de cho fada 's a mhaireas an siostam-cunntaidh ann an Gàidhlig a tha fhathast stèidhichte air ficheadan, seach deichean? Cha do ràinig e deireadh an rathaid fhathast ach chanainn gum bi sinn deiseil airson faighinn cuidhteas e taobh a-staigh trichead bliadhna, neo deich bliadhna fichead.

Dhomh fhìn, tha rudeigin snog mu dheidhinn a bhith a' cunntadh ann am ficheadan. Tha e nas nàdarraiche dhomh ann an Gàidhlig, ged a tha e nàdarraich dhomh cunntadh ann an deichean ann am Beurla. Uaireannan, tha an seann siostam a cheart cho sgiobalta ris an t-siostam deiceach. Smaoinichibh tiotan air an àireamh “*one hundred and seventy five*”, mar a chanadh iad ann am Beurla. Anns an t-siostam ùr ann an Gàidhlig, chanamaid “ceud, seachdad 's a còig”; anns an t-seann siostam, chanamaid “ochd fichead 's a còig-deug”.

Cha mhòr nach eil a h-uile cànan anns an Roinn Eòrpa air gluasad air falbh bho fhicheadan, is a dh'ionnsaigh deichean. Agus chan fhada gus an lean a' Ghàidhlig orra. 'S e siostam nan deichean a thathar a' teagasg anns na sgoiltean Gàidhlig.

Chanadh na Frangaich, 's dòcha, gu bheil iad fhèin air beagan de dhualchas nam ficheadan a ghlèidheadh, leis gur e “*quatre-vingts*” a th' aca air ceithir fichead, neo ochdad. Gu ìre, tha sin fìor, agus chan eil facal aca airson naodhad, neo ceithir fichead 's a deich, ach “*quatre-vingt-dix*”. Agus chan eil facal àraidh aca airson seachdad nas motha. Canaidh iad “*soixante-dix*”.

Ach chan eil sin co-ionann air feadh nan dùthchannan a bhruidhneas Frangais. Anns a' Bheilg agus an Eilbheis, mar eisimpleir, canaidh iad “*septante*” airson seachdad, “*huitante*” airson ochdad agus “*nonante*” airson naodhad.

Tha e annasach an ùine a thugadh ann a bhith a' stèidheachadh siostam nan deichean ann an tomhas is airgead ann an diofar rìoghachan. Ann an seachd ceud deug, ceithir fichead 's a deich, neo seachd ceud deug is naodhad (1790), mhol Tòmas Jefferson siostam-tomhais ùr do na Stàitean Aonaichte, stèidhichte air deichean. Dà bhliadhna as dèidh sin, rinn na h-Aimeireaganaich a' chiad airgead air an t-saoghal a bha gu tur deiceach. Ach, a dh'aindeoin sin, còrr is dà cheud bliadhna as dèidh don doilear nochdadh, tha mòran rudan fhathast ann am Aimeireaga nach eil stèidhichte air deichean.

Ann am Breatainn, bhathar a' comharrachadh, air a' mhìos 's a chaidh, mar a bha deich bliadhna fichead, neo trichead bliadhna, air a dhol seachad bho dh'atharraich an t-airgead don t-siostam a th' againn a-nise. Ach, a dh'aindeoin gu bheil sinn a' pàigheadh airson peatral ann an airgead deiceach, is a dh'aindeoin gu bheil sin a' ceannach peatral ann an

tomhasan deicheach – litearan seach galanan – tha sinn fhathast a’ siubhal astar air na rathaidean ann am mìltean, seach ciolomeatairean. Dè cho ciallach ’s a tha sin?!

Bho àm gu àm, bidh mi fhathast a’ cluinntinn daoine ann an Alba ag ràdh, “B’ fheàrr leam puinnnd is galanan. Bha còir aca an seann siostam-tomhais a ghlèidheadh. Cha tuig mi an siostam ùr gu bràth.” Uill, chan eil mi-fhìn cho cinnteach mu dheidhinn sin. Agus, mar dhearbhadh air a sin, seo agaibh ceist:

Dè an cuideam, ann am puinnnd, a th’ air galan de dh’uisge? Mmm, cuiridh mi geall nach eil fios agaibh. Ach dè an cuideam, ann an ciolograman, a th’ air litear de dh’uisge? Tha aonan, agus tha mi cinnteach gu robh fios agaibh air a sin. Tha sin fhèin a’ sealltainn cho fada ’s a tha sinn air gluasad air falbh on t-seann siostam-tomhais mar-thà. Aig a’ cheann thall, aithreachas ann neo às, falbhaidh na ficheadan air an dearbh rathad a ghabh am punnd is an galan.

* * *

Faclan na seachdaine: deicheach: *decimal*; ochdad: *eighty*; seachdad: *seventy*; naodhad: *ninety* (for more notes on the new counting system, see *Litir 29, 03.12.99*); co-ionann: *equivalent*; a’ Bheilg: *Belgium*; an Eilbheis: *Switzerland*; stèidhichte: *established*; mìltean: *miles*; ciolomeatairean: *kilometres*; ciallach: *sensible*; cuideam: *weight*; ciolograman: *kilograms*; mar-thà: *already*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: Saoil dè cho fada ’s a mhaireas X?: *how long do you think X will last?*; chanainn gum bi sinn deiseil airson faighinn cuidhteas e taobh a-staigh trichead bliadhna: *I would say that we shall be ready to get rid of it within 30 years*; tha e nas nàdarraiche dhomh ann an Gàidhlig: *it is more natural for me in Gaelic*; cha mhòr nach eil a h-uile cànan air gluasad air falbh o fhicheadan: *nearly all languages have moved away from twenties*; gu bheil iad air beagan de X a ghlèidheadh: *that they have preserved a little of X*; siostam nan deichean ann an tomhas is airgead ann an diofar rìoghachdan: *the decimal system in measures and currency in various countries*; a’ chiad airgead air an t-saoghal a bha gu tur deicheach: *the first currency in the world that was entirely decimal*; litearan seach galanan: *litres instead of gallons*; b’ fheàrr leam puinnnd: *I preferred pounds*; cha tuig mi an siostam ùr gu bràth: *I’ll never understand the new system*; cuiridh mi geall nach eil fios agaibh: *I’ll bet you don’t know*; aig a’ cheann thall: *in the end*; falbhaidh na ficheadan air an dearbh rathad a ghabh am punnd is an galan: *the twenties will go down the same road as the pound and gallon. [And an additional note for those with a particular interest: a gallon of water weighs 8.3 pounds!]*

Puing ghràmair na seachdaine: Còrr is dà cheud bliadhna as dèidh don doilear nochdadh: *more than 200 years after the dollar appeared. I would like to make a point this week about the use of “as dèidh”, which means “after”. The first thing to note is that is entirely equivalent to “an dèidh” and “an deaghaidh” which are just dialectal differences. Because it is a compound preposition, made of two elements, any noun following it goes into the genitive case. Thus we say as dèidh mhìosan (after months), as dèidh an t-samhraidh (after the summer) and as dèidh a’ phrògram seo (after this program). But where it is followed by a verbal clause, where the verb is in the active voice (we’ll look at the passive situation on another occasion), the sentence takes a structure as follows: as dèidh do Chalum obair-dachaigh a dhèanamh (after Calum did his homework). Note the “do” (or “dha” in some dialects). Here is another example: as dèidh do Sheònaid an leabhar fhosgladh (after Janet opened the book). Note also the use of prepositional pronouns eg as dèidh dhomh mo bhracaist a ghabhail (after I took my breakfast); as dèidh dhuinn an taigh a pheantadh (after*

we painted the house); dè rinn thu as dèidh dhut do dhreuchd a leigeil seachad? (*what did you do after you retired?*).

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine: Aithreachas ann neo às: *with or without regret*.

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