

## *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) \* Today’s Litir is number 100.*

Halò agus fàilte oirbh. Tha sinn air rudeigin de chlach-mhìle a ruigsinn an t-seachdain-sa. ’S i seo a’ cheudamh Litir bho thòisich am prògram o chionn dà bhliadhna, agus bu mhath leam taing mhòr a thoirt don a h-uile duine a th’ air sgrìobhadh thugam thairis air an ùine sin.

Chleachd mi am facal *clach-mhìle* ann a sin. Thuirt mi *clach-mhìle*, seach *clach-mìle*. An urrainn dhuibh innse dhomh carson? Uill, ’s e is coireach gu bheil am facal *clach* boireann. Mar sin, tha am facal *mìle* air a shèimheachadh, mar a bhios sinn a’ sèimheachadh buadhair as dèidh ainmeair boireann. Clach mhòr, clach bhàn is mar sin air adhart.

Chì sibh an aon seòrsa rud ann am faclan eile, leithid *clach-bhleith*, neo *grindstone*, agus *clach-bhràthan* neo *quernstone*. Chan eil fhios a’ m cia mheud agaibh a bhios eòlach air brà – chan eil a leithid cumanta an-diugh ann, ach ann an taighean-tasgaidh, ’s dòcha. Dh’fhairich mi tè turas a bha mi ann an taigh ann am baile beag anns na beanntan ann an Nepal. Tha mi ag ràdh gun do dh’fhairich mi i air sgàth ’s gur i a dhùisg mi mu chòig uairean sa mhadainn, agus solas an latha fhathast gun tighinn.

B’ iad dithis pheathraichean a bha a’ dèanamh na h-obrach. Chuir iad sìl arbhair-Innseanaich a-steach don toll anns a’ chloich uachdaraich, ris an canar *sùil na bràthan*, agus thionndaidh iad a’ chlach sin. Uill, abair fuaim. B’ e sin deireadh ar cadail airson na h-oidhche! Ach, ged a bha mi sgìth, cha robh am fuaim buileach gun tlachd. Bha na nigheanan a’ seinn cuideachd – òrain-obrach – dìreach mar a bhiodh na Gaidheil o shean nuair a chleachdadh iad a’ bhrà.

An cuala sibh a-riamh am facal *clach-chinn*? Chan e *ceann-cloiche* – ’s e rud eadar-dhealaichte a tha sin! ’S e *clach-chinn* rud a chì sibh ann an cladh, a’ comharrachadh uaigh. Cluinnidh sibh cuideachd *clach-uaighe*. Anns an t-seann aimsir, bha mòran de chlachan-uaighe na Gaidhealtachd nan laighe air an talamh, seach a’ stobadh an àirde mar a tha iad an-diugh. Agus, ma thèid sibh gu seann chladh, chì sibh feadhainn ann fhathast. ’S ann tric a tha iad còmhdaichte le còinneach.

Agus tha sin gam thoirt gu seanfhacal anns a bheil am facal *clach*. ’S dòcha gum bi sibh air thoiseach orm is gu bheil fios agaibh mar-thà air na tha mi a’ dol a ràdh. Tha seanfhacal car coltach ris anns cha mhòr a h-uile cànan anns an Roinn Eòrpa, a rèir choltais. Seo e ann am Frangais – *la pierre qui roule n’amasse pas de mousse*. Ann am Beurla, bidh sibh eòlach air – *a rolling stone gathers no moss*. Agus ann an Gàidhlig - *a’ chlach a thionndaidhear tric, cha tig còinneach oirre*. A’ chlach a thionndaidhear tric, cha tig còinneach oirre.

Uill, leis an fhìrinn innse, tha dà dhreach air an t-seanfhacl. Cluinnidh sibh cuideachd – *cha chinn còinneach air clach an udalain* – *moss does not grow on an oft-turned stone*. 'S e *udalan* rud a thionndaidheas bho thaobh gu taobh – *swivel* neo *hinge* neo a leithid. Cha chinn còinneach air clach an udalain. Ach, ma chanas sibh sin, cuimhnicibh gu bheil “o” fada ann an *còinneach* neo 's dòcha gun can sibh rudeigin nach eil buileach iomchaidh!

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**Faclan na seachdainne:** clach-mhìle: *milestone*; brà: *quern*; cumanta: *common*; taighean-tasgaidh: *museums*; òrain-obrach: *work songs*; clach-chinn, clach-uaighe: *headstone, gravestone*; cladh: *cemetery*; udalan: *swivel, hinge, something that turns or rotates*.

**Abairtean na seachdainne:** a' cheudamh Litir: *the hundredth Litir*; tha X air a shèimheachadh: *X is lenited (aspirated)*; mar a bhios sinn a' sèimheachadh buadhair as dèidh ainmeir boireann: *as we lenite an adjective after a feminine noun*; b' iad dithis pheathraichean a bha a' dèanamh na h-obrach: *it was two sisters that were doing the work*; chuir iad sìl arbhair Innseanaich a-steach don toll anns a' chloich uachdaraich: *they put maize seed into the hole in the upper stone (of the quern)*; b' e sin deireadh ar cadail airson na h-oidhche: *that was the end of our sleep for the night*; cha robh am fuaim buileach gun tlachd: *the noise was not entirely without pleasure*; seach a' stobadh an àirde mar a tha iad an-diugh: *rather than standing upright as they do today*; 's ann tric a tha iad còmhdhaichte le còinneach: *it is often they are covered with moss*; tha dà dhreach air an t-seanfhacl: *the proverb exists in two forms*; cuimhnicibh gu bheil “o” fada ann an còinneach: *remember that còinneach has a long “o”*; gun can sibh rudeigin nach eil buileach iomchaidh: *you might say something that is not altogether appropriate (if you don't make the “o” long in “còinneach”, you end up with “Coinneach”, the Gaelic equivalent of Kenneth!)*

**Puing ghràmair na seachdainne:** *Firstly, answers to the three questions I posed last week. This stone fell on the children: thuit a' chlach seo air a' chloinn. Put the cup on the stone: cuir an cupa air a' chloich. I am looking for my wife: Tha mi a' sireadh mo mhnà/tha mi a' coimhead airson mo mhnà. Now, in this week's Litir, you may have noticed that I said “dh'fhairich mi” when I meant that I heard the sound of the quernstone at work, rather than “chuala mi”. This is a common expression for hearing something for which you are not necessarily listening. So, you may well be asked, “an d'fhairich thu a' chuthag fhathast am-bliadhna?” (have you heard the cuckoo yet this year?). You might say, “chuala mi air a rèidio thu” (you were actively listening to the radio) but “dh'fhairich mi an spreadhadh” (I heard the explosion – which suddenly happened out of the blue). In the last case, one might be pushed to translate it simply as “I heard the explosion” because the speaker might have meant “I sensed...” or “I felt the explosion”. In all of these, faireachdainn is the most appropriate Gaelic verb. Why not ask somebody today if they have heard the cuckoo yet this year?*

**Seanfhaclan na seachdainne:** a' chlach a thionndaidhear tric, cha tig còinneach oirre. Cha chinn còinneach air clach an udalain. *Both of these proverbs are direct equivalents of the English “a rolling stone gathers no moss.”*

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