

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 **

A bheil cuimhn’ agaibh air Litir ochdad ’s a h-ochd (88) air an darna latha dhen Ghearran am-bliadhna, nuair a bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu dheidhinn a’ bhàird ainmeil, Uilleam Ros, agus mu dheidhinn an òrain-ghaoil aige do Mhòr Ros anns a bheil na faclan, “Carson nach d’rugadh dall mi?” Uill, bha mi ann an Geàrrloch, ann an Siorrachd Rois, aig toiseach na mìos airson fosgladh taisbeanaidh anns a bheil bàird na sgìre air an comharrachadh. Agus am measg nam bàrd, gu dearbh, anns a’ phrìomh àite, chanadh mòran, tha Uilleam Ros. Bhuineadh a mhàthair do Gheàrrloch agus chuir Uilleam fhèin seachad bliadhnaichean a’ fuireach ann.

Bha bàrdachd anns an dualchas aige. Bha a sheanair, air taobh a mhàthar, cuideachd na bhàrd, agus tha e fhèin air a chomharrachadh anns an taisbeanadh. ’S e an t-ainm a bh’ air Iain MacAoidh, ged is e am frith-ainm aige as aithne don chuid as motha – am Pìobaire Dall. ’S ann air sgàth a dhoille a tha mi uaireannan a’ smaoinichadh gu bheil e rudeigin annasach gun do sgrìobh Uilleam na faclan sin – “Carson nach d’rugadh dall mi?” mar gu robh doille air stad a chur air bho bhith a’ gabhail gaol mòr air a leannan.

Bha Iain air leth math mar phìobaire. Tha diofar bheachdan air a dhoille, ge-tà. Tha cuid dhen bheachd gun do chaill e fhradharc aig aois seachd bliadhna, agus gur i a’ bhreac a chuir às dha. Tha cuid eile, ge-tà, a’ cumail a-mach gun do rugadh e dall.

Ach cha do chuir doille stad air a phìobaireachd. Bha e na oileanach aig sgoil ainmeil anns an Eilean Sgitheanach, a bh’ air a ruith le cuid de Chloinn ’ic Cruimein. Bha e cho math air a’ phìob ’s gun deach dà sheanfhalac a chruthachadh air a shàilleabh.

Aon turas bha Iain Dall agus oileanach eile a’ seinn na pìoba, fear ma seach, agus MacCruimein ag èisteachd riutha. Bha Iain na b’ fheàrr, agus dh’fhaighnich MacCruimein dhen fhear eile carson nach robh e a’ cluich mar Iain Dall. “Dhèanainn sin,” fhreagair an gille, “mura robh mo mhedir as dèidh na sgait.” Bha e a’ ciallachadh gu robh e air a bhith ag ithe sgait, agus gu robh a mhedir, a chorragan, leanailteach, neo “stigeach” mar a chanas mòran an-diugh. Is cha robh iad a’ gluasad gu ceart air an fheadan. Agus bho sin a-mach, chanadh daoine mu dheidhinn droch phìobaire gu robh “a mhedir as dèidh na sgait.”

Bha fear de Chloinn ’ic Cruimein, air an robh “Pàdraig Caogach”, a bha e glè ainmeil mar phìobaire. Thòisich e turas air port a chruthachadh ach cha b’ urrainn dha crìoch a chur air. Airson dà bhliadhna, dh’fheuch e ri chrìochnachadh, ach dh’fhailnich air. Ghabh Iain Dall truas ris, agus chuir e fhèin crìoch air.

Uill, cha robh Pàdraig toilichte. Ghabh e caothach. Agus a rèir beul-aithris, dh'fheuch e fhèin is caraidean dha cur às do dh'Iain le bhith ga thilgeil far mullach cnuic. Ach mhair Iain beò, ged a thuit e còrr is seachd meatair. O chionn ceud bliadhna, bha muinntir Bhoraraig fhathast ag aithneachadh an àite far an do thachair seo mar “Leum an Doill”. Chan eil fhios agam co-dhiubh tha iad ga aithneachadh fhathast.

Chan eil fhios agam dè thachair do Phàdraig nas motha, ach 's e “Lasan Phàdraig Chaogaich” a chaidh a chur air a' phort mar ainm. Agus air sgàth na thachair, chaidh an seanfhacal seo a chruthachadh airson Iain Doill – “*Chaidh am foghlam os cionn Mhic Cruimein.*” Sin Iain Dall mar phìobaire. An ath-sheachdain bheir sinn sùil air a chuid bhàrdachd.

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Faclan na seachdaine: an Gearran: *February*; Iain MacAoidh: *John Mackay*; am Piobaire Dall: *the Blind Piper*; dhèanainn: *I would do*; leanailteach, stigeach: *sticky*; Pàdraig Caogach: *winking Peter or possibly squint-eyed Peter*; port: *tune*; muinntir Bhoraraig: *the people of Bhoraraig (in N. Skye)*; Leum an Doill: *the blind man's leap*; lasan: *wrath, passionate anger*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: mu dheidhinn an òrain-ghaoil aige do Mhòr Ros: *about his love song to Marion Ross*; carson nach d'rugadh dall mi?: *why was I not born blind?*; airson fosgladh taisbeanaidh anns a bheil bàird na sgìre air an comharrachadh: *for the opening of an exhibition in which the area's bards are noted*; bhuineadh a mhàthair do Gheàrrloch: *his mother belonged to Gairloch*; mar gu robh doille air stad a chur air bho bhith a' gabhail gaol mòr air a leannan: *as if blindness would have stopped him from falling in love with his sweetheart*; gun do chaill e fhradharc aig aois seachd bliadhna: *that he lost his sight at the age of 7 years*; gur i a' bhreac a chuir as dha: *that it was smallpox that destroyed it (his sight)*; a bh' air a ruith le cuid de Chloinn 'ic Cruimein: *run by some MacCrimmons*; a' seinn na pìoba: *playing the bagpipes*; fear ma seach: *in turns*; cha robh iad a' gluasad gu ceart air an fheadan: *they weren't moving properly on the chanter*; ghabh X truas ris: *X took pity on him*; Ghabh e caothach: *he lost his temper*; cha b' urrainn dha crìoch a chur air: *he could not finish it*; le bhith ga thilgeil far mullach cnuic: *by throwing him off the top of a hill*; chan eil fhios agam dè thachair do Phàdraig nas motha: *neither do I know what happened to Peter*.

Puing ghràmair na seachdaine: Airson dà bhliadhna, dh'fheuch e ri chrìochnachadh, ach dh'fhàillnich air: *for two years, he tried to finish it (masc.), but failed. If you are listening to a Gaelic conversation and you hear a “dh” (which sounds like a soft “g” in front of a broad vowel and a “y” in front of a narrow vowel) starting a verb, do you sometimes have difficulty working out what the verb is? The “dh” is a sound device which gets over the problem of a consonant combination at the beginning of a word which produces no sound – a common example is a lenited “f” – ie “fh”. So there is a good chance your verb will start with an “f”. For example, we say dh'fhosgail e an doras (he opened the door), dh'fhairich e an spreadhadh (he heard the explosion), dh'fhàillnich air (he failed), dh'fheuch e sin (he tried that) and dh'fheòraich e (he asked). The word “fàilneachadh” (fàilligeadh in some places) means “failed” and is followed by the preposition “air” eg Dh'fhàillnich air Uisdean an obair a chrìochnachadh (Hugh failed to complete the work); dh'fhàillnich oirre (she failed); dh'fhàillnich oirnn (we failed).*

Seanfhaclan na seachdaine: tha a mhedir as dèidh na sgait: *his fingers are after the skate – a comment made of a bad piper. The reason for this is explained in the text.* Chaidh am foghlam os cionn Mhic Cruimein: *the education outstripped MacCrimmon – this is*

equivalent to saying that the student has surpassed the teacher and can be used as a proverb in that context – it need have nothing to do with piping. Mhic Cruimein is Mac Cruimein in the genitive case, following the compound preposition, os cionn.

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