

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 **

O chionn greis, ann an Litir naoidhead 's a ceithir (94), rinn mi aithris air samhlaidhean mu dheidhinn coin, anns a bheil na beathaichean sin a' faighinn droch chliù. *Cho sgìth ri cù* is a leithid sin. Uill, goirid as dèidh sin, fhuair mi brath tron phost-dealain bho neach-èisteachd aig a bheil Gàidhlig na h-Eireann, ag innse dhomh gu robh co-dhiù aon seanfhacal ann an Eirinn a bha a' sealltainn beachd eadar-dhealaichte air coin.

Ma 's math mo chuimhne, agus gabhaibh mo leisgeul ma tha mi air a dhol beagan tuathal leis, 's e a bh' ann, “Tá saol an mhadaidh bhàin aige” neo, anns a' Ghàidhlig againne, “Tha saoghal a' choin bhàin aige, neo “Tha beatha a' choin bhàin aige”. Tha sin a' ciallachadh gu bheil “e” – an duine – gu math fortanach.

Uill, is math sin agus bu mhath leam fhaighinn a-mach dè is coireach gu bheil coin bhàna nas fhortanaiche na coin dubha. Co-dhiù, tha smuaintean stèidhichte air a sin air a bhith a' cuairteachadh nam cheann. Agus 's e na thàinig asta – “seanfhacal” nach eil sean idir air sgàth 's gu bheil mi dìreach air a chruthachadh an-dràsta fhèin. “Tha saoghal a' choin Rùmaich aige”. Tha sin a' ciallachadh, “*he has the life of a Rum dog*”, sin cù a bhuineas do dh'Eilean Rùm. Tha saoghal a' choin Rùmaich aige.

Carson a chanainn sin? Uill, tha deagh adhbhar agam, ach feumaidh mi ràdh anns a' chiad dol a-mach nach ann air coin Rùmach an latha an-diugh a tha mi a' smaoinichadh, ach air an fheadhainn a bh' ann faisg air ceud bliadhna air ais.

Bha Seòras Bullough air fear de na daoine a bu bheartaiche ann am Breatainn aig an àm. Bha athair, Iain, air airgead mòr a dhèanamh ann an gnìomhachas a' chlà ann an Sasainn, agus bha e air Rùm a cheannach airson sealg ann. Bha uachdaran roimhe air a' chuid a bu mhotha de na daoine a bhuineadh don eilean fhuadachadh.

Ann an ochd ceud deug is seachdad (1870), chaochail Iain, agus fhuair Seòras an oighreachd. Chuir e roimhe nàdar de “chaisteal”, neo co-dhiù taigh mòr mòr, a thogail anns an eilean, agus chaidh sin a dhèanamh air an taobh sear, aig ceann Loch Sgrèasort. Tha e ann fhathast.

Chaidh clach-ghainmhich ruadh a thoirt a-steach às Arainn agus dh'obraich sgioba de thrì cheud duine, cuid aca às Eilean Eige, fad trì bliadhna airson an caisteal a thogail. Dh'iarr Bullough air an luchd-obrach fèilidhean beaga a chur orra fhad 's a bha iad ag obair, agus thug e tasdan a bharrachd gach seachdain dhaibh nan dèanadh iad sin.

Ach dh'fhàs an luchd-obrach mì-thoilichte, agus na meanbh-chuileagan ann an Rùm cho fiadhaich. An uairsin, thug Bullough da sgillinn a bharrachd gach là dhaibh airson smocadh – airson na cuileagan a chumail air falbh!

Aig a' cheann thall, dh'èirich caisteal àraidh, le na h-uimhir de rumannan ann, le taighean-gloinne is leas mòr, raon-golf, taighean làn thurtairean is ailigeutairean is mar sin air adhart. Cha do thuig Seòras Bullough am facal “spìocaireachd”. Uill, cha do thuig a rèir cuid de rudan co-dhiù.

Agus tha sin gam thoirt do na coin. Bha taigh-chon aig Bullough, làimh ris a' chaisteal, a bha gu math goireasach do na creutairean a bha a' fuireach ann. Bha siostam-teasachaidh ann gus nach fhàsadh na coin fuar. 'S e a bha laghach dhaibh.

Ach – agus seo a' phuing, saoilidh mi – cha robh siostam-teasachaidh sam bith anns na seòmraichean far an robh na sgalagan neo searbhantan a' feuchainn ri cadal fhaighinn air oidhcheannan fuara. Cha robh saoghal a' choin Rùmaich acasan.

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Faclan na seachdaine: samhloidhean: *similes*; droch chliù: *a bad reputation*; neach-èisteachd: *listener*; gnìomhachas a' chlà: *the textile industry*; oighreachd: *estate*; Loch Sgrèasort: *Loch Scresort*; Eilean Eige: *Isle of Eigg*; fèilidhean beaga: *kilts*; meanbh-chuileagan: *midges*; smocadh: *smoking (tobacco)*; taighean-gloinne: *glasshouses*; leas: *garden*; turtairean: *turtles*; ailigeutairean: *alligators*; spìocaireachd: *meanness*; làimh ri: *next to*; goireasach: *well-appointed*; siostam-teasachaidh: *(central) heating system*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: fhuair mi brath tron phost-dealain: *I was told by e-mail*; gabhaibh mo leisgeul ma tha mi air a dhol beagan tuathal: *excuse me if I have gone a little wrong*; tha saoghal a' choin bhàin aige: *he has the life of a (lit. the) white dog*; tha smuaintean stèidhichte air a sin air a bhith a' cuairteachadh nam cheann: *thoughts based on that have been circulating in my head*; cù a bhuineas do dh'Eilean Rùm: *a dog that belongs to the Isle of Rum*; anns a' chiad dol a-mach: *in the first instance*; faisg air ceud bliadhna air ais: *nearly 100 years ago*; bha X air a' chuid a bu mhotha de na daoine a bhuineadh don eilean fhuadachadh: *X had cleared most of the people who belonged to the island*; chuir e roimhe nàdar de chaisteal a thogail: *he decided to build a sort of castle*; chaidh clach-ghainmhich ruadh a thoirt a-steach às Arainn: *red sandstone was brought in from Arran*; thug e tasdan a bharrachd dhaibh nan dèanadh iad sin: *he gave them an extra shilling if they would do that*; dh'èirich caisteal àraidh, le na h-uimhir de rumannan ann: *a distinctive castle arose, with lots of rooms in it*; cha do thuig a rèir cuid de rudan: *he didn't (understand) with respect to some things*; 's e a bha laghach dhaibh: *it's himself that was nice to them*; far an robh na sgalagan neo searbhantan a' feuchainn ri cadal fhaighinn: *where the workmen and servants were trying to get sleep*.

Puing ghràmair na seachdaine: Bha X air fear de na daoine a bu bheartaiche ann am Breatainn: *X was one of the richest men in Britain. The use of the preposition “air” in this expression is one that defies literal translation and I am not sure if it is to be found in any text book. Nor is it a figure of speech common to all dialects (although all will understand what is meant) but you will hear it quite often (particularly on Skye), so it is worth being aware of it. There are other suitable constructions, of course, which could convey the same information. Before reading further (close your eyes quickly!), try to think of three..... OK, time's up, here are mine!:* b' e X fear de na daoine a bu bheartaiche ann am Breatainn; or 's e fear de na daoine a bu bheartaiche ann am Breatainn a bh' ann an X; or bha X am measg

nan daoine a bu bheartaiche ann am Breatainn. *But be aware of the alternative, using “air”, which can allow you to vary your speech pattern.*

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine: Ma 's math mo chuimhne: *if my memory serves me correctly.*

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