

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 **

Tha mo smuaintean air eich an t-seachdain-sa. 'S dòcha gur e as coireach airson sin gu robh mi nam bhrìtheamh aig mòd ionadail o chionn ghoirid, agus bha agam ri còmhradh ri clann ann an Gàidhlig. Bha a' chuid a bu mhotha aca à baile mòr, agus bha tè a bha seo, nach robh ach seachd bliadhna a dh'aois, a' fuireach ann am flat.

“A bheil peat agad?” dh'fhaighnich mi.

“Tha,” ars' ise, “cat. Ach tha mi ag iarraidh each.”

“Carson each?” dh'fhaighnich mi dhith.

“Bidh mi a' marcachd,” thuirt i.

“Agus, nuair a gheibh thu each,” dh'fhaighnich mi, “an cum thu anns a flat e?”

Uill, bha i a' feuchainn ri bhith modhail, agus duais a bhuannachadh, ach bha e follaiseach gu robh i dhen bheachd gu robh mi nam amadan airson a leithid de cheist a chur oirre. “Cha chum mi anns a flat e,” thuirt i, “ach aig a *Riding Centre*.” Choimhead i suas a dh'ionnsaigh nan speuran agus dh'atharraich mi an cuspair gu sgiobalta.

Chan eil eich mar phàirt de bheatha nam bailtean mòra mar a b' àbhaist, agus chan eil Gaidheil an là an-diugh a' cumail eich mar a chum iad uaireigin. Nuair a chì sibh an uiread de sheanfhaclan le eich annta, tha e follaiseach gu robh iad gu math cudthromach gu h-eachdraidheil ann an dòigh-beatha nan Gaidheal.

Tha mi cinnteach gum bi sibh eòlach air an fhear seo: *Ruigidh each mall muileann*. Cluinnear gu math tric e, ach tha amharas agam nach eil a h-uile duine eòlach air an t-seanfhaclan gu lèir, oir tha sin dìreach mar phàirt dheth. Seo e gu slàn: *Ruigidh each mall muileann, ach feumaidh fear fuireach a bhriseas a chas*. Deagh chomhairle, chanainn, agus bidh mi uaireannan a' meòmhrachadh air nuair a tha mi a' sgitheadh!

Aig deireadh na bliadhn' an-uiridh (Litir 80, 08.12.00), dh'innis mi dhuibh mu dheidhinn Dail an Eich, ainm-àite an seo ann an Inbhir Nis. Chan e sin a-mhàin e do a leithid, ge-tà. Tha dà àite eile anns a' bhaile a tha ainmichte airson eich, ged nach eil am facal *each* a' nochdadh annta. Ma tha sibh air a bhith ann an Gaidhealtachd na h-Eireann, bidh sibh eòlach air an fhaclan *capall* - airson each. Uill, tha e againn an seo cuideachd, a' ciallachadh *each boireann* neo *each-obrach*. Agus tha e ann an Inbhir Nis ann an ceàrnaidh dhen bhaile ris an canar *Capall-Innis* neo, ann am Beurla, Capel Inch.

Bidh feadhainn agaibh ag aithneachadh a' chàirdeis eadar capall agus *caballo* ann an Spàinntis, neo le *cheval* agus *cavalier* ann am Frangais. Agus, ann am Beurla, le

capercaillie, an t-eun mòr a tha a’ fuireach anns na coilltean-giuthais. Thàinig *capercaillie* às *capall-coille*, leis gu bheil an t-eun a’ dèanamh fuaim mar each.

’S e am facal eile airson each – *marc*, a th’ againn fhathast ann am *marcachd*, *marcaiche* is *marc-shluagh*. Tha ceàrnaidh ann an Inbhir Nis, faisg air Capall-Innis, air a bheil *Marc Innis*, neo *Merkinch* ann am Beurla an là an-diugh. Bha an dà àite nan innsean làimh ri Abhainn Nis, neo nan eileanan anns an abhainn o shean, agus feumaidh gu robh eich air an cumail annta.

Nise, ceist phearsanta dhuibh. A bheil sibh ag obair ro chruaidh? A bheil cus uallaich oirbh fhèin, is a bheil feadhainn eile anns an àite-obrach agaibh rudeigin leisg, a’ fàgail cus agaibh fhèin ri dhèanamh? Uill, ma tha, ’s dòcha gu bheil sibh dìreach ro èasgaidh. Mar a chanas an seanfhacal – *Is ann air each èasgaidh a leigear an t-uallach*. Gabhaibh air ur socair. Ruigidh an t-each as maille am muileann aig a’ cheann thall.

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Faclan na seachdaine: eich: *horses*; briteamh: *judge*; flat: *flat* (*it can also mean “saucer” but the context should make it obvious what is meant!*); peat: *pet*; a’ marcachd: *horse-riding*; follaiseach: *obvious*; amadan: *fool*; dòigh-beatha: *way of life*; capall: *mare, work horse*; coilltean-giuthais: *pine forests*; marcaiche: *horse rider*; marc-shluagh: *cavalry*; pearsanta: *personal*; èasgaidh: *willing, enthusiastic*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: ’s dòcha gur e as coireach airson sin: *perhaps the reason for that is*; bha i a’ feuchainn ri bhith modhail, agus duais a bhuannachadh: *she was trying to be polite, in order to win a prize*; choimhead i suas a dh’ionnsaigh nan speuran: *she looked up towards the heavens*; tha sin dìreach mar phàirt dheth: *that is just part of it* (see the note on “*de*” below); aig deireadh na bliadhn’ an-uiridh: *at the end of last year*; chan e sin a-mhàin e do a leithid, ge-tà: *that is not the only instance of the like, however*; bha an dà àite nan innsean làimh ri Abhainn Nis neo nan eileanan anns an abhainn: *the two places were meadows next to the River Ness, or islands in the river* (*innis can mean either*); gabhaibh air ur socair: *take it easy*; ruigidh an t-each as maille am muileann aig a’ cheann thall: *(even) the slowest horse will eventually reach the mill*.

Puing ghràmair na seachdaine: ann an ceàrnaidh dhen bhaile ris an canar X: *in a part of the town called X. Are you familiar with the usage of the preposition “de”, meaning “of” or “off” (and not to be confused with “dè”, meaning “what”)*. Combined with the singular article, an, it emerges as den or, as lenition is increasingly common in modern Gaelic, dhen. When used as “off”, it is straightforward (eg thàinig am mullach dhen taigh: *the roof came off the house*) and it often appears in conjugated form, eg cuir dhiot do gheansaidh (*take off your jumper*), leig i dhith a dreuchd (*she resigned her job*). When it means “of”, there are a couple of traps to beware of. Firstly, in some dialects, it has become confused with the preposition “do”, meaning “to”, such that, rather than dh’fhaighnich e ceist dhìomh (*he asked a question of me*), one might hear dh’fhaighnich e ceist dhomh. Both are acceptable. The second point is that it must not be confused with the French “de”, meaning “of”, which can be used for possession. In Gaelic you must use the genitive case for possession. De is used particularly in a partitive context, that is referring to a part or fraction of something eg b’ esan fear de na saighdearan sin (*he was one of those soldiers*); b’ ise tè dhen fheadhainn a bu ghlice (*she was one of the wisest ones*).

Seanfhaclan na seachdaine: Ruigidh each mall muileann, ach feumaidh fear fuireach a bhriseas a chas: *a slow horse will reach the mill, but the one that breaks his leg must stay where he is*. Is ann air each èasgaidh a leigear an t-uallach: *it is on the willing horse that the burden is laid*.

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