

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 **

Ann an Litir mu dheireadh, o chionn ceala-deug, thug sinn sùil air an fhacal *sgamhan*. An t-seachdain seo bu mhat leam sùil a thoirt air facal eile, aig a bheil ceangal do *sgamhan*. 'S e sin “cliabh”. Tha amharas agam gum bi sibh eòlach air an fhacal cliabh mu thràth. Tha e a' ciallachadh *creel*. Ann an Litir seasgad 's a trì (63) an-uiridh, thug mi an abairt dhuibh – “a' taomadh na mara le cliabh” – rud nach gabh coileanadh g' e bith dè nì thu.

Agus, gu dearbh, 's e sin a' chiall as cumanta a th' aige – *creel* no *basket* – an seòrsa a bhiodh daoine a' cleachdadh o shean airson rudan a ghiùlan air an guailnean, leithid airson fàdan a thoirt dhachaigh bhon pholl-mònach. Canaidh sinn cliabh cuideachd ri *pannier* air each agus ri *creel* dhen t-seòrsa a chleachdas iasgair airson giomaich a ghlacadh. 'S e sin cliabh-ghiomach. Chan eil, ge-tà, ceangal aig gin aca sin ri *sgamhan*.

Ach ma smaoinich sibh airson tiotan air cumadh clèibh, bidh sibh a' tuigsinn gu bheil e rudeigin coltach ri pàirt dhen bhodhaig – mar a chanar anns a' Bheurla – *the chest* no *thorax*, an dearbh àite far a bheil an *sgamhan*. Tha na h-aisnichean, na cnàmhan timcheall a' chlàibh ann an duine, car coltach ris na staingean ann an cliabh dhen t-seòrsa a thogas duine. Gu dearbh, 's e an aon fhacal a th' air na dhà anns a' Bheurla – *ribs*. Aisnichean agus staingean.

Tha cuimhn' a'm air turas a sheall m' athair dhomh mar a thogainn cliabh anns an t-seann dòigh Ghaidhealaich – rud a chunnaic e fhèin iomadh turas na òige air a' Chomraich. Bha sinn a' fuireach ann an Astràilia, agus b' e a' chiad cheist a chuir mi air – ciamar a gheibheadh e fiodh a bhiodh freagarrach. 'S e coilltean *eucalypt* a bha timcheall oirnn. Ach suas an rathad bha cuideigin air na h-uibhir de chraobhan seilich a chur, agus 's e an seileach a' chraobh as freagarraiche airson clèibh a thogail, leis gu bheil e sùbailte. Chruinnich sinn slatan seilich agus thill sinn don leas air cùl an taighe.

Thòisich e le bhith a' stobadh grunn slatan anns an talamh. Lùb e iad agus stob e na cinn eile anns an talamh mu dhà through air falbh. B' iad sin na staingean. An uairsin, dh'fhigh e slatan eile eatarra gus an do thog e, mean air mhean, cliabh a bha bun-os-cionn. Cha robh ann an uairsin ach an cliabh a tharraing às an talamh agus ceann gach staing a ghearradh dheth.

Tha fhios nach eil mòran daoine a' togail chliabh air a' Ghaidhealtachd an-diugh. Chan fhiach an t-saothair. Ach, nuair a bha mi anns na h-Eileanan Arainneach ann an taobh siar na h-Eireann, mhothaich mi do dhoireachan beaga de chraobhan seilich. Bidh muinntir na coimhearsnachd a' cumail nan doireachan sin airson 's gum bi stuth aca airson clèibh a

thogail no, mar as trice a thachras an-diugh, airson bascaidean beaga a thogail a reiceas iad do luchd-turais.

Ach tilleamaid don bhodhaig. Agus seo rabhadh dhuibh. Na canaibh uair sam bith gu bheil duine “ann an cliabh” oir, anns an t-seadh sin, tha cliabh a’ ciallachadh *straightjacket*. Anns an t-seann aimsir, b’ e nàdar de chliabh a chuirte air daoine a bha feumach air smachd dhen t-seòrsa. Agus canaidh daoine fhathast “tha an t-òlach ann an cliabh”, a’ ciallachadh *the fellow is a madman!* Nise, a rèir seann fhaclair MhicAilpein is MhicCoinnich bha sin cuideachd air a ràdh mu dheidhinn daoine aig an robh droch Ghàidhlig. Taing do Shealbh gu bheil sinn nas modhaile na sin an-diugh!

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Faclan na seachdaine: cliabh-ghiomach: *lobster creel*; aisnichean: *ribs (human)*; staingean: *ribs (creel)*; seileach: *willow*; sùbailte: *pliable, flexible*; leas: *garden*; na h-Eileanan Arainneach: *The Aran Islands*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: o chionn ceala-deug: *a fortnight ago*; a’ taomadh na mara le cliabh: (*lit.*) *emptying the sea with a creel*; rud nach gabh coileanadh: *something that cannot be fulfilled*; airson fàdan a thoirt dhachaigh bhon pholl-mònach: *to take peats back from the peat-bank*; ma smaoinichas sibh airson tiotan air cumadh clèibh: *if you think for a moment of the form of a creel (clèibh is the genitive of cliabh)*; mar a thogainn cliabh anns an t-seann dòigh: *how I could (would) make a creel in the old way*; ciamar a gheibheadh e fiodh a bhiodh freagarrach: *how he would get wood that would be suitable*; thòisich e le bhith a’ stobadh grunn slatan anns an talamh: *he started by shoving several rods of wood into the ground*; dh’fhigh e slatan eile eatarra: *he wove other rods between them*; gus an do thog e, mean air mhean, cliabh a bha bun-os-cionn: *until he made, little by little, a creel which was upside-down*; mhothaich mi do dhoireachan beaga de chraobhan seilibh: *I noticed small copses of willow trees*; tilleamaid don bhodhaig: *let’s return to the human body*; mar as trice a thachras an-diugh: *as most often happens today*; na canaibh uair sam bith: *don’t ever say*; Taing do Shealbh gu bheil sinn nas modhaile na sin an-diugh: *thank goodness we are more polite than that today*.

Puing-ghràmar na seachdaine: Anns an t-seann aimsir, b’ e nàdar de chliabh a chuirte air daoine a bha feumach air smachd dhen t-seòrsa: *in the olden days, it was a type of (wicker) creel that would be put on people who needed that type of control. A challenging grammatical point this week! Chuirte is a passive conditional (or passive past habitual) form of the verb “cuir” and means “would be put” eg chuirte e anns an uisge (it would be put in the water). In a regular verb it is generally formed by leniting the root of the verb and adding a terminal “-te”. Other examples would be bhuailte i (she would be struck); thogte iad (they would be raised); dh’òlte e (it would be drunk); leughte an leabhar (the book would be read). You will recognise that this is not a simple grammatical form and can generally be avoided by learners. However, if you have reached the point where you are trying to stretch your linguistic competency, you will find a capacity to recognise and use such forms useful. Note, however, that there are two other word endings equivalent to “-te”, used in some areas, which represent exactly the same grammatical form – “-t(e)adh” and “-(a)ist” eg chuirteadh e and chuirist e.*

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine: Chan fhiach an t-saothair: *it’s not worth the effort*.

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