

Litir do Luchd-Ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

*Each week the West Highland Free Press publishes the text for Roddy Maclean's "Letter to Gaelic Learners" on BBC Radio nan Gaidheal (103-105 FM). The programme is broadcast at 11.50 every Friday morning, and repeated at the new time of 7.00 pm the following Monday. It is also available on the internet at www.bbc.co.uk/alba **

Chan fhada gus am bi clachan-meallain a' tuiteam oirnn a-rithist, mura h-eil frasan dhiubh air a bhith ann mu thràth. Faodaidh iad a bhith gu math guineach, piantail nuair a bhualas iad air do chraiceann ach, mar as trice, ann an Alba cha bhi iad a' dèanamh cron mòr – air càraichean no togalaichean no daoine.

Chan ionann e ann an àiteachan eile, ge-tà. Tha cuimhn' a'm air turas a bha mi ann an Sydney ann an Astràilia. An oidhche roimhe, bha stoirm mhòr ann agus bha frasan de chlachan-meallain a bha cho mòr ri buill-ghoilf. Chaidh mi tro sgìre far a bheil mòran taighean-gloinne, agus bha na clachan-meallain air sgrios mhòr mhòr a dhèanamh orra. Tha caraid agam a tha a' fuireach ann an Sydney agus bha e ag innse dhomh mu dheidhinn stoirm eile nuair a chaidh na càraichean gu lèir anns an t-sràid aige a mhilleadh le clachan-meallain ach, anns an ath-shràid, nach robh cron sam bith air a dhèanamh.

Tha mi cinnteach gun cuala sibh fhèin naidheachdan annasach mu chnapan mòra deighe a' tuiteam às an adhar. Uaireannan tha iad a' tighinn far thogalaichean àrda. Uaireannan, tha amharas ann gu bheil iad a' tighinn bho itealain. Ach ciamar a mhìnicheas sinn mar a thuit pìos mòr deighe fad air falbh o bhaile sam bith nuair nach robh plèanaichean ann am bith? Oir thachair an dearbh rud air a' Ghaidhealtachd ann am meadhan an naoidheadh linn deug.

Tha Bail' a' Mhullaich na bhaile beag gu siar air a' Bhlàr Dhubh ann an Ros an Ear. Cha chreid mi gun do thachair an t-uamhas ann a sin na eachdraidh a dhèanadh ainmeil e – ach 's dòcha aon rud. Air an treas là deug dhen Lùnastal, ann an ochd deug, ceathrad 's a naoi (1849), thuit pìos mòr deighe don talamh ann a sin. Bha e mu shia meatairean, no fichead tròigh, bho cheann gu ceann – rudeigin nas mò na clach-mheallain àbhaisteach ann an Alba! Gu fortanach, cha tàinig e sìos air taigh no bàthach no bò, ged a bha e meadhanach faisg air a' bhaile-fearainn fhèin.

Chaidh a' chùis aithris anns a' phàipear-naidheachd, an *Times*, a dh'innis don luchd-leughaidh gu robh am pìos deighe brèagha, gu robh e *trid-shoilleir*, a' ciallachadh gum b' urrainn do dhuine fhaicinn troimhe, agus gu robh e air a dhèanamh de christalan daoimeanach a bh' air an cur còmhla. Dh'aithris an *Times* cuideachd nach tàinig e às an adhar buileach gun rabhadh, oir goirid mus do nochd e, chualas brag mòr tàirneanaich anns na speuran.

Tha mi cinnteach gu bheil sibh air cluinntinn mu dheidhinn frasan èisg is frasan losgann is gnothaichean mar sin, far a bheil beathaichean beaga a' tuiteam às an adhar. Tha iad sin cumanta gu leòr ann am mòran àiteachan agus chan eil càil as ùr ann mun deidhinn.

Gu dearbh, sgrìobh Pliny (am fear nas sine) mu dheidhinn fras de losgannan anns' a' bhliadhna seachdad 's a seachd (77) A.C.

Ach is annasaiche leam na h-aithrisean a chuala mi mu dheidhinn mar a bhios beathaichean beagan nas mò na sin a' tuiteam gu talamh, chan ann beò, ach marbh, agus iad air an cuairteachadh le deigh. O chionn còrr is ceud bliadhna, thuit turtair a-mach às an adhar ann am Mississippi anns na Stàitean Aonaichte, agus e ann am broinn deighe. Agus dìreach ceithir bliadhna fichead air ais, bha aithris ann am pàipearan-naidheachd gu robh lachan reòite air tuiteam gu talamh ann an Arkansas. Agus bha sin anns an Dùbhlachd. Bha iad deiseil, tha e coltach, airson dinnear na Nollaig, ged a bha na h-itean fhathast orra!

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Faclan na seachdaine: clach-mheallain, clachan-meallain: *hailstone, hailstones*; guineach, piantail: *stinging and painful*; buill-ghoilf: *golf balls*; itealain: *aircraft (pl.)*; am Blàr Dubh: *Muir of Ord*; bàthach: *byre*; baile-fearainn: *farm, country township*; luchd-leughaidh: *readers*; criostalan daoimeanach: *diamond-shaped crystals*; turtair: *turtle*; lachan reòite: *frozen ducks*; an Dùbhlachd: *December*

Abairtean na seachdaine: mura h-eil frasan dhiubh air a bhith ann mu thràth: *if there have not already been showers of them*; chan ionann e ann an àiteachan eile: *it's not the same in other places*; anns an ath-shràid nach robh cron sam bith air a dhèanamh: *in the next street that no damage at all was done*; gun cuala sibh fhèin naidheachdan annasach: *that you (have) heard yourselves strange anecdotes*; mu chnapan mòra deighe a' tuiteam às an adhar: *about large lumps of ice falling from the sky*; nach tàinig e às an adhar buileach gun rabhadh: *that it did not come from the sky entirely without warning*; chualas brag mòr tàirneanaich anns na speuran: *a loud thunderclap was heard in the heavens*; frasan èisg is frasan losgann: *showers of fish and showers of frogs*; tha iad sin cumanta gu leòr: *they are common enough*; chan eil càil as ùr ann mun deidhinn: *there is nothing new about them*; agus iad air an cuairteachadh le deigh: *surrounded by ice*; am broinn deighe: *inside (a lump of) ice*; bha iad deiseil airson dinnear na Nollaig, ged a bha na h-itean fhathast orra: *they were ready for Christmas dinner, although they still had feathers on them*.

Puing-ghràmar na seachdaine: gu robh e trìd-shoilleir: *that it was transparent. I would like to make you aware this week of the preposition trìd which is equivalent to the more usual tro, and means "through". It is now somewhat archaic, but you will meet it in old stories and in the Bible, eg Psalm XXIII: ged ghluaisinn eadhon trìd ghlinn dorcha sgàil' a' bhàis... (though I walk in death's dark vale...).* It is actually a relict of the third person singular masculine form of the prepositional pronoun incorporating an older form of tro and, because of this, it is in effect a compound preposition masquerading as a simple one. It therefore commands the genitive, rather than the dative, case eg trìd na firinne (through the truth). However, because it is relatively archaic, a learner is most likely only to meet it in the Gaelic equivalent of transparent, trìd-shoilleir or trìd-shoillseach. Trìd-shoillseachd means "transparency" and Dwelly gives trìd-shiubhal as "permeation". Trìd is effectively an equivalent of the Latin trans which has been widely adopted in English, providing enormous capacity for word creation (look at the words starting "trans" in your English dictionary). It strikes me that we could be using trìd as a prefix which would allow us similar capacity to invent new Gaelic words. What you do think?

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine: Is annasaiche leam na h-aithrisean mu dheidhinn mar a bhios beathaichean nas mò na sin a' tuiteam gu talamh: *stranger to me are the reports about larger animals than that falling to the ground (ie from the sky)*. Is annasaiche leam X: *I find X stranger, more novel, more unusual*.

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