

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 **

Bha uair ann, agus chan eil e cho fada sin air ais ann an cuid de cheàrnaidhean, nuair a bha mòran Ghaidheal aona-chànanach. Cha robh Beurla aca idir. Nuair a thigeadh luchd-turais, cuid mhath aca nan Sasannaich, don Ghaidhealtachd, bhiodh aig cuideigin ri eadar-theangachadh a dhèanamh, no bhiodh aig na Gaidheil ri beagan Beurla ionnsachadh. Fìor chorra uair, bhiodh an luchd-turais ag ionnsachadh beagan Gàidhlig.

Ann an dùthchannan bochda tha na daoine, mar as trice, gu math onarach is laghach is fialaidh, ge bith cà’ tèid thu. Ach tha corra dhuine ann nach eil cho onarach is a tha a’ coimhead air luchd-turais mar chothrom airgead a chosnadh dha fhèin. Agus ’s ann mar sin a bha e air a’ Ghaidhealtachd o shean cuideachd, tha mi cinnteach. Bha a’ chuid a bu mhò dhen t-sluagh bochd, ach onarach – ach duine no dithis an siud ’s an seo. Agus bhiodh iadsan a’ feuchainn ri brath a ghabhail air an luchd-turais Shasannach a h-uile cothrom a gheibheadh iad.

Bha fear ann uaireigin, a bha na Ghaidheal, ach a bh’ air a bhith a’ fuireach thall anns na h-Innsean airson bliadhnaichean mòra. Bha e air a bhith am measg Shasannach thall agus bha a chuid Bheurla air a dhol gu math Sasannach. Cha do chaill e a chuid Ghàidhlig idir, ach mura robh fios aig duine gu robh Gàidhlig aige no, gu dearbh, gur e Albannach a bh’ ann, bhiodh e a’ smaoinichadh gur e Sasannach a bh’ ann. Co-dhiù, bliadhna a bha seo, thill am fear seo dhachaigh don Ghaidhealtachd.

Bha e air taobh siar na dùthcha agus bha aige ri dhol tarsainn loch-mara air choreigin airson faighinn dhachaigh. Aig an àm sin cha robh rathaidean no drochaidhean ann mar a tha an-diugh. Cha robh no Caledonian Mac a’ Bhriuthainn! Nam biodh neach-siubhail ag iarraidh dhol tarsainn loch, bha aige ri cuideigin às an sgìre fhastadh airson a dhol a-null anns a’ bhàta aige fhèin. Agus dh’fheumadh e pàigheadh na rachadh iarraidh air.

Co-dhiù chaidh e a dh’ionnsaigh fir an aiseig – bha dithis ann – agus dh’fhaighnich e dhen chiad fhear, ann am Beurla, gu dè a’ chosgais a bhiodh ann airson faighinn a-null. Nise, bha an dà chànan aig an fhear seo, ach cha robh aig an sgiobair. Cha robh aigesan ach Gàidhlig. Dh’fhaighnich an dàrna fear dhen sgiobair ann an Gàidhlig, “dè ghabhas tu mar fharadh bhon Sasannach seo?”

“Iarr deich tasdan air,” thuirt an sgiobair. B’ e an àbhaist airson a dhol a-null dìreach còig tasdan. Thionndaidh am fear eile air an fhear-siubhail, nach robh idir a’ sealltainn gu robh e a’ tuigsinn a’ chòmhradh, agus thuirt e ris ann am Beurla, “Cosgaidh e fichead tasdan dhuibh, tha e saor aig a’ phrìs sin, agus chan urrainn don sgiobair càil nas lugha na sin iarraidh.” Cha tuirt am fear-siubhail guth agus chaidh e air bòrd a’ bhàta.

Nuair a bha iad letheach slighe tarsainn a' chaolais, bhruidhinn am fear-siubhail ris an fhear eile ann an Gàidhlig bhrèagha a' chinn a tuath. Nise, shaoileadh tu gum biodh fear a' bhàta rudeigin diùid agus duilich ann an suidheachadh mar sin, ach cha robh. Gu dearbh, thòisich e air trod ris an fhear eile. "Nàire oirbh," thuirt e, "nàire oirbh airson a bhith cho beag-spèiseil don dùthaich agaibh fhèin 's gu robh sibh a' toirt creidsinn gur e Sasannach a bh' annaibh! Tha còir againn dà fhichead tasdan iarraidh oirbh, ach chan iarr ach na còig!" Gu mì-fhortanach, chan eil freagairt an fhir eile air a glèidheadh ann am beul-aithris.

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Faclan na seachdainne: aona-chànanach: *monolingual*; onarach: *honest*; fialaidh: *generous*; na h-Innsean: *India*; a dh'ionnsaigh: *towards, up to*; faradh: *fare*; an àbhaist: *the usual*; fear-siubhail: *traveller*; saor: *cheap*; beag-spèiseil: *showing little respect*;

Abairtean na seachdainne: bha uair sin, agus chan eil e cho fada sin air ais: *there was a time, and it is not that long ago*; bhiodh aig cuideigin ri eadar-theangachadh a dhèanamh: *somebody would have to translate*; fìor chorra uair: *very occasionally*; ge bith cà' tèid thu: *wherever you go (for "càite an tèid thu")*; bhiodh iadsan a' feuchainn ri brath a ghabhail air X: *they would try to take advantage of X*; a h-uile cothrom a gheibheadh iad: *(at) every opportunity they would get*; cha do chaill e a chuid Ghàidhlig idir: *he didn't lose his Gaelic at all*; co-dhiù, bliadhna a bha seo, thill X: *anyway, this particular year, X returned*; bha aige ri dhol tarsainn loch-mara air choreigin: *he had to cross some sea loch or other*; bha aige ri cuideigin às an sgìre fhadstadh: *he had to hire somebody from the area*; gu dè a' chosgais a bhiodh ann airson faighinn a-null: *what would be the cost of getting over*; iarr deich tasdan air: *ask him for ten shillings*; chan urrainn don sgiobair càil nas lugha na sin iarraidh: *the skipper can't ask any less than that*; cha tuirt X guth: *X said nothing*; nuair a bha iad letheach slighe tarsainn a' chaolais: *when they were halfway across the narrows/strait*; thòisich e air trod ris an fhear eile: *he started to scold the other man*; gu robh sibh a' toirt creidsinn gur e Sasannach a bh' annaibh: *that you were pretending to be an Englishman*; tha còir againn dà fhichead tasdan iarraidh oirbh: *we should charge you 20 shillings*; ach chan iarr ach na còig: *but we'll only ask the five*; air a glèidheadh ann am beul-aithris: *preserved in oral tradition*.

Puing-ghràmar na seachdainne: *The word "Sasannach" appears 7 times in the Litir, in the 3 different forms – Sasannach, Sasannaich and Shasannach. Can you explain the grammatical principles behind each? In the first para. we have cuid mhath aca nan Sasannaich ("many of them English people"). Here, nan is a contraction of ann an + an ("in their"); literally this means "they are in their English people" – it is a plural noun in the dative case. Similarly, you might say tha mi nam Shasannach (I am an Englishman) – here nam is a contraction of ann an + mo, and the mo lenites the following noun. In the 2nd para, we have air an luchd-turais Shasannach. This is also a dative and Sasannach is lenited because it is an adjective qualifying the masculine noun luchd-turais (cf. air a' bhòrd mhòr, aig a' bhalach bheag). In the 3rd para. there is am measg Shasannach. Here the word is a noun in the genitive plural, which has the same form as the nominative singular, except that it is lenited because there is no article. It is genitive because it is commanded by the compound preposition am measg. In air a dhol gu math Sasannach (gone very English), the word is an adjective and in all the cases after this, it is a noun in the nominative singular case, meaning "Englishman".*

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdainne: Nàire oirbh!: *shame on you!* The familiar or singular equivalent is *nàire ort* or *mo nàire ort*.

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