

# *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](mailto:roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk) \**

Bho àm gu àm, bidh mi a’ toirt sùil tro chruinneachaidhean de sheanfaclan Gàidhlig. Tha an-còmhnaidh rudeigin annta a tha a’ toirt orm smaoinichadh. Agus mholainn a leithid dhuibhse cuideachd oir ’s iomadh rud a ghabhas ionnsachadh mun chànan cuideachd bho bhith a’ leughadh seanfaclan.

Ann an obair agam mar neach-naidheachd, uaireannan bidh agam ri seanfhacal Beurla eadar-theangachadh gu Gàidhlig, agus chan eil càil nas dorra na sin. “*It’s like,*” said the Minister, “*taking coals to Newcastle.*” Seadh, dè chanamaid airson sin? “Tha e,” thuirt am Ministear, “mar a bhith a’ toirt fiodhrach a Loch Abar.” Dhèanadh sin a’ chùis, nach dèanadh? Chì sibh nach gabh *gual* no an *Caisteal Nuadh* cur anns an eadar-theangachadh Ghàidhlig, oir cha bhuin a leithid don dualchas againn.

Dè mu dheidhinn “*your eye’s bigger than your tummy*” mar a bhios pàrantan ag ràdh ri clann a tha a’ cur cus bìdh air an truinnsearan. Uill, seo an dearbh sheòrsa de sheanfhacal ann an Gàidhlig – *is mò làn do shùla na làn do bhroinn*. Is mò làn do shùla na làn do bhroinn.

An turas mu dheireadh a bha mi a’ leughadh leabhar de sheanfaclan, chunnaic mi am fear seo – *is mios’ am fear beag na Frangach*. Is mios’ am fear beag na Frangach. Chan eil e a’ coimhead uabhasach “PC”, a bheil? Agus tha mi-fhìn car deidheil air na Frangaich.

Cha chreid mi gu bheil an seanfhacal a’ toirt droch shealladh air na Frangaich mar sin, oir dh’èirich e anns an dòigh seo. Bha fear beag ann an Srath Spè o shean, air an robh Iain MacAnndra mar ainm. Bha e cliùiteach mar bhoghadair, mar a bha na Frangaich, tha e coltach, ged a bha mise a’ smaoinichadh gur e a’ chrois-bhogha a b’ fheàrr leothasan. Co-dhiù, bha sabaid ann agus mharbh Iain a nàimhdean, fear as dèidh a chèile, le bhith a’ losgadh saighdean orra. Agus thuirt fear de na nàimhdean aige – “Is mios’ am fear beag na Frangach.”

’S ann tric a leughas sinn aithrisean mun Ghaidhealtachd anns an ochdamh linn deug a chaidh a sgrìobhadh le Sasannaich, no uaireannan Cuimrich, ach chan eil cus dhiubh ann a chaidh a sgrìobhadh le Frangaich. Ach bha mi a’ coimhead tro leabhar an là eile, ann am Beurla, air an robh *To the Highlands in 1786*. ’S e eadar-theangachadh a bh’ ann de na chaidh a sgrìobhadh leis an Fhrangach, Alexandre de La Rochefoucauld, agus a charaid Pòlainneach, Maximilien de Lazowski.

Chruthaich iad dealbh inntinneach de na Gaidheil, dìreach dà fhichead bliadhna an dèidh Blàr Chùil Lodair. Gu dearbh, cha b’ urrainn do chuid de mhuinntir na Gaidhealtachd bruidhinn mu Chùil Lodair gun a bhith a’ fàs feargach, agus rinn mòran aca dì-meas garbh air an Rìgh. Cha chanadh iad “Rìgh” ris, ach “Deòrsa” no “Riaghladair”. Bhiodh iad ag òl mòran. Bha iad

moiteil às an aodach àraidh aca. Agus bha am buntàta a' fàs, agus a' fàs cudthromach dhaibh. Gu dearbh, sgrìobh de La Rochefoucauld, bhiodh call mòr mòr ann nam failneachadh air a' bhuntata bliadhna air choreigin.

Sgrìobh e gu robh na Gaidheil gu math moiteil às a' chànan aca ach, leis gu robh sgoiltean Beurla a' nochdadh air a' Ghaidhealtachd, gun cailleadh iad i ann an ùine gun a bhith fada. Thuir e, ge-tà, gur e rud duilich a bhiodh ann nuair a thachradh sin. Uill, còrr is dà cheud bliadhna as dèidh sin, tha a' Ghàidhlig fhathast beò.

Mar a thuir am fear eile, ged nach robh e a' beachdachadh air cànan, "Is obair-là duine a thiodhlacadh."

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**Faclan na seachdaine:** an-còmhnaidh: *always*; neach-naidheachd: *journalist*; nas dorra: *more difficult (comparative of duilich)*; deidheil air: *keen on*; nàimhdean: *enemies*; Pòlainneach: *Polish*; Riaghladair: *Governor*; moiteil às: *proud of*.

**Abairtean na seachdaine:** bidh mi a' toirt sùil tro chruinneachaidhean de sheanfhaclan: *I look through collections of proverbs*; a tha a' toirt orm smaoineachadh: *that makes me think*; dè chanamaid airson sin?: *what would we say for that?*; dhèanadh sin a' chùis, nach dèanadh?: *that would do the job, wouldn't it?*; cha bhuin a leithid don dualchas againn: *such things do not belong to our [linguistic] heritage*; a tha a' cur cus bìdh air an truinnsearan: *who put too much food on their plates*; cha chreid mi gu bheil an seanfhacal a' toirt droch shealladh air X mar sin: *I don't think the proverb gives a bad impression of X, as such*; gur e crois-bhogha a b' fheàrr leothasan: *that it was the crossbow they preferred*; rinn mòran aca dì-meas garbh air an Rìgh: *most of them treated the king with contempt*; bha am buntàta a' fàs, agus a' fàs cudthromach dhaibh: *the potato was growing and growing important to them*; bhiodh call mòr ann nam failneachadh air X: *there would be a big loss [disaster] if X failed*; gun cailleadh iad i ann an ùine gun a bhith fada: *that they would lose it (Gàidhlig is grammatically and conceptually feminine) within a short time*.

**Puing-ghràmar na seachdaine:** Mholainn a leithid dhuibhse cuideachd: *I would recommend the like (the same thing) to yourselves as well. Do words like mholainn, ending in –ainn, confuse you or do you recognise them immediately for what they are – the first personal singular of a conditional or past habitual verb? Its placing at the beginning of a sentence or phrase gives it away as a verb. There is no pronoun present and the – (a)inn ending announces that it means "I would..." or "I used to (habitually)..."*. Here are some examples: Bhrisinn a' ghloinne nan robh teine ann (*I would break the glass if there were a fire*); cheannaichinn e nan robh e na bu shaoire (*I would buy it if it were cheaper*); dh'èistinn rithe ach chan urrainn dhomh dhol ann (*I would listen to her but I cannot make it*); chuirinn siùcar ann an cofaidh nuair a bha mi òg (*I would put sugar in coffee when I was young*); bhithinn a' seinn anns an amar an-còmhnaidh (*I would always be singing in the bath*).

**Seanfhaclan na seachdaine:** A' toirt fiodhrach a Loch Abar: *taking coals to Newcastle (the forests of Lochaber were once famous)*. Is mò làn do shùla na làn do bhroinn: *your eyes are bigger than your tummy*. Is obair-là duine a thiodhlacadh: *it's a day's work to bury a man*.

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