

## **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) \**

An t-seachdain sa chaidh dh’innis mi dhuibh mun t-sagart, an t-Athair Urramach Ragnall Burn. Aig àm a’ Chogaidh Mhòir, thòisich e air coiseachd air mòran de bheanntan na Gaidhealtachd.

Bha e luath air a chasan agus chuir e iongnadh air muinntir an àite leis cho fada ’s a chumadh e a’ dol, le glè bheag de bhiadh. Cha toireadh e teanta leis ach, aig deireadh gach là, dhèanadh e air an taigh a b’ fhaisge. Mar bu trice, bha sin aig geamair no cìobair agus, mar bu trice, gheibheadh e cuid-oidhche leotha – ach a-mhàin nuair a bha an t-uachdaran air casg a chur air a leithid.

Bha fad’ a bharrachd dhaoine a’ fuireach anns na glinn aig an àm sin. Agus bha Gàidhlig aig cuid mhath aca. Dh’fhàs Ragnall uabhasach dèidheil orra agus air an cànan, agus dh’fhàs e gu math fileanta a rèir choltais, le blas math air a’ Ghàidhlig aige.

B’ e fear dhiubh geamair ann an Gleann Srath Farair, Theodore Caimbeul, a bha eòlach air an sgoilear Ghàidhlig, Uilleam MacBhàtair, a bh’ air a bhith a’ bruidhinn ris mu ainmean-àite. Bha Theodore gu math fiosrachail mu eachdraidh is dualchas, agus chuir Maighstir Ragnall seachad mòran ùine ris a’ chagailt a’ còmhradh leis, is a’ faighinn sgeulachdan bhuaithe.

Fhuair e deagh eòlas cuideachd air dà theaghlach eile anns an sgìre sin – na Boas aig Lungard ann an Gleann Canaich agus na Scotts aig Allt Beithe ann an Gleann Afraig, far a bheil Ostail Òigridh Ghleann Afraig an-diugh. Bhuineadh athraichean an dithis fhear sin do na Crìochan. Bha iad air tighinn chun na Gaidhealtachd le treudan chaorach anns an naoidheamh linn deug. Mar a shaoileadh tu, cha robh Gàidhlig aca.

Ach bha Gàidhlig aig na gillean aca agus phòs Aonghas Scott tè às Na Hearadh is, gu dearbh, bha i fhèin làn Gàidhlig, ged nach robh a’ chlann aca cho fileanta rim pàrantan. Chòrd na feasgairean a chuir e seachad nan cuideachd gu mòr ris an t-sagart. Bha e a’ faireachdainn airson greis gu robh e mar gu robh teaghlach aige. Tha e coltach gu robh meas aig na Scotts airsan cuideachd, ged a shaoil iad gu robh cuid de na cleachdaidhean pearsanta aige car annasach. Mar eisimpleir, chuireadh e siabann min am broinn nan stocainnean aige gus nach fhaigheadh e balgan air buinn a chas.

Chòrd Deas-àirigh ann an Cnòideart gu mòr ris cuideachd. Bha teaghlach de Stiùbhartaich a’ fuireach anns an t-Srathan aig bonn a’ ghlinne, agus gheibheadh Ragnall fàilte is furan ann an sin. Bha Gàidhlig aca uile agus bha iad làn sgeulachdan is òran is beul-aithris. Aig

an àm sin bha ochd taighean anns a' ghleann anns an robh daoine a' fuireach, agus bha sgoil ann anns an robh suas ri dusan duine cloinne. An-diugh chan eil duine a' fuireach ann.

Bho Ruairidh MacMhathain aig Loch a' Bhraoin ann an Siorrachd Rois, fhuair Maighstir Ragnall co-dhiù ceud ainm-àite nach robh sgrìobhte aig duine roimhe. Fhad 's as aithne dhomh, tha iad fhathast ann an tasg ann an Oilthigh Obair Dheathain, a' feitheamh ri sgrùdadh le sgoilear.

Chaochail Ragnall Burn ann an naoi deug, seachdad 's a dhà (1972). Aig àm a bhàis, bha na glinn a chuimhnich e bho na bliadhnaichean eadar an dà chogadh air atharrachadh gu tur. Bha mòran aca fo uisgeachan dhamaichean is bha na seann teaghlachan air falbh. Cha mhòr gu robh duine ann a chuimhneachadh an sagart annasach. Tha e math, ma-thà, gun do sgrìobh Ealasaid Ailean leabhar mu dheidhinn – "Burn on the Hill". Ma tha ùidh agaibh ann an eachdraidh nan gleann iomallach, mholainn e dhuibh.

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**Faclan na seachdaine:** teanta: *tent*; geamair: *gamekeeper*; ciobair: *shepherd*; na glinn: *the glens*; Uilleam MacBhàtair: *William (WJ) Watson*; bhuaithe: *from him*; Ostail Òigridh: *Youth Hostel*; treudan chaorach: *flocks of sheep*; Deas-àiridh: *Dessary*; Cnòideart: *Knoydart*; Ruairidh MacMhathain: *Rory Matheson*; Ealasaid Ailean: *Elizabeth Allan*.

**Abairtean na seachdaine:** aig àm a' Chogaidh Mhòir: *at the time of the Great War*; chuir e iongnadh air muinntir an àite: *he surprised the local people*; leis cho fad 's a chumadh e a' dol: *with how long he would keep going*; dhèanadh e air an taigh a b' fhaisge: *he would make for the nearest house*; nuair a bha an t-uachdaran air casg a chur air a leithid: *when the landlord had banned such a practice*; chuir X seachad mòran ùine ris a' chagailt a' còmhradh leis: *X spent much time at the hearth, conversing with him*; bhuineadh athraichean an dithis fhear do na Crìochan: *the two men's fathers belonged to the Borders*; gu robh e mar gu robh teaghlach aige: *that it was as if he had a family*; am broinn nan stocainnean aige: *inside his stockings*; anns an robh suas ri dusan duine cloinne: *in which there were up to a dozen children*; tha iad fhathast ann an tasg ann an Oilthigh Obair Dheathain: *they are still archived (in store) at Aberdeen University*; a' feitheamh ri sgrùdadh le sgoilear: *awaiting examination by a scholar*; fo uisgeachan dhamaichean: *under dam water (water of dams)*; cha mhòr gu robh duine ann: *there was hardly a person*; mholainn e dhuibh: *I would recommend it to you*.

**Puing-ghràmar na seachdaine:** gus nach fhaigheadh e balgan air buinn a chas: *so that he would not get blisters on the sole(s) of his feet. I have taken the traditional approach here in giving cas as the genitive plural of cas, foot, although many today might give it as casan. The general rule is that genitive plurals have a broad vowel ending – which exists with cas (and also with casan). Generally speaking, nouns which pluralise in the nominative with an –an (or –aichean or –annan) suffix, have a genitive plural form identical to the nominative plural form, except that is lenited where there is no article present (eg dorsan chàraichean, dorsan nan càraichean), but this is sometimes foregone in preference of the nominative singular form if the last vowel in the nominative singular is broad (eg muinntir nan eilean, rather than muinntir nan eileanan; port nan long, rather than port nan longan and uighean nan cearc, rather than uighean nan cearcan). With a chas, you will know it means "of his feet (plural)" because the lenition tells us "his" and, if it referred to only one foot it would be "bonn a chois", chois being the genitive singular of cas.*

**Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine:** gheibheadh e cuid oidhche: *he would get a night's lodging*.

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