

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 **

Halò a-rithist. O chionn ceala-deug, an turas mu dheireadh a bha an Litir ann, thug mi rann dhuibh, agus dh'iarr mi oirbh obrachadh a-mach cò mu dheidhinn a bha i:

*Trì mìosan cù, còig bho chaogad cat,
Is ionann bean is bò, bliadhna mhòr don each.*

'S e a th' ann an ùine a bhios gach beathach a' giùlain àl, an ùine a bhios an fheadhainn òga anns a' mhachlaig mus bi iad air am breith. Tri mìosan airson cù, còig bho chaogad là, sin ceathrad 's a còig là, airson cat. Tha bean is bò co-ionann aig naoi mìosan agus tha an t-each a' giùlain searrach airson bliadhna mus bi e air a bhreith.

'S e mamailean a tha sin ach feumaidh mi ràdh gur e eòin a th' air a bhith nam inntinn an t-seachdain-sa. Thòisich e air an deireadh-sheachdain sa chaidh, nuair a chaidh mi a chèilidh air deagh charaidean agam aig a bheil croit air talamh àrd. Aig oir coille mhòir, faisg air a' chroit aca, cha mhòr nach do stiùir mi mo charbad tro threud de dh'eòin bheaga a bha nan suidhe ann am meadhan an rathaid.

Bha mu cheathrad dhiubh ann agus nan robh mi air a bhith ag iarraidh feadhainn airson na poite, bha mi air mo chas a chur air troighean an luaiths, seach air troighean a' chasgain, no troighean a' bhreig. 'S e *cearcan-tomain* a bh' annta. *Partridges*. Chuala mi as dèidh làimh gu bheil an t-uachdaran ag àrach nan cearc beaga seo airson sealg. Uill, 's iad na daoine a bhios a' sealg, tuigidh sibh. Bidh na cearcan-tomain dìreach .. uill .. a' feitheamh ri peilear, fhad 's a chì mise.

Co-dhiù, tha e a cheart cho math nach do mharbh mi gin aca, nach eil. Nach eil? Seadh, uill, goirid as dèidh sin, cha mhòr nach do bhuail mi ann an easag. Agus an uairsin easag eile. Bha mi toilichte nuair a ràinig mi taigh mo charaidean gun eòin is itean thairis air toiseach a' charbaid!

'S e an rud eile a thug eòin gu m' inntinn an t-seachdain-sa an naidheachd gu bheil piseach a' tighinn air an traon. Chan e *traon* a chanas iad ris anns a h-uile h-àite. Canaidh mòran ann an Siorrachd Rois *garra-gart* ris agus ann an Colasa, 's e *tearaidh-trèan* a chanas iad. Bidh cuid ag ràdh *trèan-ri-trèan*. Mura h-eil sibh eòlach air gin aca sin, 's e *corncrake* a th' air ann am Beurla.

'S iad na h-eileanan air taobh an iar na h-Alba na h-àiteachan as cudthromaiche airson an traoin an là an-diugh ann am Breatainn – na h-Eileanan Siar, Tiriodh, Colla, Colasa – agus an t-eilean beag a tha ceangailte ri Colasa nuair a bhios tràigh mhòr ann – Orasa. Chuala mi

o chionn ghoirid gu bheil an àireamh dhiubh air a dhol suas anns a' bhliadhna a dh'fhalbh deich às a' cheud. Deagh naidheachd as dèidh bliadhnaichean de chrionadh.

Is tha dà ainm eile ann airson an eòin seo as toigh leam, oir tha iad a' dèanamh tuairisgeul air an fhuaim a tha iad a' dèanamh. Rudeigin mar ...(fuaim)... Ann an Gàidhlig, 's e *ràcadh* a chanas sinn ri fuaim mar sin. Agus canaidh cuid *ràc an arbhair* no *ràc an fheòir* ris. 'S ann ann an arbhar no ann am feur a tha iad a' neadachadh agus 's ann ainneamh a tha iad air am faicinn. Ach, bidh daoine gan cluinntinn, ceart gu leòr – uaireannan air an oidhche faisg air taigh-croite... (fuaim)... 'S dòcha gu bheil e a cheart cho math nach eil iad ann fad na bliadhna!

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Faclan na seachdaine: machlag: *womb, uterus*; searrach: *foal*; mamailean: *mammals*; croit: *croft*; treud: *flock*; cearc-thomain: *partridge*; easag: *pheasant*; eòin: *birds*; itean: *feathers*; traon: *corncrake*; piseach: *progress, improvement*; Tìriodh: *Tiree*; Orasa: *Oronsay*; ràcadh: *a rasping or croaking noise*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: cò mu dheidhinn a bha i: *what it was about*; an ùine a bhios gach beathach a' giùlain àl: *the time that each animal carries young*; mus bi iad air am breith: *before they are born*; nuair a chaidh mi a chèilidh air deagh charaidean: *when I went to visit good friends*; cha mhòr nach do stiùir mi mo charbad tro X: *I almost steered my car through X*; bha mi air mo chas a chur air troighean an luaths: *I would have put my foot on the accelerator (speed) pedal*; troighean a' chasgain, no troighean a' bhreig: *two ways of saying 'brake pedal'*; chuala mi as dèidh làimh: *I heard afterwards*; a' feitheamh ri peilear, fhad 's a chì mise: *waiting for a bullet, as far as I can see*; tha e a cheart cho math nach do mharbh mi gin: *it's just as well I didn't kill any*; thairis air toiseach a' charbaid: *across the front of the vehicle*; nuair a bhios tràigh mhòr ann: *when there is a low tide*; deich às a' cheud: *ten percent*; deagh naidheachd as dèidh bliadhnaichean de chrionadh: *good news after years of decline*.

Puing-ghràmar na seachdaine: gu bheil an t-uachdaran ag àrach nan cearc beaga seo airson sealg: *that the landlord raises these small hens for hunting. Have you worked out why it is cearc beaga here? I have taken the traditional approach although many might say cearcan beaga today. The important thing is to note which case cearc is in here. It follows a verbal noun (ag àrach) so it will be in the genitive case – the genitive plural. The article will be nan and the accompanying adjective will be unlenited and, if short, will carry a terminal –a. If you are unsure as to the genitive plural of cearc, think of the Gaelic for henhouse – taigh-chearc (lit. 'house of hens'). This tells you that cearc, and not cearcan, is the genitive plural, at least traditionally. It is, of course, lenited without the article – ie taigh-chearc not taigh-cearc. What would we call a house where turkeys are kept, given that the Gaelic for turkey is cearc Fhrangach? First of all, think of 'of the turkeys' – nan cearc Frangach – and then lenite the noun and discard the article. The answer is taigh chearc Frangach. And a 'partridge house', given that a partridge is cearc-thomain? The second part of the compound noun (which is always in its genitive form) effectively acts as an adjective would, so the answer is taigh chearc-tomain.*

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine: cha mhòr nach do bhuaill mi ann an X: *I almost hit X*.

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