

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 **

Dè an diofar a th’ ann eadar siùcar ann an Alba is siùcar ann an Eirinn? Uill, tha iad le chèile geal agus milis agus, ann an Gàidhlig na h-Eireann, tha am facal air a shon – siùcra – uabhasach coltach ris an fhacal a th’ againne. Ach nuair a bha mi ann am Baile Atha Cliath an t-seachdain sa chaidh, mhothaich mi do dh’aon diofar, co-dhiù mar a tha siùcar a’ nochdadh air bùird ann an taighean-bìdh. Oir ’s iomadh trup, ann an Eirinn, a bhios rudeigin sgrìobhte air na pacaidean ann an Gàidhlig na dùthcha.

Tha aon chompanaidh a’ cur sean-fhaclan Gaeilge air na pacaidean fon tiotal ‘*A Spoonful of Irish*’. Seo eisimpleir dhen t-seòrsa rud a th’ orra: ‘Is glas iad na cnoic i bh’fad uainn’. Tuigidh sibh gu bheil glas a’ ciallachadh ann an Eirinn, mar a bha e ann an Alba o shean, ‘uaine’, no ‘gorm’ ma bhios e a-mach air dath feòir. Chanamaid anns a’ Ghàidhlig againn fhìn, ‘*is gorm na cnuic a tha fada uainn*’. Is gorm na cnuic a tha fada uainn. Tuigidh sibh gu bheil sin a’ ciallachadh gu bheil na rudan fad air falbh nas fheàrr na tha an fheadhainn faisg air làimh. Thug mi seanfhacal eile dhuibh air an dearbh chuspair ann an Litir 60 anns an Iuchar 2000 - *tha na h-itean as bòidhche air na h-eòin fad às*.

Ged nach gabh mi siùcar ann an tì no cofaidh, chòrd e rium na seanfhaclan a leughadh. Agus saoilidh mi gum biodh e uabhasach fhèin math nan dèanadh companaidh Albannach an dearbh rud, le bhith a’ cur seanfhaclan Gàidhlig air pacaidean siùcair – agus air pacaidean de sheòrsachan eile cuideachd.

Cheannaich mi leabhar de sheanfhaclan Gaeilge nuair a bha mi ann an Eirinn agus seo fear aca: *briseann an dúchas trí shùile an chait* no, mar a chanamaid, brisidh dùthchas tro shùilean a’ chait. Seo mar a thàinig an seanfhacal gu bith, a rèir beul-aithris. Bha uaireigin tuathanach ann, aig an robh cat. Gach oidhche bhiodh an cat a’ cumail coinneal an greim eadar a spògan airson ’s gum faicadh an duine a shuipear nuair a bha e ga gabhail.

Bha an duine gu math moiteil às a’ chat agus, oidhche a bha seo, nuair a thàinig sgoilear don taigh aige, dh’fhaighnich an duine dheth an robh e air a leithid fhaicinn a-riamh roimhe. Thuirt an sgoilear nach robh. An uair sin, chuir an tuathanach geall gun cumadh an cat greim air a’ choinneil ge bith dè chitheadh e. Thuirt an sgoilear nach cumadh agus dh’aontaich an dithis còig notaichean a chur air a’ gheall. Ach dh’iarr an sgoilear air an tuathanach fantainn gus an tilleadh e.

An ceann greis, thill e agus bha trì luchan beò aige ann am bocsa. ‘A-nise,’ thuirt e, ‘cuiridh sinn deuchainn air a’ chat.’ Nuair a bha am biadh deiseil air a’ bhòrd, leum an cat suas agus chuir e a’ choinneal eadar a spògan gus am faicadh na daoine an diathad. Ach, fhad ’s a

bha iad ag ithe, leig an sgoilear tè de na luchan ma sgaoil, agus ruith i tarsainn a' bhùird. Choinhead an cat oirre gu geur, ach cha do ghluais e.

Leig an sgoilear dàrna luch, agus chaidh fèithean a' chait air chrith, ach cha do leig e a' choinneal. Leig an sgoilear an treas luch ma sgaoil agus an turas seo, thilg an cat bhuaithe a' choinneal agus chaidh e an tòir air an luchraig. Bhuannaich an sgoilear, ma-thà. Agus dh'fhaighnich e dhen tuathanach nach cuala e a-riamh gum briseadh dùthchas tro shùilean a' chait.

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Faclan na seachdaine: siùcar: *sugar*; Baile Atha Cliath: *Dublin*; pacaidean: *packets*; geall: *a wager, bet*; luch, luchag: *mouse*; tarsainn: *across*; diathad: *meal*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: dè an diofar a th' ann eadar X agus Y?: *what is the difference between X and Y?*; mhothaich mi do dh'aon diofar: *I noticed one difference*; nas fheàrr na tha an fheadhainn faisg air làimh: *better than the ones close at hand*; chòrd e rium na seanfhaclan a leughadh: *I enjoyed reading the proverbs*; saoilidh mi gum biodh e uabhasach fhèin math: *I reckon it would be terrific*; nan dèanadh companaidh Albannach an dearbh rud: *if a Scottish company would do the same thing*; mar a chanamaid: *as we would say*; bha uaireigin tuathanach ann: *once upon a time there was a farmer*; bhiodh an cat a' cumail coinneal an greim eadar a spògan: *the cat would keep hold of a candle between its paws*; airson 's gum faiceadh an duine a shuipear: *so that the man would see his supper*; bha e moiteil às a' chat: *he was proud of the cat*; an robh e air a leithid fhaicinn a-riamh roimhe: *had he ever seen the like*; dh' iarr X air Y fantainn gus an tilleadh e: *X asked Y to wait until he returned*; cuiridh sinn deuchainn air X: *we will test X*; leig an sgoilear tè de na luchan ma sgaoil: *the scholar released one of the mice*; cha do ghluais e: *it didn't move*; chaidh fèithean a' chait air chrith: *the cat's muscles quivered*; thilg e bhuaithe a' choinneal: *he threw aside the candle*; chaidh e an tòir air X: *he went in pursuit of X*.

Puing-ghràmar na seachdaine: *Gaelic learners sometimes get confused about the colours in the language which do not necessarily correspond to colours in English. I might make three comments about that: firstly, the spectrum is not broken up in exactly the same way as in English which has been heavily influenced by artistic theory. Liath, for example, usually translated as grey can also apply to light blues. Secondly, languages change through time and, for example, glas which retains its meaning of green in Ireland is generally considered to be a grey today, but without any hint of blue in it. In many places eg an Coire Glas, it almost certainly reflects its older use, ie meaning 'green corrie'. Thirdly, colour in Gaelic is strongly attributive (I am told it is a little like Mandarin Chinese in that regard, although I cannot vouch for it!) This means that the adjective goes with the noun even if the pure colour it represents is not actually the same. This is also seen sometimes in English. For example people talk about 'red hair' or a 'red pillar box'. The two reds are not the same and the hearer understands that. We would say in Gaelic ruadh for the first and dearg for the second. But gorm is strongly attributive. We might say fear gorm (green grass), adhar gorm (blue sky), meatailt ghorm (polished metal) and each gorm (dark grey horse). Historically, fear gorm meant a negro man and gorm might also be applied to jet black shiny hair as in Dòmhnall Gorm.*

Seanfhaclan na seachdaine: is gorm na cnuic a tha fada uainn: *green are the hills that are far away*; brisidh dùthchas tro shùilean a' chait: *heredity breaks through the eyes of the cat*.

* "Litir do Luchd-Ionnsachaidh" is funded by Comataidh Craolaidh Gàidhlig