

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 mi a-mach air seanfhaclan Eireannach an t-seachdain sa chaidh agus tha mi an dòchas gun gabh sibh mo leisgeul ma bheir mi na dhà eile dhuibh an t-seachdain-sa, oir tha pacaid no dhà de shiùcar air fhàgail agam a thug mi leam bho thaigh-bìdh ann am Baile Atha Cliath. An turas seo, cuiridh mi dreach Gàidhlig na h-Alba orra, ged nach eil mi cinnteach co-dhiù tha iad againn gu nàdarrach ann an Alba.

Seo a’ chiad fhear: *Cha do bhris facal math fiacail a-riamh*. Bha sin air a bhith feumail dhomh an là eile nuair a bha mi ag innse do dheugaire gum bu chòir dha ‘tha mi duilich’ a ràdh ri neach eile as dèidh dha dragh a chur air. *Cha do bhris facal math fiacail a-riamh*. Ach is cinnteach gun deach iomadh fiacail a bhriseadh air sàilleamh droch fhaclan!

’S e am fear eile a bu mhath leam a thoirt dhuibh, seanfhacal anns a bheil tòrr gliocais, chanainn: *Is coma le fear nam bròg càite an cuir e a chas*. Tha fear nam bròg a’ ciallachadh – mar a bhiodh o shean – fear a bha beartach gu leòr gus am biodh brògan aige. Agus nach eil beartas a’ dìon daoine gu mòr bho chruadalachd na h-àrainneachd a tha timcheall orra? Is coma le fear nam bròg càite an cuir e a chas.

Nuair a bha mi a’ tighinn a-steach a Bhaile Atha Cliath anns an itealan – os cionn a’ chuain – mhothaich do dh’eilean faisg air a’ chladach agus, gu dearbh, faisg air a’ bhaile mhòr fhèin. Eilean beag a bh’ ann. Uill, leis an fhìrinn innse, chunnaic mi dà eilean. Bha fear na bu mhò air bòrd-beulaibh an itealain, pìos beag gu tuath air Baile Atha Cliath. Agus air a’ bhòrd-chùlaibh, bha an t-eilean beag faisg air a’ phrìomh bhaile.

Bha a-riamh ùidh agam ann an eileanan na h-Eireann. Chan eil mòran aca ann, co-dhiù an coimeas ris an t-seachd ceud a th’ againn ann an Alba. Ach tha iad gu math brèagha agus tha feadhainn aca prìseil a thaobh cànan is cultar. Ach an fheadhainn air an robh mi, ’s ann air taobh an iar na dùthcha a tha iad. Tha an dà eilean beag a chunnaic mi bhon phlèana air an taobh an ear. B’ fheudar dhomh choimhead ann an leabhar airson faighinn a-mach dè na h-ainmean a th’ orra.

’S e Lambay a th’ air an fhear as fhaide tuath. Ach, ann am Beurla, ’s e *Ireland’s Eye* a th’ air an fhear bheag. Ainm neònach, nach e? *Ireland’s Eye*. Cha b’ urrainn dhomh obrachadh a-mach ciamar a fhuair e ainm mar sin, agus rinn mi an tuilleadh rannsachaidh. Seo na dh’ionnsaich mi mu dheidhinn is tha e gu math inntinneach. ’S e an t-ainm tùsail a bh’ air ann an Gàidhlig na h-Eireann – *Innis Ereinn*. Nise b’ i Eireann boireannach. Bha an t-eilean leathase uaireigin.

Ach nuair a thàinig na Lochlannaich, nuair a ghabh iad smachd air Baile Atha Cliath, dh'atharraich iad am facal Gàidhlig *innis* don iar-leasachan Lochlannach *oe*, no *ey*, a tha a' ciallachadh an aon rud – eilean. 'S e sin an aon iar-leasachan a th' againn fhèin ann an àiteachan mar Bharraigh is Beàrnaraigh.

Tro thìde, chaidh *Ereinn* atharrachadh gu *Eirinn* is tha sin furasta gu leòr a thuigsinn. Eirinn-ey. Mu dheireadh rinn luchd na Beurla nàdar de dh'eadar-theangachadh air, no co-dhiù air a' chiad phàirt dheth, is fhuair iad Ireland's Eye – ged nach eil ceangal sam bith ann eadar an t-ainm agus Eirinn no sùil. 'S ann iomadh-fhillte dha-rìreabh a tha dualchas ainmean-àite air uairean.

* * *

Faclan na seachdainne: deugaire: *teenager*; o shean: *in olden times*; beartach: *wealthy*; prìseil: *valuable*; iar-leasachan: *suffix*; tro thìde: *through time*.

Abairtean na seachdainne: tha pacaid no dhà de shiùcar air fhàgail agam: *I have a packet or two of sugar left*; a thug mi leam bho thaigh-bìdh: *which I took with me from a restaurant*; cuiridh mi dreach Gàidhlig na h-Alba orra: *I will put them in Scottish Gaelic (instead of Irish)*; bha sin air a bhith feumail dhomh: *that would have been useful to me*; bho chruadalachd na h-àrainneachd a tha timcheall orra: *from the hardship(s) of the environment around them*; os cionn a' chuain: *above the open sea (ocean)*; mhothaich mi do dh'eilean: *I noticed an island*; air bòrd-beulaibh an itealain: *on the starboard side of the aircraft*; air a' bhòrd-chùlaibh: *on the port side*; an coimeas ris an t-seachd ceud a th' againn: *in comparison to the 700 we have*; b' fheudar dhomh choimhead ann an leabhar: *I had to look in a book*; bha an t-eilean leathase uaireigin: *she owned the island at one time*; rinn luchd na Beurla nàdar de dh'eadar-theangachadh air: *English-speakers made a sort of translation of it*; ged nach eil ceangal sam bith ann eadar an t-ainm agus Eirinn no sùil: *although there is no connection between the name and Ireland or an eye*; 's ann iomadh-fhillte dha-rìreabh a tha dualchas ainmean-àite air uairean: *place name heritage is very complex sometimes*.

Puing-ghràmar na seachdainne: Eilean beag a bh' ann: *it's a small island. Do you instinctively feel there is something missing in this sentence and does it leave you feeling a bit uncomfortable? If so, good! This means you are getting a good feel for the language. If the missing element does not worry you at all, even better – you can consider yourself fluent! The missing piece, of course, is the assertive verb at the start of the sentence. In full, it should be: 's e eilean beag a bh' ann. But in conversation, the 's e is sometimes missed out – it is simply understood by both speaker and listener. In reply to 'duine mor a th' ann', a listener might say, 's e gu dearbh, duine gu math mòr', starting his sentence with the missing 's e. Similarly in the Litir I said 'ainm neonach, nach e?', missing off the initial 's e. Be aware of the tendency (as in all languages) for Gaelic speakers to take short cuts in conversation, thus departing from what is taught in the text books. This week it is also worth noting the Gaelic for starboard and port (as in boats or planes): am bòrd-beulaibh and am bord-cùlaibh. By comparing them with the original meaning of the English 'starboard', you might come up with an explanation for each. We'll look at them in next week's Litir.*

Seanfhaclan na seachdainne: Cha do bhris facal math fiacail a-riamh: *a good word never broke a tooth*; Is coma le fear nam bròg càite an cuir e a chas: *the shod man cares not where he puts his foot*.

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