

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 **

'S dòcha nach bi sibh eòlach air an abairt *a-bhàn*, a' ciallachadh *sìos*. Chan eil i cho cumanta anns na h-eileanan 's a tha i air tìr-mòr, gu h-àraidh sa cheann a tuath far a bheil i an ìre mhath cumanta. Canaidh daoine sin nuair a tha gluasad air choreigin ann. Canaidh iad 'tha mi a' dol a-bhàn don chladach', a' ciallachadh 'tha mi a' dol sìos don chladach'. Uill, tha an stòiridh beag a tha mi a' dol a dh'innse dhuibh an-dràsta a' tighinn à Siorrachd Rois, agus 's dòcha gun cluinn sibh *a-bhàn* ann turas no dhà.

Chan eil mi cinnteach dè cho sean 's a tha an stòiridh seo ach tha e co-cheangailte ri ainm-àite air Beinn Eighe, eadar Ceann Loch Iù agus Toirbheartan – *Allt a' Ghille*. Tha an t-allt a' sruthadh air aodann deas na beinne a-bhàn a dh'ionnsaigh Loch Clàr. A rèir beul-aithris, 's ann mar seo a fhuair e ainm.

Bha fear anns an sgìre, faisg air Ceann Loch Iù, aig an robh crodh, agus bha galar air a' chrodh. Nuair a bha iad tinn, bhiodh na beathaichean a' geumnaich gun sgar, a' dèanamh fuaim uabhasach. Air sgàth sin, 's e 'galar na geumnaich' a chanadh daoine ris, no 'galar na geumraich' anns an sgìre sin. Dh'fheuch an duine a h-uile rud a b' aithne dha mar leigheas don ghalar. Ach cha do dh'obraich gin aca, agus dh'fhàs an crodh na bu mhiosa.

Aig an àm ud, bha cuid de dhaoine a' creidsinn ann an leigheasan a bha car annasach, a rèir mar a thuigheas sinn galairean, agus na rudan a tha gan adhbharachadh, an-diugh. Airson galar na geumnaich bha iad a' creidsinn gur e an aon leigheas a dh'obraicheadh – uisge fhaighinn anns an robh cridhe air a bhith – cridhe aig duine nach robh a-riamh eòlach air a phàrantan. Cha leigeadh an crodh a leas an t-uisge òl. Gheibheadh iad leigheas nan robh an t-uisge dìreach air a chrathadh orra.

Ach càite am faigheadh an duine cridhe aig fear eile nach robh a-riamh eòlach air a phàrantan? Cha robh fios aige gu dè dhèanadh e. Là a bha seo, ge-tà, nochd coigreach anns an sgìre – ceannaiche-siubhail òg. Aig an àm ud, cha robh taighean-seinnse no taighean-òsta ann, agus fhuair am fear òg cuid oidhche ann an taigh an duine leis an robh an crodh tinn.

Thug iad seachad ùine an tac' an teine, a' cabadaich ri chèile. 'Dè an t-ainm a th' ort?' dh'fhaighnich fear an taighe dhen ghille. Dh'innis an coigreach gu dè chanadh daoine ris, ach dh'aidich e nach robh e buileach cinnteach an robh sin ceart, oir cha robh e a-riamh eòlach air a phàrantan, agus cha robh fios aige eadhon dè na h-ainmean a bh' orra. Chlisg fear an taighe ach cha tuirt e guth.

Air an làrna-mhàireach, thòisich an gille air an rathad a dh'ionnsaigh Thoirbheartain. Ach ghabh am fear eile agus caraidean aige geàrr-rathad anns a' mhonadh, thàinig iad a-bhàn aig allt agus mhuirt iad an gille. 'S e *Allt a' Ghille* a th' air an allt sin a-nise.

Thug iad cridhe a' ghille a-mach, rinn iad an stuth-leigheis leis agus chrath iad e air a' chrodh. Dh'fhàs an crodh na b' fheàrr gu sgiobalta. Ach ... tha e coltach gun deach an galar a-null bhon chrodh do na daoine a mharbh an ceannaiche. Agus airson ginealaich as dèidh sin bhiodh na daoine anns an teaghlach sin a' dol air chuthach, no air chaothach, bho

àm gu àm, agus iad ag èigheachd aig àird an claiginn mar gur e crodh a bh' annta, a' fulaing le galar na geumnaich.

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Faclan na seachdaine: a-bhàn: *down*; beul-aithris: *oral tradition*; galar: *disease*; leigheas: *cure*; coigreach: *stranger*; ceannaiche-siubhail: *travelling salesman*; taighean-seinnse: *pubs*; taighean-òsta: *hotels*; an làrna-mhàireach: *the next day*; geàrr-rathad: *short-cut*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: an ìre mhath cumanta: *relatively common*; nuair a tha gluasad air choreigin ann: *when there is some sort of movement*; eadar Ceann Loch Iù agus Toirbheartan: *between Kinlochewe and Torridon*; tha an t-allt a' sruthadh air aodann deas na beinne: *the burn flows on the southern face of the mountain*; bhiodh na beathaichean a' geumnaich gun sgur: *the beasts would low ceaselessly*; a h-uile rud a b' aithne dha: *everything he knew*; cha do dh'obraich gin aca: *none of them worked*; na bu mhiosa: *worse*; a rèir mar a thuigeas sinn galairean: *according to how we understand (our understanding of) diseases*; agus na rudan a tha gan adhbharachadh: *and the things that cause them*; anns an robh cridhe air a bhith: *in which a heart had been*; cha leigeadh an crodh leas an t-uisge òl: *the cattle wouldn't need to drink the water*; nan robh an t-uisge air a chrathadh orra: *if the water were sprinkled on them*; nach robh a-riamh eòlach air a phàrantan: *who never knew his parents*; fhuair am fear òg cuid oidhche: *the young man got a night's lodging*; an tac' an teine, a' cabadaich ri chèile: *at the fireside, chatting to each other*; dh'innis X gu dè chanadh daoine ris: *X told what people called him*; ag èigheachd aig àird an claiginn: *shouting at the top of their voices (lit. of their skulls)*; mar gur e crodh a bh' annta: *as if they were cattle*.

Puing-ghràmar na seachdaine: bhiodh na daoine anns an teaghlach sin a' dol air chuthach, no air chaothach, bho àm gu àm: *the people in that family would go insane from time to time. Note the alternative pronunciation (and spelling which reflects that) of what is the same word – cuthach or caothach – meaning insanity, but also extreme anger (cf 'mad' in English which has the same connotations). This is a not uncommon variation in Gaelic, between different dialects, of which you may choose one – base it upon your teacher's Gaelic, if you have a teacher. Otherwise, pick one and stick with it. Another example is the Gaelic for 'thinking'. In Ross-shire, as well as other places, it is smuaineachdainn, obviously derived from the noun smuain, a thought. People say 'tha mi a' smuaineachdainn' (I am thinking). In many other places, however, the vowel has been narrowed from 'ua' to 'ao' and the ending of the verbal noun is –adh rather than –ainn, i.e. smaoineachadh – this is the common form in the northernmost of the Western Isles eg bha mi a' smaoineachadh gu robh ... (I was thinking that...) In the southern parts of the Western Isles, it is generally smaointinn eg a bheil thu a' smaointinn gu bheil..? (are you thinking that...?). You might also hear smaointeachadh. Don't get fazed by the variation – it is all part of the rich tapestry of the language, and all the forms are instantly and mutually intelligible.*

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine: chlisg fear an taighe ach cha tuirt e guth: *the man of the house started (because of the surprise of the lad's announcement) but he said nothing.*

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