

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 **

An-uiridh, ann an Litir ceud, seachdad 's a trì (173), thug mi sgeulachd ghoirid dhuibh a fhuaradh bho bhoireannach ann am Bhatarsaigh – Nan NicFhionghain, Nan Eachainn Fhionnlaigh, a chaochail o chionn beagan is fichead bliadhna. Cha robh dùil agam gun tillinn thuice cho luath, ach bha mi aig òraid mu a deidhinn o chionn ceala-deug, agus bu mhòr a chòrd i rium. Tha mi air a bhith a' smaoinneachadh air Nan grunn tursan bhon uair sin.

'S e an t-Ollamh Iain MacAonghais a thug an òraid aig Comunn Gàidhlig Inbhir Nis, mu dheidhinn cuid de na seanfhaclan is gnàthsan-cainnt a chlàr daoine ann an còmhradh le Nan. Bha Iain eòlach oirre agus chruthaich e dealbh don luchd-èisteachd de bhoireannach laghach coibhneil aig an robh stòras a bha mòr is beartach, ach a bha a' buntainn ri farsaingeachd saoghal nan Gaidheal. Ged a bha i a' fuireach air eilean iomallach, bha a cridhe aig cridhe na Gaidhealtachd.

Dh'innis Iain grunn de na seanfhaclan aice a th' air clàran ann an Sgoil Eòlais na h-Alba, ach chan eil iad air an cur ri chèile fhathast mar chruinneachadh ceart. 'S dòcha gun tachair sin uaireigin mar phàirt dhen phroiseact ris an canar Tobar an Dualchais, a tha a' cur seann stuth mar sin ann an cruth diodsaideach.

Ach an-dràsta, bu mhath leam stòiridh beag laghach eile aig Nan aithris dhuibh, ged a tha mi air a dhèanamh beagan nas sìmplidhe. 'S ann mu dheidhinn bodach is cailleach anns an Eilean Sgitheanach a tha e. Bha am bodach a' call a chuimhne ach bha e cho brogail 's gun rachadh e don mhonadh a h-uile là. Co-dhiù, là a bha seo, agus e a' tilleadh às a' mhonadh, lorg am bodach sporan air an talamh. Bha e làn notaichean.

Nuair a ràinig e an taigh aige, chaith e an sporan a smùr na mònachd, agus cha do smaoinich e air tilleadh, oir bha e a' call a chuimhne. Cha do leig a' chailleach oirre gun robh i a' faicinn dad às an rathad, ach dè rinn i làrna-mhàireach ach fhuair i leabhar beag agus chuir i am bodach dha sgoil còmhlaidh ris na gillean òga.

An ceann deannan làithean as dèidh sin, cò thàinig mun cuairt ach am bàillidh. Thachair e ris a' bhodach agus thuirt e ris, “An là a bha mi a' togail a' mhàil mu dheireadh, chaill mi sporan.”

“O,” ars' am bodach, “fhuair mise sporan.” Bha e a' tighinn gu chuimhne mar a lorg e e.

“O, an d' fhuair?” ars' am bàillidh. “Dè rinn thu leis?”

“Cha do rinn mi ach a chaitheamh ann am smùr na mònachd,” ars' am bodach.

“Uill, ma thà,” ars' am bàillidh, “tha e an sin fhathast.”

“Tha,” ars' am bodach, “tha mi cinnteach gu bheil.”

Chaidh am bodach dhachaigh còmhlaidh ris a' bhàillidh agus thòisich iad air rùileach smùr na mònachd. Ach, ged a bhiodh iad a' rùileach fhathast chan fhaigheadh iad an sporan. Thionndaidh am bàillidh ris a' bhodach agus thuirt e ris, “Cò là a fhuair thu an sporan?”

“An là mun deach mi dha sgoil,” thuirt am bodach.

“O Mhic an Ànraidh!” ars’ am bàillidh, “an là mun deach thusa dha sgoil, cha do rugadh mise an uair sin no fad’ as a dhèidh.”

Dh’fhalbh am bàillidh is cha d’ fhuair e sporan no dad eile. Bha an sporan agus an t-airgead aig a’ chaillich, ge brith gu dè mar a chosg i e.

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Faclan na seachdainne: an-uiridh: *last year*; Bhatarsaigh: *Vatersay*; Nan Eachainn Fhionnlaigh: *Nan, daughter of Hector, who was himself a son of Finlay*; ceala-deug: *fortnight*; an t-Ollamh Iain MacAonghais: *Dr John MacInnes*; Comunn Gàidhlig Inbhir Nis: *The Gaelic Society of Inverness*; laghach coibhneil: *nice and kind*; Sgoil Eòlais na h-Alba: *The School of Scottish Studies*; bàillidh: *factor*; rùileach (dialectual form of rùrach): *searching with hands*.

Abairtean na seachdainne: a fhuaradh bho bhoireannach: *which was obtained from a woman*; cha robh dùil agam gun tillinn thuice: *I didn’t expect to return to her*; a bha a’ buntainn ri farsaingeachd saoghal nan Gaidheal: *which belonged to the broad world of the Gael*; ann an cruth diodsaidheach: *in a digital format*; bha e cho brogail ’s gun rachadh e don mhonadh: *he was so sprightly that he would go to the hill*; bha e làn notaichean: *it was full of paper money*; chaith e an spòran a smùr na mònadh: *he threw the purse in the peat dross*; cha do leig a’ chailleach oirre: *the old woman didn’t let on*; dad às an rathad: *anything out of the ordinary*; chuir i am bodach dha sgoil: *she sent the old man to school*; an ceann deannan làithean as dèidh sin: *a few days after that*; an là a bha mi a’ togail a’ mhàil: *the day I was collecting the rent*; an là mun deach mi: *the day before I went*; no fad’ as a dhèidh: *or long after it*.

Puing-ghràmar na seachdainne: “O Mhic an Ànraidh!” ars’ am bàillidh: *it is difficult to give a translation of Mhic an Ànraidh – literally it means Son of the Tempest or Son of the Distress and is an expletive (as uttered here by the factor). But the point I want to make is a grammatical one about mhic (or o mhic or a mhic). This is the word mac (son) in the vocative case, known in Gaelic as an tuiseal gairmeach. Unfortunately for the learner, dictionaries do not give the vocative case of nouns, so they must be constructed from basic principles. And, for singular words, these are as follows (we will look at plural vocatives in a future Litir): In masculine nouns, it is the same as the genitive singular case, and lenited eg a bhalaich! (lad!), a Dhòmhnail! (Donald!). [The exclamation mark is here only included to demonstrate that the noun is in the vocative]. In feminine nouns it is the same as the nominative case, and lenited (ie not slenderised), eg a chaileag! (lass!), a Mhòrag! (Morag!). Adjectives follow the inflexion of the noun so we get, for example, a bhalaich bhig! (little lad!) and a chaileag bheag! (little lass!). In the case of mac followed by a noun (or name), the second word is in the genitive (as ànraidh, the genitive of ànradh) eg a mhic mo bhràthar! (son of my brother!)*

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdainne: ge brith gu dè mar a chosg i e: *however she spent it. Ge brith is a dialectual variant of ge bith or ge be, and is common in the southernmost of the Western Isles. It means whatever or however or, with cò, whoever (ge brith cò thigeadh: whoever would come, regardless of who would come).*

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