

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 ag innse dhuibh an t-seachdain sa chaidh mun sgoilear ainmeil, Seòras Bochanan, a chaochail ann an Dùn Eideann ann an còig-deug, ochdad 's a dhà (1582). Chaidh a thiodhlacadh ann an Cladh nam Manach Liath ach cha deach clach-uaiqe a thogail dha oir cha robh mòran airgid aige, agus bha e airson 's gum biodh na bh' aige air a chosg air daoine bochda.

Uaireigin as dèidh a bhàis, tha e coltach gun do ghabh cuideigin gnothach ri bhodhaig oir, tràth anns an t-seachdamh linn deug, bha a chlaigeann ann an làmhan ceannard an oilthigh, an t-Urramach Iain MacAdhaimh, aig an robh spèis mhòr do Bhochanan. Agus airson bliadhnaichean mòra bha e ann am preas ann an Roinn an Eòlais-Bhodhaig.

O chionn beagan bhliadhnaichean, chaidh an claigeann a thoirt a-mach agus rinn eòlaichean obair air mac-samhail dheth, a' cur fèithean, fiaclan agus feusag air gus am faighte eòlas air coltas ceann Bhochanan nuair a bha e na bhodach. Bha iad airson sin a dhèanamh leis gu bheil còig dealbhan deug dheth ann am bith agus chan eil iad idir coltach ri chèile. Aig a' cheann thall, cho-dhùin iad gur e an dealbh a b' fheàrr a bh' ann fear a rinn am Fleamach, Adrian Keij, a th' ann an làmhan a' Chomainn Rìoghail.

Co-dhiù, sin mo sgeul air Seòras Bochanan. Bidh cuimhne agaibh gu bheil mi a' dèanamh mo shlighe gu tuath air Slighe Taobh an Iar na Gaidhealtachd. Agus faisg air àite-breith Bhochanan ann an Srath Bhlàthain bha uaireigin caisteal air an *robh Gartness Castle*. Tha mi an dùil gur e a' Ghàidhlig a bh' air – Caisteal Gart an Eas. Aig àm anns an t-siathamh linn deug, tha e coltach gum biodh Iain Napier a' fuireach anns a' chaisteal. Bha Napier am measg an fheadhainn a chruthaich logarithms. Gu dearbh, 's e duine comasach a bh' ann. Bha e na innleachdair air leth agus na fheallsanaiche.

Ach bha duilgheadas aige nuair a bha e a' fuireach anns a' chaisteal. Bha muileann-uisge air an abhainn ri thaobh agus dhèanadh e fuaim mòr. Uaireannan bhiodh Napier ag òrdachadh gum biodh am muileann air a chur dheth gus am faigheadh e cothrom smaoinachadh ann an sàmhchair. Agus uaireannan, air an oidhche, bhiodh uiread de smuaintean a' cuairteachadh na chlaigeann 's gum falbhadh e air a chois air bruach na h-aibhne gun dad air ach gùn-oidhche agus bonaid.

Gu tuath air Srath Bhlàthain, tha Slighe Taobh an Iar na Gaidhealtachd a' dol seachad air baile beag brèagha ris an canar Drumainn. An uair sin, tha i a' dol tarsainn cnoc air a bheil *Conic Hill*. Mmm. *Conic Hill*. Bha e iongantach dhomh gu robh ainm Beurla mar sin air cnoc ann an àrainneachd far a bheil a' chuid as mò aca Ceilteach – bhon Ghàidhlig no seann chànan nam Breatannach.

Chòimhead mi air agus bho aon taobh dh'fhaodadh tu ràdh gu bheil cumadh faisg air cumadh còin air. Ach an ann às a sin a thàinig an t-ainm? Uill, uaireannan gheibhear beagan fios air a leithid le bhith a' coimhead air an àite gu dlùth. Agus bha aon rud follaiseach dhomh mu dheidhinn *Conic Hill*. Bha e còmhdaichte le uiread de chòinneach nach fhaca mi

a-riamh cha mhòr, co-dhiù air monadh lom. Agus tha e coltach gur ann à “còinneach” a thàinig *Conic*. Chan eil mi cinnteach ach 's dòcha gur e Cnoc na Còinnich a bh' air o thùs ann an Gàidhlig.

Air taobh thall a' chnuic tha Loch Laomainn agus Baile Mo Thatha. Tha an sgìre seo làn ainmean co-cheangailte ri naoimh, agus bheir sinn sùil air cuid aca an ath-sheachdain.

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Faclan na seachdaine: Seòras Bochanan: *George Buchanan*; clach-uaiqe: *gravestone*; Roinn an Eòlais-Bhodhaig: *Department of Anatomy*; mac-samhail: *replica*; Srath Bhlàthain: *Strathblane*; comasach: *capable*; naoimh: *saints*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: chaidh a thiodhlacadh ann an Cladh nam Manach Liath: *he was buried in Greyfriars Kirkyard*; gum biodh na bh' aige air a chosg air daoine bochda: *that what he had would be spent on poor people*; uaireigin as dèidh a bhàis: *sometime after his death*; gun do ghabh cuideigin gnothach ri bhodhaig: *that somebody did something with his body*; ann an làmhan ceannard an oilthigh: *in the ownership (hands) of the head of the university*; leis gu bheil còig dealbhan deug dheth ann am bith: *since there exist 15 pictures of him*; bha e na innleachdair air leth agus na fheallsanaiche: *he was an excellent inventor and a philosopher*; gus am faigheadh e cothrom smaoineachadh ann an sàmhchair: *so that he would get an opportunity to think in peace and quiet*; gum falbhadh e air a chois air bruach na h-aibhne: *that he would walk on the bank of the river*; dh'fhaodadh tu ràdh: *you could say*; gu bheil cumadh faisg air cumadh còin air: *that it has a shape similar to a cone*; le bhith a' coimhead air an àite gu dlùth: *by looking closely at the place*; le uiread de chòinneach nach fhaca mi a-riamh, cha mhòr: *with an amount of moss I have hardly ever seen*; co-dhiù air monadh lom: *at least on a bare (unforested) hill*.

Puing-ghràmar na seachdaine: gus am faighte eòlas air coltas ceann Bhochanan: *in order to obtain knowledge of the appearance of Buchanan's head. I don't expect you all to recognise or understand faighte, although you will come across words like it, even in normal conversation. The -te ending means it is either a past participle of a verb or what it is in this case, the passive conditional/past habitual. Faigh is an irregular verb. The forms of the passive are gheibhte eg gheibhte e (it would be got, obtained) and faighte eg am faighte e? (would it be got?)*

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine: bhiodh uiread de smuaintean a' cuairteachadh na chlaigeann: *a vast number of thoughts would be circulating in his brain (lit. in his skull). Did you notice the two different uses of claigeann in the Litir? At the beginning it refers to the bones of the cranium, ie the skull (stripped of its flesh). In the second, regarding Napier's cogitations, it is used in an idiomatic sense to mean "head", "brain" or "grey matter". Here is a phrase I hope you will all be able to use in the months or years to come: if somebody says "a bheil Gàidhlig agaibh?", that you can reply, "Tha – làn a' chlaiginn dhith" (a full skull of her ie that you are fluent!)*

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