

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 e Ceann Loch Lìobhann am baile as fhaide tuath air Slighe Taobh an Iar na Gaidhealtachd ron cheann-uidhe anns a' Ghearastan. Bha uair ann nuair a bha e na bhaile grànda tionnsgalach, ach chan ann mar sin a tha e an-diugh. Tha e làn fhlùraichean agus, air là brèagha, tha coltas laghach air. Tha feadhainn dhen bheachd gu bheil an t-àm ann an t-àite a “reic” mar fhear de phrìomh bhailtean na Gaidhealtachd airson cur-seachadan a' mhonaidh.

'S e an àrainneachd a thug Companaidh Aluminium Bhreatainn ann cuideachd, ged nach robh mòran ùidh acasan ann am bòidhchead nàdarrach. Bha iad airson sgeama dealain-uisge a thogail ann, a' cleachdadh cumadh na tìre agus a' gabhail brath air an uisge mhòr a bhios ann gach bliadhna. Mar sin, dhèanadh iad aluminium gu saor.

Dh'obraich na ceudan air an sgeama, ach cha robh mòran dhiubh às an sgìre, oir cha robh sluagh mòr ann. Bha iad à iomadh dùthaich, ach gu h-àraidh à ceann a deas na h-Alba, Eirinn agus Sasainn. Thog iad dam agus chruthaich iad loch as ùr, fear mòr air a bheil *Blackwater Reservoir*, far nach robh ann roimhe ach gleann anns an robh trì lochan beaga. Nuair a bha an sgeama deiseil ann an naoi-deug 's a naoi (1909), bha na leaghadairean ann an Ceann Loch Lìobhann comasach air seachd mìle gu leth tonna de dh'aluminium a dhèanamh anns a' bhliadhna, a dhà uiread 's a bh' air a chleachdadh ann am Breatainn aig an àm.

Ach dh'atharraich a' mhargaidh airson aluminium gu mòr taobh a-staigh beagan bliadhnaichean. Ann an naoi-deug is a ceithir-deug, thòisich an cogadh agus dh'àrdaich an t-iarrtas airson na meatailt, oir bha i air a cleachdadh ann an gnìomhachasan a' chogaidh.

An uair sin, cha robh an leghadair mòr gu leòr. Ach, airson tuilleadh aluminium a dhèanamh, b' fheudar dhaibh tuilleadh dealain a dhèanamh agus tuilleadh uisge a stòradh. Leis a sin, thogadh pìob airson uisge a thoirt don Bhlackwater Reservoir à loch nàdarrach os cionn Ceann Loch Lìobhann, air a bheil Loch Eilde Mòr. Ach, leis gu robh mòran fhear òga air falbh thall thairis, bha e doirbh don chompanaidh a bha ga togail, Balfour Beatty, luchd-obrach gu leòr fhaighinn. Mar sin, am measg an fheadhainn a rinn an obair, bha prìosanaich-chogaidh Ghearmailteach.

Dh'obraich na leaghadairean airson còrr is ceithir fichead bliadhna tro dhà chogadh ach, mu dheireadh, cha b' urrainn dhaibh a bhith beò ann am farpais an aghaidh aluminium shaor à dùthchannan eile. A-nise, chan eil dad air fhàgail air an làraich ach aon togalach a-mhàin far an robh na h-uibhir uaireigin. Gu fortanach, cha do dh'aontaich na h-ùghdarrasan ris a' bheachd-smuain, nuair a bha gnothaichean a' dol gu mòr, ainm ùr a chur air a' bhaile – *Aluminiumville!*

Thairis air bliadhnaichean na h-aluminium cha robh Ceann Loch Lìobhann idir coltach ri iomhaigh anns an t-seann òran:

*Tha na h-aibhnean 's na coilltean as bòidhch' air an t-saoghal
Ann an gleannan mo ghaoil taobh Loch Lìobhainn.*

Ach 's dòcha gu bheil e nas coltaiche ri iomhaigh a-nise – agus bidh na mìltean de luchd-coiseachd a' dol ann airson bòidhchead na sgìre fhaicinn dhaibh fhèin. Ma dh'fhanas iad ann greis, chì iad soighnichean dà-chànanach – Gàidhlig agus Beurla – ann an grunn àiteachan, eadhon am broinn tè de na bùthan.

Beagan mhiltean thar a' mhonaidh gu tuath air Ceann Loch Lìobhann, tha Slighe Taobh an Iar na Gaidhealtachd a' tighinn gu ceann anns a' Ghearastan. Mòran taing airson tighinn nam chois oirre thar nan seachdainean a dh'fhalbh. An ath-sheachdain, bidh cuspair ùr agam, agus tha mi an dòchas gum bi sibh còmhla rium a-rithist.

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Faclan na seachdaine: Ceann Loch Lìobhann: *Kinlochleven*; bòidhchead nàdarrach: *natural beauty*; gu saor: *cheaply*; leaghadair: *smelter*; prìosanaich-chogaidh Ghearmailteach: *German prisoners-of-war*; .

Abairtean na seachdaine: ron cheann-uidhe anns a' Ghearastan: *before the journey's end in Fort William*; tha coltas laghach air: *it's got a nice appearance (laghach brings in more than physical appearance – also atmosphere)*; gu bheil an t-àm ann an t-àite a "reic": *that it's time to "sell" the place*; airson cur-seachadan a' mhonaidh: *for outdoor (hill) pastimes (eg hillwalking)*; bha iad airson sgeama dealain-uisge a thogail: *they wanted to build a hydro-electric scheme*; a' cleachdadh cumadh na tìre: *using the topography*; a' gabhail brath air an uisge mhòr: *taking advantage of the high rainfall*; far nach robh ann roimhe ach: *where there was nothing before but*; a dhà uiread 's a bh' air a chleachdadh: *twice as much as was consumed*; dh'àrdaich an t-iarrtas airson na meatailt: *(the) demand for the metal rose*; b' fheudar dhaibh tuilleadh dealain a dhèanamh: *they had to make more electricity*; leis gu robh mòran fhear òga air falbh: *because many young men were away*; ann am farpais an aghaidh aluminium shaor: *in competition with (against) cheap aluminium*; far an robh na h-uibhir uaireigin: *where there were once many*; cha robh X coltach ri iomhaigh: *X was not like its image*; airson tighinn nam chois: *for accompanying me*.

Puing-ghràmar na seachdaine: eadhon am broinn tè de na bùthan: *even inside one of the shops. Do you understand why I said "tè" here. It is because bùth is a feminine noun; in these cases an individual item is thought of as a feminine object, ie tè. On the other hand, if the noun is masculine, as in taigh, we would use "fear" eg am broinn fear de na taighean. In order to work out which to use, you need to know whether the noun you are about to discuss is masculine or feminine – and this may be difficult in the early days. Don't worry – you will get familiar with noun gender with increasing familiarity with the language, and if you make a mistake you will still be understood. Sometimes people take a shortcut and use the non-gender-specific "aon" (ie "one") eg am broinn aon de na bùthan. This is acceptable and understandable although it is not as attractive to the fluent listener's ear. Gender is important, as it is in many languages and I would suggest that when you learn a new word, you try to remember whether it is masculine or feminine.*

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine: Bha uair ann (nuair a bha e na bhaile grànda tionnsgalach): *there was a time (when it was an ugly industrial town).*

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