

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 rodny.maclea@bbc.co.uk
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Bha mi ag innse dhuibh an t-seachdain sa chaidh mun bhàrd Uibhisteach, Iain MacCodrum, no Iain MacFhearchair, a bha fìor mhath air cluich le cainnt. Tha e coltach gu robh e air turas turas, ma dh’fhaodas mi sin a ràdh, agus chaidh an soitheach air an robh e – ’s e ràmhach a bh’ ann – a-steach a Thobar Mhoire ann am Muile.

Thàinig sluagh mòr don chladach airson faighinn a-mach cò às a bha iad air tighinn. “Cò às a thug sibh an t-ìomradh?” dh’fhaighnich fear aca. “Às ar gàirdeanan,” fhreagair MacFhearchair sa bhad.

Mar a shaoileadh sibh, cha robh an sluagh riarichte le freagairt mar sin. Dh’fhaighnich cuideigin eile, “an ann bho thuath a thàinig sibh?” Agus gun dàil fhreagair am bàrd, “pàirt bho thuath agus pàirt bho thighearnan.” Tha mi cinnteach gur e fear gu math draghail a bh’ ann aig àmannan!

Bhiodh e a’ cluich le fuaimean cuideachd agus bidh sibh mothachail gu bheil na fuaimean “aoi” agus “ui” faisg air a chèile. Feumaidh neach-ionnsachaidh a bhith faiceallach gun can e “aoighean”, a’ ciallachadh “*guests*”, gu ceart is nach bi neach eile a’ smaoinichadh gu bheil e ag ràdh “uighean” a tha a’ ciallachadh “*eggs*”.

Dh’innis mi dhuibh an t-seachdain sa chaidh gu robh e beò aig an aon àm ri Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair, bàrd cho ainmeil ’s a bh’ againn ann an saoghal na Gàidhlig. Chuala Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair mu dheidhinn agus chaidh e a chèilidh air.

Dhlùthaich e ris an taigh aige agus bha duine taobh a-muigh an dorais. ’S e MacFhearchair, no MacCodrum, a bh’ ann, ach cha do dh’aithnich Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair e, oir cha robh e air fhaicinn roimhe. “An aithne dhut Iain MacCodrum?” dh’fhaighnich e. “’S aithne gu ro mhath,” fhreagair am fear aig an doras.

“A bheil fios agad a bheil e a-staigh?” dh’fhaighnich Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair. “Ma tà,” fhreagair am fear eile, “bha e a-staigh nuair a bha mise, ’s cha do rinn mi ach tighinn a-mach.” Cha do thuig Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair fhathast gu robh e a’ bruidhinn ris a’ bhàrd fhèin.

“Caithidh mi an oidhche nochd mar ris, mas àbhaist aoighean a bhith aige,” thuirt e. “Tha mi a’ creidsinn,” fhreagair Iain, “nach bi e falamh dhiubh sin cuideachd mu bhios na cearcan a’ breith.”

Gu mì-fhortanach, chan eil an aithris air a’ chòmhradh ag innse dhuinn gu dè thachair nuair a fhuair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair a-mach gum b’ e am fear eile Iain MacCodrum. Saoilidh mi gum biodh e gu math toilichte co-dhiù ùine a chur seachad còmhla ri fear a bha cho sgileil le cainnt.

Is tha sin gam thoirt gu naidheachd eile mu dhuine ann an Cinn Tìre aig an robh sgil de a leithid cuideachd. ’S e breabadair a bh’ ann, bha e bochd agus bha teaghlach mòr aige. Turas

a bha seo, bha clàrsairean is bàird Eireannach air an rathad dhachaigh a dh'Eirinn as dèidh dhaibh tadhal air uaislean na sgìre. Ach dh'fhàg fear de na bàird a chochall air a chùlaibh – b' e sin an rud a chuireadh e air mar chomharra gu robh e na bhàrd.

Agus fhuair am breabadair greim air. Shaoileadh e gun dèanadh e airgead na b' fheàrr mar bhàrd na dhèanadh e mar bhreabadair, agus dh'fhalbh e leis a' chochall air. Ràinig e taigh mòr ach chunnaic am bàrd Eireannach e, oir bha e air tilleadh a choimhead airson a chochall. Thug e dùbhlán don bhreabadair. “Am bàrd thu?”

Agus fhreagair am breabadair, “cha b' àrd no ìosal mi, a dhuine.” Cò chanadh nach robh e airidh air a' chochall?!

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Faclan na seachdainne: soitheach: *vessel, boat*; ràmhach: *boat propelled by oars*; Tobar Mhoire: *Tobermory*; sa bhad: *immediately*; draghail: *annoying*; àmannan: *times*; sgileil: *skilful*; Cinn Tìre: *Kintyre*; breabadair: *weaver*; clàrsairean: *harpists*; bàird: *bards*; cochall: *hood (signifying bardic status)*.

Abairtean na seachdainne: gu robh e air turas turas: *that he was on a journey one time (please forgive my own little word-play)*; airson faighinn a-mach cò às a bha iad air tighinn: *to find out whence they had come*; cò às a thug sibh an t-ìomradh (also ìomramh)?: *it was meant as “where did you row from?” but MacFhearchair deliberately misinterpreted it*; às ar gàirdeanan: *from our arms*; an ann bho thuath a thàinig sibh?: *did you come from the north?*; pàirt bho thuath agus pàirt bho thighearnan: *partly from tenantry (another meaning of tuath) and partly from lords*; bàrd cho ainmeil 's a bh' againn: *as famous a bard as we (ever) had*; chaidh e a chèilidh air: *he went to visit him*; dhlùthaich e ri X: *he approached, drew closer to X*; cha robh e air fhaicinn roimhe: *he had never seen him before*; caithidh mi an oidhche nochd mar ris: *I'll spend the night with him*; mas àbhaist aoi ghean a bhith aige: *if it is normal for him to have guests*; nach bi e falamh dhiubh sin ma bhios na cearcan a' breith: *that he will not be short of them if the hens are laying (he deliberately misinterpreted aoi ghean as uighean)*; as dèidh dhaibh tadhal air uaislean: *after visiting gentry*; bha e air tilleadh a choimhead airson a chochall: *he had returned to look for his cochall*; am bàrd thu?: *are you a bard? (the weaver chose to misinterpret this as “am b' àrd thu?” i.e. were you tall or high-ranking?)*; cha b' àrd no ìosal mi: *I was not high or low*.

Puing-ghràmar na seachdainne: bha e a-staigh nuair a bha mise, 's cha do rinn mi ach tighinn a-mach: *he was inside when I was, and I did nothing except come out. Have you noticed how you can sometimes use the verb “to do” (dèan) along with what appears to be other verbs? This is because of the close relationship between the verb and the noun in Gaelic. Indeed, the verbal noun form (ag obair, a' glanadh) has a high profile in the language, owing to the loss of the old present tense. In the above example, tighinn is actually a noun which would appear in the verbal noun form as a' tighinn. Consider also how you might say “dèan suidhe” (make sit) rather than “suidh sìos” (sit down); or instead of “an do dh'ionnsaich thu Gàidhlig?”, a fluent speaker might ask you “an e Gàidhlig-ionnsachadh a rinn thu?” (to which you would reply “'s e”). In these examples, suidhe and ionnsachadh are nouns. And if you are a parent of young children, remember that we say “dèan cadal” for “go to sleep.”*

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdainne: thug e dùbhlán don bhreabadair: *he challenged the weaver. Tha X a' toirt dùbhlán do Y: X is challenging Y.*

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