

## Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Each week the West Highland Free Press publishes the text for Roddy Maclean's "Letter to Gaelic Learners" on BBC Radio nan Gaidheal (103-105 FM). The programme is broadcast at 11.50 a.m. every Friday and is repeated at 7.55 p.m. the same day. It is also available on the internet at [www.bbc.co.uk/alba](http://www.bbc.co.uk/alba)

Bha sibh a' feitheamh gu foighidneach fad seachdain, tha mi cinnteach, airson faighinn a-mach dè th' ann an *caora chrom* agus dè an ceangal a th' aice do dh'uisge-beatha. Uill, anns a' chiad dol-a-mach, chan e beathach a th' innte. 'S e a th' ann an caora chrom ainm eile airson a' phàirt dhen phoit-dhuibh air a bheil a' *chliath*. Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu dheidhinn na clèithe an t-seachdain sa chaidh – a' phìob shnìomhach anns am bi an ceò, a dh'èireas às a' phoit-dhuibh, a' fuarachadh.

Chan ann dìreach ann an Gàidhlig a tha ainm creutair co-cheangailte ris a' chlàith oir, ann am Beurla, canaidh daoine *worm* rithe. Tha mi an dùil gur e a cumadh as coireach ri sin. Carson is e a' *chaora chrom* a chanas sinn rithe ann an Gàidhlig? Uill, chanainn gu robh i a' cur ann an cuimhne dhaoine cumadh nan adharcan ann an cuid de chaoraich dhen t-seann seòrsa.

Tha an t-ainm a' nochdadh ann an seann phort-a-beul: *tha bainne aig na caoraich uile 's galan aig a' chaora chruim*. Tha bainne aig na caoraich uile 's galan aig a' chaora chruim. Chan e galan de bhainne a thathar a' ciallachadh, ge-tà, ach galan de rudeigin nas làidire!

Leugh mi stòiridh an là eile à Dùthaich MhicAoidh, far an robh sinn an t-seachdain sa chaidh, anns an robh am fear a bha seo a' dèanamh uisge-beatha. Agus tha caora anns an sgeulachd, ged nach e caora chrom a th' innte. Bhuineadh an duine do Phort Sgeire, agus bha poit-dhubh aige fhèin agus feadhainn eile ann am bothan ri taobh allt air a bheil Allt na Cleite.

Bha uiread de thalamh aig na croitearan sin 's nach robh feum aca air eòrna a cheannach. Dh'fhàsadh iad an eòrna dhaibh fhèin. Co-dhiù, oidhche a bha seo, dh'fhalbh ar caraid chun a' mhonaidh. Tuigidh sibh gur ann air an oidhche a bhiodh daoine a' tadhal air a' phoit-dhuibh, oir bha an obair aca an aghaidh an lagh. Bha an croitear air a bhith ag òl mus do dh'fhalbh e, ge-tà, agus bha an smùid air. A dh'aindeoin sin, ràinig e am bothan, chuir e an teine thuige, agus thòisich an stuth làidir air cruinneachadh anns a' ghlacadan – an soitheach a bha aig ceann thall na clèithe.

Bha a h-uile càil a' dol gu math nuair a chuala an duine bragadaich aig an doras. Smaoinich e gur e oifigearan-cusbainn a bh' ann, gu robh iad air a lorg, agus e a' dèanamh uisge-beatha. Bha an t-eagal mòr air.

Ach cha do dh'fheuch duine ri briseadh a-steach. Chaidh ar caraid a dh'ionnsaigh an dorais le òrd na làimh. Tharraing e an doras gus an robh e leth-fhosgailte, agus chunnaic e dà shùil a' coimhead air bhon dorchadas. Chlisg e. An uair sin, thilg e an t-òrd a dh'ionnsaigh nan sùl le uile neart. Dhùin e an doras le brag, ghlas e e agus shuidh e sìos ri taobh na stòbha, agus e air chrith leis an egal.

Chaidh ùine seachad agus cha chuala e dad bhon taobh a-muigh. Thog e lanntair far a' bhùird agus dh'fhosgail e an doras. Agus bha rudeigin air an stàirsnich ceart gu leòr. Chan e oifigear-cusbainn air a dhruim dìreach a bh' ann idir, ge-tà, ach caora! Bha peata aige, a bha e air àrach bho bha i na h-uain, agus lean i air anns an dorchadas chun a' bhothain. Bha aon chaora aige a bha crom agus blàth am broinn a' bhothain, agus tè bho chd eile a bha dìreach agus fuar air an taobh a-muigh.

\* \* \*

**Faclan na seachdaine:** caora chrom: *the worm of a still (can also mean a crooked horned sheep)*; a' fuarachadh: *cooling*; rudeigin: *something*; nas làidire: *stronger*; Port Sgeire: *Portskerra*; poit-dhubh: *small still used by distillers of illegal whisky*; bothan: *bothy*; glacadan: *the vessel that captures the new spirit*; bragadaich: *noise like crackling or sharp rustling*; oifigearan-cusbainn: *customs/excise officers*; peata: *pet*.

**Abairtean na seachdaine:** bha sibh a' feitheamh gu foighidneach: *you were waiting patiently*; chan e beathach a th' innte: *she is not an animal*; tha mi an dùil gur e a cumadh as coireach ri sin: *I reckon it's her shape that's responsible for that*; gu robh i a' cur ann an cuimhne dhaoine cumadh nan adharcan: *that she reminded people of the shape of the horns*; tha bainne aig na caoraich uile: *all the sheep have milk*; (tha) galan aig a' chaora chruim: *the caora chrom has a gallon*; a thathar a' ciallachadh, ge-tà: *which is meant, however*; 's nach robh feum aca air eòrna a cheannach: *that they didn't need to buy barley*; co-dhiù, oidhche a bha seo: *anyway, one night*; dh'fhalbh ar caraaid chun a' mhonaidh: *our friend went to the hill*; an aghaidh an lagh: *against the law*; bha an smùid air: *he was drunk (informal usage)*; an soitheach a bha aig ceann thall na clèithe: *the vessel that was at the far end of the worm*; le òrd na làimh: *with a hammer in his hand*; chlisg e: *he started*; a dh'ionnsaigh nan sùl le uile neart: *towards the eyes with all his strength*; dhùin e an doras le brag: *he closed the door with a bang*; air chrith leis an eagal: *shaking with fear*; thog e lanntair far a' bhùird: *he picked up a lantern from the table*; bha rudeigin air an stàirsnich: *something was on the doorstep*; air a dhruim dìreach: *flat on his back*; bho bha i na h-uain: *since she was a lamb*.

**Puing-ghràmar na seachdaine:** *I would like to reinforce the point about the slenderisation of an adjective which qualifies a feminine noun in the dative singular case, even when the noun itself cannot be slenderised because of its vowel combination. The first example is dubh in poit-dhubh (lit. "black pot"). This occurs in the dative singular case three times in the Litir and note that, while poit cannot be slenderised, dubh can and generally is: eg airson a' phàirt dhen phoit-dhuibh, a dh'èireas às a' phoit-dhuibh, a' tadhal a' air phoit-dhuibh. The same explanation can be given for the phrase galan aig a' chaora chruim. The chruim here is the lenited and slenderised form of crom (caora is in the dative or prepositional case following the preposition aig and it is, of course, a feminine word). In the nominative singular it is caora chrom. In the dative singular, caora cannot slenderise, but chrom does - to chruim.*

**Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine:** chuir e an teine thuige: *he lit the fire. Note also that chaidh a chur thuige means “it was lit” in relation to a fire, but “he was all fired up” ie angry, in reference to a person!*

\* *“Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh” is funded by Comataidh Craolaidh Gàidhlig*