

# 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](mailto:roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk) \* This is Litir 242.*

Tha mi a' smaoinichadh gum bi cuid agaibh eòlach air an ainm *Iain Lom*. B' e Iain bàrd nan Dòmhnallach ann an Loch Abar anns an t-seachdamh linn deug. Tha e ainmeil airson an dàin aige "Latha Inbhir Lòchaidh" anns an do chomharraich e a' bhuaidh a thug Clann Dòmhnail, fo stiùir Mhontròis is Alasdair Mhic Colla, air a nàimhdean, na Caimbeulaich, aig Blàr Inbhir Lòchaidh ann an sia ceud deug, ceathrad 's a còig (1645). Seo earrann bhon dàn:

*Alasdair Mhic Colla ghasta,  
Làmh dheas a' sgoltadh nan caisteal;  
Chuir thu 'n ruaig air Gallaibh glasa,  
'S ma dh'òl iad càil gun chuir thu ast' e.*

Cha chanadh tu gur e bàrd na sìthe a bh' ann! Co-dhiù, bha mi a' leughadh an là eile mu chòmhradh a bh' ann, uaireigin às dèidh a' bhatail, eadar Iain agus ceannard nan Caimbeulach, Marcais Earra-Ghaidheal. Bha am Marcais air airgead-cinn a chur air a' bhàrd, agus chaidh Iain gu dàna don taigh aige airson an t-airgead iarraidh dha fhèin!

Uill, a rèir na sgeòil, bha an Caimbeulach modhail gu leòr. Leig e Iain a-steach agus sheall e seòmar dha, anns an robh na h-uibhir de chinn choileach-dubha crochte air a' bhalla. "Am faca tu riamh, Iain," dh'fhaighnich e, "uiread sin de choilich-dhubha san aon àite?"

"Chunnaic," fhreagair Iain.

"Càite?" dh'fhaighnich am Marcais.

"An Inbhir Lòchaidh," thuirt Iain. Bha e a' ciallachadh Caimbeulaich mharbh às dèidh a' bhatail.

"A, Iain, Iain," ars' am fear eile, "cha sguir thu gu bràth de chagnadh nan Caimbeulach."

"S e as duilich leam," fhreagair an Dòmhnallach, "nach urrainn mi an slugadh."

Bidh an fheadhainn agaibh, a th' air a bhith a' leantainn a' phrògram seo o chionn ghoirid, a' smaoinichadh – 'dè thachair do dh'Iain Stiùbhart Blackie? Nach robh Ruairidh a' dol a dh'innse dhuinn tuilleadh mu bheatha?"

Uill, bha agus tha, oir 's ann anns an leabhar a sgrìobh Blackie, "*The Language and Literature of the Scottish Highlands*" a leugh mi an còmhradh sin eadar Iain Lom agus Marcais Earra-Ghaidheal. Sgrìobh Blackie an leabhar leis an amas dearbhadh do luchd na Beurla nach e cultar is cànan gun bhrìgh is gun luach a bh' aig na Gaidheil.

Bha Blackie, a bha na Phroifeasair de Ghreugais ann an Oilthigh Dhùn Eideann, ainmeil air feadh na rìoghachd. Bha e eòlach air grunn de na h-uaislean mòra ann an Lunnainn, nam measg Uilleam Gladstone a bhiodh na phrìomhaire ceithir tursan mus biodh a bheatha seachad. Agus bhiodh e a' nochdadh gu tric air an àrd-ùrlar ann am bailtean ann an Sasainn agus Alba, a' toirt òraid air caochladh chuspairean – rudan mar Plato, cainnt nan seann Ghreugach, cultar nan Gaidheil agus poileataics.

A h-uile samhradh bhiodh e fhèin is a bhean a' dèanamh air taigh a cheannaich iad faisg air an Òban, agus 's ann an sin a dh'ionnsaich e mòran dhen Ghàidhlig aige. Mar a chaidh an ùine seachad thuig na Gaidheil gu robh e na dheagh charaid dhaibh, agus gum b' esan am fear a b' fheàrr a rachadh os cionn iomairt airson Ceilteis a stèidheachadh mar chuspair oilthigh ann an Dùn Eideann.

Am measg na dh'iarr air sin a dhèanamh bha feadhainn anns an Eaglais Shaoir. Bha an nàimhdeas a dh'èirich eadar Blackie agus cuid anns an Eaglais Chlèirich (mus robh an sgaradh ann), a thaobh na Deuchainn Oilthigh ann an Obar Dheathain, air socrachadh. Dh'aithnich Blackie nach robh duine na b' fheàrr ann na e fhèin, agus dh'aontaich e a bhith na phrìomh thagraiche airson Cathair na Ceilteis a stèidheachadh. Ach bha dusan mìle not a dhith orra. Chì sinn mar a chruinnich iad an t-suim sin an ath-sheachdain.

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**Faclan na seachdaine:** gasta: *fine, splendid*; Marcais Earra-Ghaidheal: *Marquis of Argyll*; airgead-cinn: *head-money (a price on his head)*; gu dàna: *boldly, daringly*; brìgh: *import, meaning*; luach: *value*.

**Abairtean na seachdaine:** b' e Iain bàrd nan Dòmhnallach: *John was the MacDonald bard*; a' bhuaidh a thug Clann Dòmhnail air a nàimhdean: *the victory Clan Donald had over his enemies*; fo stiùir Mhontròis is Alasdair Mhic Colla: *under the leadership of Montrose and Alasdair MacColla*; [do] làmh dheas a' sgoltadh nan caisteal: *[your] right hand splitting the castles*; chuir thu 'n ruaig air Gallaibh glasa: *you chased away grey non-Gaels (Gallaibh is the old dative plural of Gall)*; ma dh'òl iad càil gun chuir thu ast' e: *if they had drunk anything you spilled it out of them*; cha sguir thu gu bràth de chagnadh nan Caimbeulach: *you will never stop chewing the Campbells*; 's e as duilich leam: *what I most regret (today we would mostly use duilghe or dorra for the comparative of duilich)*; nach urrainn mi an slugadh: *that I can't swallow them*; a bhiodh na phrìomhaire ceithir tursan: *who would be prime minister four times*; a' toirt òraid air caochladh chuspairean: *lecturing on a variety of subjects*; bhiodh e fhèin is a bhean a' dèanamh air taigh a cheannaich iad: *he and his wife would go to a house they had bought*; a rachadh os cionn iomairt: *who would lead a campaign*; airson Ceilteis a stèidheachadh mar chuspair oilthigh: *to establish Celtic as a university subject*; bha an nàimhdeas a dh'èirich eadar X agus Y air socrachadh: *the enmity that arose between X and Y had diminished*; dh'aontaich e a bhith na phrìomh thagraiche: *he agreed to be the prime advocate*.

**Puing-ghràmar na seachdaine:** anns an robh na h-uibhir de chinn choileach-dubha crochte air a' bhalla: *in which there were lots of blackcock heads hanging on the wall. Welcome to coileach-dubh, one of those lovely compound nouns! It is a compound because the word combination creates a new concept. Coileach-dubh is not a black domestic cockerel but a species of wild bird, the black grouse or blackcock, Lyrurus tetrix. The compound inflects according to the rules for such words, meaning that the first element, the noun, declines regularly and the second element, the adjective, acts as an independent adjective, in agreement with the noun, would act. The indefinite genitive plural of coileach is choileach (can you explain why?) "Of the blackcocks" would be nan coileach-dubha; "of blackcocks" is choileach-dubha. Note however that I have taken the traditional view here. Many modern Gaels use a genitive plural form of such nouns, where an adjective is present, which has been influenced by the nominative plural; for "of the cockerels" they would still say nan coileach but "for the blackcocks",*

*would be nan coilich-dhubha. If you have a teacher ask him/her what he/she would say.*

**Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine:** bha dusan mìle not a dhith orra: *they needed twelve thousand pounds. Tha X a dhith air Y (Y is lacking, missing, needing X).*

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