

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.macleam@bbc.co.uk * This is Litir 244.*

Bu mhath leam gum faighinn ticead bho chuideigin airson turas a-null thairis gu dùthaich shneachdach ann am meadhan a’ gheamhraidh. Tha fhios a’ m dè tha sibh a’ smaoinneachadh – “tha Ruairidh ag iarraidh dhol air splaoid.” Ach chan ann mar sin a tha e idir. Tha mi airson rannsachadh a dhèanamh air na thachras do ghoireasan-siubhail ann an dùthchannan sneachdach agus, nan robh agam ris na sgithean agam a thoirt leam airson faighinn bho àite gu àite air an t-sneachd, uill, cha bhithinn mi-thoilichte.

Ach ’s e rannsachadh a bhiodh fa-near dhomh, is chan e splaoid. Bha mi ann an Eirinn o chionn ghoirid agus, air an rathad dhachaigh à Baile Atha Cliath, ràinig mi Port-adhair Ghlaschu ceart gu leòr. Nuair a bha mi a’ feuchainn ri thilleadh a dh’Inbhir Nis, ge-tà, cha b’ urrainn dhomh. Chaidh am port-adhair ann an Inbhir Nis a dhùnadh air sàilleamh sneachda. Bha suidheachadh nan rathaidean is nan sgoiltean na bu mhiosa buileach. Cho luath ’s a nochd trì ciadameatairean (no òirleach ma tha sibh sean-fhasanta) de shneachd air na rathaidean, bha a h-uile mac màthar ag èigheachd mu cho cunnartach ’s a bhitheadh e an taigh fhàgail. Tha e coltach nach cual’ iad guth mu chòtaichean is botannan-coiseachd. Is dòcha cuideachd gun do dhiochuimhnich iad mar a bha cùisean o chionn beagan bhliadhnaichean.

Bha mi a’ coimhead tro leabhar an là eile a tha mu dheidhinn eachdraidh Sgìre Raoid ann an Cataibh, agus bha aithrisean na bhroinn a bha gu math inntinneach mu gheamhraidhean sneachdach. ’S e an tìotal a th’ air *Rogart: The Story of a Sutherland Crofting Parish*. ’S e fear Iain Dòmhnallach, no Iain am Post, a chuir ri chèile e, agus mar phost cha bhiodh duine na b’ eòlaiche na esan, tha mi cinnteach, air buaidh na h-aimsir air goireasan is seirbheisean.

A rèir an leabhair, tha tuathanach às an sgìre, Peadar Boa, anns a’ *Ghuinness Book of Records* airson na h-ùine as fhaide fo shneachd a mhair caora beò. Chaidh mi gu leabhar *Ghuinness* agus chan e sin buileach am fiosrachadh a bh’ acasan, ged a thug iad an duais do thuathanach às an dearbh sgìre aig an dearbh àm – fear Ailig MacIllFhinnein.

Cha tèid mi-fhìn an sàs anns an deasbad air cò tha ceart is cò tha ceàrr, ach bha e iongantach gu robh tè de na caoraich fhathast beò anns a’ Mhàrt naoi ceud deug, seachdad ’s a h-ochd (1978) as dèidh dhi leth-cheud là a chur seachad fon t-sneachd. Mhair i beò le bhith ag ithe a clòimhe fhèin, a rèir leabhar *Ghuinness*, ach tha Iain Dòmhnallach ag innse sgeulachd mu fheadhainn eile a mhair beò airson seachdainean le bhith ag ithe rùsg à preas conaisg .

Bha an suidheachadh a cheart cho dona, no ’s dòcha na bu mhiosa, anns a’ gheamhradh de leth-cheud ’s a ceithir gu leth-cheud ’s a còig (1954-5). Bha an sneachd cho domhainn ’s gu robh comas aig daoine greimeachadh len làmhan air na uèirichean-fòn. Agus mhair an droch shìde cho fada ’s gun do thòisich na h-ùghdarrasan air fodar a leigeil bho itealain. Nan robh crodh aig tuathanach dhèanadh e cumadh mar “C” (airson *cattle*) anns an t-sneachd agus nan robh caoraich aige dhèanadh e “S” (airson *sheep*).

Tha e coltach gu robh duine no dithis dhen bheachd gum feuchadh iad ri bèilichean feòir fhaighinn mar seo saor 's an asgaidh, ged nach robh feum ac' air fodar. Tha mi cinnteach nach robh iad buileach cho toilichte nuair a fhuair iad bileag-iarrtais airson airgead as dèidh làimh! Chan eil port an asgaidh ann, mar a thuir an seann chlàrsair.

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Faclan na seachdainne: sneachdach: *snowy*; rannsachadh: *research*; Baile Atha Cliath: *Dublin*; botannan-coiseachd: *walking boots*; fodar: *fodder*; itealain: *aircraft*; bèilichean feòir: *bales of hay*.

Abairtean na seachdainne: airson turas a-null thairis: *for a trip overseas*; tha X ag iarraidh dhol air splaoid: *X wants to go on a junket*; chan ann mar sin a tha e: *that is not the situation*; air na thachras do ghoireasan-siubhail: *about what happens to transport facilities*; nan robh agam ris na sgithean agam a thoirt leam: *if I had to take my skis with me*; a bhiodh fa-near dhomh: *which would be in my mind*; air sàilleamh sneachda: *because of snow*; na bu mhiosa buileach: *much worse*; trì ciadameatairean (no òirleach ma tha sibh sean-fhasanta): *3 centimetres (or an inch if you are old-fashioned)*; a h-uile mac màthar: *every Tom, Dick and Harry*; eachdraidh Sgìre Raoird ann an Cataibh: *the history of Rogart in Sutherland*; cha bhiodh duine na b' eòlaiche air buaidh na h-aimsir: *there wouldn't be anyone with a greater knowledge of the effect of the weather*; airson na h-ùine as fhaide fo shneachd a mhair caora beò: *for the longest time a sheep remained alive buried in snow*; às an dearbh sgìre anns an dearbh stoirm: *from the same area in the same storm*; le bhith ag ithe a clòimhe fhèin: *by eating her own wool*; rùsg à preas conaisg: *bark from a whin (gorse) bush*; greimeachadh len làmhan air na uèrichean-fòn: *grabbing the telephone wires with their hands*; bileag-iarrtais airson airgead às dèidh làimh: *invoice for payment afterwards*.

Puing-ghràmar na seachdainne: Bu mhath leam gum faighinn ticead bho chuideigin: *I would like to get a ticket from somebody. How would you deal with the word faighinn in a situation like this because it is given in the dictionaries as the present participle of the irregular verb faigh (the verbal noun is a' faighinn)? If I had been using this grammatical structure, however, I would have said bu math leam ticead fhaighinn. The fact that the sentence starts with a conditional verb (bu instead of is) is a clue; the -inn ending on the verb is another. It is the first person singular conditional in its dependent form (ie gheibhinn, I would get; gum faighinn, that I would get. Literally I am saying "I would like that I would get..."*

Seanfhacal na seachdainne: Chan eil port an asgaidh ann, mar a thuir an seann chlàrsair: *there's no free tune, as the old harper said. The first part is a proverb, equivalent to the English "there's no such thing as a free lunch", and the second refers to what I imagine to be its origin – when musicians, notably harpers, toured the Scottish and Irish Gaidhealtachd playing for clan chiefs. They expected a reward for their efforts!*

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