

# 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 248.*

Cha robh mi ann an New Zealand, no Sealainn Nuadh, ach aon turas. Is mòr am beud, oir tha i uabhasach brèagha. Agus bu mhath leam a ràdh gu soilleir gu robh am beachd sin agam fada mus do nochd na fiolmaichean – “*Lord of the Rings*”! Chòrd na beanntan anns an eilean mu dheas gu mòr rium agus, anns an eilean mu thuath, shaoil mi gu robh cultar nam Maori air leth priseil is inntinneach. Gu dearbh, ’s e Maori a’ chiad chànan a chuala mi nuair a fhuair mi far na plèana ann an Auckland.

Bha na Gaidheil uaireigin pailt ann an New Zealand is tha an sliochd pailt fhathast. Chunnaic mi ìomhaigh de chù-chaorach ann an sgìre ris an canar “Dùthaich MhicCoinnich” ann am meadhan an eilein mu dheas, agus sgrìobhte oirre bha na faclan Gàidhlig “Beannachdan air a’ chù-chaorach”. As aonais nan con-chaorach, agus na caoraich fhèin, cha robh na Gaidheil air a bhith comasach air bith-beò a dhèanamh anns na beanntan sin.

Taobh a-muigh Alba is Eirinn, ’s e New Zealand an aon dùthaich air an t-saoghal far an cuala mi òrain Ghàidhlig air prògram rèidio àbhaisteach. Bha sin ann an Dùn Eideann, no Dunedin, baile gu math Albannach anns an eilean mu dheas. Uaireigin às dèidh sin, bha mi air ais ann an Astràilia, far an robh mi a’ fuireach, agus bha còmhradh agam le fear à New Zealand. Dh’innis e dhomh gu robh àite anns an dùthaich aige air an robh “Lochnagar”. Nise, tha amharas agam gur e loch a bh’ ann, seach beinn, ach chan urrainn dhomh a bhith cinnteach às a sin. Ma tha duine còir sam bith ag èisteachd ri seo air an eadar-lìon ann an New Zealand, ’s dòcha gun cuir e ceart mi.

Co-dhiù, thàinig an còmhradh sin gu mo chuimhne, às dèidh dhomh bruidhinn ri fear eile, ann an Alba an turas seo, mu dheidhinn “Lochnagar”. Ach chan e “Lochnagar” a thuir e, oir bha an còmhradh ann an Gàidhlig, agus bidh fios agaibh, tha mi an dùil, gur e beinn, seach loch, a th’ anns an rud ris an canar *Lochnagar* ann am Beurla ann an Alba. Bha mo charaid is mi fhìn a-mach air “Beinn nan Cìochan” oir ’s e sin ainm Gàidhlig na beinne.

Nach annasach e gun deach ainm locha a chur air mullach beinne? Ciamar a thachair sin? Uill, tha loch anns a’ choire fon mhullach air a bheil *Loch na Gàire*. Dh’eadar-theangaich Uilleam MacBhàtair sin mar “*Loch of the Outcry*”, agus bha e dhen bheachd gun d’ fhuair e an t-ainm bho fhuaim na gaoithe a bhios a’ cuairteachadh anns a’ choire. Ann am Beurla ’s e *Lochnagar* a chanadh daoine, agus a chanas iad fhathast, ris an loch, agus chanadh iad *Top of Lochnagar* no *Hill of Lochnagar* ris a’ bheinn. Mu dheireadh chuir iad dìreach “Lochnagar” air a’ bheinn fhèin.

’S dòcha gu robh adhbhar a bharrachd ann air a shon, oir bha ainmean aig na Gaidheil air na mullaichean a bha co-cheangailte ri rudan a bhuineas do bhoireannaich a-mhàin – cìochan. ’S e a’ Chìoch Mhòr a bh’ aca air aon mhullach, agus cuiridh mi geall gu robh “Cìochan” eile air an ainmeachadh oirre, oir ’s e *Meikle Pap* a th’ air aonan dhiubh an-diugh ann an Albais, an cànan a ghabh thairis bhon Ghàidhlig anns an sgìre sin. Air sgàth sin, ’s e “Beinn nan Cìochan” a bh’ air – agus a th’ air – a’ bheinn air fad. Tha fhios gum b’ fheàrr leis na Bhictorianaich “Lochnagar” a chantainn rithe, ge-tà, seach a bhith a’ meòmhrachadh cus air ciall an ainm Ghàidhlig!

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**Faclan na seachdain:** priseil: *valuable*; ìomhaigh: *statue, image*; Dùthaich MhicCoinnich: *Mackenzie Country*; Albais: *Scots language*.

**Abairtean na seachdaine:** is mòr am beud: *great is the pity*; tha an sliochd pailt fhathast: *their descendants are still plentiful*; far an cuala mi òrain Ghàidhlig: *where I have heard Gaelic songs*; tha amharas agam gur e loch a bh' ann: *I suspect it was a loch*; chan urrainn dhomh a bhith cinnteach às: *I can't be certain of it*; 's dòcha gun cuir e ceart mi: *perhaps he'll put me right*; gur e beinn, seach loch, a th' ann: *that it is a mountain, rather than a loch*; bha X is Y a-mach air “Beinn nan Cìochan”: *X and Y were on about [talking about] “Beinn nan Cìochan” [lit. Mountain of the Breasts]*; gun deach ainm locha a chur air mullach beinne: *that a loch's name was applied to a mountain summit*; a bhios a' cuairteachadh anns a' choire: *which circulates in the corrie*; rudan a bhuineas do bhoireannaich a-mhàin: *things which belong only to women*; gum b' fheàrr leis na Bhictorianaich “Lochnagar” a chantainn rithe: *that the Victorians preferred to call it “Lochnagar”*; a bhith meòmhrachadh cus air ciall an ainm: *contemplating too much the meaning of the name*.

**Puing-ghràmar na seachdaine:** “Beannachdan air a' chù-chaorach”. As aonais an con-chaorach...: *blessings on the sheepdog [collectively]. Without their sheepdogs... Can you explain why the second part of the compound is chaorach and not caorach? The reason is that it is the genitive plural; we are saying literally “dog of sheep (pl.)”. The word caora (nominative plural caoraich) is irregular and unusual, because the genitive singular and the genitive plural are identical (as are the nominative singular and nominative plural in English), ie caorach. They are differentiated by two things – the article (if present) and lenition. We say ceann na caorach for “the sheep's head” (sing.), and cinn nan caorach for “the heads of the sheep” (pl.). But, without the article, the plural is lenited ie ceann caorach means “a sheep's head” but cinn chaorach means “heads of sheep” (pl.) Sheepdogs work with more than one sheep so the second part of the compound is the genitive plural. It is therefore always lenited, regardless of the case in which the compound appears eg a' choin-chaorach (of the sheepdog), na coin-chaorach (the sheepdogs), nan con-chaorach (of the sheepdogs).*

**Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine:** cha robh na Gaidheil air a bhith comasach air bith-beò a dhèanamh: *the Gaels wouldn't have been capable of making a living*. Tha X a' dèanamh bith-beò: *X makes a living, livelihood*.

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