

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.maclean@bbc.co.uk * This is Litir 255.*

Tha mi gu mòr an comain Iain MhicIlleathain, ged nach b’ aithne dhomh e, is ged nach robh e càirdeach dhomh. Tha mi na chomain a chionn ’s gun do sgrìobh e mu dheidhinn a’ bhaile agam fhìn – Inbhir Nis. Uill ’s dòcha nach eil sin buileach ceart, oir ’s e fear eile a sgrìobh an leabhar aige, ach ’s e guth Iain fhèin a tha a’ nochdadh air na duilleagan.

Tha e aithnichte do mhuinntir Inbhir Nis mar “Naochadair Chlach na Cùdainn” oir ’s e ainm an leabhair aige *Reminiscences of a Clachnacuddin Nonagenarian*. Chaidh an leabhar a chur ri chèile ann an ochd ceud deug, ceathrad ’s a dhà (1842) nuair a bha MacIlleathain naochad ’s a sia bliadhna a dh’aois, agus tha e a’ toirt dealbh dhuinn de dh’Inbhir Nis nuair a bha e mòran na bu lugha, agus mòran na bu Ghaidhealaiche, na tha e an-diugh.

Dhuibhse nach eil eòlach air Inbhir Nis, ’s e a th’ ann an Clach na Cùdainn ach clach a tha suidhichte ri taobh Talla a’ Bhaile. Fhuair i a h-ainm leis gum biodh boireannaich a’ cur an cuid chùdainnean air a’ chloich nuair a bha iad air an rathad a dh’ionnsaigh na h-aibhne airson aodach a nighe. Agus tha mi cinnteach gun stadadh iad aig a’ chloich air an rathad dhachaigh cuideachd.

’S ann aig Clach na Cùdainn a chluinneadh iad naidheachdan a’ bhaile. Is tha an “Naochadair” ag innse dhuinn gum biodh gillean is nigheanan Inbhir Nis a’ suiridhe anns a’ cheàrnaidh sin cuideachd. Nuair a bha iad taobh a-muigh a’ bhaile aca, bhiodh muinntir Inbhir Nis a’ bruidhinn orra fhèin mar mhuinntir Chlach na Cùdainn, no “Clachnacuddin Lads and Lasses”.

Rugadh Iain MacIlleathain pìos beag a-mach à Inbhir Nis ann an Cnoc Mhoire air an t-seachdamh là dhen Fhaoilleach, seachd ceud deug, ceathrad ’s a sia (1746) – trì mìosan ro Bhlàr Chùil Lodair. Chaochail athair nuair a bha Iain òg, agus ’s e sheanair a thog an gille. Bha cuimhne mhath aig Iain agus, a bharrachd air sin, chuala e mòran naidheachdan aig a sheanair agus, mar sin, bha fiosrachadh aige mu dheidhinn rudan a thachair aig deireadh an t-seachdamh linn deug.

Anns na litrichean romhainn, bu mhath leam naidheachd no dhà innse dhuibh a nochdas anns an leabhar aige. Ach an-dràsta, bheir mi sùil aithghearr air tuairisgeul a rinn fear eile de MhacIlleathain fhèin. B’ esan Iain Friseal agus anns an leabhar aige *Reminiscences of Inverness*, tha e a’ dèanamh tuairisgeul de MhacIlleathain, agus e na bhodach de chòrr is naochad bliadhna a dh’aois.

Seo an t-aodach a bh’ air: bonaid ghorm, còta geàrr, briogais ghorm, stocainnean dubha, agus brògan is bucaill. ’S dòcha gun do rinn e fhèin cuid dhen

aodach aige, oir bha e na thàillear fad a bheatha. Thachair Iain Friseal ris nuair a bha e air rathad a dh'ionnsaigh na h-aibhne còmhla ri ogha. "Ciamar a tha sibh an-diugh, a Mhaighstir MhicIlleathain?" thuirt am Frisealach ris. "Aig m' aois," fhreagair am bodach, "chan eil adhbhar agam a bhith a' gearan."

Bhruidhinn iad airson greis mu chuimhne air a' bhaile. "Chan eil ach aon bhùth a b' aithne dhomh nuair a bha mi òg fhathast ann am bith," thuirt e, "... bha am baile gu math eadar-dhealaichte an uair sin ... Cha robh ceanglaichean ann leis a' cheann a deas mar a th' aca an-diugh len coidsichean is mar sin air adhart. 'Eil fhios agad, bha mi còrr is seasgad bliadhna a dh'aois mus do thòisich a' chiad choidse air ruith eadar seo agus Peairt." Saoil dè chanadh Iain MacIlleathain nam faiceadh e Inbhir Nis mar a tha e an-diugh?!

* * * * *

Faclan na seachdaine: duilleagan: *pages*; naochadair: *nonagenarian*; Clach na Cùdainn: *lit. Stone of the Tub (Clachnacuddin)*; a' suiridhe: *courting, wooing, chatting up*; Cnoc Mhoire: *Kirkhill*; am Faoilleach: *January*; Blàr Chùil Lodair: *Battle of Culloden*; Iain Friseal: *John Fraser*; cota gearr: *short coat*; bucaill: *buckles*; am Frisealach: *Fraser [informal]*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: tha mi gu mòr an comain X (genitive): *I am very much indebted to X*; ged nach b' aithne dhomh e: *although I didn't know him*; ged nach robh e càirdeach dhomh: *though he was not related to me*; leis gum biodh boireannaich a' cur an cuid chùdainean air a' chloich: *because women would put [rest] their tubs on the stone*; a dh'ionnsaigh na h-aibhne: *on the way to the river*; airson aodach a nighe: *to wash clothes*; 's e sheanair a thog an gille: *it was his grandfather that raised the lad*; bheir mi sùil aithghearr air: *I'll take a quick look at*; agus e na bhodach de chòrr is naochad bliadhna a dh'aois: *who was an old man of more than 90 years*; bha e na thàillear fad a bheatha: *he was a tailor all his life*; còmhla ri ogha: *with his grandson*; chan eil aon bhùth ... fhathast ann am bith: *there is not one shop ... still existing*; len coidsichean is mar sin air adhart: *with their coaches and what not*; bha mi còrr is seasgad bliadhna a dh'aois: *I was over sixty years of age*; mus do thòisich a' chiad choidse: *before the first coach started*; saoil dè chanadh Iain MacIlleathain?: *what would John Maclean say*; nam faiceadh e Inbhir Nis mar a tha e an-diugh: *if he saw Inverness as it is today*.

Puing-ghràmar na seachdaine: Dhuibhse nach eil eòlach air Inbhir Nis: *[to/for] those of you who don't know Inverness*. Dhuibhse is the emphatic form of dhuibh which is a prepositional pronoun made from the preposition do and the second person plural sibh, meaning "to/for you" (plural). I have used it here because I want to address a number of listeners so I am speaking directly to them. It is a slightly formal manner of address more likely to be used in a speech than in informal conversation. I could similarly use the same prepositional pronoun but with other persons, eg dhomhsa agus mo leithid (to/for myself and others like me); dhutsa, tha rudan mar sin furasta (for you, things like that are easy); dhasan, aig an robh athair ainmeil (to/for him, who had a famous father); dhise, a tha air leth sgileil (to/for her, who is very skilful); dhuinne a rugadh ann an Alba (for/to those

of us born in Scotland); dhaibhsan nach gabh deoch làidir (for/to those [of them] who don't drink).

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine: chan eil adhbhar agam a bhith a' gearan: *I have no reason to complain. Phrases of this sort are commonplace at the start of a conversation between two people who know each other: eg "Ciamar a tha thu?" "O, chan eil adhbhar [agam] a bhith a' gearan".*

* *"Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh" is funded by Seirbheis nam Meadhanan Gàidhlig*