

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 259.*

Tha ceist agam dhuibh aig toiseach na Litreach an-diugh. Cuine a nochd a’ chiad sgàilean, no *umbrella*, air a’ Ghaidhealtachd? Uill, cha chreid mi gu bheil fios againn air a sin, agus feumaidh sinn aideachadh nach eil a leithid gu cus feum nuair a tha gaoth làidir ann co-dhiù. Agus, gu h-àraidh air taobh an iar na Gaidhealtachd, is iomadh là a th’ ann air a bheil a’ ghaoth ro làidir airson sgàilean a chur suas.

Mura h-eil fios againn cuine a nochd a’ chiad sgàilean air a’ Ghaidhealtachd, chan eil sin fìor mu bhaile Inbhir Nis, ged nach urrainn dhomh ràdh am b’ e sin a’ chiad fhear air a’ Ghaidhealtachd gu lèir. Is cuine a bha sin? Uill, faodaidh sibh tuairam a dhèanamh air a’ ghnòthach, agus innsidh mi dhuibh dè a’ bhliadhna a bh’ ann nas fhaide dhen Litir.

Mus robh sgàilean ann, agus mus robh còtaichean ceart dìonach againn, no Gore-Tex no càil mar sin, bidh fios agaibh gur e dìreach am breacan, no am fèile mòr, a bh’ aig daoine airson an cumail blàth is tioram. Mus robh sgàileanan aig muinntir Inbhir Nis, tha “Naochadair Chlach na Cùdainn” ag innse dhuinn gur ann tric a chluinnteach air sràidean a’ bhaile an cuireadh seo – “thig fo mo bhreacan”. Is iomadh ceangal romansach eadar fear is boireannach a thòisich anns an dòigh sin, a rèir choltais.

Nochd saighdear Gaidhealach, ann an èideadh Gaidhealach, mu choinneimh na Bànrigh Anna turas. B’ esan am Màidsear Seumas Friseal às an Fhreiceadan Dubh. Nise, nuair a chanas mi gu robh èideadh Gaidhealach air, feumaidh mi aideachadh nach robh fèile beag air. An àite sin bha triubhas tartain. Ach bha breacan aige cuideachd, a ghiùlain e thairis air a ghualainn.

Dh’fhaighnich a’ Bhànrigh dheth gu dè am feum a dhèanadh e dhen bhreacan. “Airson mo leannan a phasgadh ann air oidhche fhuar,” fhreagair am Frisealach. Uill, bha a’ Bhànrigh cho toilichte le fhreagairt, ’s gun do tharraing i fàinne far a corraig is gun tug i don t-saighdear i.

Ach bha na làithean romansach sin a’ tighinn gu ceann, oir cha b’ fhada gus an tigeadh an sgàilean don Ghaidhealtachd. Chan eil e buileach cho romansach a bhith a’ toirt cuireadh do chuideigin – “thig fo mo sgàilean”!

Tha a’ chuid mhòr anns an rìoghachd seo dhen bheachd gur ann airson a chumail tioram a chleachdas duine sgàilean, ach chan eil sin fìor anns a h-uile h-àite. Chunnac mi mòran ann an Àisia a bha gan cleachdadh airson an dìon an aghaidh solas teth na grèine. Agus tha cuimhne agam air a bhith ag èisteachd ri boireannach ann an Calcutta air an rèidio, agus i a’ mìneachadh mar a bhiodh i a’ cleachdadh sgàilean nuair a bhiodh i a’ coiseachd tro choille. “Bhiodh sin nuair a tha ràithe an uisge ann, airson ur cumail

tioram,” thuir an t-agallamhair rithe. “O chan ann,” fhreagair i. “Bidh e gam dhìon an aghaidh nathraichean a bhios a’ leum oirnn bho na craobhan os ar cionn!”

Co-dhiù ’s ann air là tioram grianach, a nochd a’ chiad sgàilean ann an Inbhir Nis, a rèir an “Naochadair”, Iain MacIlleathain. ’S ann air là fèille a bha e, agus chaidh an sgàilean a ghiùlain os cionn an fhìr a bha aig meadhan na buidhne a bha a’ caismeachd tron bhaile. Is bha sin air a’ chòigeamh là fichead dhen Dàmhair anns a’ bhliadhna seachd ceud deug is seasgad (1760), dìreach ceithir bliadhn’ deug às dèidh Blàr fuilteach Chùil Lodair.

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Faclan na seachdaine: sgàilean: *umbrella*; naochadair: *nonagenarian*; èideadh Gaidhealach: *Highland dress*; fèile beag: *kilt*; triubhas tartain: *tartan trews*; Àisia: *Asia*; agallamhair: *interviewer*; là fèille: *festival day, holiday*; a’ caismeachd: *parading*; Dàmhair: *October*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: cha chreid mi gu bheil fios againn: *I don’t think we know*; feumaidh sinn aideachadh: *we must admit*; nach eil a leithid gu cus feum: *that such things aren’t of too much use*; is iomadh là a th’ ann: *there is many a day*; faodaidh sibh tuaiream a dhèanamh: *you can guess*; mus robh còtaichean ceart dìonach againn: *before we had proper waterproof coats*; gur e dìreach am breacan a bh’ aig daoine: *that it was just the (tartan) plaid that people had*; gur ann tric a chluinntean an cuireadh seo: *that this invitation would often be heard*; b’ esan am Màidsear Seumas Friseal às an Fhreiceadan Dubh: *he was Major James Fraser of the Black Watch*; a ghiùlain e thairis air a ghualainn: *that he carried over his shoulder*; dè am feum a dhèanadh e dhen bhreacan: *what use he made [would make] of the plaid*; airson mo leannan a phasgadh: *to wrap my sweetheart in*; airson an dìon an aghaidh solas na grèine: *to protect themselves against sunlight*; agus i a’ mìneachadh mar a bhiodh i a’ cleachdadh sgàilean: *who was explaining how she would use an umbrella*; nuair a tha ràithe an uisge ann: *when it is the wet season*; nathraichean a bhios a’ leum oirnn bho na craobhan: *snakes that jump on us from the trees*; Blàr fuilteach Chùil Lodair: *the bloody Battle of Culloden*.

Puing-ghràmar na seachdaine: ’s gun do tharraing i fàinne far a corraig: *that she drew a ring from her finger. You will know that the generic word for finger is corrag (each finger has an individual name in Gaelic), but it is here slenderised as corraig (note the pronunciation change). The reason is that it is preceded by the preposition far which takes the genitive. This might seem strange as simple looking prepositions almost always take the dative, but far originated as the complex preposition de bhàrr (literally “from the top of”). Of course, “from the finger” would be far a’ chorraig, but here corraig remains unlenited because it is commanded by the third person singular possessive article (ie “her”) which does not lenite a following consonant.*

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine: innsidh mi dhuibh dè a’ bhliadhna a bh’ ann nas fhaide dhen Litir: *I will tell you what year it was further on in the Litir. Nas fhaide dhen t-seachdain: further on in the week. Nas fhaide dhen bhliadhna: at a later point in the year.*

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