

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.maclea@bbc.co.uk * This is Litir 271.*

Tha mi a’ dol a chantainn rudeigin connspaideach. Cha do chuir Naomh Pàdraig às do nathraichean ann an Èirinn. Nise, chan eil mi a’ ciallachadh gu bheil adhbhar saidheansail airson a ràdh nach e Naomh Pàdraig a bu choireach nach eil nathraichean anns an eilean sin. Chan e sin a tha mi ag ràdh idir. Tha mi ag ràdh gu bheil nathraichean fhathast ann an Èirinn. Tha fhios agam air a sin, oir bha mi ann o chionn ghoirid agus sheas mi air tè. Dh’fhàg i a puinnsean ann am feòil mo chois. Agus dh’fhairich mi cràdh cho dona ’s a dh’fhairich mi a-riamh air a sàilleamh.

Tha cuid dhen bheachd gu bheil na stòiridhean mu dheidhinn Naoimh Phàdraig is na nathraichean a’ riochdachadh na strì eadar Crìosdachd agus an seann chreideamh a bh’ ann roimhe. Co-dhiù tha sin fìor gus nach eil, thathar ag ràdh nach eil nathair sam bith ann an Èirinn an-diugh. Agus bha mi a’ creidsinn sin gus an robh mi ann an Contae Chiarraí air tràigh ghainmhich. Bha seo ann an Gàidhealtachd Chorca Dhuibhne, gu siar air An Daingean.

Bha mi air a bhith a’ snàmh sa mhuir air là brèagha, agus mi casruisgte. Bha mi a’ coiseachd a-mach às an t-sàl, agus tràigh mhòr ann aig an àm, nuair a dh’fhairich mi rudeigin air bonn mo chois. Cha robh e dona an toiseach ach taobh a-staigh leth-mhionaid bha pian mhòr ann.

“Muir-tèachd”, thuirt a’ chlann rium, ach chaidh mi às àicheadh sin. Bha fios agam, gu mì-fhortanach, gu robh mi air mo chas a chur air iasg ris an canar ann am Beurla *the lesser weever fish*. Bidh an t-iasg seo na laighe fon ghainmhich le dìreach na dealgan droma aige, a tha co-cheangailte ri poca de phuinnsean, a’ stobadh an àirde. Tha e rudeigin pailt, a rèir choltais, ann an Sasainn is Èirinn, agus tha e ann an Alba cuideachd.

Bha fios agam mu dheidhinn, oir nuair a bha mi òg bha mi air làithean-saora ann an Norfolk còmhla ri teaghlach eile. Chaidh caraid dhomh, a bha na ghille òg, a sgobadh le fear de na h-èisg sin, agus bha e ann an droch staid airson beagan uairean a thìde.

Ach cha robh fios agam de an leigheas a bh’ ann dha. Chuir sinn fòn gu ospadal ann an Trá Lí. Bha an dotair ùr don dùthaich is cha robh fios aige gu robh a leithid de rud ann mar iasg puinnseanta ann an Èirinn. Bha an dearbh rud fìor mun dàrna dotair. Mu dheireadh bhruidhinn sinn ri nurs a bhios a’ surfadh, is cha robh mòran fiosrachaidh aice na bu mhò. Tha sin na iongnadh dhomh oir nuair a thill mi dhachaigh lorg mi duilleag air an eadar-lìon a chuir buidheann Èireannach – Cumann Sábháilteacht Uisce – a-mach, a’ toirt rabhadh do shnámhadairean mun “*venomous weever fish*”.

Ach fuirich ort, Ruairidh, bidh sibh ag ràdh – nach tuit thu aig an toiseach gun do sheas thu air nathair? Uill, thuirt, agus thuirt airson dà adhbhar. ’S e an t-ainm

saidheansail a th' air an iasg – *Echiichthys vipera* – “an t-iasg le dealgan a tha coltach ri nathair”. Agus 's e ainm ann an Gàidhlig – *nathair-ghainmhich*. Nathair-ghainmhich.

Mar sin, ma chuir Naomh Pàdraig às do na nathraichean ann an Èirinn, bha e soirbheachail dìreach air talamh tioram sìos gu ìre an làin àird. Ach fon ìre sin, tha nathraichean gu leòr ann an Èirinn fhathast. Is tha aon rud eile cinnteach – cha tèid mise a shnàmh a-rithist air tràigh ghainmhich ann an Alba no Èirinn, agus mi casruisgte.

* * * * *

Faclan na seachdaine: connspaideach: *controversial*; puinnsean: *poison*; roimhpe: *before it (fem.)*; Contae Chiarraí: *County Kerry*; tràigh ghainmhich: *sandy beach*; casruisgte: *barefoot*; sàl: *sea water*; muir-tèachd: *jellyfish*; leigheas: *cure*; snàmhadairean: *swimmers*; nathair-ghainmhich: (*lit. “sand-snake”*) *the lesser weever fish (Echiichthys vipera) – it might also be the fish referred to as “stangaram” in some places.*

Abairtean na seachdaine: gu bheil adhbhar saidheansail airson a ràdh: *that there is a scientific reason for saying*; chan e sin a tha mi ag ràdh idir: *it is not that which I am saying at all*; sheas mi air tè: *I stood on one (nathair is feminine)*; ann am feòil mo choise: *in the flesh of my foot*; dh'fhairich mi cràdh: *I felt pain*; air a sàilleamh: *because of it (fem.)*; a' riochdachadh na strì eadar X agus Y: *representing the struggle between X and Y*; co-dhiù tha sin fìor gus nach eil: *whether that is true or not*; thathar ag ràdh: *it is said*; agus tràigh mhòr ann aig an àm: *the tide being low at the time (ie there was a big beach)*; chaidh mi às àicheadh sin: *I denied that*; le dìreach na dealgan droma aige a' stobadh an àirde: *with only its dorsal spines sticking up*; tha e rudeigin pailt: *it is somewhat common*; chaidh X a sgobadh: *X was stung*; bha e ann an droch staid: *he was in a bad way*; gu robh a leithid de rud ann: *that such a thing existed*; cha robh mòran fiosrachaidh aicese na bu mhò: *she didn't have much information either*; tha sin na iongnadh dhomh: *that surprises me*; bha e soirbheachail dìreach air talamh tioram: *he was only successful on dry land*; cha tèid mise a shnàmh a-rithist: *I won't go swimming again.*

Puing-ghràmar na seachdaine: *Can you explain why I said “bha an dotair ùr don dùthaich” (the doctor was new to the country) and not “bha an dotair ùr don dhùthaich”? I ask the question because dùthaich is here in the (singular) dative case following the preposition do (or it might have been its dialectal equivalent, dha ie ... dhan dùthaich), and in the dative a lenitable consonant following the article is generally lenited ie don chaora (not don caora), don mhullach (not don mullach). I hope you twigged (from the Gaelic tuig, by the way) that it is because of the juxtaposition of the n and the d. A terminal n tends to act as a lenition-blocker on d (and on t and s). See if you can find another example in the Litir where a terminal n on one word blocks lenition of a d at the start of the following word. And are there any instances where n is followed by a lenited d? (all good rules are broken somewhere or other!)*

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine: *Cha do chuir Naomh Pàdraig às do nathraichean ann an Èirinn: St. Patrick did not eliminate snakes in Ireland. Tha X a' cur às do Y: X is doing away with, eliminating, killing Y.*

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