

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 273.*

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh an t-seachdain sa chaidh mu Naomh Ciaran, a’ chiad naomh Èireannach a rugadh ann an Èirinn. Chuir e manachainn air chois ann an Saighir ann an Contae Ua bhFáilí. Tha seann stòiridh ann mu dheidhinn mar a thagh e an t-àite, seach àite sam bith eile, airson a mhanachainn.

Fhuair e trèanadh anns an t-sagartachd ann an Tours agus anns an Ròimh agus, a rèir na sgeòil, thachair e ri Naomh Pàdraig anns an Eadailt. Bhrosnaich Naomh Pàdraig e a dhol a dh’Èirinn roimhe. Thuirt Pàdraig ris, “Thalla do dh’fhuaran ann am meadhan na h-Èireann agus cuir manachainn air chois ann a sin, oir ’s ann an sin a gheibh thu urram.”

“Chan aithne dhomh an t-àite sin,” arsa Ciaran. “A bhrathair chòir,” fhreagair Pàdraig, “bidh an Tighearna maille riut. Thoir an clag seo mar chompanach dhut air do thuras. Fanaidh e balbh gus an ruig thu an t-àite ach, nuair a ruigeas tu e, seinnidh an clag gu binn. Às dèidh trithead bliadhna, leanaidh mi ort.”

Thug an dithis beannachd do chèile agus dh’fhalbh Ciaran gu ruige Èirinn. Dh’fhuirich Pàdraig anns an Eadailt. Bhon là sin a-mach, bha an clag, a thug Ciaran leis, balbh. Bha sin gus an do ràinig e am fuaran ann am meadhan na dùthcha. Bha an clag na phòcaid ach, nuair a ràinig e an t-àite ceart, sheinn an clag gu binn. Stad Ciaran far an robh e ann am meadhan na coille, agus roghnaich e bothan a thogail dha fhèin ann a sin. Ach bha e fhèin is na beathaichean measail air a chèile agus, a rèir beul-aithris, thog torc nimhe am bothan dha. Tro thìde thog Ciaran agus luchd-taic aige manachainn anns an dearbh àite.

Mar a bha mi ag aithris an t-seachdain sa chaidh, rugadh Naomh Ciaran ann an Eilean Clèire, an t-eilean as fhaide deas ann an Èirinn. Tha e air a chuimhneachadh gu mòr ann a sin fhathast. Thathar ag ràdh mu dheidhinn (is tha mi a’ cur seo anns a’ Ghàidhlig againn fhèin), “Ann an Comar clùmhor air taobh na grèine, ’s ann a rinn Ciaran naomh air thùs a chealla”. Tha “comar” a’ ciallachadh an aon rud ri *tairbeart* an seo, agus ’s e sin an t-ainm a th’ air a bhaile bheag far am faicear a’ mhuir air gach taobh dhen eilean leis gu bheil e cho cumhang an sin. Ann an Comar clùmhor air taobh na grèine, ’s ann a rinn Ciaran naomh air thùs a chealla.

Suas am bruach bhon t-seann eaglais ann an Comar tha taigh-seinnse ann – no *teach-tabhairne* mar a chanas na h-Èireannaich. Agus tha rudeigin anns a’ chumantas eadar am fear leis a bheil e agus an seann naomh a tha co-cheangailte ris an eilean. ’S e Ciaran, no Ciarán, an t-ainm a th’ airsan cuideachd. Ciarán Danny Mike.

Air an taobh a-staigh dhen taigh-sheinnse, os cionn an dorais aghaidh, tha sanas mòr ann an Gàidhlig na h-Èireann. Tha mi a' tuigsinn gur e seanfhacal a th' ann a bhuineas do dh'Èilean Clèire. Seo e ann an Gàidhlig na h-Alba: "Tart an dèidh an òil, bròn an dèidh an airgid." Tha tart a' ciallachadh "pathadh". Tart an dèidh an òil, bròn an dèidh an airgid.

Bha mi greis a' meòmhrachadh air, agus mi a' gabhail pinnt Guinness, is saoilidh mi gu bheil tòrr gliocais anns an t-seanfhacal. Cha mhair rud sam bith gu sìorraidh. Agus air an oidhche an dèidh sin chaidh mi air ais airson pinnt eile.

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Faclan na seachdaine: manachainn: *monastery*; Contae Ua bhFáilí: *County Offaly*; sagartachd: *priesthood*; an Ròimh: *Rome*; an Eadailt: *Italy*; fuaran: *spring*; arsa: *said*; clag: *bell*; companach: *companion*; beannachd: *blessing*; torc nimhe: *wild boar*; Eilean Clèire: *Cape Clear Island*; tairbeart: *isthmus*; tobhta: *ruin*; taigh-seinnse: *pub*; pathadh: *thirst*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: bhrosnaich Naomh Pàdraig e: *St Patrick encouraged him*; a gheibh thu urram: *that you will obtain reverence*; chan aithne dhomh an t-àite sin: *I don't know that place*; bidh an Tighearna maille riut: *The Lord will be with you*; fanaidh e balbh gus an ruig thu X: *it will remain mute until you reach X*; seinnidh an clag gu binn: *the bell will ring sweetly*; bha e fhèin is na beathaichean measail air a chèile: *he and the animals were fond of each other*; anns an dearbh àite: *in the very same place*; tha e air a chuimhneachadh fhathast: *he is still remembered*; ann an Comar clùmhhor air taobh na grèine: *in snug sheltered Comar on the sunny side*; 's ann a rinn Ciaran naomh air thùs a chealla: *it was that saintly Ciaran originally built his church*; far am faicear a' mhuir: *where the sea is (can be) seen*; 's e Ciaran an t-ainm a th' airsan cuideachd: *his name is also Ciaran*; os cionn an dorais aghaidh: *above the front door*; a bhuineas do X: *which belongs to X*; cha mhair rud sam bith gu sìorraidh: *nothing lasts for ever*; chaidh mi air ais airson pinnt eile: *I went back for another pint*.

Puing-chànain na seachdaine: Tha seann stòiridh ann mu dheidhinn mar a thagh e an t-àite: *there is an old story about how he chose the place. Let us consider an t-àite. Àite is a masculine noun with an initial vowel and is here in the singular nominative or nominal case (in modern Gaelic there is no separate accusative case), as it is the direct object of a verb, but not a verbal noun (which would command the genitive). The grammatical standard in this instance is that the article is an t-. However, I am sometimes challenged on this by speakers of Lewis Gaelic or by learners who have picked up their Gaelic from speakers who belong to that island. They tell me that in fact no "t" is pronounced (or that it is hardly pronounced) in their dialect and that it should therefore not be written. It is certainly true that in Lewis there is a degree of consonant mutation, and a reduction of consonant enunciation, not found elsewhere in Scotland. Nevertheless, a standard form for the written language is essential so that we all know exactly what the written word is saying. Thus, regardless of dialect, the t- should always be written. The same applies across the language: gheibh is pronounced "yiv" or "yo"; abhainn is pronounced "avin" or "awin"; cunnart is pronounced "koonurt", "koonurst" or "koonust", and so on. If we were to alter the spelling for each dialect*

to satisfy the differing pronunciations, the written language would become a “brochan”. Please stick to the spelling conventions!

Seanfhacal na seachdainne: Tart an dèidh an òil, bròn an dèidh an airgid: *thirst after drinking, sorrow after money (ie riches). Nothing lasts for ever...*

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