

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 * This is Litir 274.*

An t-seachdain sa chaidh bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Eilean Clèire, eilean Gàidhealach far chosta a deas na h-Èireann. Bha mi ann as t-samhradh agus chuala mi seann sgeulachd a bhuineas don eilean. Bu mhath leam a h-innse dhuibh ann an Gàidhlig na h-Alba, agus dreach rudeigin sìmplidh oirre.

Ach mus tòisich mi, feumaidh mi ceist a chur oirbh. Dè tha am facal *gruagach* a’ ciallachadh dhuibh? Uill, tha *gruag* a’ ciallachadh “falt air a’ cheann” no “falt fuadan a tha a’ dol air a’ cheann”. Mar sin tha ceangal air choreigin eadar *gruagach* agus *falt*. Tha faclair Dwelly a’ toirt dhuinn – *young woman, maiden, virgin, man with long hair, bridesmaid, bridegroom’s maid*.

Tha e eadar-dhealaichte ann an Èirinn, ge-tà. Anns a’ ghearr-fhaclair aig Ó Dónaill, tha *gruagach* a’ ciallachadh “*hairy goblin, brownie, shaggy uncouth person, ogre, giant*”. Is dòcha nach biodh an t-òran brèagha aig Dòmhnall Ailean Dhòmhnail na Bainich à Uibhist “*Gruagach Òg an Fhuilt Bhàin*” buileach cho tarraingeach do dh’Èireannaich ’s a tha e dhuinne – air a’ chiad shealladh co-dhiù!

Tha an sgeulachd bheag seo mu dheidhinn *Gruagach Èireannach* – ’s e sin *Famhair*. Ged is e *Gruagach* a chanas na h-Èireannaich, tha mise a’ dol a ghabhail *Famhair* air – *Famhair Dhùn an Òir*. ’S e *Dùn an Òir* seann chaisteal ann an Eilean Clèire.

Bha uaireigin am *Famhair* seo ann. Bha e mòr is làidir. Agus bha draoidheachd aige. Bha a bhean ainmeil oir bha i air leth bòidheach. Bha i air tè de na boireannaich a bu bhrèagha air an do làigh sùil peacaich a-riamh. Bha dath an òir air a falt, a bha cho fada ’s gun do ràinig e an talamh nuair a bha i na seasamh.

’S ann tric a thigeadh daoine-uaisle airson coimhead air a’ bhoireannach seo leis gu robh i cho brèagha. Tha an seanfhacal Gàidhlig ag innse dhuinn gun tig trì rudan gun iarraidh – an t-eagal, an t-eud ’s an gaol. Agus ’s ann a thàinig an t-eud air an *Famhair*. Mar sin, nuair a bha e a’ falbh a thadhal air daoine eile, dh’fhastaich e gaisgeach air an robh an t-Amadan Mòr mar ainm airson sùil a chumail air a bhean, is a dìon bho fhir-suiridhe gus an tilleadh e.

Ach cha robh e air a dhol fada bhon chaisteal nuair a roghnaich e tilleadh airson faicinn co-dhiù bha an t-Amadan Mòr a’ dèanamh a’ ghnothaich dha gu dùrachdach. Chuir e draoidheachd air fhèin agus thill e don chaisteal le cruth eadar-dhealaichte air. Cha do dh’aithnich a bhean e ach bha esan cho toilichte a faicinn, agus i na h-aonar, ’s gun tug e pòg dhi.

Rinn e deiseil airson falbh a-rithist. Ach bha an t-Amadan Mòr air fhaicinn agus bha e na sheasamh eadar am Famhair agus an doras. Cha do dh'aithnich esan am Famhair na bu mhò. Thuirt an t-Amadan Mòr ris an fhear eile nach robh cead aige a bhith sa chaisteal, agus am Famhair air falbh. Agus thug e a chlaidheamh a-mach.

Thòisich an dithis air sabaid. Gheàrr am Famhair aon chas an Amadain Mhòir dheth. Ach chum an t-Amadan Mòr air a' sabaid, agus e leth-chasach. An uair sin, gheàrr am Famhair a chas eile dheth.

“Gheibh thu do dhà chois air ais bhuan,” thuirt am Famhair, “ma leigeas tu a-mach mi.”

“Cas eile a gheibhinn, no na dhà,” fhreagair an t-Amadan, “chan fhàg thu an t-àite seo gus an till am Famhair, às dèidh dhut pòg a thoirt do bhean.”

“Seadh,” ars' am Famhair ris fhèin. “Chan eil math dhomh a bhith a' falbh air chuairt, is a' fàgail seirbheiseach ro dhùrachdach às mo dhèidh!”

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Faclan na seachdainne: Eilean Clèire: *Cape Clear Island*; famhair: *giant*; caisteal: *castle*; draoidheachd: *magic*; an t-Amadan Mòr: *The Big Fool*; pòg: *kiss*; claidheamh: *sword*; leth-chasach: *one-legged*.

Abairtean na seachdainne: bu math leam a h-innse dhuibh: *I would like to tell it (fem.) to you*; tha ceangal air choreigin eadar X agus Y: *there is some connection or other between X and Y*; Dòmhnall Ailean Dhòmhnail na Bainich: *Donald Allan MacDonald (bàrd from S. Uist)*; Gruagach Òg an Fhuil Bhàin: *Young Fair-haired Maiden (song)*; buileach cho tarraingeach do dh'Eireannaich: *quite as attractive to Irish people*; 's a tha e dhuinne: *as it is to us*; air a' chiad shealladh: *at first sight*; bha i air tè de na boireannaich a bu bhrèagha: *she was one of the most beautiful women*; air an do làigh sùil peacaich a-riamh: *upon whom a sinner's eye ever fell*; bha dath an òir air a falt: *her hair was the colour of gold*; 's ann tric a thigeadh daoine-uaisle: *gentlemen would often come*; dh'fhastaich e gaisgeach: *he employed a hero*; is a dìon bho fhir-suiridhe: *and to protect her from suitors*; nuair a roghnaich e tilleadh: *when he decided to return*; a' dèanamh a' ghnòthaich dha gu dùrachdach: *doing the job for him diligently*; cha do dh'aithnich a bhean e: *his wife didn't recognise him*; gheibh thu do dhà chois air ais bhuan: *you will get your two legs back from me*; cas eile a gheibhin no na dhà: *should I get one leg or the two*; chan fhàg thu: *you won't leave*; às dèidh dhut pòg a thoirt do bhean: *after you kissing his wife*; chan eil math dhomh a bhith a' falbh: *it isn't good for me to go away*; a' fàgail seirbheiseach ro dhùrachdadh às mo dhèidh: *leaving a servant behind me who is too diligent by far*.

Puing-chànain na seachdainne: Cha robh e air a dhol fada bhon chaisteal: *he hadn't gone far from the castle. This construction is an example of the past perfect or pluperfect tense in which the action being related occurred at an earlier time than the main narrative which is itself in the past tense. It uses the past tense of the verb “to be” (cha robh) and the preposition air (originally iar) which means “after”, followed by the lenited verbal noun (or infinitive) of the verb. Compare*

this to chan eil e air a dhol fada (he hasn't gone far). In this case we are using the present tense of the verb "to be" (chan eil) and the action is much closer to us in time. Here are three other examples of the past perfect: cha robh i air an obair a dhèanamh (she hadn't done the work); nach robh sibh air a bhith ann fada gu leòr? (had you not been there long enough?); an robh iad air a bhith a' coimhead anns an àite cheart? (had they been looking in the right place?)

Seanfhacal na seachdainne: Thig trì rudan gun iarraidh – an t-eagal, an t-eud 's an gaol: *three things come without seeking – fear, jealousy and love.*

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