

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 280.*

Halò a-rithist. Anns an litir seo tha mi airson a dhol an sàs ann an dubh-fhaclan. Trì dubh-fhaclan a tha car annasach, ach aig a bheil rudeigin anns a’ chumantas eatarra. Tha iad uile a-mach air *bà bhreaca*. Bà bhreaca. Dè a’ Bheurla a chuireadh sibh air sin? “Mottled cows”, ’s dòcha? Bà bhreaca. Uill, nuair a chluinneas sibh na dubh-fhaclan, bidh sibh mothachail, tha mi an dùil, nach e “beathaichean cruaidh” a thathar a’ ciallachadh. ’S e an obair agaibhse, ma-thà, faighinn a-mach dè dìreach a tha na “bà” a’ riochdachadh anns na dubh-fhaclan.

Seo agaibh a’ chiad fhear: *Trì bà bhreaca an cois na leacainne, nach do bhleoghainneadh deur de am bainne riamh*. A bheil sibh eòlach air an fhacal *leacann*? ’S e facal boireann a th’ ann, is tha i a’ ciallachadh “the broad slope of a hill”. Agus *bleoghainn*? Tha sin a’ ciallachadh na bhios daoine a’ dèanamh airson bainne a thoirt à bò. Mar sin, cha d’ fhuair duine bainne a-riamh bho na bà seo. Trì bà bhreaca an cois na leacainne, nach do bhleoghainneadh deur de am bainne riamh. Seo agaibh a-nise an dàrna dubh-fhacal agus tha am facal *leacann* a’ nochdadh a-rithist. Feumaidh gu bheil na bà seo air nàdar de leacann, ach an ann air cliathaich cnuic a tha iad? *Trì bà bhreaca a’ ruith le leacainn, cha chuir banachag buarach orra is cha chuir buachaille stad orra*. A bheil am facal *banachag* agaibh? Tha sin a’ ciallachadh “boireannach a bhios a’ bleoghainn”. Tha *buarach* a’ ciallachadh rud a chuireas banachag air casan na bà fhad ’s a tha i ris a’ bhleoghainn. Agus *buachaille*? Tha sin a’ ciallachadh “fear a bhios a’ trusadh cruaidh”. Seo an dubh-fhacal a-rithist: *Trì bà bhreaca a’ ruith le leacainn, cha chuir banachag buarach orra is cha chuir buachaille stad orra*.

Tha sin gar toirt don treas dubh-fhacal. Seo e: *Trì bà bhreaca a’ leum le leacainn, cha nighear iad, ’s cha bhlighear iad; is àirde an geum na geum na buaile, trì bà uallach aigeannach*. Tuigidh sibh a’ chiad phàirt dheth – trì bà bhreaca a’ leum le leacainn. Tha an dàrna pàirt – *cha nighear iad, ’s cha bhlighear iad* – a’ ciallachadh “they will not be washed and will not be milked”. Tha an treas pàirt – *is àirde an geum na geum na buaile* – ag innse dhuinn gu bheil iad a’ dèanamh fuaim mòr, barrachd fuaim na dhèanadh crodh ann am buaile. Agus mu dheireadh *trì bà uallach aigeannach*. Tha *uallach* a’ ciallachadh “lively” agus tha *aigeannach* a’ ciallachadh “boisterous” no “sprightly”, ach tha dàrna ciall air, co-cheangailte ri *aigeann*, a tha a’ ciallachadh “doimhneachd a’ chuain”. Aha – ’s dòcha gu bheil *bà aigeannach* a’ ciallachadh “cows of the deep ocean” seach “sprightly cows”. Èistibh gu dlùth ris an

treas dubh-fhacal a-rithist: Trì bà bhreaca a' leum le leacainn, cha nighear iad, 's cha bhlighear iad; is àirde an geum na geum na buaile, trì bà uallach aigeannach. Seadh – a bheil e agaibh a-nise? Tha na bà a' riochdachadh tuinn na fairge – na trì tuinn mhòra a thig aig àmannan aig muir nuair a tha stoirm ann. Tha iad a' dol le leacainn – ach 's e leacann mara a th' ann, seach leacann talmhainn. Cha ghabh na bà bleoghainn no smachdachadh, nì iad fuaim mòr agus, gun teagamh, tha iad aigeannach. Slàn leibh an-dràsta.

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Faclan na seachdaine: dubh-fhacal: *riddle, enigma*; a' bleoghainn: *milking*; banachag: *milkmaid*; buarach: *fetter*; buachaille: *cowherd*; aigeannach: *sprightly; also, of the deep*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: tha mi airson a dhol an sàs ann an X: *I want to get involved in X*; aig a bheil rudeigin anns a' chumantas eatarra: *which have something in common*; bà bhreaca: *mottled cows*; nach e “beathaichean cruidh” a thathar a' ciallachadh: *that it is not “cattle” that is meant*; dè dìreach a tha na “bà” a' riochdachadh: *just exactly what the “cows” represent*; an cois na leacainne: *accompanying the slope*; nach do bhleoghainneadh deur de am bainne: *were not milked of a drop of their milk*; an ann air cliathaich cruic a tha iad?: *are they on the side of a hill?*; fhad 's a tha i ris a' bhleoghainn: *while she is involved in milking*; fear a bhios a' trusadh cruidh: *a man who gathers cattle*; cha chuir X stad orra: *X will not stop them*; seo am fear as mò as toigh leam: *this is the one I like best*; cha nighear iad, 's cha bhlighear iad: *they won't be washed, and they won't be milked*; is àirde an geum na geum na buaile: *their bellow is louder than the bellow of the cattlefold*; tuinn na fairge: *the waves of the sea*; a thig aig àmannan nuair a tha stoirm ann: *which come sometimes during a storm*; 's e leacann mara a th' ann, seach leacan talmhainn: *it's a sea slope, rather than a land slope*; cha ghabh na bà bleoghainn no smachdachadh: *the cows can't be milked or controlled*; slàn leibh an-dràsta: *cheerio just now*.

Puing-chànain na seachdaine: *Firstly, I asked you to ponder a question last week: in the phrase de chunnaic i ach an t-aon boireannach a bu bhrèagha a chunnaic i riamh (what did she see but the [one] most beautiful woman she had ever seen), why is there a t- in front of “aon”? The reason is that boireannach is a masculine noun and is here in the nominative case. If it were feminine, there would be no t- (cf an t-eilean, masc.; an earrann, fem.) In this week's Litir did you notice the lenition of the adjective in agreement with bà (nominative plural) ie bà bhreaca? The declension of bò is irregular, but it is usually only nouns whose plural nominative is slender which lenite an attributive adjective when in that case eg bodaich bheaga, boireannaich mhòra, caoraich bhàna, coin fhiadhaich and, as in the Litir, tuinn mhòra. Bò/bà is an exception to the rule.*

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine: a' ruith le leacainn: *running down a slope*.

* Tha “Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh” air a maoinachadh le Seirbheis nam Meadhanan Gàidhlig