

# 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](mailto:rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk) \* This is Litir 289.*

Dè a’ Ghàidhlig a chuireadh sibh air an fhacal Bheurla “fort”? No ’s dòcha gum bu chòir dhomh faighneachd – dè a’ Bheurla a chuireadh sibh air an fhacal Ghàidhlig *dùn*? Anns an leabhar ùr aig Micheal Robson, a tha a’ fuireach ann an Nis ann an Leòdhas, tha an t-ùghdar ag ràdh gur e “fort” a’ Bheurla a th’ air *dùn*, ach nach e *dùn* a’ Ghàidhlig air “fort”. Tha Mgr Robson air am facal Gàidhlig a chleachdadh ann am Beurla – agus rachainn leis air a sin. Ma tha thu a-mach, ann am Beurla, air dùin Eilein Leòdhais, chan eil facal nas fheàrr air an son na “dun” fhèin. Tuigidh daoine cò air a tha thu a-mach. Agus ’s e tiotal an leabhair *“Forts and Fallen Walls: the duns of northern Lewis”*.

Tha na dùin ann an diofar shuidheachaidhean. Tha cuid dhiubh air eileanan ann an lochan, tha cuid air creagan no eileanan làimh ri bearraidhean a’ chladaich, agus tha feadhainn sa mhonadh. Ann am beul-aithris, bha ceangal làidir ann eadar cuid de na dùin agus na sìthichean. Agus bu mhath leam aithris a dhèanamh air sgeulachd a th’ aig Micheal Robson anns an leabhar aige mu dheidhinn sìthichean ann an co-cheangal ri Dùn Bhuirgh. Tha sin ann am Borgh air taobh an iar-thuath Leòdhais.

O chionn fhada bha boireannach ann am Borgh a bha air a sàrachadh leis an t-snìomh a bh’ aice ri dhèanamh. Bha i seachd sgìth dhen obair oir cha robh aice ach maide-snìomh no cuigeal airson an snìomh a dhèanamh. Bha seo mus robh cuibhlichean-snìomha aig muinntir Leòdhais. Oidhche bha seo, bha am boireannach sgìth, agus rinn i rud ris an canar “òrdachadh-oidhche”. Thuirt i gum b’ fheàrr leatha gum biodh a’ chlàimh gu lèir aice air a snìomh air an oidhche sin fhèin.

Cho luath ’s a thuirt i sin, nochd buidheann de mhnathan-sìthe anns an taigh. Agus obair a dhèanamh. Bha cuid dhiubh an sàs ann an cìreadh. Rinn feadhainn eile an thòisich iadsan air an càrdadh. Agus rinn treas buidheann an snìomh. Bha iad cho sgiobalta air an obair, is nach b’ fhada gus an robh a’ chlàimh gu lèir anns an taigh air a snìomh. Cha robh na mnathan-sìthe toilichte a bhith gun obair, ge-tà, agus bha iad an uair sin ri buaireadh.

Dh’fhalbh fear an taighe a chèilidh air bodach glic anns an sgìre, airson comhairle fhaighinn air a’ chùis. Thuirt am bodach nach robh còir aig bean an duine a leithid de dh’òrdachadh-oidhche a dhèanamh. Bu chòir dhuibh, thuirt e, na sìthichean fhàgail far a bheil iad. Ach gheall e thighinn chun an taighe airson faighinn cuidhteas nam ban-sìthe.

Thàinig e gu uinneag agus dh’èigh e, “Dùn Bhuirgh na teine, Dùn Bhuirgh na teine”. Nuair a chuala na mnathan-sìthe seo, thuirt iad, “Mo

chreach mhòr is mo dhunaidh, mo bhuilg, m' ùird is m' innean.” Bha iad troimh-chèile agus dh'fhalbh iad don àite-fuirich aca – an dùn.

Thuir am bodach ri fear is bean an taighe – cho luath 's a gheibheadh na sìthichean a-mach nach robh teine anns an dùn, gum biodh iad air ais. Agus bha e ceart. Ach mus do thill iad, dhùin na daoine a h-uile fosgladh anns an taigh. Dh'iarr na sìthichean air a' bhodach an leigeil a-steach.

“Dè tha sibh ag iarraidh?” dh'fhaighnich am bodach.

“Obair”, fhreagair na sìthichean.

“Ma 's e obair a tha sibh ag iarraidh,” thuir an seann duine, “thallaibh is cumaibh air falbh na tonnan a tha a' briseadh air a' chladach ud thall.” Dh'fhalbh na sìthichean chun a' chladaich agus chan fhacas san dùn iad bhon uair sin.

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**Faclan na seachdaine:** ùghdar: *author*; Borgh: *Borve*; cuibhlichean-snìomha: *spinning wheels*; òrdachadh-oidhche: *literally, a night-ordering, it means a voiced wish for something (to which the fairies will respond)*; cìreadh: *combing*; càrdadh: *carding*.

**Abairtean na seachdaine:** dè a' Ghàidhlig a chuireadh sibh air X?: *what Gaelic translation would you give for X?*; chan eil facal nas fheàrr air an son na X: *there is not a better word for them than X*; tuigidh daoine cò air a tha thu a-mach: *people will understand what you are on about*; eileanan làimh ri bearraidhean a' chladaich: *islands next to coastal precipices*; a bha air a sàrachadh leis an t-snìomh a bh' aice ri dhèanamh: *who felt oppressed by the [wool] spinning she had to do*; bha i seachd sgìth dhen obair: *she was totally fed up with the work*; cha robh aice ach maide-snìomh no cuigeal: *she only had a [spinning stick or] distaff*; cho luath 's a thuir i sin: *as soon as she said that*; buidheann de mhnathan-sìthe: *a group of fairy women*; nach b' fhada gus an robh a' chlàimh gu lèir air a snìomh: *that it was not long until all the wool was spun*; dh'fhalbh fear an taighe a chèilidh air bodach glic: *the man of the house left to visit a wise old man*; nach robh còir aig bean an duine X a dhèanamh: *that the man's wife ought not to have done X*; bu chòir dhuibh na sìthichean fhàgail far a bheil iad: *you should leave the fairies where they are*; airson faighinn cuidhteas nam ban-sìthe: *in order to get rid of the fairy women*; mo bhuilg, m' ùird is m' innean: *my bellows, my hammers and my anvil*; cho luath 's a gheibheadh na sìthichean a-mach nach robh teine anns an dùn: *as soon as the fairies found out there was no fire in the dun*; cumaibh air falbh na tonnan a tha a' briseadh air a' chladach ud thall: *keep back the waves that are breaking on yonder shore*; chan fhacas san dùn iad bhon uair sin: *they haven't been seen in the dun since then*.

**Puing-chànain na seachdaine:** rachainn leis air a sin: *literally this means “I would go with him on that”*. It is an idiomatic way of saying “I would agree with him on that”. Rachainn is the first person singular conditional of rach. Note, however, that although we refer to the verb “to go” as rach, that some of the forms in which the root rach appears do not exist in some dialects. For example rachainn (“I would go”) is quite commonly dheighinn. And note that rachamaid, meaning “we would go” is replaced in some parts by rachadh sinn or dheighheadh sinn. Despite these dialectal differences, the different forms will

*be understood in areas where they would not normally be used, an example of the unifying influence of Gaelic broadcasting over the last generation or so.*

**Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine:** *Mo chreach mhòr is mo dhunaidh: literally “my great devastation and disaster”, this is an idiomatic equivalent to the English “woe is me and thrice woe” – although the English here is considerably more archaic!*

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