

# 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](mailto:roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk) \* This is Litir 296.*

Bu mhath leam tòiseachadh an t-seachdain seo le amaladh-cainnte. 'S e sin a' Ghàidhlig air “tongue twister” – amaladh-cainnte, agus tha iomadh dhiubh ann ann an Gàidhlig. Feuchaibh am fear seo: *cha robh reithe leathann liath riamh reamhar*. Cha robh reithe leathann liath riamh reamhar. A bheil sibh ga thuigs'? Feuchaibh a-rithist e – gu sgiobalta. Cha robh reithe leathann liath riamh reamhar. Uill, rinn mi a' chùis an ìre mhath...

Thàinig leabhar inntinneach a-mach an-uiridh anns a bheil naidheachdan is stòiridhean co-cheangailte ris a' Ghàidhealtachd. 'S e an t-ainm a th' air *Recollections of an Argyllshire Drover and other West Highland Chronicles* agus 's e a th' annta ach sgeulachdan is naidheachdan a chaidh a chruinneachadh le Eric Cregeen. Rinn Mairead Bennett obair deasachaidh air an leabhar – anns a bheil stòiridhean anns an dà chànan.

'S e fear de na daoine a thug sgeulachdan do Chregeen Dòmhnall Mac na Ceàrdaich, no Dòmhnall Chalum Bhàin, à Baile Phuill ann an Tiriodh. Tha mi cinnteach nach robh cus duilgheadais aige fhèin le amalaidhean-cainnte, co-dhiù a rèir cho sgiobalta 's a bha eanchainn is a theanga le stòiridhean à beul-aithris.

Rugadh Dòmhnall ann an ochd ceud deug, ochdad 's a còig (1885) agus chuir e a' mhòr-chuid de bheatha seachad ann an Tiriodh fhèin, ach a-mhàin an ùine a bha e anns a' Chabhlach Rìoghail sa Chogadh Mhòr. Gu dearbh, chuir e seachad a' mhòr-chuid de bheatha ann am Baile Phuill fhèin – “baile nam bàrd” mar a chanadh iad ris anns an naoidheamh linn deug. Bha athair, Calum Bàn, cuideachd ainmeil mar seanchaidh. Am measg na chruinnich dualchas bho Dhòmhnall, bha Calum MacIlleathain nach maireann, agus an t-Ollamh Iain MacAonghais.

B' e tè de na sgeulachdan a dh'innis Dòmhnall “A' Bhanarach agus am Mèirleach”. Seo pàirt dhith agus cumaidh mi gu math faisg air a' chainnt aig Dòmhnall fhèin a tha cho brèagha is cho Tiristeach.

“Aig an àm shònraichte a bha seothach, bhiodh iad a' goid crodh air Diùc Earra-Ghàidheal. Agus thachair gu robh mo shinn-sinn-seanmhair [air an robh Seònaid], gu robh i na banaraich aig Diùc Earra-Ghàidheal. Chan fhanadh na gillean a dh'fhaire dè bha a' gabhail àite, ach thuirteise an oidhche seo – 's e boireannach sgairteil a bh' innte – ‘Fanaidh mise,’ ars' ise, ‘a-nochd a dh'fhaire a' chruidh ach dè chì mi.” Agus thilg i oirre am breacan agus rinn i air a' bhàthaich.

Shuidh i fo cheann màirt. Cha robh i fada bho cheann a' mhàirt nuair a thàinig na mèirlich – dithis – is bha iad a' feuchainn a' chruidh ach cò an fheadhainn a bu reamhra. Agus cà' na chuir fear de na mèirlich a chorrach ach ann am beul na tè a bha fo cheann a' mhairt. Agus nuair a fhuair i grèim air a chorrach, le aon *snap* thug i dheth bàrr na corraig. Theich na mèirlich. Agus anns a' mhadainn nuair a bha a h-uile nì gu gasta, thuirte an Diùc rithe, ‘Ciamar a chaidh dhut a-raoir, a Sheònaid?’

‘Chaidh gu math,’ thuirte ise. ‘Sin agaibh pìos de mheur a' mhèirlich agus faighibh fhèin a' chòrr.’

Agus 's e tuathanach nach robh brùideil fada air falbh a bha a' goid a' chruidh, chionn fhuaradh e. Cha b' urrainn dha chorrach fhalach agus bha e air a bhrath. Bha sgonn eile dhen chorrach aig an Diùc. Uill, chan eil fhios agam an deach an duine sin a pheanasachadh. Tha mi cinnteach gun deachaidh."

Sin agaibh blasad dhen dualchas a chaidh a chruinneachadh bho Dhòmhnall Chaluim Bhàin – seanchaidh math dha-rìreabh.

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**Faclan na seachdaine:** amaladh-cainnte: *tongue twister*; Mac na Ceàrdaich: *Sinclair*; Baile Phuill: *Balephuill*; Tiriodh: *Tiree*; seanchaidh: *storyteller*; nach maireann: *deceased*; mo shinn-sinn-seanmhair: *my great-great-grandmother*; breacan: *tartan plaid*.

**Abairtean na seachdaine:** tha iomadh dhiubh ann: *there are many of them*; a bheil sibh ga thuigs'?' (thuigsinn): *do you understand it?*; sgeulachdan is naidheachdan a chaidh a chruinneachadh le X: *stories and anecdotes that were collected by X*; nach robh cus duilgheadais aige fhèin: *that he himself didn't have too much difficulty*; rinn X obair deasachaidh air an leabhar: *X edited the book*; chuir e seachad a' mhòr-chuid de bheatha ann am X: *he spent most of his life in X*; mar a chanadh iad ris: *as they called it*; A' Bhanarach agus am Mèirleach: *The Dairymaid and the [Cattle]Thief*; a tha cho brèagha is cho Tiristeach: *which is so delightful and so Tiree-ish*; chan fhanadh na gillean a dh'fhaire dè bha a' gabhail àite: *the boys would not stay to be on the lookout for what was happening*; 's e boireannach sgairteil a bh' innte: *she was a hardy, energetic woman*; fanaidh mise a dh'fhaire a' chruidh ach dè ch' mi: *I will stay to keep watch on the cattle to see what I [will] see*; rinn i air a' bhàthaich: *she made for the byre*; bha iad a' feuchainn a' chruidh ach cò an fheadhainn a bu reamhra: *they were trying (feeling) the cattle to see which were the fattest ones*; cà' na chuir fear de na mèirlich a chorrach: *where did one of the thieves put his finger*; thug i dheth bàrr na corraig: *she took off the top of the finger*; nuair a bha a h-uile nì gu gasta: *when everything was in good order*; ciamar a chaidh dhut a-raoir, a Sheònaid?: *how did you get on last night, Janet?*; faighibh fhèin a' chòrr: *[you can] get the rest for yourself*; chan eil fhios agam an deach X a pheanasachadh: *I don't know if X was punished*; tha mi cinnteach gun deachaidh [dialectal form of deach]: *I'm sure he was*.

**Puing-chànain na seachdaine:** Aig an àm shònraichte a bha seothach, bhiodh iad a' goid crodh air Diùc Earra-Ghàidheal: *at this particular time, they would steal cattle from the Duke of Argyll. I have just looked up seothach in the three most recently published Gaelic dictionaries and none of them carries it. This is because it is a dialectal form of seo. Nevertheless, it is met with quite frequently, not only in Tiree, but also in the most southerly of the Western Isles. The "standard" form of the above sentence would be "aig an àm shònraichte a bha seo, bhiodh..." The same applies to sin and siud – these also exist in the dialectal forms sineach or shineach and siudach or shiudach. Don't be fazed by such dialectal variation – it is one of the joys of (any) language that not everybody speaks it in exactly the same way.*

**Amaladh-cainnt na seachdaine:** Cha robh reithe leathann liath riamh reamhar: (*lit.*) *there was never a broad grey ram that was fat. Of course, the sentence is nonsense – its only value is as a tongue-twister!*

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