

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 rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk * This is Litir 300.*

Tha mi a' dol a chur crìoch an-dràsta air an sgeulachd thraidiseanta a thòisich mi o chionn ceala-deug – “Morachan is Mionachan.” Nuair a dh'fhàg sinn mu dheireadh e, bha Morachan aig an loch, a' feuchainn ri uisge fhaighinn don bhean-fhuine le criathar. Chaidh eun seachad air sgèith is thuirt e ris, “Suath poll bog ris is cumaidh sin làn e. Suath poll bog ris.”

Shuath e poll bog ris is chuir e uisge ann, ach nach do ruith a h-uile deur troimhe. Chaidh faoileag seachad is dh'eigh an fhaoileag, “Suath crèadh ruadh rag ris is cumaidh sin làn e. Suath crèadh ruadh rag ris.” Fhuair e crèadh ruadh rag is shuath e ris a' chriathar e. Lìon e an criathar le uisge is cha do ruith aon deur troimhe.

Thug e an t-uisge don bhean-fhuine. Rinn a' bhean-fhuine am bonnach. Is thug Morachan am bonnach don ghille-shabhail. Thug an gille-sabhail dha an sop. Is thug e an sop don bhoin. Is bhleoghainn a' bhò am bainne. Is thug e am bainne don chat. Is dh'òl an cat am bainne.

Is ruith an cat an luch. Is sgròb an luch an t-ìm. Is shuath e an t-ìm ri casan a' choin. Is ruith an cù am fiadh. Is shnàmh am fiadh an t-uisge. Is fhliuch an t-uisge a' chlach. Is dh'fhaobharaich a' chlach an tuagh. Is gheàrr an tuagh an t-slat. Is fhuair Morachan an t-slat.

Ach nuair a ràinig e an t-àite far an robh Mionachan bha Mionachan air sgàineadh leis na dh'ith e de na cnothan!

Is iomadh duine a thogadh ann an dachaigh Ghàidhealach aig a bheil an stòiridh sin fhathast. Bidh mòran eòlach air na caractaran mar *Biorachan Beag* is *Biorachan Mòr*. Anns an leabhar ainmeil de sgeulachdan traidiseanta le Iain Òg Ìle, “*Popular Tales of the West Highlands*”, 's iad na h-ainmean a th' orra *Murchag* is *Mionachag*. Anns an leabhar thathar ag ràdh gun deach an sgeulachd a chruinneachadh ann am mòran àiteachan air a' Ghàidhealtachd. Bha sin anns an naoidheamh linn deug. Nach math gu bheil i beò fhathast.

Bidh beagan mhìosan ann mus nochd cnothan sa choille. Chan eil ann an-dràsta ach toiseach an Earraich. Tha beagan teas ann an solas na grèine, ge-tà, an dèidh mìosan dorch' a' gheamhraidh. Ach saoil dè an seòrsa samhraidh a bhios againn ann an Alba am-bliadhna? Suarach cho math 's a bha e an-uiridh, ged a bha an samhradh a bhon-uiridh math fhèin.

'S e an t-eagal a th' orm, is a th' air mòran, leis nach robh geamhradh fuar reòta againn, gum bi an samhradh rudeigin truagh. Uaireannan bidh deagh shamhradh a' leantainn air geamhradh fuar. Uill, 's e sin a tha cuid a' cumail a-

mach co-dhiù. No an e gum bi geamhradh fuar a' leantainn air deagh shamhradh?

'S ann mar sin a bha e anns a' bhliadhna ochd ceud deug is sia ar fhichead (1826). Thathar a' cuimhneachadh na bliadhna sin ann am beul-aithris mar bliadhna le deagh shamhradh agus an uair sin droch gheamhradh. 'S e *Bliadhna an Teas Mhòir* a chanar rithe. Bliadhna an Teas Mhòir. Cha robh uisge sam bith ann eadar an Cèitean agus an Lùnastal. Thiormaich na h-uillt is na h-aibhnichean. Bhathar ag ràdh cuideachd gun do thoirmich cuid de na lochan air a' Ghàidhealtachd, ach chan eil mi a' creidsinn sin!

Ach 's dòcha gu bheil mi a' dol air thoiseach orm fhìn. Cha d' fhuair sinn sneachd na cuthaig fhathast. Fanaidh mi greis mus cuir mi na sgithean agam a-mach à sealladh.

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NB: Readers should refer back to the first two parts of the story published over the last fortnight.

Faclan na seachdaine: faoileag: *seagull*; caractaran: *characters*; beò: *alive*; reòta: *frozen*; sgithean: *skis*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: a' feuchainn ri uisge fhaighinn don bhean-fhuine le criathar: *trying to get water for the baker woman with a sieve*; suath crèadh ruadh rag ris: *rub it with hard red-brown clay*; cha do ruith aon deur troimhe: *not one drop [of water] ran through*; thug e an sop don bhoin: *he gave the straw to the cow (boin is the dative singular of bò, but now a little archaic)*; is (short for "agus") ruith an cat an luch: *and the cat chased the mouse*; shuath e an t-ìm ri casan a' choin: *it rubbed the butter on the dog's feet*; dh'fhaobharaich a' chlach an tuagh: *the stone sharpened the axe*; bha X air sgàineadh leis na dh'ith e de na cnothan: *X had burst because of the amount of nuts he ate (ie there was a little too much procrastination about getting the stick!)*; gun deach an sgeulachd a chruinneachadh: *that the story was collected*; dè an seòrsa samhraidh a bhios againn?: *what sort of summer will we have?*; ged a bha an samhradh a bhon-uiridh math fhèin: *although the summer the year before last was really good*; eadar an Cèitean agus an Lùnastal: *between May and August*; thiormaich na h-uillt is na h-aibhnichean: *the burns and the rivers dried up*; gu bheil mi a' dol air thoiseach orm fhìn: *that I'm getting ahead of myself*; sneachd na cuthaig: *the lambing snow (lit the cuckoo snow)*; a-mach à sealladh: *out of sight*.

Puing-chànain na seachdaine: Tha beagan teas ann an solas na grèine: *there's a little heat in the light of the sun. Consider both this sentence and Bliadhna an Teas Mhòir (the year of the great heat) – did you notice that teas in both of these sentences is in the genitive singular case (it is only going to be singular as "heat" is a singular concept) – in the first after the quantitative noun beagan and in the second as a straightforward possessive ("the year OF the heat")? And did you notice that this is identical to the nominative singular? Teas does not inflect. You will notice however that the qualifying adjective mòr does inflect and is both lenited and slenderised in the genitive. And here is a further interesting point: the similar noun meas can mean both "judgement, opinion, respect" and "fruit". In the first instance it does not inflect, but in the*

second, the genitive singular form is measa. The probable reason for the different grammatical behaviour of seemingly identical words is that they have different origins – meas (opinion) is anciently related to the English “measure”, while meas (fruit) bears a distant relationship to the English “mast” (fruit of the beech tree).

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine: *Suarach cho math ’s a bha e an-uiridh: it was pretty poor last year. I wonder if some of you might have remembered this idiom from an earlier Litir...? It appeared in Litir 64 (11.08.00)*

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