

# 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 at [roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk) \* This is Litir 316. Note that Roddy also broadcasts a simplified version – An Litir Bheag – on Monday evenings at 7.00 pm. This is also available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 12 corresponds to Litir 316 .*

Tha e iongantach cho tric 's a tha am facal “Spion” a’ nochdadh ann an ainmean-àite air feadh an t-saoghail. Bidh fios agaibh, 's dòcha, gu bheil am facal Gàidhlig *spìon* a’ ciallachadh “a’ tarraing rudeigin à-mach”. Mar eisimpleir, ma bheir sinn rùsg bho chaora le bhith a’ tarraing na clòimhe dhith, an àite a bhith a’ gearradh na clòimhe le deamhais, canaidh sinn gu bheil sinn “ga spìonadh”.

Bhithinn a’ marbhadh is a’ spìonadh chearc nuair a bha cearcan agam. Cha do chòrd e rium idir. Ach 's e an aon spìonadh a bhios mi a’ dèanamh an-diugh – spìonadh nan luibhean anns an leas. Chan eil sin a’ còrdadh rium nas mò!

'S e aon dòigh airson “eradicate” a ràdh ann an Gàidhlig – *spìon às a’ bhun*. Spìon às a’ bhun. Ach chan eil sin ag obair leis na luibhean anns an leas. Faodaidh mi an spìonadh às a’ bhun, ceart gu leòr, ach chan fhaigh mi cuidhteas iad a-chaoidh! Chan e *eradication* a bhios ann idir!

Anns a’ Mhonadh Ruadh tha cnoc creagach ann a tha ainmichte air a’ mhap mar *Spion Rocks*. Am measg nan ainmean Gàidhlig a tha timcheall air, mar Coire Ruairidh, Cnap Leum an Easaich agus Leacann a’ Bhothain Dhuibh, tha an t-ainm Beurla seo ann – *Spion Rocks*.

Dè thachair ann? An robhar a’ spìonadh chearc-fraoich ann? An robhar a’ spìonadh clòimhe chaorach ann? No an robhar a’ spìonadh fraoch airson a thoirt dhachaigh? Uill, cha chreid mi gu robhar a’ spìonadh rud sam bith. Cha chreid mi gur ann às a’ Ghàidhlig a thàinig *Spion* ann an *Spion Rocks*.

Is iomadh àite ann an Iompaireachd Bhreatainn anns an do nochd an t-ainm *Spion* tràth san fhicheadamh linn, oir thàinig saighdearan dhachaigh bhon chogadh ann an Afraga a Deas. Anns an Fhaoilleach anns a’ bhliadhna naoi ceud deug (1900), bha blàr fuilteach ann an àite air a bheil *Spion Kop*. Rinn na Boers a’ chùis air na Breatannaich ann a sin. An là an-diugh, tha Spion agus Spion Kop a’ nochdadh mar ainmean-àite ann am mòran dùthchannan. Tha bailtean ann an sgìrean cho fad’ air falbh o chèile ri meadhan Shasainn agus Cuimrigh Nuadh a Deas air a bheil “Spion Kop” mar ainm.

Bidh sibh eòlach, ma tha ùidh agaibh ann am ball-coise, air aon cheann de stadium sgioba Liverpool air a bheil “The Kop”. 'S e “The Spion Kop” a bh’ air o shean.

'S e ainm Afrikaans a th’ ann an Spion Kop. Tha e a’ ciallachadh “cnoc-faire”. 'S e sin àite far am faighear sealladh dhen dùthaich timcheall. Cnoc-faire. Dh’ainmich na *voortrekkers* e ann an ochd ceud deug, trithead 's a còig (1835).

Chan eil mi cinnteach dè cho tric 's a chunnaic na *voortrekkers* leòmhainn. Ach tha leòmhainn gu cinnteach ann am pàirtean de dh’Afraga a Deas. A bheil cuimhne agaibh air an t-seann sgeulachd anns a bheil an leòmhann agus an tràill? Bha iad còmhla ann an raon-sabaid. Gu h-iongantach cha do mharbh an leòmhann an tràill. Carson? Bha

e ga aithneachadh. Chuidich an tràill an leòmhan roimhe. 'S e Androcles an t-ainm a bh' air an tràill. Bha e air droigheann a thoirt a-mach à spòg an leòmhainn. Bha e air an droigheann a spìonadh.

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**Faclan na seachdaine:** iongantach/gu h-iongantach: *surprising/surprisingly*; deamhais: *hand-shears*; Am Monadh Ruadh: *The Cairngorms*; iompaireachd: *empire*.

**Abairtean na seachdaine:** ann an ainmean-àite air feadh an t-saoghail: *in place names throughout the world*; ma bheir sinn rùsg bho chaora: *if we take a fleece from a sheep*; le bhith a' tarraing na clòimhe dhith: *by pulling the wool off it*; spìonadh nan luibhean anns an leas: *pulling the weeds in the garden*; chan eil sin a' còrdadh rium nas mò: *I don't enjoy that either*; tha cnoc creagach ann a tha ainmichte: *there is a rocky hill there which is named*; Cnap Leum an Easaich: *the knob of the cataract-leap*; Leacann a' Bhothain Dhuibh: *the slope of the black bothy*; an robhar a' spìonadh chearc-fraoich ann?: *were grouse plucked there?*; an robhar a' spìonadh clòimhe chaorach ann?: *were sheep plucked of their fleeces there?*; an robhar a' spìonadh fraoch?: *was heather pulled? [eg for thatching]*; rinn X a' chùis air Y: *X defeated Y*; Cuimrigh Nuadh a Deas: *New South Wales*; ma tha ùidh agaibh ann am ball-coise: *if you are interested in football*; cnoc-faire: *lookout-hill*; far am faighear sealladh: *where a view is obtained*; tha leòmhainn ann am pàirtean de dh'Afraga a Deas: *there are lions in parts of South Africa*; bha iad còmhla ann an raon-sabaid: *they were together in a fighting-arena*; cha do mharbh an leòmhan an tràill: *the lion didn't kill the slave*; bha e air droigheann a thoirt a-mach à spòg an leòmhainn: *he had pulled a thorn from the lion's paw*.

**Puing-chànain na seachdaine:** Bhithinn a' marbhadh is a' spìonadh chearc nuair a bha cearcan agam: *I would kill and pluck hens when I had hens. Why did I use bhithinn here – it is the first person singular of the conditional of the verb “to be”? The reason is that the conditional also stands for the past habitual – it is the verbal mood to be used when describing past actions that took place on a regular or repeated basis, rather than as a one-off. Chearc is the indefinite genitive plural – it is in the genitive following the verbal nouns a' marbhadh and a' spìonadh. Some people would say cearcan today but I have kept to traditional usage – and a hen-house [house of hens] is still called a taigh-chearc not a taigh-chearcan.*

**Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine:** Spìon às a' bhun: *eradicate*. Thathar a' feuchainn ri a spìonadh às a' bhun: *they are trying to eradicate it*. Faodaidh mi an spìonadh às a' bhun, ceart gu leòr, ach chan fhaigh mi cuidhteas iad a-chaoidh: *this is a play on the idiom because spìonadh às a' bhun literally means “pulling out by the root”. I might pull the weeds out by the root, but I will never get rid of them – so the idiom doesn't quite work for weeds – which can never be eradicated!*

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