

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 rodny.maclea@bbc.co.uk * This is Litir 325. 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 21 corresponds to Litir 325.*

A bheil sibh eòlach air an lus air a bheil an t-ainm saidheansail *Pinguicula vulgaris*? 'S e an t-ainm oifigeil a th' air ann am Beurla *common butterwort*. Ach 's dòcha gum bi cuid eòlach air mar *bog violet*. 'S e a th' ann lus a tha a' fàs ann am boglaichean is àiteachan fliucha, gu h-àraidh far a bheil an talamh neo-thorrach. Tha e cumanta gu leòr air a' Ghàidhealtachd.

'S dòcha gum faca sibh fhèin e. Tha e beag. Tha duilleagan buidhe-uaine air a tha a' fàs ann an cròilean, faisg air an talamh. Tha na duilleagan fada agus tiugh. Tha na flùraichean purpaidh. Bidh iad a' stobadh suas air gas chumhang.

Buinidh an lus seo don teaghlach *Lentibulariaceae*. 'S e teaghlach beag a th' ann agus tha e car annasach. Bidh na lusan a bhuineas don teaghlach a' glacadh mheanbh-fhrìdean. 'S ann mar sin a tha iad a' faighinn nam mèinnearach a tha a dhìth orra, gu h-àraidh naitraidsean. 'S e sin a tha a' leigeil leotha fàs ann an àite neo-thorrach. 'S iad na duilleagan, a tha leanailteach, a bhios a' glacadh nam meanbh-chreutairean.

Tha caochladh ainmean air an lus seo ann an Gàidhlig. Tha cuid aca co-cheangailte ri bainne no ìm, mar a tha an t-ainm Beurla, *butterwort*. Mar eisimpleir, *lus a' bhainne*, *lus an ime* agus *badan measgain*. Tha *measgan* a' ciallachadh soitheach anns am bithear a' cur ìm. Bidh an lus seo a' binndeachadh bainne. 'S dòcha gu robh e air a chleachdadh airson sin anns an t-seann aimsir. Ach tha ainm eile, agus ainm nas cumanta air an lus seo ann an Gàidhlig – *mòthan*. Bha am mòthan air a chleachdadh mar sheun-gaoil.

Gu traidiseanta, bhiodh boireannach a' dol don mhonadh. Bhiodh i a' dol air a glùin chli. Bhiodh i a' spìonadh naoi freumhaichean dhen mhòthan agus bhiodh i gan snìomh còmhla mar chuach.

Chuireadh am boireannach a' chuach seo air a beul, agus bhiodh fear a bheireadh pòg dhi a' gabhail gaol dhi. Chuireadh boireannach a bha an impis leanabh a bhreith cuach mar sin foidhpe airson dèanamh cinnteach gun nochdadh an leanabh gu sàbhailte. Bheireadh daoine cuach mar sin leotha nuair a bha iad a' siubhal airson an cumail sàbhailte. Bhathar ag ràdh gu robh bainne bho bhò a bh' air am mòthan ithe math do leanabh a bh' air ùr-bhreith. Bhathar a' creidsinn gum biodh am mòthan a' dìon daoine an aghaidh buidseachd.

Agus tha seanfhacal ann a tha ceangailte ris an lus seo. *Dh'òl e bainne na bà baobh a dh'ith am mòthan*. Dh'òl e bainne na bà baobh a dh'ith am mòthan. Thathar ag ràdh sin mu dheidhinn duine a fhuair a-mach à suidheachadh cunnartach air èiginn – mar gur e mìorbhail a bh' ann.

'S e a' Bheurla a tha cuid a' cur air an t-seanfhacal: *he drank the milk of the foolish cow which ate the bog-violet* ach tha amharas agam gu bheil seo nas coltaiche: *he drank*

the milk of the bewitched cow that ate the bog-violet. Dh'òl e bainne na bà baobh a dh'ith am mòthan.

Tha mi a' smaoinichadh gun tàinig an seanfhacal gu bith leis gu robh daoine dhen bheachd gum biodh cumhachdan os-nàdarrach aig duine a dh'òl bainne bho bhò a bh' air am mòthan ithe. Agus gur iad na cumhachdan sin a leig leis an duine tighinn beò tro shuidheachadh cunnartach.

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Faclan na Litreach: saidheansail: *scientific*; mèinnearach: *mineral*; naitraidsean: *nitrogen*; leanailteach: *sticky*; caochladh: *various*; measgan: *butter dish*; seun-gaoil: *love-charm*; foidhpe: *under her*; buidseachd: *witchcraft*.

Abairtean na Litreach: boglaichean is àiteachan fliucha: *bogs and wet places*; tha e cumanta gu leòr: *it's pretty common*; a tha a' fàs ann an cròilean: *which grow in a rosette*; bidh iad a' stobadh suas air gas chumhang: *they stick up on a narrow stalk*; bidh na lusan a bhuineas don teaghlach a' glacadh mheanbh-fhrìdean: *the plants which belong to the family catch insects*; a tha a' leigeil leotha fàs: *which allows them to grow*; bidh an lus seo a' binndeachadh bainne: *this plant curdles milk*; anns an t-seann aimsir: *in olden times*; bhiodh i a' dol air a glùn chli: *she would go on her left knee*; bhiodh i a' spìonadh naoi freumhaichean: *she would pull up nine roots*; bhiodh i gan snìomh còmhlà mar chuach: *she would weave them together to make a coil*; bhiodh fear a bheireadh pòg dhi a' gabhail gaol dhi: *a man who kissed her would fall in love with her*; a bha an impis leanabh a bhreith: *who was about to give birth*; airson dèanamh cinnteach gun nochdadh an leanabh gu sàbhailte: *to make sure the baby would arrive safely*; bhathar ag ràdh: *it was said*; do leanabh a bh' air ùr-bhreith: *for a new born baby*; a fhuair a-mach à suidheachadh cunnartach air èiginn: *who narrowly escaped a dangerous situation*; mar gur e mìorbhail a bh' ann: *as if it were a miracle*; gum biodh cumhachdan os-nàdarrach aig duine: *that a man would have supernatural powers*; bho bhò a bh' air am mòthan ithe: *from a cow that had eaten the bog violet*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: gu h-àraidh far a bheil an talamh neo-thorrach: *particularly where the ground is infertile. The prefix neo- is a very common one. It creates the opposite of the following element. Just as fertile becomes infertile with an in- prefix, torrach becomes neo-thorrach with a neo- prefix. But notice the lenition following neo-. There is a vast number of such examples. Here are two more: neo-cheangailte (unbound); neo-bhòidheach (unhandsome). Note that there is usually a hyphen following the neo and that the emphasis in speech is on the first syllable of the second element. But in a few words the neo has become fused to the second element to such an extent that the emphasis is now on the neo. In this case there is no hyphen eg neoni (zero, originally neo+nè ie no thing); neònach (curious, originally neo+ghnàthach) and neoghlán (impure, neo+glán). MacDonald and Robertson's recent dictionary gives neo(i)chiontach for neo-chiontach (not guilty, innocent), reflecting its pronunciation.*

Seanfhacal na Litreach: Dh'òl e bainne na bà baobh a dh'ith am mòthan: *he drank the milk of the bewitched cow that ate the bog-violet.*

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