

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

A special programme, in the form of a “letter”, designed for 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, Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 529. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 225 corresponds to Litir 529.

Fhuair mi post-d bho fhear a bhuineas do dh’Inbhir Nis, agus a tha ag ionnsachadh na Gàidhlig. ’S ann à Marc-Innis a bha a mhàthair – an sgìre de dh’Inbhir Nis as fhaide a chum a’ Ghàidhlig beò mar chainnt coimhearsnachd. Tha cuimhne aig mo charaid air a mhàthair a bhith a’ cleachdadh fhaclan àraidh a bhuineadh do dhualchainnt shònraichte. Tha e ag innse dhomh gur ann nuair a bha e air tighinn gu ìre a thuig e gur e faclan Gàidhlig a bh’ annta.

Latha a bha seo, bha e a’ tadhal air a mhàthair agus mhothaich i gun robh rudeigin air amhaich - rud ris an canar *cyst* ann am Beurla. Nise, bu mhath leam faighneachd dè a’ Ghàidhlig a th’ agaibh fhèin air *cyst*. ’S aithne dhomh na faclan a leanas: *fluth*, *balgan-iongrach*, *balgan-bèiste* agus *guc*. Na dualchainnt Bheurla fhèin, chleachd màthair mo charaid am facal *farach*. Farach.

Bha e a’ cuimhneachadh an fhacail sin o chionn ghoirid agus chuir e roimhe faighinn a-mach an e facal Gàidhlig a th’ ann. Uill, chan eil e anns na faclairean. Ach ann am fear Dwelly tha *farach-donn* agus *farach-dubh* ann. Tha iad **le chèile** a’ ciallachadh *Lus nan Cnapan*. ’S e Lus nan Cnapan a’ Ghàidhlig air *Common Figwort*, *Scrophularia nodosa*, lus a tha a’ fàs ann an àiteachan fliucha. ’S iad na cnapan ann an ainm an luis atan air a fhreumhaichean. ’S ann air an sgàth a tha luchd-saidheans a’ gabhail *nodosa* air an lus – tha *nodules* air.

Tha am facal *Scrophularia* co-cheangailte ris an tinneas air a bheil *scrofula* ann am Beurla agus *tinneas an rìgh* ann an Gàidhlig. Aig aon àm, ann am Breatainn agus san Fhraing, bhathar a’ creidsinn gur e an leigheas airson tinneas an rìgh nam biodh rìgh a’ cur a làimh air an euslainteach.

Nise, tha a h-uile càil a tha seo inntinneach oir bidh cuimhne agaibh gur ann air amhaich mo charaid a bha am balgan no *cyst* – no farach. ’S e tinneas amhaich a th’ ann an tinneas an rìgh. Bidh cnapan a’ nochdadh air amhaich an euslaintich.

Aig aon àm bhathar a’ creidsinn ann an rud ris an canar ann am Beurla *The Doctrine of Signatures*. Nan robh rudeigin air luibh a’ coimhead coltach ri ball-bodhaig duine, bhathar a’ creidsinn gum biodh an luibh fhèin co-cheangailte ris a’ bhall-bhodhaig sin, agus gun dèanadh e leigheas airson tinneas a bha a’ bualadh air a’ bhall-bhodhaig.

Chan eil mi cinnteach dè cho làidir ’s a bha an *Doctrine of Signatures* ann an eòlas is feallsanachd luibh-eòlaichean na Gàidhlig. Ach bha mi a’ meòrachadh air a’ cheist seo agus shaoil mi gur dòcha gur iad na cnapan air na freumhaichean a bha a’

comharrachadh comas an luis leigheas a dhèanamh air cnapan air an amhaich. Chaidh mi gu *The Gaelic Names of Plants* le Iain Camshron agus seo na sgrìobh e fhèin mu Lus nan Cnapan: “*...from the resemblance of its roots to tumours ... it was esteemed a remedy for all scrofulous diseases.*” Bha Lus nan Cnapan na leigheas airson tinneas an rìgh – tinneas a tha a’ fàgail chnapan air an amhaich.

Tha e a’ coimhead coltach, ma-thà, gur e facal Gàidhlig a th’ ann am *farach*, agus gu bheil e a’ ciallachadh “cnap” no eadhon “cnap air an amhaich”. Ma tha smuain sam bith agaibh air sin b’ fhìor thoigh leam cluinntinn bhuaibh.

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Faclan na Litreach: post-d: *email*; Marc-Innis: *Merkinch*; dualchainnt: *dialect*; Lus nan Cnapan: *Common Figwort [lit. plant of the lumps]*; amhaich: *neck*; a’ meòrachadh: *contemplating*; Iain Camshron: *John Cameron*.

Abairtean na Litreach: a bhuineas do: *who belongs to*; as fhaide a chum a’ Ghàidhlig beò mar chainnt coimhearsnachd: *which kept the language alive as a community tongue longest*; gur ann nuair a bha e air tighinn gu ìre: *that it was when he had reached maturity*; a thuig e gur e faclan Gàidhlig a bh’ annta: *that he understood that they were Gaelic words*; bha e a’ tadhal air a mhàthair: *he was visiting his mother*; ’s aithne dhomh na faclan a leanas: *I know the following words*; chuir e roimhe faighinn a-mach: *he decided to find out*; atan air a fhreumhaichean: *swellings on its roots*; air an sgàth: *on their account*; tinneas an rìgh: *scrofula [lit. the king’s disease – it was also known in English as “king’s evil”]*; bhathar a’ creidsinn gur e an leigheas: *it was believed that the cure was*; nam biodh rìgh a’ cur a làimh air an euslainteach: *if the king would put his hand on the patient*; coltach ri ball-bodhaig duine: *like a human organ*; eòlas is feallsanachd luibh-eòlaichean na Gàidhlig: *the body of knowledge and philosophy of the Gaelic botanists*; shaoil mi gur dòcha: *I thought that perhaps*; a bha a’ comharrachadh comas an luis leigheas a dhèanamh: *which indicated the plant’s ability to effect a cure*; seo na sgrìobh e: *here’s what he wrote*; bha Lus nan Cnapan na leigheas airson tinneas an rìgh: *Common Figwort (“plant of the lumps” was a cure for scrofula (a lumpy disease of the neck)*; b’ fhìor thoigh leam cluinntinn bhuaibh: *I’d really like to hear from you*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: *It’s interesting how Gaelic words persisted in certain Highland English dialects for some time. The Merkinch dialect in Inverness is one example. My informant tells me of another Gaelic word his Merkinch-raised mother would use when she had overboiled potatoes. She would say “the tatties are away to smurach”. If you don’t know the word, look up smùrach in a Gaelic dictionary. As regards farach meaning a lump in the neck, there is another candidate for a Gaelic origin. Fàireag means a “gland, swollen gland, hard lump between flesh and skin.” It’s possible the two words are related. If you use either word in Gaelic or English, I’d be pleased to hear your thoughts on the matter.*

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: Tha iad le **chèile** a’ ciallachadh: *they both mean*.

Tha “Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh” air a maoinachadh le MG ALBA