

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Faclair Armstrong (2)

Each week the West Highland Free Press publishes the text for Ruairidh's "Letter to Gaelic Learners" on BBC Radio nan Gàidheal (103.5-105 FM). Broadcasts are as follows: 2:55pm on Sunday as part of BBC Radio nan Gàidheal's hour-long learning zone, following the Gaelic Learners' programme 'SpeakGaelic Extra', with a repeat at 10.30 pm on Wednesday. This is Litir 1,331. There is also a simpler version – An Litir Bheag – which is broadcast at 2:30pm each Sunday. Litir Bheag 1,027 corresponds to Litir 1,331. The Litir is also available at www.bbc.co.uk/litir and www.learnghaelic.scot/litir. Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learnghaelic.scot.

Tha sinn a' toirt sùil air faclan às an fhaclair aig Raibeart Armstrong, a chaidh fhoillseachadh **dà cheud bliadhna air ais** ann an ochd ceud deug is còig air fhichead (1825). Tha sinn aig an litir 'f'. 'S e am facal a thagh mi – *fàidh* 'prophet, soothsayer'. As a sin, gheibh sinn na faclan *fàidheadaireachd* 'prophecy' agus *fàidheil* 'like a prophet, prophetic'.

Tha mi a' cuimhneachadh còmhraidh a bh' agam o chionn fhada le fear aig an robh Gàidhlig bho dhùthchas. Bha mi ag iarraidh air innse dhomh dè bha a' dol a thachairt anns an ùine romhainn. 'Ist, 'ille,' thuirt e, '**cha fàidh mi is cha mhac fàidh mi**'. *I'm not a prophet or the son of a prophet.* Cha fàidh mi is cha mhac fàidh mi. Cha robh e airson beachd a thoirt air a' ghnòthach!

An ath fhacal a th' agam, 's e *geur-leanmhainn*. Tha e a' tighinn bhon dà fhacal – *geur* 'sharp, keen' agus *lean* 'follow, pursue'. *Geur-lean* 'pursue hotly or keenly'. *Geur-leanmhainn* 'hot pursuit or chase'. Ge-tà, tha ciall a bharrachd air an fhacal fhìllte agus 's e sin *persecute, persecution*. *Rinn e geur-leanmhainn orra* 'he persecuted them'.

Leis nach e litir 'cheart' a th' ann an 'h' ann an aibidil na Gàidhlig, 's e 'i' an ath litir againn. Bidh sibh eòlach air an fhacal *ifrinn*. Tha e a' ciallachadh 'hell'. Ifrinn. Anns an fhaclair fhreumh-fhaclach aige, tha MacBheathain ag innse dhuinn gun tàinig am facal bhon Laidinn *infernum*. Mar sin, tha *ifrinn* càirdeach do na faclan Beurla *infernal* agus *inferno*.

Ge-tà, 's e àite fuar a bh' ann an 'ifrinn' nan seann Cheilteach pàganach. Seo mar a mhìnichas Armstrong e: *Ifrinn literally means the isle of the cold land, or clime, being a contracted form of i-fuar-fhuinn. The Celtic hell was a cold dark region, abounding in venomous reptiles and wild beasts... The Scotch Celts still retain the name, though well aware that cold forms no part of infernal punishment.* Ma bheir sibh sùil air faclair Dwelly, chì sibh earrann de na sgrìobh Armstrong fon cheann-fhacal *ifrinn*.

'S e 'l' an ath litir ann an aibidil na Gàidhlig. Thagh mi am facal *luidhear* 'chimney, vent'. 'S e sin am facal a tha sinn a' cleachdadh airson 'ship's funnel'. *Bha trì luidheirean air an Queen Mary* 'there were three funnels on the Queen Mary'.

Nise, 's e facal boireanta a th' ann an *luidhear*. Mar sin, canaidh sinn 'tha toit a' tighinn às an luidheir'. Tha am facal air a chaolachadh anns an tuiseal thabhartach

shingilte. Ge-tà 's e *luidheir* – an riochd caol – a th' aig Armstrong mar cheann-fhacal. Math dh'fhaodte gun robh am facal air a dhol caol ann an Siorrachd Pheairt.

Mu dheireadh an-diugh, am facal *masladh*. Tha e a' ciallachadh '*shame, disgrace, scandal*'. Bhuaithe sin, tha sinn a' faighinn a' ghnìomhair *maslaich*, '*disgrace, put to shame*' agus am buadhair *maslach* '*disgraceful*'. Tha *sin dìreach maslach* '*that's disgraceful, appalling*'. Tha mi an dòchas nach cleachd sibh fhèin am facal *maslach* ro thrìc!

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Faclan na Litreach: thagh: *chose, selected*; ifrinn: *hell*; freumh-fhaclach: *etymological*; ceann-fhacal: *headword*; luidhear: *chimney, vent, funnel*; boireanta: *feminine*; an riochd caol: *the slender form*; ro thrìc: *too often*.

Abairtean na Litreach: Tha sinn a' toirt sùil air faclan às an fhaclair aig Raibeart Armstrong: *we are looking at words from Robert Armstrong's dictionary*; às a sin, gheibh sinn na faclan: *from that, we get the words*; tha mi a' cuimhneachadh còmhraidh a bh' agam o chionn fhada: *I am remembering a conversation I had a long time ago*; le fear aig an robh Gàidhlig bho dhùthchas: *with a man who spoke Gaelic as his first language*; bha mi ag iarraidh air innse dhomh: *I was wanting him to tell me*; dè bha a' dol a thachairt anns an ùine romhainn: *what was going to happen in the future*; ist, 'ille: *literally, be quiet, lad but the expression is used idiomatically to gain the listener's attention*; cha robh e airson beachd a thoirt air a' ghnòthach: *he didn't want to opine on the matter*; càirdeach do na faclan Beurla: *related to the English words*; beachd eadar-dhealaichte air tùs an fhacail: *a different opinion on the origin of the word*; 'ifrinn' nan seann Cheilteach pàganach: *the 'hell' of the old pagan Celts*; tha am facal air a chaolachadh anns an tuiseal thabhartach shingilte: *the word is slenderised in the dative singular case*; bhuaithe sin, tha sinn a' faighinn a' ghnìomhair: *from that, we get the verb*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: a chaidh fhoillseachadh dà cheud bliadhna air ais: *that was published two hundred years ago. The two most common ways of saying 'ago' in Gaelic involve the adverbs o chionn and air ais. We can say 'five years ago' with o chionn còig bliadhna or coig bliadhna air ais. The former is more common than the latter. However, you will occasionally hear both used together: Thachair sin o chionn ceithir bliadhn' deug air ais 'that happened fourteen years ago'.*

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: cha fàidh mi is cha mhac fàidh mi': *I'm not a prophet or the son of a prophet [I cannot foretell the future].*

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