

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 roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk **

’S e a’ chiad mhìos dhen bhliadhna, ann am Beurla – *January*, a tha a’ faighinn ainm bho sheann dia Ròmanach. Ach, gu h-eachdraidheil, chanadh na Sasannaich am *wolf-month* ris, agus ’s e an ìre mhath an aon ainm a tha againn dha ann an Gàidhlig – *am Faoilleach*. ’S e *faol* seann fhacal airson madadh-allaidh, agus bha an t-ainm *Faolan* (neo madadh-allaidh beag) gu math cumanta am measg fir na Gaidhealtachd o shean. Tha e againn fhathast anns an ainm-chinnidh, *MacIllFhaolain*, neo mar a theirear ann am Beurla, *MacLellan*.

Tha mi a’ dèanamh dheth gur e is coireach gu bheil *am Faoilleach* air a’ mhìos seo gur e sin an t-àm sam biodh na madaidhean-allaidh gu math acrach, agus sneachd air feadh na dùthcha. Thigeadh iad do na bailtean, a’ coimhead airson biadh agus, uaireannan, dheanadh iad sgrios.

Ach feumaidh mi rudeigin cudthromach a ràdh mu dheidhinn an Fhaoillich. Ged a tha sinn an-diugh ga thomhas mar co-ionann ri *January*, cha b’ ann mar sin a bha e o shean. Do na seann Ghaidheil, b’ e am Faoilleach an ceala-deug mu dheireadh dhen gheamhradh, agus a’ chiad cheala-deug dhen earrach. Bha sin na b’ fhaisge air a bhith co-ionann ri *February*, seach *January*.

Agus tha dearbhadh air a sin anns an t-seanfhalac seo: *chan eil port a sheinneas an smeòrach san Fhaoilleach, nach gul i seachd uairean mus ruith an t-earrach*. Canaidh mi sin a-rithist gus an greimich sibh air: Chan eil port a sheinneas an smeòrach san Fhaoilleach, nach gul i seachd uairean mus ruith an t-earrach. ’S gann gun cluinnear smeòrach anns an Fhaoilleach mar a tha e an-diugh – a’ chiad mhìos dhen bhliadhna. Agus seo abairt eile a bhios feumail dhuibh. Ma chluinneas sibh naidheachd nach gabh creidsinn, neo a tha gu math eu-coltach, dh’fhaodadh sibh a ràdh, “*tha sin mar smeuran dubha san Fhaoilleach*.”

’S e an ath mhìos an *Gearran* a tha an-diugh co-ionann ri *February*. Tha am facal *gearran* cuideachd a’ ciallachadh “each fireann a th’ air a spothadh”, agus tha e coltach gu bheil ceangal ann eadar na dhà, agus gun deach ainm a’ bheathaich a chur air gaoth a thigeadh aig an àm sin a h-uile bliadhna. Tha an treas mìos, *am Màrt*, furast’ a chuimhneachadh leis gu bheil e cho coltach ri *March* ann am Beurla. Thàinig an dà ainm bhon Laidinn, *Martius*, mìos Mhars. B’ e Mars dia a’ chogaidh anns an t-seann Ròimh.

Ach, a-rithist, do na Gaidheil o shean, bhiodh am Màrt a’ gluasad anns a’ mhìosachan a rèir na h-aimsir. Bha e a’ ciallachadh dhaibhsan – an t-àm anns am biodh obair nan tuathanach a’ tòiseachadh. Chuireadh iad sìol anns a’ Mhàrt, ach chan ann ro thràth anns a’ Mhàrt. Bha e cudthromach dhaibh nach nochdadh na duilleagan bhon t-sìol gus am biodh am Màrt seachad. Agus tha sean-fhalac ann mu dheidhinn sin: *Am feur a thig a-mach sa Mhàrt, thèid*

e a-staigh sa Ghiblean. Am feur a thig a-mach sa Mhàrt, thèid e a-staigh sa Ghiblean. Tha sin a' ciallachadh – ma nì sibh rudeigin ro thràth, nuair nach eil an t-àm freagarrach air a shon, nach soirbhich leibh.

Agus 's e *an Giblean* an ath-mhìos anns a' mhìosachan. As dèidh sin, thig *an Cèitean*. Canaidh feadhainn a' *Chèitean* ris, seach an Cèitean, is canaidh feadhainn eile a' *Mhàigh*. Tha an Ceitean a' ciallachadh a' chiad phàirt dhen t-samhradh, agus bidh Gaidheil tric is minig a' moladh a' mhìosa seo – mar a chì sinn anns an ath litir, nuair a bheir sinn sùil air a' Chèitean, agus air a' chòrr de mhìosachan nan Gaidheal.

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Faclan na seachdainne: am Faoilleach (or am Faoilteach): *January*; ainm-cinnidh: *surname (clan name)*; an Gearran: *February (note that in Gaelic we always use the definite article with the name of each month)*; gearran: *gelding*; sìol: *seed*; an Giblean: *April*; an Cèitean: *May*.

Abairtean na seachdainne: gu math cumanta am measg fir na Gaidhealtachd: *very common amongst the menfolk of the Gaidhealtachd*; uaireannan, dheanadh iad sgrios: *sometimes they would plunder*; tha sinn an-diugh ga thomhas mar co-ionann ri X: *today we reckon on it being equivalent to X*; an ceala-deug mu dheireadh dhen gheamhradh: *the last fortnight of the winter*; 's gann gun cluinnear smèrach anns an Fhaoilleach mar a tha e an-diugh: *a thrush is rarely heard in the Faoilleach as it is today (ie the first month of the year)*; ma chluinneas sibh naidheachd nach gabh creidsinn, neo a tha gu math eu-coltach: *if you hear a story that is unbelievable or most unlikely (to be true)*; each fireann a th' air a spothadh: *a male horse which has been castrated*; tha an treas mìos furast' a chuimhneachadh: *the third month is easy to remember*; b' e Mars dia a' chogaidh anns an t-seann Ròimh: *Mars was the god of war in ancient Rome*; bhiodh am Màrt a' gluasad anns a' mhìosachan a rèir na h-aimsir: *am Màrt would move in the calendar according to the weather (ie it was a weather-month, not a strict calendar-month)*; nach soirbhich leibh: *you will not be successful*; bidh X tric is minig a' moladh a' mhìosa seo: *X very often praises this month*.

Puing ghràmair na seachdainne: Mar a theirear ann am Beurla: *as is said in English*. Theirear represents the present and future tense of the Indicative mood of the Passive voice of the irregular verb, abair (say). Mar a theirear ann an Spàinntis, “Adios” (as is said in Spanish, “Adios”). You will already be familiar with irregularities in this verb, such as abair e! (lit. say it!); tha mi ag ràdh (I say, am saying); thuir i (she said) and theirinn (I would say). Note that in some places, notably Argyll, theirear may be replaced by abrar. Mar a dh'abrar ann an Eadailtis, “Arrivederci” (as is said in Italian, “Arrivederci”).

Sean-fhaclan na seachdainne: 3 proverbs this week: 1. Chan eil port a sheinneas an smèrach san Fhaoilleach, nach gul i seachd uairean mus ruith an t-earrach: *for every song the thrush sings in the Faoilleach, she will lament seven times before the spring is over. I think this means that there is a long time between the Faoilleach (originally at the end of winter when you might expect to hear a thrush) and the end of Spring – so don't be in a hurry to get things done too early in the season.* 2. Tha sin mar smeuran dubha san Fhaoilleach: *that is like ripe bramble berries (blackberries) in January – a most unlikely event!* 3. Am feur a thig a-mach sa Mhàrt, thèid e a-staigh sa Ghiblean. *The grass which comes out in March will disappear in April ie if the shoots of a crop appear too soon, they will wither and die – so you must live within the constrictions of the seasons provided by nature. Perhaps there's a good philosophical point here!*

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