

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 rodny.maclea@bbc.co.uk **

A bheil sibh eòlach air an fhacal “sgamhan”? ’S dòcha gu bheil sibh air a chluinntinn air an rèidio anns an tuiséal ghinideach, nuair a tha daoine a’ bruidhinn mu “aillse-sgamhain”. ’S e sin a’ Ghàidhlig air *lung cancer*. Aillse-sgamhain. Agus ’s e sgamhan a’ Ghàidhlig air *lungs* no, uaireannan, dìreach air *one lung*.

Tha am facal sgamhan nam cheann an-dràsta oir, gach turas a thèid mi eadar Inbhir Nis agus a’ Chomraich ann an Ros an Iar, bidh mi a’ dol seachad air loch ann meadhan Siorrachd Rois air a bheil Loch Sgamhain. Tha tuathanas-èisg air an loch, agus dà eilean beag le craobhan orra, ach sin e. Cha mhòr gu bheil duine a’ fuireach anns an sgìre an-diugh. Ciamar, ma-thà, a fhuair an loch ainm?

Faisg air làimh, tha dà aite eile air a bheil ainmean stèidhichte air pàirtean dhen bhodhaig – Beinn na Feusaige agus Coire a’ Chlaiginn. Nise, chan eil càil a dh’fhios agam ciamar a fhuair an dà aite sin an cuid ainmean, ach tha mi air beul-aithris a chluinntinn mu Loch Sgamhain. Bha na seann daoine anns an sgìre sin a’ cumail a-mach gun deach sgamhan a lorg là air choreigin air bhog anns an loch. Sgamhan duine.

Bha iad a’ coireachadh an eich-uisge. Bha iad ag ràdh gu robh each-uisge a’ fuireach anns an loch agus, mar a tha fios aig a h-uile duine, bidh eich-uisge bho àm gu àm a’ marbhadh dhaoine, is gan ithe. Ach tha aon phàirt dhen bhodhaig ann nach ith iad uair sam bith, agus ’s e sin an sgamhan. Slaodaidh iad an duine gu aigeann an locha, is bidh iag ga ithe ach a-mhàin an sgamhan. As dèidh na creiche, tillidh an sgamhan an uachdar, leis gu bheil e nas aotruime na uisge, agus bidh cuideigin ga lorg air a’ chladach is ag ràdh ris fhèin, “A, seadh, ’s e an t-each-uisge as coireach ri seo.”

“Sgamhan coin is sgamhan sagairt, is coltach iad ri chèile”. ’S e abairt annasach a tha sin, ach tha sgeulachd co-cheangailte rithe. Bha fear a bha seo ann an Cataibh a bha na ghadaiche, air an robh Dòmhnall MacMhurchaidh mar ainm. Là a bha seo, bha e a’ togail taigh is bha e faisg air a bhith deiseil, nuair a chaidh sagart na Comraich seachad air.

“Tha aon choire air an taigh,” thuirt an sagart. Bha Dòmhnall ro àrdanach airson faighneachd dè bh’ ann agus dh’fhalbh an sagart. Ach mu dheireadh mhothaich Dòmhnall don uireasbaidh – cha robh doras ann! Bha an caothach air, agus chuir e dithis de na mic aige a-mach airson an sagart a mharbhadh agus an sgamhan aige a thoirt air ais. Uill, cha robh na mic deònach sin a dhèanamh agus mharbh iad cù na àite. Thug iad sgamhan a’ choin air ais leotha. Agus ’s e sin na faclan a thuirt Dòmhnall riutha, “sgamhan coin is sgamhan sagairt, is coltach iad ri chèile.” Bha e borb, ’s dòcha, ach cha robh e faoin.

Ach dè mu dheidhinn Loch Sgamhain? Ma choimheadas sibh ann am faclair Dwelly, tha sgamhan cuideachd a' ciallachadh rudan eile, nam measg *blockhead*, *villainous person*, *corn or hay built up in a barn*, *no refuse or dross*. 'S dòcha gur e sin a bha e a' ciallachadh o thùs – *loch of the refuse*. Chan eil fhios a'm. B' fheàrr leam dhol le beachd nan seann daoine, ceart no ceàrr e. Agus cò chanadh le cinnt nach robh each-uisge a' fuireach ann uair no uaireigin?

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Faclan na seachdaine: aillse-sgamhain: *lung cancer*; tuathanas-èisg: *fish farm*; bodhaig: *human body (living)*; Beinn na Feusaige: (lit.) *Mountain of the Beard*; Coire a' Chlaiginn: (lit.) *Corrie of the Skull*; nas aotruime: *lighter*; Cataibh: *Sutherland*; gadaiche: *robber*; sagart na Comraich: *the priest of Applecross*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: anns an tuiseal ghinideach: *in the genitive case*; cha mhòr gu bheil duine a' fuireach anns an sgìre: *hardly a person lives in the area*; gun deach sgamhan a lorg là air choreigin air bhog anns an loch: *that lungs were found one day floating in the loch*; bha iad a' coireachadh an eich-uisge: *they were blaming the water-horse (kelpie)*; slaodaidh iad an duine gu aigeann an locha: *they drag the man to the abyss of the loch*; sgamhan coin is sgamhan sagairt, is coltach iad ri chèile: *a dog's lungs and a priest's lungs, they are alike*; tha aon choire air an taigh: *there is one thing wrong with the house*; mhothaich e don uireasbaidh: *he noticed the deficiency*; chuir e dithis de na mic aige a-mach: *he sent two of his sons*; mharbh iad cù na àite: *they killed a dog instead of him (ie the priest)*; bha e borb ach cha robh e faoin: *he was barbarous but he wasn't naïve*; b' fheàrr leam dol le beachd nan seann daoine, ceart no ceàrr e: *I would prefer to agree with the old people, right or wrong*.

Puing-ghràmar na seachdaine: Bha Dòmhnall ro àrdanach airson faighneachd dè bh' ann: *Donald was too haughty to ask what it was. Are you familiar with some of the words which describe the spectrum of emotions and nature from pride through to arrogance? At the lower end of the scale are moit and pròis which can both mean pride of a type which is entirely positive and justified, although they may also indicate a degree of conceit. The adjectives are moiteil and pròiseil which both generally use the preposition às eg tha mi moiteil asad (I am proud of you); tha i pròiseil aiste fhèin (she is proud of herself). At the less positive end of the spectrum are àrdan and uaibhreas which may point to an excessive or unjustified pride, spilling over into haughtiness or arrogance. The adjectives are àrdanach and uaibhreach and no preposition is needed eg 's e duine àrdanach a th' ann (he is an arrogant man); 's i a tha uaibhreach! (it is her that is haughty!). Incidentally, the Gaelic for Alexander the Great is Alasdair Uaibhreach. It couldn't possibly be Alasdair Mòr – too many Gaels answer to that!*

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine: As dèidh na creiche, tillidh an sgamhan an uachdar: *after the destruction (ie the killing and eating of the human), the lung returns to the surface. An uachdar means "to the surface" and can also be used figuratively eg thig a h-uile càil an uachdar aig a' cheann thall (all will be revealed in the end).*

NB: There will be no Litir next week because of the National Mòd. It will return the following week.

* "*Litir do Luchd-Ionnsachaidh*" is funded by Comataidh Craolaidh Gàidhlig