

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Graddaning

Each week the West Highland Free Press publishes the text for Ruairidh's "Letter to Gaelic Learners" on BBC Radio nan Gaidheal (103.5-105 FM). Broadcasts are as follows: 11.50 am Friday, repeated at 10.55 am the next day (Saturday) and 2.55 pm on Sunday. This is Litir 662. There is also a simpler version – An Litir Bheag – which goes to air around 7.00pm on Monday evenings between Siubhal gu Seachd and Rapal. Litir Bheag 358 corresponds to Litir 662. Both programmes are available on the BBC website at bbc.co.uk/alba/foghlam.

An cuala sibh riamh am facal Beurla – *graddaning*? *G-R-A-D-D-A-N-I-N-G*. *Graddaning*. Tha e a' tighinn bhon Ghàidhlig, agus tha e a' ciallachadh dòigh airson min-fhlùir a dhèanamh. Bha mi a' leughadh mu dheidhinn ann an leabhar mun Eilean Sgitheanach o chionn ghoirid – iris ùr de *History of Skye* le Alasdair MacNeacail. "This ruinous method of making meal," sgrìobh MacNeacail, "prevailed in Skye until the very end of the nineteenth century." Ach dè bh' ann?

Tha *graddaning* – ann am Beurla nan Sasannach agus ann an Albais – a' tighinn bhon fhacal Ghàidhlig *gradan*. 'S e gradan dòigh airson arbhar a dheasachadh. Ma tha sibh eòlach air seann dòighean airson min-fhlùir a dhèanamh, bidh fios agaibh gum bite a' sùisteadh no a' bualadh an arbhair. An uair sin, bhite ga chàthadh no ga fhasgnadh. A bharrachd air a' ghràn, gheibhte moll no càth, agus connlach às a' ghnothach. Bhiodh iad sin feumail mar bhiadh do chrodh, airson stuth-leapa agus airson tughadh-taighe.

Ach le gradan, cha bhitheadh moll no connlach ann. Carson? Uill, chuirte teine ris an arbhar. Seo mar a bha e ag obair, a rèir an sgrìobhadair Sgitheanaich, Màrtainn MacIlleMhàrtainn: *Bidh boireannach, a tha na suidhe, a' gabhail làn a dùirn de dh'arbhar, ga ghreimeachadh air na coinnleanan na làimh chli agus bidh i a' cur teine ris na diasan a thèid an smàl gu luath; tha slat aice na làimh dheis, a chleachdas i gu sgileil, a' bualadh a' ghràin d'eth aig an dearbh àm 's a tha an cochall dìreach loisgte*. Sgrìobh MacIlleMhàrtainn gun robh na Gàidheil gu math measail air a' ghradan oir bha am blas a' còrdadh riutha.

Bhiodh daoine a' dèanamh a' ghradain ann am mòran sgìrean fhathast anns an ochdamh linn deug. Cha robh muilnean-uisge no àthan pailt agus dh'fhaodadh gach teaghlach an cuid arbhair fhèin a dheasachadh anns an dòigh sin.

Ach cha do dh'obraich e gu math fad na h-ùine, agus gu tric bhiodh cochaill dhubha loisgte am measg na mine – agus bhiodh bonnaich nan Gàidheal uaireannan an ìre mhath dubh. Bhiodh luchd-turais don Ghàidhealtachd a' cur sìos air muinntir an àite airson a bhith a' leantainn leis a' chleachdadh shean-fhasanta seo, agus chuir cuid de chinn-chinnidh stad air. Bhathar ag ràdh gun robh crodh a' bàsachadh le cion bìdh anns a' gheamhradh nuair a bhiodh connlach air an cumail beò.

Bha Màrtainn MacIlleMhàrtainn dhen bheachd gun tàinig am facal *gradan* bhon fhacal Ghàidhlig *grad*, a ciallachadh 'luath'. 'S e dòigh luath a bh' ann airson arbhar a dheasachadh. Ach tha e coltach gu bheil *gradan* co-cheangailte ri *greadan* no

gread a tha a' ciallachadh 'scorch' no 'burn'. Anns an t-seann aimsir bha *greadan* cuideachd a' ciallachadh duilleagan tiormaichte tombaca a bh' air am pronnadh ann am poit-phronnadh airson snaoisean a dhèanamh. Snaoisean – sin cleachdadh eile a th' air a dhol à bith.

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Faclan na Litreach: Alasdair MacNeacail: *Alexander Nicolson*; bonnaich: *bannocks*; snaoisean: *snuff*.

Abairtean na Litreach: dòigh airson min-fhlùir a dhèanamh: *a way of making flour*; gum bite a' sùisteadh no a' bualadh an arbhair: *that the corn would be flailed*; bhite ga chàthadh no ga fhasgnadh: *it would be winnowed*; gheibhte moll no càth, agus connlach às a' ghnòthach: *chaff and straw would be obtained from the process*; feumail mar bhiadh do chrodh: *useful as cattle food*; airson stuth-leapa agus airson tughadh-taighe: *for bedding and for house thatch*; chuirte teine ris an arbhar: *the corn would be burned*; a rèir an sgrìobhadair Sgitheanaich, Màrtainn MacIlleMhàrtainn: *according to the Skye writer, Martin Martin*; ga ghreimeachadh air na coinnleanan na làimh chli: *holding it by the stalks in her left hand*; bidh i a' cur teine ris na diasan a thèid an smàl gu luath: *she sets fire to the ears which are presently in a flame*; a' bualadh a' ghràin dheth aig an dearbh àm nuair a tha an cochall dìreach loisgte: *beating off the grain at the very time the husk is quite burnt*; bha am blas a' còrdadh riutha: *they liked the flavour*; cha robh muilnean-uisge no àthan pailt: *neither watermills nor kilns were plentiful*; dh' fhaodadh gach teaghlach an cuid arbhair fhèin a dheasachadh: *each family could prepare its own corn*; gu tric bhiodh cochaill dhubha loisgte am measg na mine: *often there would be burnt, black husks amongst the meal*; bhiodh luchd-turais a' cur sìos air muinntir an àite: *tourists would criticise local people*; airson a bhith a' leantainn leis a' chleachdadh shean-fhasanta seo: *for maintaining this old-fashioned habit*; gun robh crodh a' bàsachadh le cion bìdh: *that cattle were dying of a lack of food*; duilleagan tiormaichte tombaca a bh' air am pronnadh ann am poit-phronnadh: *dried leaves of tobacco that were ground in a mortar*; sin cleachdadh eile a th' air a dhol à bith: *that's another habit that's disappeared*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: It would be interesting to make a list of loanwords in Scots and English, which originated in Gaelic, but which have largely or completely gone out of usage in recent times, often because of a change in technology or lifestyle, or because another word has supplanted the original. In addition to *graddaning*, examples would include *philabeg* "small kilt" (from *fèileadh beag*), *usqueba* "water of life" (although "whisky" has been retained) and *ingle* "fire" (from *aingeal*, and retained today only in the architectural term "inglenook"). Can you add to the list?

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: a' gabhail làn a dùirn de dh'arbhar: *taking a handful (a fill of her fist) of corn*.

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