

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 at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk * This is Litir 5. Note that Roddy also broadcasts a simplified version – An Litir Bheag – on Monday evenings at 7.00 pm. This is also available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 5 corresponds to Litir 309.*

“Is cinnteach gu bheil [an dà leabhar] *Superstitions of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* agus *Witchcraft and Second Sight in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* le Iain MacGriogair Caimbeul am measg nan cruinneachaidhean a bu chudromaiche a chaidh a dhèanamh a-riamh de bheul-aithris.” Cò tha ag ràdh sin? Chan e mise co-dhiù, ged nach d’ rachainn na aghaidh. ’S e Ragnall MacIlleDhuibh a sgrìobh sin – ann an leabhar ùr a nochd o chionn ghoirid. ’S e tìotal an leabhair *The Gaelic Otherworld*. Anns an leabhar tha clo-bhualadh às ùr ann dhen dà sheann leabhar aig a’ Chaimbeulach. Agus na chois tha notaichean bho MhacIlleDhuibh, a tha na sgoilear Ceilteach. ’S e leabhar fìor mhath a th’ ann. Seo criomag de bheul-aithris bhon leabhar. Tha fhios againn gu robh an dà-shealladh cumanta am measg nan daoine air a’ Ghàidhealtachd. Ach bha na seann Ghàidheil fhèin dhen bheachd gu robh cuid de bheathaichean na b’ fheàrr na daoine ann a bhith a’ “faicinn” rudeigin nach do thachair fhathast. B’ iad an dà bheathach a b’ fheàrr – coin agus eich.

Nuair a tha a’ ghealach làn, agus an oidhche soilleir, bidh coin gu tric a’ dèanamh donnal, an àite comhartaich. Ann am beul-aithris Shasainn, thathar ag ràdh gu bheil iad a’ dèanamh donnal ris a’ ghealaich.

Ach air a’ Ghàidhealtachd, bhathar a’ cumail a-mach gum biodh na coin a’ dèanamh donnal air oidhche shoilleir a chionn ’s gum biodh iad a’ faicinn taibhs aig duine a bha fhathast beò. ’S e am facal Gàidhlig airson sin – *tàslach*. Bhiodh na coin a’ faicinn tàslaich nan daoine beò – a’ ciallachadh gu robh an duine sin faisg air a bhàs.

“Chuala mi,” dh’innis fear Sgitheanach do dh’Iain MacGriogair Caimbeul, “na ficheadan tursan na coin a’ dèanamh donnal mus robh tiodhlacadh gu bhith ann an cladh Chille Mhoire. ’S e a bu chuireach gum fac’ iad tàslaich nan daoine beò.” Tha an Caimbeulach cuideachd ag innse dhuinn mu thachartas ann an Latharna. Bha galla chutach ghlas ann – ’s e sin cù boireann glas gun earball - galla chutach ghlas. Agus bhiodh i a’ dol gu àite faisg air allt agus a’ dèanamh donnal gu h-uabhasach. Rinn i sin gach là airson ceala-deug.

Aig deireadh na h-ùine sin, bha boireannach agus pàiste a’ dol thar an uillt na b’ fhaide suas. Bha aca ri dhol tarsainn drochaid fhiodha. Bha pasgan de leathar aig a’ bhoireannach, oir bha i a’ dol a chèilidh air greusaiche. Bha an greusaiche a’ dol a dhèanamh brògan dhi leis an leathar aice.

Co-dhiù, chaidh am boireannach tarsainn an uillt leis a' phasgan. Dh'fhàg i am pasgan air an taobh thall agus thill i airson a' phàiste. Ach nuair a bha i fhèin is am pàiste a' dol tarsainn na drochaid, thàinig tuil. Chaidh an drochaid a sguabadh air falbh. Chaidh am boireannach is am pàiste a bhàthadh. Agus chaidh an cuirp a lorg anns an dearbh àite ri taobh an uillt far am biodh a' ghalla a' dèanamh donnal.

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Faclan na seachdainne: Iain MacGriogair Caimbeul: *John Gregorson Campbell*; beul-aithris: *folklore, oral tradition*; Ragnall MacIlleDhuibh: *Ronald Black*; a' comhartaich: *barking*; Latharna: *Lorne*; tuil: *flood, deluge*.

Abairtean na seachdainne: ged nach d' rachainn na aghaidh: *although I wouldn't deny it [go against it]*; tha clo-bhualadh às ùr ann dhen dà sheann leabhar aig a' Chaimbeulach: *there is a new printing of Campbell's two old books*; na chois tha notaichean: *there are notes accompanying it*; chan urrainn a bhith cinnteach aig amannan: *it is impossible to be certain at times*; dè chanadh na daoine ri rudeigin: *what the people would call something*; gu robh cuid de bheathaichean na b' fheàrr na daoine: *that some animals were better than people*; coin agus eich: *dogs and horses*; bidh coin gu tric a' dèanamh donnal [ris a' ghealaich]: *dogs often howl [at the moon]*; bhathar a' cumail a-mach: *it was reckoned*; gum biodh iad a' faicinn taibhs aig duine a bha fhathast beò: *that they would see the ghost of somebody who was still alive*; na ficheadan tursan: *scores of times*; mus robh tiodhhlacadh gu bhith ann an cladh Chille Mhoire: *before a funeral was to take place in Kilmuir churchyard*; galla chutach ghlas: *a grey tailless bitch*; rinn i sin gach là airson ceala-deug: *she did that every day for a fortnight*; bha boireannach agus pàiste a' dol thar an uillt: *a woman and child were going across the burn*; bha aca ri dhol tarsainn drochaid fhiodha: *they had to cross a wooden bridge*; bha i a' dol a chèilidh air greusaiche: *she was going to visit a shoemaker*; air an taobh thall: *on the other side*; thill i airson a' phàiste: *she returned for the child*; chaidh an drochaid a sguabadh air falbh: *the bridge was swept away*; chaidh an cuirp a lorg: *their bodies were found*; anns an dearbh àite: *in the very same place*.

Puing-chànain na seachdainne: Bha pasgan de leathar aig a' bhoireannach: *the woman had a package/parcel of leather*. Why did I say pasgan de leathar here, using the simple preposition de and with leathar in the dative singular, instead of saying pasgan leathair (placing leathar in the genitive singular), which means "a parcel of leather"? The reason is that pasgan de leathar is more likely to convey the notion that the package contains leather (whatever the outer covering might be). Pasgan leathair conveys the impression that the packaging material is itself leather (regardless of what it might contain). If you want to be quite unambiguous in conveying the information that the package contained leather, you might say pasgan anns an robh leathar.

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdainne: bhiodh na coin nan tàmh: *the dogs were at rest*. Tha e na thàmh: *he is at rest*; tha i na thàmh: *she is at rest*.

* Tha "Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh" air a maoinachadh le Seirbheis nam Meadhanan Gàidhlig