

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

A special programme, in the form of a “letter”, designed for 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, Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 382. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 78 corresponds to Litir 382.

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh an t-seachdain sa chaidh mun turas a ghabh mi o chionn ghoirid gu Dùn Dearduil faisg air Loch Nis – cnoc is seann làrach a tha co-cheangailte ri Deirdre agus Clann Uisne. Faisg air an dùn, chuala mi fuaim neònach dha-rìreabh. Bha e car coltach ri beathach a’ sgreuchail. Dè bh’ ann? Dà chraoibh a’ suathadh na chèile sa ghaoith? Beathach ann an ribe? No taibhs?

Uill, chan eil fhios agam a bheil sibh fhèin a’ creidsinn ann an taibhsean. Tha gu leòr ann an Alba a chreideas, no co-dhiù nach canadh a-muigh no mach nach eil a leithid ann. Ach nan robh taibhs air Dùn Dearduil, cò bhiodh ann?

Leugh mi o chionn ghoirid mu bhoireannach air an robh **Nighean an Tomaidh**. Bha i beò aig deireadh an ochdamh linn deug. A rèir beul-aithris cha robh i slàn na h-inntinn. Feumaidh, ge-tà, gun robh i slàn na bodhaig oir bhiodh i a’ dol a h-uile latha dhen bhliadhna gu mullach Dhùn Dearduil. Bhiodh i a’ coiseachd timcheall air mullaichean nan cnoc. Agus bhiodh i a’ seinn fhad ’s a bha i a’ coiseachd.

Am measg na sheinneadh Nighean an Tomaidh air Dùn Dearduil bha an rann bheag a leanas. Nuair a ruigeas mi an deireadh, cuiridh mi a’ cheist oirbh: an robh craobhan a’ fàs air an dùn aig an àm? Seo an rann:

Hò, thèid mi a Dhùn Dearduil,

An Dùn as docha leam sa choill.

Togaidh mi taigh air Dearduil Ghuanach,

Togaidh mi sabhal air a’ Chreig Dheirg,

Ciridh mi m’ fhalt dualach donn air Creag nan Gobhar.

An robh craobhan a’ fàs ann, ma-thà? Bha, oir bhiodh am boireannach a’ seinn, *An Dùn as docha leam sa choill*. Mar sin tha e freagarrach gu leòr gu bheil a’ leagail nan craobh neo-dhùthchasach, agus gu bheil a’ feuchainn ris an àrainneachd a chur air ais mar a bha i aig an àm sin – le dìreach craobhan dùthchasach ann.

Chan eil fhios agam am bi taibhs Nighean an Tomaidh fhathast a’ dol an dèidh còrr is dà cheud bliadhna. Ach nuair a bha mi a’ dèanamh rannsachadh air an sgìre, às dèidh dhomh a bhith ann, lorg mi fiosrachadh a bha gu math inntinneach. Tha aithrisean ann gun robh taibhs no taibhsean ann an àite ris an canar Glac an Amair, faisg air Bail’ an Lagain. Tha baile-fearainn fhathast ann am Bail’ an Lagain, às a bheil a’ faighinn sealladh math de Dhùn Dearduil faisg air làimh.

Anns an t-seann aimsir bhiodh na daoine a’ faicinn bodachan an sin, gun cheann, agus còta dearg air. ’S e an t-ainm a thug iad don taibhs “Bodach a’ Charbh-

dhuin”. Aon turas, chunnaic treabhaiche à Bail’ an Lagain e. Bha an treabhaiche air fear de na h-eich aige a chur a-mach gu feurachadh fad na h-oidhche ann an Glac an Amair. Bha e a’ dol ga cheangal ann le dà chorraich. Cheangail e tè de na corraich agus thionndaidh e a choimhead airson na corraich eile. A-mach às an dorchadas thàinig guth – “Seo i” – agus thilg an taibhs a’ chorrach eile a dh’ionnsaigh an treabhaiche.

Agus leugh mi rud eile. Bha fuaran ainmeil ann an Glac an Amair air an robh Fuaran Glac an Amair (dè eile?). Bhathar a’ creidsinn gu robh an t-uisge ann math do shlàinte dhaoine. Agus a rèir beul-aithris, bha tàcharan a’ fuireach ann. Saoil, ma-thà, cò no dè dìreach a rinn am fuaim neònach a chuala mi an latha sin aig bonn Dùn Dearduil?

* * * * *

Faclan na Litreach: sgreuchail: *screeching, screaming*; ribe: *trap*; taibhs: *ghost*; sabhal: *barn*; dùthchasach: *native*; baile-fearainn: *farm*; bodachan: *mannikin*; fuaran: *spring, well*; tàcharan: *sprite*.

Abairtean na Litreach: seann làrach: *an old site*; neònach dha-rìreabh: *extremely strange*; dà chraoibh a’ suathadh na chèile: *two trees rubbing together*; tha gu leòr ann a chreideas: *there are plenty who do believe*; nach canadh a-muigh no mach nach eil a leithid ann: *who would never state for sure that such things don’t exist*; cha robh i slàn na h-inntinn: *she wasn’t the full shilling*; nuair a ruigeas mi an deireadh: *when I reach the end*; togaidh mi taigh air Dearduil Ghuanach: *I’ll build a house on airy [Dùn] Dearduil*; cìridh mi m’ fhalt dualach donn air Creag nan Gobhar: *I’ll comb my brown waving locks on the Rock of the Goats*; gu bheilear a’ leagail nan craobh neo-dhùthchasach: *that the non-native trees are being felled*; gu bheilear a’ feuchainn ris an àrainneachd a chur air ais mar a bha i: *that an attempt is being made to return the environment to the state it was in*; às dèidh dhomh a bhith ann: *after my being there*; Glac an Amair: *the defile of the water-channel (presumably referring to where the river powers through a small rocky canyon)*; às a bheilear a’ faighinn sealladh math: *from which a good view is obtained*; bha an treabhaiche air fear de na h-eich aige a chur a-mach gu feurachadh: *the ploughman had put one of his horses out to graze*; cheangail e tè de na corraich: *he tied one of the shackles*; saoil, ma-thà, cò no dè dìreach a rinn am fuaim?:: *who or what exactly do you think, then, made the noise (a sika deer is probably the answer!)*

Puing-chànain na Litreach: **Nighean an Tomaidh:** *a written account compiled from oral tradition gives the translation “the maiden of the knoll” and I have accepted that, and given Tomaidh the appropriate pronunciation. Ostensibly her name might be a contraction of Nighean Iain Tomaidh ie “the daughter of John the son of Tommy” (in which case the Tomaidh would be pronounced like Tommy). The “an” contraction (for Iain) is not unusual in Gaelic nicknames or patronymics eg Murchadh ’an Ailig would be Murdo son of John, son of Alex.*

Gnàths-cainnt na Litreach: **An Dùn as docha leam sa choill:** *the dùn I love most in the forest. This is evidence that Dùn Dearduil was at least partly forested in the late 18th Century. Docha is considered to be the comparative form of toigh and means “more (or most) valued”. Dwelly gives the example: Is toigh leam thusa, ach*

is docha leam esan: *I like you, but I prefer him. Most people today would say Is toigh leam thusa, ach is fheàrr leam esan, using feàrr, the comparative form of math.*

** Tha “Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh” air a maoineachadh le Seirbheis nam Meadhanan Gàidhlig.*