

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 roddy.macleaen@bbc.co.uk This is Litir 403. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 99 corresponds to Litir 403.

O chionn beagan mhìosan dh’ainmich mi Àird Chlach ann an Siorrachd Narann. Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mun leabhar aig Dòmhnall MacIlleDhuibh à Lios Mòr – *Sgeul no Dhà às an Lios*. Anns an leabhar tha Dòmhnall ag innse dhuinn gun deach an Naomh Moluag a thiodhacadh ann an Àird Chlach – a rèir beul-aithris co-dhiù. An uair sin chaidh a chorp a thoirt air ais a Lios Mòr.

Tha e follaiseach gu bheil eachdraidh mhòr aig Àird Chlach, gu h-àraidh co-cheangailte ris an eaglais. Ach càite a bheil an sgìre sin? Uill, bha mi innte an latha eile, agus chan eil i fad sam bith a-mach à Inbhir Nis. Tha i gu deas air Inbhir Narann. Gheibhear ann air an rathad eadar **Inbhir Narann** agus Baile nan Granddach. Tha Uisge Èireann ga roinn ann an dà leth.

Ged nach cluinnear mòran Gàidhlig ann an-diugh, tha na h-ainmean-àite ag innse dhuinn gu robh an cànan uaireigin làidir ann. Eadhon ann an ochd ceud deug, naochad ’s a h-aon (1891) bha Gàidhlig aig fichead ’s a trì às a’ cheud dhen t-sluagh.

Ann am meadhan na sgìre, tha loch ann. Air a’ mhap, le dreach na Beurla air, tha ainm an locha air a litreachadh B-E-L-I-V-A-T. Ahà, thuir mi rium fhìn, bha na Lochlannaich anns an sgìre. Oir tha *-vat* aig deireadh ainm a’ ciallachadh “loch” ann an Lochlannais. Mar eisimpleir, *Langavat* – loch fada – no *Laxavat* – loch nam bradan. Bhithinn an dùil, mar sin, gun canadh tu ainm an locha mar “BEL-ee-vat”. Tha baile beag faisg air an loch air a bheil an dearbh ainm. Feumaidh gun tàinig ainm a’ bhaile bho ainm an locha, shaoil mi.

Uill, bha mi a’ bruidhinn ri fear a tha a’ fuireach anns an sgìre – ged nach eil e air a bhith ann fada – agus dh’innis e dhomh gun cuala esan “bel-EEV-ut” aig muinntir an àite. Mmm, thuir mi rium fhìn, cò as a thàinig an t-ainm? Agus a bheil e Lochlannach?

A rèir an fhiosrachaidh mu ainmean-àite aig Iain Mac an Tàilleir – stuth fìor mhath a gheibhear air an eadar-lìon – ’s e ainm Gàidhlig a th’ ann – Buaile Fhiodhaid – a tha a’ ciallachadh ann am Beurla *the cattle fold at the wooded place*. Buaile Fhiodhaid. Chanainn gun tàinig ainm an locha bho ainm a’ bhaile, seach an rathad eile. Agus bhiodh a’ Ghàidhlig a’ mìneachadh mar a chanas daoine ann am Beurla “bel-EEV-ut” seach “BEL-ee-vat”.

Tha coille mhòr mhòr anns an sgìre sin an-diugh, le craobhan dùthchasach agus neo-dùthchasach innte. Tha an t-ainm-àite ag innse dhuinn nach e rud ùr a th’ anns na craobhan, ge-tà. Ach ’s dòcha nach robh uiread de chraobhan ann san t-seann aimsir – oir bha Buaile Fhiodhaid a’ seasamh a-mach mar àite anns an robh coille.

Co-dhiù, tha dualchas àraidh aig Loch Buaille Fhiodhaid. Bhathar ag ràdh anns an t-seann aimsir gun robh tarbh-uisge a' fuireach san loch. Tarbh-uisge no *water-bull*. Bhathar ag ràdh gun robh e mòr mòr is **cho dubh ris an t-suith**. Bha coltas daimh air. Bha adharcan mòr' agus cluasan eagach aige.

Bhiodh an tarbh-uisge ag ithe lusan a bha a' fàs air bruach an locha. Ach nuair a dh'fhàsadh na lusan sin gann, bhiodh e a' falbh a dh'àiteachan eile. 'S ann an uair sin a dh'fhàsadh e cunnartach. Bhiodh e a' fàs miannach air feòil dhaoine. Bhiodh e a' dol fad is farsaing, a' coimhead airson daoine airson ithe. Innsidh mi tuilleadh mu dheidhinn an tairbh-uisge sin an ath-sheachdain.

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Faclan na Litreach: Àird Chlach: *Ardclach*; Baile nan Granndach: *Grantown on Spey*; Lochlannaich: *Norsemen*; tarbh-uisge: *water-bull*.

Abairtean na Litreach: Siorrachd Narann: *Nairnshire*; Dòmhnall MacIlleDhuibh à Lios Mòr: *Donald Black from Lismore*; gun deach an Naomh Moluag a thiodhacadh: *St Moluag was buried*; chaidh a chorp a thoirt air ais: *his body was brought back*; chan eil i fad sam bith a-mach à Inbhir Nis: *it's not far out of Inverness*; tha Uisge Èireann ga roinn ann an dà leth: *The Findhorn River divides it into two halves*; ged nach cluinnear mòran: *although not much is heard*; gu robh an cànan uaireigin làidir: *that the language was once strong*; fichead 's a trì às a' cheud: *23%*; bhithinn an dùil gun canadh tu: *I'd expect that you'd say*; air a bheil an dearbh ainm: *called the same name*; shaoil mi: *I thought*; stuth fìor mhath a gheibhear air an eadar-lìon: *excellent material available [which will be got] on the internet*; seach an rathad eile: *rather than the other way around*; le craobhan dùthchasach agus neo-dhùthchasach innte: *with native and non-native trees in it*; nach robh uiread de chraobhan ann san t-seann aimsir: *there weren't so many trees there in olden times*; bha coltas daimh air: *it had the appearance of an ox*; adharcan mòr' agus cluasan eagach: *large horns and notched ears*; nuair a dh'fhàsadh X gann: *when X grew scarce*; 's ann an uair sin a dh'fhàsadh e cunnartach: *it's then he would get dangerous*; miannach air feòil dhaoine: *desirous of human flesh*; a' coimhead airson daoine airson ithe: *looking for people to eat*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: **Inbhir Narann:** *the town of Nairn. According to W J Watson this was shortened from Invernairn – an anglicised form of the Gaelic. The river name is thought be very old and might be Pictish or pre-Pictish (Watson suggested it was related to the Italian river Nar and its town Narnia, giving a link – even if tenuous – between Nairn and the famous works of the author C S Lewis!) But the point I want to make is that Narann (short first “a”) is a genitive form – Inbhir Narann is “the mouth of the Nairn”) – because I sometimes hear Gaelic speakers saying “Inbhir Narainn” as if they are attempting to genitivise Narann according to modern grammar rules. Because Narann is already in the genitive, “of Nairn” is also Inbhir Narann. Thus “the people of Nairn” are properly muinntir Inbhir Narann not muinntir Inbhir Narainn.*

Samhla na Litreach: **cho dubh ris an t-suith:** as black as [the] soot.

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