

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.macleane@bbc.co.uk This is Litir 404. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 100 corresponds to Litir 404.

Bha sinn ann an Àird Chlach an t-seachdain sa chaidh – gu deas air Inbhir Narann. Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mun tarbh-uisge ann an Loch Buaille Fhiodhaid. Aig amannan, bhiodh an tarbh-uisge a’ fàgail an locha, agus e miannach air feòil dhaoine. B’ urrainn dha a dhreach atharrachadh. Feasgar brèagha a bha seo, dh’fhàg e an loch le coltas eich air – each a bha brèagha, solt. Bha diollaid is srian air.

Chunnaic e buidheann de chloinn a’ dol tarsainn nam boglaichean faisg air an loch. Chunnaic a’ chlann an t-each brèagha. Chaidh iad dha ionnsaigh. Leig an t-each leis a’ chloinn grèim a ghabhail air an t-srian aige. Leig e leotha dhol air a mhuin. Bha a’ chlann **cho sona ris an Rìgh**. Cha robh amharas sam bith orra nach e each ceart a bh’ ann.

Nuair a bha a’ chlann a’ marcachd air, chaidh e faisg air lochan beag dubh. Bhathar ag ràdh mun lochan sin gun robh e uabhasach fhèin domhainn. Bhathar ag ràdh cuideachd gun robh e ceangailte ri Loch Buaille Fhiodhaid tro amaran dìomhair fon talamh. Gu h-obann, leum an t-each a-steach don lochan agus chaidh e à fianais. Thug e a’ chlann leis. An uair sin dh’atharraich e a dhreach air ais gu bhith na tharbh-uisge. Dh’ith e a’ chlann sa bhad. Thachair seo o chionn fhada ach aig toiseach an fhicheadamh linn, bhiodh cuid de sheann duine san sgìre fhathast a’ gabhail “Loch na Cloinne” air an lochan sin.

Cha robh an tarbh-uisge an-còmhnaidh cunnartach, ge-tà. Air làithean teth samhraidh, bhiodh e a’ tighinn a-mach ag ionaltradh faisg air an loch. Uaireannan bhiodh e a’ dol a chadal ann an blàths na grèine. Bha **spòrs** an uair sin aig na gillean. Bhiodh gille a’ feuchainn ri faighinn faisg air an tarbh-uisge gun fhiosta don bheathach. Nam faigheadh e faisg gu leòr, bhiodh e a’ tarraing gaoidsean far bian an tairbh mus biodh fios aig a’ chreutair dè bh’ air tachairt!

Bhiodh muinntir Àird Chlach ag ràdh mu dheidhinn duine a rinn sin gum biodh beatha mhath aige. Bhiodh airgead gu leòr aige is gheibheadh e deagh bhean. Bhiodh teaghlach mòr aige agus bheireadh e buaidh air nàmhaid sam bith a thigeadh na rathad. Ach chan eil sin a’ ciallachadh gum biodh a h-uile càil rèidh. Chan fhàgadh e an saoghal gu sìtheil. Gheibheadh e bàs ann an tubaist obann, uabhasach.

Cha bu chòir dhuinn dìochuimhneachadh gur e nàdar de tharbh a bh’ ann, ged a bha e a’ fuireach fon uisge. Bhiodh e a’ fàs aonaranach anns an dachaigh aige. Bho àm gu àm bhiodh e a’ falbh a-mach a’ sireadh bò. Gheibheadh e cothrom as t-samhradh nuair a bhiodh treudan de chrodh sa mhonadh, uaireannan gun bhuachaille.

Às an aonadh eadar bò talmhainn agus tarbh-uisge thigeadh laoigh a bha furasta gu leòr aithneachadh. Bha na cluasan aca eagalach, bha na h-earbail aca goirid agus bha a’ bhian aca

riabhach. Agus bha na ladhran aca dubh is gleansach. Bha coltas car fiadhaich air na sùilean aca cuideachd.

Bha dà laogh dhen t-seòrsa sin aig tuathanach. Thàinig an samhradh. Dh'iomain an tuathanach na laoigh gu talamh ionaltraidh. Ach mhothaich e gu robh an dà laogh le càirdeas don tarbh-uisge a' fàs mì-shocrach. Latha a bha seo, theich iad. Ruith an tuathanach is a chompanaich às an dèidh ach bha iad ro luath. Ràinig iad Loch nan Doirb gun sgìths sam bith orra, leum a-steach don loch agus chan fhacas tuilleadh iad.

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Faclan na Litreach: Àird Chlach: *Ardclach*; Inbhir Narann: *Nairn*; tarbh-uisge: *water-bull*; Loch Buaille Fhiodhaid: *Loch Belivat*; amannan: *times*; solt: *placid*; diollaaid: *saddle*; srian: *bridle*; amharas: *suspicion*; marcachd: *riding*; an-còmhnaidh: *always*; aonaranach: *lonely*; eagach: *notched*; dh'iomain: *drove*; mì-shocrach: *uneasy*; Loch nan Doirb: *Lochindorb*; sgìths: *weariness*.

Abairtean na Litreach: miannach air feòil dhaoine: *desirous of human flesh*; b' urrainn dha a dhreach atharrachadh: *he could change his appearance*; le coltas eich air: *bearing the appearance of a horse*; tarsainn nam boglaichean: *across the bogs, marshy ground*; dha ionnsaigh: *towards it*; leig e leotha dhol air a mhuin: *it let them go on its back*; uabhasach fhèin domhainn: *exceptionally deep*; bhathar ag ràdh gun robh e ceangailte ri: *it was said that it was linked to*; amaran dìomhair fon talamh: *secret channels under the ground*; chaidh e à fianais: *it disappeared*; dh'atharraich e a dhreach air ais: *it changed its appearance back*; dh'ith e a' chlann sa bhad: *it ate the children immediately*; bhiodh cuid a' gabhail "Loch na Cloinne" air: *some would call it "The Loch of the Children"*; ag ionaltradh: *grazing*; gun fhiosta don bheathach: *without the beast knowing*; bhiodh e a' tarraing gaoisidean far bian an tairbh: *he would pull hairs from the bull's hide*; bheireadh e buaidh air nàmhaid sam bith a thigeadh na rathad: *he would defeat any enemy who would come in his way*; gum biodh a h-uile càil rèidh: *that everything would be smooth*; chan fhàgadh e an saoghal gu sìtheil: *he wouldn't leave the world peacefully*; gheibheadh e bàs ann an tubaist obann: *he would die in a sudden accident*; cha bu chòir dhuinn dìochuimhneachadh: *we shouldn't forget*; treudan de chrodh sa mhonadh, uaireannan gun bhuchaille: *herds of cattle on the hill, sometimes without a herdsman*; às an aonadh: *from the union*; bha a' bhian aca riabhach: *their hide was brindled*; bha na ladhran aca dubh is gleansach: *their hooves were black and shiny*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Bha spòrs aig na gillean: *the lads had fun*. It's interesting how a loan word from another language can either take on a new meaning or, alternatively, preserve an older meaning or connotation that the word possessed in the donor tongue. Although spòrs (which came into Gaelic from English) is an equivalent to sport (as in football, shinty), it is just as likely to refer to fun or merriment (bha deagh spòrs againn – we had great fun). In English sport is thought to have originated as a variation of the noun disport which, according to my Collins Dictionary meant "amusement". Although sport still has that meaning in English, the connection with fun and amusement is stronger in Gaelic. Similarly, the adjective spòrsail can mean both "fun-loving" and "sporty".

Samhla na Litreach: cho sona ris an Rìgh: *as happy as could be (lit. as happy as the King)*.

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