

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.maclean@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 414. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 110 corresponds to Litir 414.

Thòisich mi an t-seachdain sa chaidh air an sgeulachd thraidiseanta “Diarmaid agus Gràinne” aig a bheil ceangal do Bheinn Ghulbain ann an Gleann Sìdh. Bha Diarmaid air teicheadh le Gràinne, a bha **fo ghealladh-pòsaidh** do Fhionn. Ach bha Gràinne air a dhol an aghaidh Dhiarmaid. Bha Diarmaid a’ sabaid le Ciofach Mac a’ Ghoill. Stob Gràinne sgian ann an sliasaid Dhiarmaid.

Theich Diarmaid. Dh’fhalbh e bho tholl gu toll, ’s gun air ach gun robh e beò. Dh’fhàs fhalt agus dh’fhàs fheusag. Bha fhalt is fheusag cho fada ’s nach biodh duine ga aithneachadh. Chaidh e taobh na Carraige far an robh Gràinne agus Ciofach a’ fuireach. Bha iasg amh aige. Dh’iarr e cead an t-iasg a ròstadh.

Nise, rud sam bith air an cuireadh Diarmaid a mheuran, bhiodh blas na meala a’ tighinn air. Bha e a’ cleachdadh a mheuran airson an t-iasg a làimhseachadh. Dh’fheuch Gràinne criomag dhen iasg agus mhothaich i blas na meala air. Bha fios aice gur e an stràinnsear Diarmaid. Thug Ciofach ionnsaigh air. Ach bha Diarmaid làidir. Mharbh e Ciofach. Agus theich e.

Nuair a chunnaic Gràinne gun robh Ciofach marbh, lean i air Diarmaid. Lorg i e aig briseadh an latha. Bha an sgian a stob i na chois fhathast ann. Cha b’ urrainn dha a toirt às. Tharraing Gràinne a-mach i. Bha eagal air Diarmaid gum faigheadh an Fhèinn grèim orra. Chùm iad a dol gus an do lorg iad allt. Thog iad taigh an sin. Bha leapannan air leth aca.

Bha Diarmaid a’ dèanamh shoithichean fiodha a-rithist. Bha na sliseagan a bha e a’ dèanamh a’ dol sìos leis an allt. Latha a bha seo bha Fionn is a chompanaich ri sealgaireachd anns an sgìre. Thug Fionn an aire do shliseagan aig bun an uillt.

“Is iad seo sliseagan Dhiarmaid,” thuirt e.

“Chan iad,” fhreagair càch. “Chan eil e beò.”

“Glaodhaidh sinn foghaid.” thuirt Fionn. “Tha e mionnaichte ris gum feum e a’ freagairt.” [B’ e *foghaid* gairm seilg a bhiodh **an Fhèinn** a’ cleachdadh]

Chuala Diarmaid an fhoghaid. “Siud shìos foghaid na Fèinne,” thuirt e. “Feumaidh mi freagairt.”

“Na freagair, a Dhiarmaid,” thuirt Gràinne. “Chan eil ann ach foghaid bhreig.”

Ach fhreagair e. Chaidh e sìos gu bun an uillt. Thachair e ri Fionn. Chuir Fionn dùbhlán roimhe oir bha e fhathast ag iarraidh dìoghaltas air Diarmaid airson Gràinne a thoirt air falbh. Dh’iarr e air Diarmaid an torc nimhe air Beinn Ghulbain a mharbhadh. Ghabh Diarmaid ris an dùbhlán.

Lean Diarmaid air an torc airson làithean mus d’ fhuair e faisg gu leòr air airson a mharbhadh. Bha sin faisg air mullach na beinne. Bha sabaid mhòr ann eatarra. Bhris an torc an

sleagh aig Diarmaid. Cha robh aig Diarmaid an uair sin ach claidheamh airson cur às dha. Ach rinn e a' chùis aig a' cheann thall.

Thill Diarmaid leis an naidheachd gun robh e air an torc nimhe a mharbhadh. Chan e sin an naidheachd a bha Fionn ag iarraidh cluinntinn. Cha robh fios aige gun robh leapannan fa leth aig Diarmaid is Gràinne. Bha e fhathast feargach is eudmhor mu chall na tè a bha fo ghealladh-pòsaidh aige.

Bha fios aige, ged as e gaisgeach làidir a bh' ann an Diarmaid, gun robh aon laigse aige. Bha ball-dòbhrain aige air bonn a chois. Nam faigheadh calg aig torc a-steach ann, bhiodh sin ag adhbharachadh a bhàis. Chì sinn mar a rinn Fionn a' chùis – agus na thachair do Ghràinne – nuair a chuireas sinn crìoch air an stòiridh anns an ath Litir.

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Faclan na Litreach: amh: *raw*; làimhseachadh: *handling*; criomag: *morsel*; sliseagan: *shavings (of wood)*; sealgairachd: *hunting*; dìoghaltas: *revenge*.

Abairtean na Litreach: an sgeulachd thraidiseanta: *the traditional story*; aig a bheil ceangal do Bheinn Ghulbain ann an Gleann Sìdh: *which has a link to Ben Gulabin in Glenshee*; stob X sgian ann an sliasaid Y: *X stuck a knife in Y's thigh*; dh'fhalbh e bho tholl gu toll: *he went from hole to hole (caves)*; 's gun air ach gun robh e beò: *and him barely alive*; bha fhalt is fheusag cho fada 's nach biodh duine ga aithneachadh: *his hair and beard were so long that nobody would recognise him*; dh'iarr e cead an t-iasg a ròstadh: *he asked permission to roast the fish*; rud sam bith air an cuireadh X a mheuran: *anything on which X would put his fingers*; blas na meala: *the taste of honey*; lorg i e aig briseadh an latha: *she found him at daybreak*; cha b' urrainn dha a toirt às: *he couldn't get it out*; tharraing X a-mach i: *X pulled it out*; gum faigheadh an Fhèinn grèim orra: *that the Fingalians would get hold of them*; bha leapannan air leth aca: *they had separate beds*; a' dèanamh shoithichean fiodha: *making wooden vessels*; bun an uillt: *the bottom [end] of the burn*; glaodhaidh sinn foghaid: *we'll shout a hunting cry*; tha e mionnaichte ris gum feum e a' freagairt: *he is sworn to it that he must answer*; siud shìos: *down there yonder*; foghaid bhrèig: *a lying hunting-cry*; chuir Fionn dùbhlàn roimhe: *Fionn set him a challenge*; torc nimhe: *wild boar*; bhris an torc an sleagh: *the boar broke the spear*; claidheamh airson cur às dha: *a sword to kill it*; feargach is eudmhor: *angry and jealous*; gun robh aon laigse aige: *that he had one weakness*; bha ball-dòbhrain aige air bonn a chois: *he had a mole on the sole of his foot*; nam faigheadh calg aig torc a-steach ann: *if a boar's bristle got in it*; bhiodh sin ag adhbharachadh a bhàis: *that would cause his death*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: B' e foghaid gairm seilg a bhiodh an Fhèinn a' cleachdadh: *a foghaid was a hunting cry the Fingalians would use*. Fèinn (always with the article) is one of those collective nouns with a plural meaning and, at least traditionally, a singular grammatical status – like clann and feadhainn. And like those two it is feminine. This is the reason for the popular saying Cothrom na Fèinne – na Fèinne is the genitive form with the na article giving away its status as a feminine singular noun. Cothrom na Fèinne means “Fingalian fair play” – such as allowing an opponent who has dropped his sword in a fight to pick it up again (although the Fingalians could be bloody and brutal at times as well, as we have seen).

Gnàths-cainnt na Litreach: a bha fo ghealladh-pòsaidh do Fhionn: *who was engaged to Fionn*.

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