

# 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 426. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 122 corresponds to Litir 426.*

An t-seachdain sa chaidh bha mi a’ toirt nàdar de gheàrr-chunntas dhuibh air an t-seann sgeulachd *Táin Bó Cuailnge*. Bha arm Chonnacht agus arm Uladh an aghaidh a chèile, oir bha Banrigh Chonnacht – Medb – **ag iarraidh an tairbh dhuinn** a bh’ aig na h-Ultaich. Rinn an sàr-Ultaich, Cuchulainn, ge-tà, an gnothach air a h-uile gaisgeach aig arm Chonnacht a chaidh a chur na aghaidh. An uair sin nochd a bhràthair dalta, Ferdiad, na aghaidh. Bha iad dlùth ri chèile. Cha robh Cuchulainn ag iarraidh sabaid na aghaidh idir.

Ach cha robh dol-às ann don dithis. Airson trì latha bha Cuchulainn is Ferdiad a’ sabaid le chèile aig ath ann an abhainn. Bha iad an ìre mhath co-ionann ann an comas sabaid. Cha robh fear seach fear dhiubh a’ faighinn làmh-an-uachdair. Aig a’ cheann thall ghabh Cuchulainn an cuthach. Sin nuair a bhiodh e fìor chunnartach. Chleachd e am ball-airm sònraichte aige – sleagh aig an robh comasan os-nàdarrach. Thilg e an sleagh ann am Ferdiad agus cha do mhair Ferdiad fada às dèidh sin. Ghiùlain Cuchulainn corp a charaid gu bruach na h-aibhne. Bha an tàmailt air. Dh’fhàg e am blàr.

Dh’fhalbh arm Medb. Bha iad a’ connsachadh am measg a chèile. Cha robh cùisean rèidh eatarra. Ach bha an tarbh donn aca. Bha iad a’ dèanamh air Connacht leis an tarbh dhonn. Ach cha robh an cogadh seachad. Thàinig saighdearan Uladh còmhla a-rithist. Chaidh iad an tòir air an nàimhdean. Bha batail ann. Anns a’ bhatail rinn na h-Ultaich a’ chùis air na Connachtaich. Leig Cuchulainn le Medb falbh le a beatha ach thug arm Uladh an tarbh donn dhachaigh leotha.

Air an rathad dhachaigh, ge-tà, thachair an tarbh donn ri Finnbhennach, an tarbh fionn-adharcach aig Ailill (rìgh Chonnacht). Thug am fear donn ionnsaigh air an fhear eile. Fad latha is oidhche bha iad a’ sabaid le chèile. Ach air madainn an làrna-mhàireach bha Finnbhennach marbh, agus bha buaidh nan Ultaich air a coileanadh.

Ged a thachair a h-uile càil a tha sin ann an Èirinn, tha àite aig Alba anns a’ ghnòthach cuideachd. Oir thathar ag ràdh gun do dh’ionnsaich Cuchulainn na sgilean gaisgeachd aige anns an Eilean Sgitheanach fo stiùir na banrigh ainmeil, Sgàthach. Agus sin far an do dh’ionnsaich e mar a chleachdadh e an sleagh os-nàdarrach aige. Mura b’ e sin, cò aige tha fios dè bh’ air tachairt do dh’Ulaidh nuair a chaidh arm Chonnacht ann.

Agus naidheachd bheag eile mu Chuchulainn agus Alba. Bidh an fheadhainn a tha measail air iomain – spòrs traidiseanta nan Gàidheal – ag ràdh seo mu a deidhinn: O chionn fhad an t-saoghail, thàinig gaisgeach à Èirinn a dh’Alba. Le trì ceumannan mòra, **thàinig e na chruinn-leum** bho fhaicheannan na h-Èireann chun an Eilein Sgitheanaich. Crochte ri gach sliasaid aige, bha ochdad duine. Bha ochdad eile air gach gàirdean. Bha naoinear eile na

fhalt. Thàinig e a dh'Alba a dh'fhaighinn foghlam còmhla ris a' Bhanrigh Sgàthach. Bha e ag ionnsachadh mu armachd is gaol. 'S e a dh'ionnsaich gu math – agus ged nach eil e air ainmeachadh anns a' bheul-aithris, tha fhios gur e Cuchulainn a bh' ann.

Mar thiodhlac, thug e an gèam – camanachd – do mhuinntir na h-Alba. 'S iomadh tiodhlac na bu mhiosa na sin a chaidh a thoirt seachad.

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**Faclan na Litreach:** Ultaich: *Ulstermen*; dol-às: *escape*; ath: *ford*; Sgàthach: *Sgàthach (a legendary warrior queen based on Skye)*; iomain, camanachd: *shinty*.

**Abairtean na Litreach:** bha mi a' toirt nàdar de gheàrr-chunntas dhuibh: *I was giving you a sort of precis*; bha arm Chonnacht agus arm Uladh an aghaidh a chèile: *the armies of Connaught and Ulster were against each other*; nochd a bhràthair dalta na aghaidh: *his foster-brother appeared against him*; dlùth ri chèile: *close to each other*; an ìre mhath co-ionann ann an comas sabaid: *pretty much equal in their fighting abilities*; cha robh fear seach fear dhiubh a' faighinn làmh-an-uachdair: *neither man was getting the upper hand*; ghabh Cuchulainn an cuthach: *Cuchulainn went into a frenzy*; sleagh aig an robh comasan os-nàdarrach: *a spear with supernatural powers*; bha an tàmailt air: *he was horrified*; dh'fhàg e am blàr: *he left the battlefield*; a' connsachadh am measg a chèile: *arguing amongst themselves*; cha robh cùisean rèidh eatarra: *matters weren't smooth between them*; an tòir air an nàimhdean: *in pursuit of their enemies*; rinn na h-Ultaich a' chùis air na Connachtaich: *the Ulstermen defeated the Connaughtmen*; leig Cuchulainn le Medb falbh le a beatha: *Cuchulainn spared Medb's life*; gheall Medb fearann, airgead – eadhon a nighean fhèin: *Medb promised land, money – even her own daughter*; an tarbh fionn-adharcach: *the fair-horned bull*; bha buaidh nan Ultach air a coileanadh: *the victory of the Ulstermen was complete*; sin far an do dh'ionnsaich e mar a chleachdadh e an sleagh: *that's where he learned how to [how he would] use his spear*; crochte ri gach sliasaid aige: *hanging off each of his thighs*; na fhalt: *in his hair*; thug e an gèam do mhuinntir na h-Alba: *he gave the game to the people of Scotland*; measail 's mar a tha mi air rugbaidh: *keen as I am on rugby*; o shean: *in olden times*.

**Puing-chànain na Litreach:** ag iarraidh an tairbh dhuinn: *Just a gentle reminder that the genitive singular is not yet dead! Remember the rules (they came naturally to previous generations of Gaelic speakers but less so today)? Following a verbal noun (ag iarraidh), an tarbh becomes an tairbh (it's a masculine noun – naturally enough for a male animal). Donn follows suit – becoming slenderised (duinn) and also becoming lenited (dhuinn) because that's what would happen to lenitable masculine verbs in the genitive singular.*

**Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach:** thàinig e na chruinn-leum bho fhaicheannan na h-Èireann chun an Eilein Sgitheanaich: *he came in a bound (standing jump) from the swards of Ireland to the Isle of Skye.*

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