

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.macleane@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 431. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 127 corresponds to Litir 431.

O chionn ghoirid chuir mi seachad beagan ùine taobh Loch Laomainn. Bha mi an sàs ann am pròiseact fo stiùir Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba – no **SNH mar as fheàrr a dh’ aithnichear e**. Bha mi fhìn is feadhainn eile a’ toirt clann aig an robh Gàidhlig a-mach a choimhead air fear de na h-eileanan a tha an-diugh le SNH.

Ann am Beurla ’s e *Inchcailloch* a chanas iad ris an eilean. Tha mi a’ dèanamh dheth gur e sin Innis Chailleach no ’s dòcha Innis Caillich. Agus cò i a’ chailleach, no cò iad na cailleachan, a tha co-cheangailte ris an eilean? Uill, cailleachan eaglaise, a rèir choltais, oir bha cailleachan dubha a’ fuireach ann. Agus b’ i an Naomh Centigerna an tè a b’ ainmeile dhiubh. A rèir beul-aithris, chaochail i anns an eilean ann an seachd ceud, trithead ’s a ceithir (734).

Tha seann dualchas eaglaiseil làidir aig Loch Laomainn. A bharrachd air Centigerna, bha an Naomh Mearain co-cheangailte ris. Bha, agus an Naomh Ceasag a thog manachainn air eilean eile, air a bheil Inchtavannach ann am Beurla – no Innis Taigh a’ Mhanaich. Agus ’s e ainm a’ bhaile bhig air cladh Loch Laomainn, faisg air Innis Caillich, Baile MoThatha. Tha an t-ainm a’ cuimhneachadh Naomh MoThatha.

Tha Innis Caillich uabhasach fhèin brèagha. Bha sluagh ann fad ceudan bhliadhnaichean agus bha eaglais is cladh ann. Tha an cladh agus tobhta na h-eaglaise fhathast ann. Ged a dh’ fhalbh an sluagh aig deireadh an ochdamh linn deug, bhathar a’ cleachdadh a’ chladha fad ùine mhòr às dèidh sin – gu goirid às dèidh an Dàrna Cogaidh.

Chanainn gu bheil an t-eilean meadhanach torrach agus ’s e obair fearainn a bh’ aig na daoine a bha a’ fuireach ann. Ach, aig deireadh an ochdamh linn deug, bha an t-uachdaran ag iarraidh rudeigin eile fhàs ann, seach fear. Craobhan-daraich. Chaidh na mìltean dhiubh a chur. Carson? Uill, aig an àm sin, bhathar a’ cleachdadh leathar airson criosan no bealtaichean tionnsgalach a dhèanamh. Bha factaraidhean ann an àiteachan mar Ghlaschu feumach air tòrr de a leithid. Agus ’s e rùsg nan darach a bhathar a’ cleachdadh airson cartadh a dhèanamh air an leathar. ’S e cartadh am pròiseas anns am bi leathar air a dhèanamh sùbailte. Bha na stuthan cartaidh no “tannins” a’ tighinn bho rùsg na craoibhe-daraich.

Mar sin, tron naoidheamh linn deug, bha Innis Caillich air a còmhdachadh le coille daraich. Agus tha fhathast. Tha a’ choille air a dhol rudeigin nàdarrach bhon uair sin agus an-diugh tha i gu math brèagha. As t-earrach tha bròg na cuthaig – no am fuath-mhuc – uabhasach fhèin pailt. Ma chromas tu sìos air latha brèagha earraich, mus nochd an raineach, agus bròg na cuthaig fo bhlàth, chan eil dad nas brèagha ann. Tha e mar gun robh ceò purpaidh air a sgaoileadh air ùrlar na coille.

Thàinig an teaghlach agam cuide rium don eilean air an deireadh-sheachdain, às dèidh gun robh m’ obair seachad. Fhad ’s a bha mise a’ cumail sùil air a’ bhàta, chaidh iadsan air

chuart air feadh an eilein. Cha tuir mi guth ro làimh mu bheathach sònraichte a tha a' fuireach ann. Uill, nach tàinig iad air ais thugam le sgeul mu dheidhinn.

“Chunnaic sinn rudeigin mòr bàn. Bha e coltach ri gobhar,” thuirt iad.

“Seadh,” fhreagair mi, “Bha mi an dùil gum faiceadh, ach chan e gobhar a bh' ann.”

“Dè bh' ann ma-thà?”

Innsidh mi dhuibh uile an ath-sheachdain.

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Faclan na Litreach: Loch Laomainn: *Loch Lomond*; cailleachan dubha: *nuns*; chaochail: *died*; Baile MoThatha: *Balmhaha*; obair fearainn: *agricultural work*; craobhan-daraich: *oak trees*; factaraidhean: *factories*; cartadh: *tanning*.

Abairtean na Litreach: a tha an-diugh le SNH: *which is today owned by SNH*; tha mi a' dèanamh dheth: *I reckon*; b' i an Naomh Centigerna an tè a b' ainmeile dhiubh: *St Kentigerna was the best-known of them*; bha an Naomh Mearain co-cheangailte ris: *St Mirren was connected to it*; bha, agus an Naomh Ceasag a thog manachainn air eilean eile: *so was St Kessog (Kessock) who built a monastery on another island*; bha sluagh ann fad ceudan bhliadhnaichean: *there was a population there for centuries*; tha an cladh agus tobhta na h-eaglaise fhathast ann: *the cemetery and the ruins (bases of the walls) of the church are still there*; bhathar a' cleachdadh a' chladha fad ùine mhòr às dèidh sin: *the cemetery was used for a long time after that*; chanainn gu bheil an t-eilean meadhanach torrach: *I'd say the island is relatively fertile*; airson criosan no bealtaichean tionnsgalach a dhèanamh: *for making industrial belts*; bha X feumach air tòrr de a leithid: *X required much of the sort (ie leather)*; rùsg nan darach: *oak bark*; am pròiseas anns am bi leather air a dhèanamh sùbailte: *the process in which leather is made supple*; bròg na cuthaig – no am fuath-mhuc: *these are both Gaelic names for the wild hyacinth (English bluebell)*; ma chromas tu sìos: *if you bend down*; coltach ri gobhar: *like a goat*; bha mi an dùil gum faiceadh: *I expected you would [see]*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: SNH. *You will notice that Gaels, being bilingual, tend to use English acronyms for official organisations (see also Litir 104 25.05.01). This is quite natural, so don't feel you have to invent a Gaelic acronym. With SNH, the Gaelic equivalent (Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba) comes out as DNA – which is already a well recognised acronym for something else! However, as Gaelic comes more into public life thanks to the Gaelic Language Act, the use of Gaelic acronyms is increasing. Many people refer to Sabhal Mòr Ostaig as SMO (it has no English equivalent), and Oilthigh na Gàidhealtachd 's nan Eilean is commonly called OGE, as well as UHI (University of the Highlands and Islands).*

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: **mar as fheàrr a dh'aithnichear e:** *as it is better known (lit. as better it is recognised). I last highlighted this idiom in Litir 66 (25.08.00) – but it was then in relation to a person. It can also be used in relation to names of things other than people.*

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