

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.macleam@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 475. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 171 corresponds to Litir 475.

Tha mòran de sheann eachdraidh Arcaibh ri lorg anns an t-seann mhòr-sgeul, *Orkneyinga Saga*. Cha b’ e Arcaich a sgrìobh e, ge-ta, ach feadhainn à Innis Tìle. Rinn iad an sgrìobhadh aig deireadh an dàrna linn deug.

Anns an *Orkneyinga Saga*, tha stòiridh ann mu dheidhinn batail eadar an t-iarla Arcach, Sigurd Eysteinnsson (Sigurd Cumhachdach), agus an t-iarla Albannach Maelbrigte Fiacail. Bha fiacail mhòr a’ stobadh a-mach à beul Mhaelbrigte. Bha i coltach ri starr-fhiacail tuirc.

Bha an dithis air aontachadh coinneachadh ri chèile ann am Moireibh. Bha iad nan nàimhdean ach bha iad air aontachadh gum feuchadh iad ri rèite fhaighinn. Dh’aontaich iad gun toireadh gach duine aca ceathrad fear còmhla ris.

Ge-tà, cha do chuir Sigurd earbsa anns na h-Albannaich. Bha e dhen bheachd nach gabhadh earbsa cur annta. Thug e a dhà uiread de dh’fhir còmhla ris oir bha e a’ smaoinichadh gun dèanadh na h-Albannaich an aon rud. Chuir e dithis air gach each.

Nuair a thàinig an dà fheachd faisg air a’ chèile, chunnaic Maelbrigte gun robh Sigurd ri cealg. “Rinn Sigurd amadain dhinn,” thuirt e. “Chì mi casan dithis fhear **air cliathaich gach eich**. Feumaidh gu bheil a dhà uiread de dhaoine ann ’s a tha de dh’eich. Gidheadh, feumaidh sinn ar misneachd a dhearbhadh. Feumaidh gach duine againn feuchainn ri co-dhiù aon duine a mharbhadh mus fhaigh e fhèin bàs.”

Misneachd ann no às, cha robh cothrom aig na Gàidheil. Nuair a bha an t-sabaid seachad, bha Maelbrigte agus a chompanaich marbh air a’ bhlàr.

Ach chan e sin deireadh an sgeòil. Rinn Maelbrigte Fiacail dìoghaltas air Sigurd. Ciamar? Uill, bha Sigurd ag iarraidh sealltainn mar a thug e buaidh. Gheàrr na Lochlannaich cinn nan laoch Albannach dhiubh. Cheangail iad na cinn do na diollaidean aca. Cheangail Sigurd ceann Mhaelbrigte don diollaid aige fhèin.

Cha robh an t-each aig Sigurd a’ dol luath gu leòr. Chuir e a spor an sàs na chliathaich. Ach bhuail e a chalpa anns an fhiacail a bha a’ stobadh a-mach à beul Mhaelbrigte. Fhuair e lot na chois. Bha an lot air a phuinnseanachadh. Chaidh e **air at**. Mus d’ fhuair e dhachaigh, chaochail Sigurd Cumhachdach. Chaidh a thiodhlacadh air bruach Abhainn Oiceall.

Tha sgeulachd dhen t-seòrsa seo a’ mìneachadh mar a thòisich an *Kirkwall Ba’ Game* – gèam ainmeil anns a bheil na ceudan an sàs air an latha ron Nollaig agus air Latha na Bliadhn’ Ùire gach bliadhna. Feuchaidh gach sgioba ri ball car coltach ri ball-coise a thoirt gu taobh thall a’ bhaile. Tha an cluich gu math gargail.

Thathar ag ràdh gun robh fear òg à Arcaibh air a dhol gu tìr-mòr na h-Alba airson sabaid le fear air an robh “Tusker” – fear le fiacail mhòr. Rinn an gille òg a’ chùis air Tusker, gheàrr e a cheann dheth agus cheangail e a cheann ri a dhìollaid.

Air an rathad dhachaigh, rinn an fhiacail mhòr lot ann an cas a’ ghille. Chaidh an lot a phuinnseanachadh. Ràinig an gille Kirkwall. Bha mòran a’ feitheamh ris. Thilg e ceann a nàmhaid don t-sluagh. Ach goirid às dèidh sin, chaochail e. Bha an sluagh cho feargach mu bhàs a’ ghille ’s gun do bhreab iad an ceann tro na sràidean. Agus ’s ann mar sin a thòisich an *Kirkwall Ba’ Game*. Aidh, ceart, mar a thuir am fear eile.

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Faclan na Litreach: Arcaibh: *Orkney*; Innis Tìle: *Iceland*; iarla: *earl*; Sigurd Cumhachdach: *Sigurd the Powerful*; Maelbrigte Fiacail: *Maelbrigte Tooth*; dìollaid: *saddle*; gargail: *fierce*.

Abairtean na Litreach: ri lorg anns an t-seann mhòr-sgeul: *to be found in the old saga*; cha b’ e Arcaich a sgrìobh e: *it wasn’t Orcadians who wrote it*; deireadh an dàrna linn deug: *the end of the twelfth century*; a’ stobadh a-mach à beul X: *sticking out of X’s mouth*; starr-fhiacail tuirc: *a boar’s tusk*; coinneachadh ri chèile ann am Moireibh: *to meet each other in Moray*; gum feuchadh iad ri rèite fhaighinn: *that they would try to reach agreement*; gun toireadh gach duine aca ceathrad fear: *that each one of them would take forty men*; nach gabhadh earbsa cur annta: *that they couldn’t be trusted*; a dhà uiread de dh’fhir: *twice as many men*; gun robh X ri cealg: *that X was involved in deceit*; rinn X amadain dhinn: *X made fools of us*; feumaidh sinn ar misneachd a dhearbhadh: *we must prove our courage*; ri co-dhiù aon duine a mharbhadh mus fhaigh e fhèin bàs: *to kill at least one man before he himself dies*; marbh air a’ bhlàr: *dead on the battlefield*; mar a thug e buaidh: *that he was victorious*; gheàrr X cinn nan laoch Albannach dhiubh: *X beheaded the Scottish warriors*; chuir e a spor an sàs na chliathaich: *he stuck his riding spur in its side*; bhual e a chalpa anns an fhiacail: *he hit his calf on the tooth*; lot na chois: *a wound in his leg*; air a phuinnseanachadh: *poisoned*; air bruach Abhainn Oiceall: *on the bank of the River Oykel (Sutherland)*; Latha na Bliadhn’ Ùire: *New Year’s Day*; rinn X a’ chùis air Y: *X defeated Y*; bha mòran a’ feitheamh ris: *many people were awaiting him*; thilg e ceann a nàmhaid don t-sluagh: *he threw his enemy’s head to the crowd*; ’s gun do bhreab iad an ceann tro na sràidean: *that they kicked the head through the streets*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Chì mi casan dithis fhear **air cliathaich gach eich**: *I can see the legs of two men on the side of each horse. Why is it eich rather than each? The reason is that the noun is in the genitive singular (gach takes the singular). If you’re unsure, think of replacing gach with the article (an). We’d say air cliathaich an eich (on the side of the horse), so we say air cliathaich gach eich. Here’s another example: tha càrn air mullach gach cnuic (there is a cairn on the summit of every hill). We’d say tha càrn air mullach a’ chnuic, but gach does not require lenition so chnuic becomes cnuic (the genitive singular form of cnoc).*

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: Chaidh e **air at**: *it became swollen*.

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