

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

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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 517. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 213 corresponds to Litir 517.

Ann an Ratharsair tha loch ann an suidheachadh àrd ann am meadhan an eilein air a bheil Loch **na Mnà**. Tha sin a’ ciallachadh “*the loch of the woman*” – Loch na Mnà. Cò i a’ bhean a th’ air a h-ainmeachadh anns an loch?

Uill, a rèir beul-aithris, ’s e a bh’ innte boireannach òg a chaidh a mharbhadh le each-uisge. Agus chan e sgeul ùr a tha sin. Chaidh an dearbh stòiridh innse do Bhoswell is Johnson nuair a bha iad ann an Ratharsair ann an seachd ceud deug, seachdad ’s a trì (1773). Chuala Boswell an stòiridh air an dearbh latha ainmeil air an do rinn e fhèin is Johnson dannsa Gàidhealach air mullach Dùn Cana – a’ bheinn as àirde anns an eilean. ’S e am fear a dh’innis an stòiridh dha bodach a bhuineadh don eilean air an robh Calum MacLeòid. ’S e a bha gan treòrachadh gu mullach na beinne.

Tha an stòiridh a’ dol rudeigin mar seo. Bha uaireigin gobha ann an Ratharsair. Latha a bha seo bha nighean a’ ghobha a-muigh sa mhonadh ri ciobaireachd. Ach, air an oidhche sin, cha do thill i dhachaigh. Air an làrna-mhàireach, chaidh an gobha agus feadhainn eile a-mach a choimhead air a son. Thàinig iad mu dheireadh gu bruach an locha. Chan eil fhios a’ m dè an t-ainm a bh’ air an loch anns na làithean ud, oir fhuair e ainm – Loch na Mnà – às dèidh an tachartais seo. Ach tha e coltach gun robh fios aig muinntir an àite gun robh each-uisge a’ fuireach ann.

Air cladach an locha, dè lorg an gobha ach cridhe is sgamhan na h-ìghne. B’ e sin obair each-uisge, gu cinnteach. Cha bhiodh each-uisge uair sam bith ag ithe sgamhan. Agus cha d’ rachadh an sgamhan **fodha**. Bhiodh e a’ fuireach air uachdar an locha. Bha an gobha troimh-chèile is làn feirg. Bha e ag iarraidh dìoghaltas. Chuir e roimhe dòigh a lorg airson an t-each-uisge a mharbhadh.

Thog an gobha is a mhac ceàrdach ri taobh an locha. Bha doras na ceàrdaich a’ coimhead a-mach air an loch. Chaidh an gobha is a mhac ann oidhche a bha seo. Os cionn an àite-teine, thog iad bior-ròstaidh. Chuir iad molt air a’ bhior-ròstaidh. Chuir iad an teine thuige. Bha iad an dùil gum biodh am fàileadh a’ tarraing an eich-uisge. Mar a dh’innis Calum MacLeòid an sgeul do Bhoswell, ’s e muc a chaidh a chur air a’ bhior-ròstaidh, seach molt.

Ann an teine bha dubhain mhòra, deiseil airson stobadh anns a' bhèist. An ceann greis, dh'èirich deatach dhearg os cionn an locha. Thàinig creutair a-mach às an loch is a-steach air an doras. Bha coltas eich air – mu bhliadhna a dh'aois, gu math peallagach is grànda.

Stob an gobha is an gille aige dà dhubhan teth anns a' chreutair. Thòisich an t-each-uisge air sgreuchail. Dh'fheuch e ri faighinn às. Tharraing e an dithis fhear a dh'ionnsaigh an dorais. Ach bha iadsan làidir gu leòr airson a chumail a-staigh. Dh'iarr an gobha air a mhac dhol don teine agus an dubhan mòr a thoirt a-mach às – agus a stobadh a-steach don each-uisge. Rinn an gille sin. Agus chùm iad grèim air an each gus an robh e marbh.

Ach – seo rud iongantach mun stòiridh. Aig a' cheann thall, nuair a thàinig solas an latha, cha robh closach eich air fhàgail air ùrlar na ceàrdaich. Cha robh ann ach poidhle slaim dhen t-seòrsa a bhiodh na seann daoine ag ràdh a thàinig bho na speuran.

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Faclan na Litreach: Ratharsair: *Raasay*; beul-aithris: *oral tradition*; each-uisge: *water-horse, kelpie*; gobha: *blacksmith*; ceàrdach: *smithy*; dubhan: *hook*.

Abairtean na Litreach: cò i a' bhean a th' air a h-ainmeachadh?: *who is the woman that is named?*; air an dearbh latha ainmeil: *on the same famous day*; bodach a bhuineadh don eilean: *an old man who belonged to the island*; 's e a bha gan treòrachadh gu mullach na beinne: *it's himself that was guiding them to the mountain top*; bha nighean a' ghobha a-muigh sa mhonadh ri cìobaireachd: *the smith's daughter was out on the hill, shepherding*; an làrna-mhàireach: *the next day*; a choimhead air a son: *to look for her*; cridhe is sgamhan na h-ìghne: *the heart and lungs of the girl*; air uachdar an locha: *on the surface of the loch*; troimh-chèile is làn feirg: *distressed and angry*; chuir e roimhe dòigh a lorg: *he decided to find a way*; os cionn an àite-teine, thog iad bior-ròstaidh: *above the fireplace, they built a roasting spit*; chuir iad an teine thuige: *they lit the fire*; gum biodh am fàileadh a' tarraing X: *that the smell would attract X*; seach molt: *rather than a wether*; deiseil airson stobadh anns a' bhèist: *ready to drive into the beast*; dh'èirich deatach dhearg: *a red vapour arose*; bha coltas eich air: *it had the appearance of a horse*; peallagach is grànda: *shaggy and ugly*; chùm iad grèim air: *they kept hold of*; cha robh closach eich air fhàgail air ùrlar na ceàrdaich: *there was not a horse's carcass left on the floor of the smithy*; poidhle slaim dhen t-seòrsa a bhiodh na seann daoine ag ràdh a thàinig bho na speuran: *a pile of slime of the type that the old people would say came from the heavens*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Loch na Mnà: *the loch of the woman*. Mnà is the genitive singular form of bean, a “woman, female or wife”. It thus takes the diagnostic feminine singular article in the genitive – na. “The loch of the women” would be Loch nam Ban. If you find the irregularity of bean a bit confusing, I recommend you look at its entry in Dwelly's dictionary. However, note that the dative forms given by Dwelly are now archaic and rarely met with.

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: cha d' rachadh an sgamhan **fodha:** *the lungs wouldn't go **under** [the water]. Although you can distinguish one lung from a pair by using the singular sgamhan (the plural is sgamhanan), in normal usage the singular form is employed to mean a pair of lungs.*

Tha "Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh" air a maoinachadh le MG ALBA