

Ann am meadhan na h-Alba, ann an seann Ghàidhealtachd Siorrachd Pheairt, tha beinn mhòr bhrèagha air a bheil Beinn Labhair. Tha a' bheinn, a tha os cionn Loch Tatha, ainmeil an-diugh airson a cuid lusain. Agus b' àbhaist dhi a bhith ainmeil, am measg nan Gàidheal co-dhiù, airson a' bheul-aithris a tha co-cheangailte ris an sgìre aig a bonn.

Uaireigin bha clach faisg air mullach na beinne. Sgrìobhte air a' chloich bha an rann beag a leanas: *Caith mar a gheibh, Is gheibh mar a chaitheas, Caomhain 's cò dha? Cuimhnich am bàs*. Nise, chan eil mi cinnteach mun fheallsanachd air cùl na rainn. A bheil sibh fhèin ag aontachadh rithe? A bheil i a' brosnachadh dhaoine gus an cuid airgid a chosg gun a bhith a' smaoineachadh air a chaomhnadh? Air an làimh eile tha e fìor nach urrainn do dhuine stòras a thoirt leis às dèidh a bhàis. Seo an rann a-rithist: *Caith mar a gheibh, Is gheibh mar a chaitheas, Caomhain 's cò dha? Cuimhnich am bàs*.

Uill, cha deach a chlach fhèin a chaomhnadh. Chaidh a goid agus chan eil fios cà' bheil i an-diugh. Ach tha cliù an neach a chruthaich an rann a' leantainn. 'S e boireannach a bh' ann. Tha i ainmeil gu leòr ann am Bràghad Albainn. Ach chan eil i cho aithnichte ann an sgìrean eile. Tha mi a-mach air **Ban-tighearna Labhair** no, mar a chanar rithe ann am Beurla, *The Lady of Lawers*.

Chan aithne dhomh gu bheil ainm-baistidh na Ban-tighearna clàraichte. Bha Gàidheil Bràghad Albainn riamh a' gabhail "Ban-tighearna Labhair" oirre. Thathar a' smaoineachadh gum buineadh i don Apainn ann an Earra-Ghàidheal, gur e ban-Stiùbhartach a bh' innte, agus gun do phòs i fear de dh' uachdarain Labhair no 's dòcha bràthair uachdarain. Tha cuid dhen bheachd gun robh i beò anns an t-seachdamh linn deug.

Nuair a thàinig i a Labhair bha buidheann de Stiùbhartach cuide rithe. Cha do thill iad dhachaigh. Dh'fhuirich iad taobh Loch Tatha. 'S e *Na Combaich – the companions* – a bha muinntir an àite a' gabhail orra mar fhrìth-ainm. Ach carson a bha Ban-tighearna Labhair ainmeil? Uill, bha, a chionn 's gur e ban-fhiosaiche a bh' innte. Bha an dà-shealladh aice. Mar a bha Coinneach Odhar ann an ceann a tuath na Gàidhealtachd, bha Ban-tighearna Labhair anns a' cheann a deas.

Bhathar a' togail eaglais ùr ann an Labhair. Cha chreid mi nach eil an tobhta ann fhathast. Nuair a bha an luchd-togail faisg air a bhith deiseil, a rèir beul-aithris, thuirt a' bhan-tighearna nach biodh na clachan-droma a' dol air mullach na h-eaglaise a-chaidh. Bha an luchd-obrach air na clachan fhàgail air cladach Loch Tatha, deiseil airson cur air druim a' mhullaich an ath latha. Uill, air an oidhche sin fhèin, dh'èirich stoirm eagallach. Chaidh na clachan a sguabadh air falbh gu bonn an locha agus b' fheudar crìoch a chur air a' mhullach le stuth air choreigin eile.

Bha fiosachd eile aice co-cheangailte ris an eaglais sin. Chuir i craobh faisg oirre agus thuirt i gun tachradh rudan mòra nuair a ruigeadh a' chraobh diofar àirdean. Mar eisimpleir, nuair a ruigeadh i àirde stuaghan an togalaich, bhiodh Eaglais na h-Alba air a sgaradh ann an dà leth. Thathar ag ràdh gun do ràinig a' chraobh an àirde sin ann an ochd ceud deug, ceathrad 's a trì (1843) – **bliadhna Briseadh na h-Eaglaise**. Chan eil ùine agam airson a' chòrr air Ban-tighearna Labhair an t-seachdain sa, ach tillidh mi don chuspair seo an ath-sheachdain.

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Faclan na Litreach: Siorrachd Pheairt: *Perthshire*; Beinn Labhair: *Ben Lawers*; Loch Tatha: *Loch Tay*; cliù: *reputation*; Bràghad Albainn: *Breadalbane*; ban-Stiùbhartach: *a Stewart [female]*; frìth-ainm: *nickname*; ban-fhiosaiche: *seer [female]*; fiosachd: *augury, foretelling*.

Abairtean na Litreach: ainmeil airson a cuid lus: *famous for its flowers*; b' àbhaist dhi a bhith: *it [fem] used to be*; airson a' bheul-aithris a tha co-cheangailte ris an sgìre aig a bonn: *for the oral tradition connected to the area at its base*; caith mar a gheibh: *spend as you get*; is gheibh mar a chaitheas: *and get as you spend*; caomhain 's cò dha?: *save, and for whom?*; cuimhnich am bàs: *remember death*; mun fheallsanachd air cùl na rainn: *about the philosophy behind the verse*; gun a bhith a' smaoineachadh air a chaomhnadh: *without thinking about saving it*; nach urrainn do dhuine stòras a thoirt leis às dèidh a bhàis: *a man can't take riches with him after his death*; chaidh a goid: *it [fem] was stolen*; chan aithne dhomh gu bheil ainm-baistidh na Ban-tighearna clàraichte: *I don't know that [if] the Lady's given name is recorded*; gum buineadh i don Apainn: *that she belonged to Appin*; nach biodh na clachan-droma a' dol air mullach na h-eaglaise a-chaidh: *that the ridge-stones would never go on the church's roof*; dh'èirich stoirm eagallach: *a fearful storm arose*; chaidh na clachan a sguabadh air falbh: *the stones were swept away*; b' fheudar crìoch a chur air a' mhullach: *the roof had to be finished*; nuair a ruigeadh i àirde stuaghan an togalaich: *when it [fem] reached the height of the building's gables*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Ban-tighearna Labhair: *The Lady of Lawers. It's interesting that the word tighearna (a lord, chief, ruler) is less likely to be used today outside a religious context than the feminised form ban-tighearna. Tighearna is a very old Celtic word (the Irish is now spelt tiarna and the Manx is çhiarna) and it was widely used in Gaelic where uachdaran, morair, ceannard or duine-uasal might be used today. Tighearna is mostly commonly met with today in a religious context referring to "The Lord" as in Ùrnaigh an Tighearna (The Lord's Prayer) and the benediction Beannachd an Tighearna Oirbh (the Lord's blessing upon you). The feminine form remains an equivalent of "Lady" in English as part of a title but even it has become old-fashioned and is most commonly met with in historical or toponymic context.*

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: bliadhna Briseadh na h-Eaglaise: *the year of the Disruption of the Church [of Scotland, when the Free Church was formed – 1843].*

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