

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.macleon@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 531. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 227 corresponds to Litir 531.

An t-seachdain sa chaidh bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Bhan-tighearna Labhair, *The Lady of Lawers*. Bha an dà-shealladh aice. Bha i beò 's dòcha anns an t-seachdamh linn deug. Chuir i craobh ri taobh na h-eaglaise ann an Labhair agus rinn i fiosachd co-cheangailte rithe. Thuirt i gun tigeadh bàs uabhasach air duine sam bith a leagadh a' chraobh. Uill, thathar ag ràdh, timcheall air ochd ceud deug is ochdad (1880) gun do leag tuathanach, air an robh Iain Caimbeul, a' chraobh. Bha fear eile ann a thug taic dha.

Cha chuir e iongnadh sam bith oirbh nach do shoirbhich leis an dithis ro mhath. Chaidh Iain Caimbeul a ghaorradh gu bàs le a tharbh fhèin. Chaill am fear-taice aige a chiall agus chaidh a chur don **taigh-chuthaich**.

Thuirt a' Bhan-tighearna iomadh rud co-cheangailte ri sgìre Loch Tatha. Thuirt i gum biodh muileann air gach allt agus crann-treabhaidh aig gach gille. Thuirt i cuideachd gum biodh an dùthaich air a criathrachadh dhen t-sluagh aice agus gum biodh na bailtean-fearainn cho fad air falbh bho chèile 's nach cluinneadh coileach tuathanaich coileach a nàbaidh. Uill, bha iad seo uile fìor. Dh'èirich an sluagh gu mòr, bha am fearann fo àiteachas gu ìre mhòr agus an uair sin bha fuadaichean ann.

Coltach ri Coinneach Odhar ann an Siorrachd Rois thug a' Bhan-tighearna beachd air na h-uachdarain anns an sgìre aice agus na bha romhpa, agus tha e coltach gun tàinig mòran dhiubh sin gu buil. Thuirt i gun cailleadh Clann 'ic an Aba – aig an robh fearann aig ceann an iar Loch Tatha – an oighreachd. Bhiodh Caimbeulaich Bhràghad Albainn a' gabhail fearann nan Abach thairis nuair a thachradh rud car neònach. Bhiodh geug à craobh-ghiuthais a' tuiteam air craobh-ghiuthais eile agus a' fàs oirre. Thathar ag ràdh gun do thachair sin anns an dàrna deichead dhen naoidheamh linn deug. An robh i a-mach air gnothach nàdarra no air nòdachadh le mac an duine? Chan eil fhios a'm, ach thàinig an fhiosachd gu buil oir, goirid às dèidh làimh, fhuair Marcais Bhràghad Albainn grèim air fearann nan Abach.

Tha e coltach cuideachd gun tuirt Bàn-tighearna Labhair gum biodh tubaist mhòr air Loch Tatha uaireigin. 'S dòcha nach tàinig sin gu buil fhathast, agus tha mi an dòchas nach tig. Bha **bàthadh mòr** ann air an loch ri linn na Ban-tighearna agus bha muinntir an àite fo ghruaimean. Ach thuirt a' Bhan-tighearna gun tigeadh an latha nuair a bhiodh mòran a bharrachd a' faighinn bàs, agus soitheach a' dol fodha. Chan e sin a-mhàin ach bhiodh smùid a' tighinn às an t-soitheach. An robh i a-mach air teine air bòrd an t-soithich no am faca i ro-shealladh de bhàtaichean-smùide?

Agus thuirt i rud eile air am bu chòir dhuinn beachdachadh an-diugh. B' e Beinn Labhair fear de na ciad àiteachan ann an Alba far am biodh daoine a' sgitheadh – fada mus robh guth air na goireasan sgithidh a chithear ann an àiteachan mar an Càrn Gorm is an t-Aonach Mòr an-diugh. Thog Club Sgithidh na h-Alba bothan anns a' Choire Odhar fon Bheinn Ghlais – tè de mhullaichean Beinn Labhair – anns na tritheadan. Ach, anns na deicheadan a dh'fhalbh, chan eil uiread de shneachd air a bhith ann 's a bh' ann an uair sin.

Co-dhiù, thuirt a' Bhan-tighearna gun tigeadh an latha nuair a bha Beinn Labhair cho fuar 's gum biodh i a' dèanamh an fhearainn airson seachd mìle mu a timcheall na fhàsach. Ma tha i ceart, 's dòcha nach e blàthachadh a tha romhainn ann an Alba ach fuarachadh.

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Faclan na Litreach: an dà-shealladh: *the second sight*; Loch Tatha: *Loch Tay*; crann-treabhaidh: *plough*; bailtean-fearainn: *farm settlements*; fuadaichean: *clearances*; Coinneach Odhar: *The Brahan Seer*; Bràghad Albainn: *Breadalbane*; nòdachadh: *grafting*; Beinn Labhair: *Ben Lawers*; blàthachadh: *warming*; fuarachadh: *cooling*.

Abairtean na Litreach: rinn i fiosachd co-cheangailte rithe: *she made a prophesy regarding it*; gun tigeadh bàs uabhasach air duine sam bith a leagadh a' chraobh: *that any person who felled the tree would suffer a terrible death*; chaidh X a ghaorradh gu bàs le a tharbh fhèin: *X was gored to death by his own bull*; chaill am fear-taice aige a chiall: *his helper lost his sense*; gum biodh an dùthaich air a criathrachadh dhen t-sluagh aice: *that the country would be sifted of its people*; nach cluinneadh coileach tuathanaich coileach a nàbaidh: *that a farmer's cockerel wouldn't hear the cockerel of his neighbour*; dh'èirich an sluagh gu mòr: *the population rose substantially*; thug X beachd air na h-uachdarain agus na bha romhpa: *X gave an opinion on the landlords and what lay [was] ahead of them*; gun cailleadh Clann 'ic an Aba an oighreachd: *that the MacNab clan would lose their estate*; bhiodh geug à craobh-ghiuthais a' tuiteam air craobh-ghiuthais eile agus a' fàs oirre: *a branch from a pine tree would fall on another pine tree and grow on it*; bha muinntir an àite fo ghruaimean: *the local people were plunged into gloom*; a' dol fodha: *sinking*; ro-shealladh de bhàtaichean-smùide: *a premonition of steam ships*; na ciad àiteachan: *the first places*; anns na deicheadan a dh'fhalbh: *in the last few decades*; chan eil uiread de shneachd air a bhith ann: *there's not been so much snow*; a' dèanamh an fhearainn airson seachd mìle mu a timcheall na fhàsach: *making the land for seven miles around it a wasteland*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: chaidh a chur don **taigh-chuthaich**: *he was sent to the lunatic asylum*. Taigh-cuthaich (lit. "house of insanity") is, like the English term "lunatic asylum" not very PC today and I only used it in the historical context of such being the name of such institutions at the time. The word cuthach (or dialectally caothach) can mean both the madness of insanity and the madness of rage – and English has the same issue regarding the meanings of "mad" and "madness". In today's world we'd be more likely to refer to a "mental health facility" as an ospadal-inntinn.

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: Bha **bàthadh mòr** ann: *there was a great drowning ie a lot of people were drowned*.

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