

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 541. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 237 corresponds to Litir 541.

An t-seachdain sa chaidh bha mi ag innse dhuibh na h-ainmean-mara air na h-Eileanan Beaga. B’ e ainm-mara Eige *Eilean nam Ban Mòra*. *The island of the big women*. Ach ciamar a fhuair e ainm mar sin?

Uill, a rèir beul-aithris, tha e a’ dol air ais don t-seann aimsir nuair a bha an t-eilean fhathast fo smachd nan Cruithneach. Aig toiseach an t-seachdamh linn bha na Gàidheil a’ leudachadh crìochan na rìoghachd aca. Chaidh Calum Cille gu ruige Eige agus Canaigh. Chuir e a h-uile muile-mhàgag agus nathair a-mach às na h-eileanan sin. Ach cha b’ e Calum Cille a dh’iompach muinntir Eige gu Crìosdachd. ’S e Donnain a rinn sin.

Thathar ag ràdh gun deach Donnain an toiseach a dh’Eilean Ì. Dh’iarr e air Calum Cille a bhith na **anam-charaid** dha. B’ e anam-charaid neach a bhiodh a’ toirt taic is stiùireadh spioradail do neach eile. Dhiùlt Calum Cille a bhith na anam-charaid do Dhonnain. Oir chunnaic e aisling. Anns an aisling chan e a’ **mhairtireachd gheal** a bha a’ feitheamh ri Donnain, ach a’ **mhairtireachd dhearg**. Chan fhaigheadh e bàs sìtheil, ach bàs fuilteach.

A dh’aindeoin sin, lean Donnain le a phlanaichean. Chaidh e fhèin is dusan companach a dh’Eige. Chuir iad manachainn air chois far a bheil Cill Donnain an-diugh. Tha seann làmh-sgrìobhainn Èireannach ag innse dhuinn gun robh leth-cheud manach a’ fuireach ann an ceann greis. Ach, a rèir aithris, cha robh iad uile-gu-lèir às aonais chleachdaidhean pàganach. ’S dòcha gur e sin an dòigh a bh’ aca airson muinntir an eilein iompachadh. Mar eisimpleir, bha iad a’ comharrachadh fèill na Bealltainn seach fèill na Càisge.

Aig an àm sin bha Eige fo smachd banrigh Chruithneach. Bha ise a’ fuireach ann am Muideart air tìr-mòr. Agus cha robh i toilichte leis mar a bha cùisean a’ dol ann an Eige. Bha i dhen bheachd gum biodh na Crìosdaidhean a’ gabhail an eilein thairis. Thuirt i, “Tha buachaillean agam [air a’ bheinn] airson mo chuid sprèidh a chumail fo smachd, chan ann airson ’s gum bi iad fhèin air am buachailleachadh le manach.”

Dh’iarr a’ bhanrigh air na h-eileanaich na manaich a chur gu bàs. Ach cha robh iad deònach. Dhiùlt iad. Ghabh a’ bhanrigh fearg mhòr. Chuir i feachd de bhana-ghaisgich mhòra a-null don eilean airson an gnothach a dhèanamh.

Nuair a lorg na bana-ghaisgich na manaich, bha iad a’ gabhail aifreann. Dh’iarr Donnain air na boireannaich leigeil leotha crìoch a chur air an aifreann. An uair sin choisich na manaich a-mach às an eaglais. Fhad ’s a bha iad a’ coiseachd a-mach bha iad air am murt, **fear mu seach**. Chaidh an cinn a ghearradh dhiubh. Chaidh an cuirp a chàrnadh agus chaidh teine a chur riutha. Bha an fhàidheadaireachd aig Calum Cille air tighinn gu buil.

Ach chan e sin deireadh na sgeòil. A rèir beul-aithris, aig meadhan-oidhche, chunnacas solais agus chualas guthan taibhseil anns an àite far an robh na cuirp air a bhith. 'S e tàladh-bàis a bh' ann. Bha na bana-ghaisgich fo gheasaibh. Lean iad na solais a-steach do loch far an robh cabhsair dìomhair. Thuit iad, **tè mu seach**, far a' chabhsair don uisge dhomhainn. Bha iad uile air am bàthadh.

Chun an latha an-diugh, 's e *Loch nam Ban Mòra* an t-ainm air an loch sin. Agus air sgàth na h-eachdraidh, 's e *Eilean nam Ban Mòra* an t-ainm a bhiodh aig muinntir an àite air Eige nuair a bha iad aig muir.

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Faclan na Litreach: ainm-mara: *sea-kenning*; Eilean Ì: *Iona*: stiùireadh spioradail: *spiritual guidance*; aisling: *vision*; Muideart: *Moidart*; deònach: *willing*; dhiùlt: *refused*; tàladh-bàis: *an enticement to death*.

Abairtean na Litreach: fo smachd nan Cruithneach: *under the control of the Picts*; a' leudachadh crìochan na rìoghachd aca: *expanding the bounds of their kingdom*; a h-uile muile-mhàgag agus nathair: *every toad and snake*; cha b' e Calum Cille a dh'iompaich muinntir Eige gu Crìosdachd: *it wasn't Columba who converted the people of Eigg to Christianity*; chan fhaigheadh e bàs sìtheil, ach bàs fuilteach: *he wouldn't have a peaceful death, but a bloody death*; lean Donnan le a phlanaichean: *Donnan continued with his plans*; chuir iad manachainn air chois: *they established a monastery*; seann làmh-sgrìobhainn Èireannach: *an old Irish manuscript*; às aonais chleachdaidhean pàganach: *without pagan practices*; fèill na Bealltainn seach fèill na Càisge: *Beltane rather than Easter*; tha buachaillean agam airson mo chuid sprèidh a chumail fo smachd: *I have herdsmen to control my cattle*; chan ann airson 's gum bi iad fhèin air am buachailleachadh le manach: *not so they themselves will be herded by a monk*; feachd de bhana-ghaisgich mhòra: *a force of big women warriors*; leigeil leotha crìoch a chur air an aifreann: *to let them finish the mass*; bha iad air am murt: *they were murdered*; chaidh an cinn a ghearradh dhiubh: *their heads were cut off [them]*; chaidh an cuirp a chàrnadh agus chaidh teine a chur riutha: *their bodies were piled up and they were set on fire*; bha an fhàidheadaireachd aig Calum Cille air tighinn gu buil: *Columba's prophecy had come true*; chunnacas solais agus chualas guthan taibhseil: *lights were seen and ghostly voices were heard*; fo gheasaibh: *under a spell*; cabhsair dìomhair: *a hidden causeway*; bha iad uile air am bàthadh: *they were all drowned*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Dh'iarr e air Calum Cille a bhith na **anam-charaid** dha: *he asked Calum Cille to be a soul friend to him. An anam-charaid (the old Gaelic form is anam-cara) is a friend who would be a spiritual adviser to another Christian and who would hear his confession. Mairtreachd gheal was the "white martyrdom" of early Christians who left their homeland [with the intention of not returning] and who devoted their lives to religious pursuits. Mairtreachd dhearg was the "red martyrdom" of those who lost their lives [dearg stands for blood] in their promotion of Christianity. The Gaelic and English terms mairtreachd and martyrdom are similar because they both originate in Latin.*

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: **fear mu seach, tè mu seach:** *one (masculine) after another, one (feminine) after another.*

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