

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 543. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 239 corresponds to Litir 543.

Tha an Litir a’ fuireach ann an Eilean Chanaigh an t-seachdain seo. Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mun Chorra-dhùn air cladach an eilein far a bheil seann togalach beag a tha a’ tuiteam às a chèile. A rèir beul-aithris chùm fear de chinn-chinnidh Chloinn Raghnaill a bhean na prìosanach ann. ’S e an t-ainm a bh’ air a’ cheann-chinnidh Dòmhnall Dubh na Cuthaig. Bha e beò anns an t-seachdamh linn deug.

Bha gunna mòr aig Dòmhnall. Tha e coltach, nuair a bha e air a losgadh, gun do rinn an gunna fuaim car coltach ri fuaim na cuthaig. Mar sin ’s e “a’ chuthag” a bh’ aig Dòmhnall fhèin, agus càch, air a’ ghunna. Gu tric anns an t-seann aimsir bhiodh ainmean dhen t-seòrsa sin aig na Gàidheil air na gunnaichean aca.

A rèir choltais chan e duine laghach a bh’ ann an Dòmhnall idir. Nam biodh cuideigin a’ cur dragh air, bhiodh e a’ maoidheadh air gun cuireadh e a’ chuthag an sàs na aghaidh.

Chaidh Dòmhnall agus an sagart ann an Canaigh a-mach air a chèile. Tha cuid a’ dèanamh dheth gun do rinn an sagart searmon an aghaidh Dhòmhnail, ga chàineadh airson a bhean a chumail anns a’ phrìosan bheag air a’ Chorra-dhùn. Tha cuid eile ag ràdh gun robh an sagart ag iarraidh dhol a dh’Uibhist ach gun robh Dòmhnall ag iarraidh stad a chur air.

Co-dhiù, chaidh Dòmhnall a Chanaigh anns a’ bhàta aige. Air an t-slighe bha ainmhidh annasach a’ leantainn a’ bhàta. Thathar ag ràdh gur e muile-mhàgag mhòr a bh’ ann. Dh’fhàs i stoirmeil. Bha fairge mhòr ann. Agus chunnacas an creutair a bha seo air mullach gach stuaigh. Bha an criutha dhen bheachd gun rachadh am bàta fodha. Bha Dòmhnall fhèin aig an stiùir agus dh’iarr e air a’ chreutair thighinn air bòrd. Chaidh e air bòrd agus ràinig am bàta Canaigh gu sàbhailte.

Thug Dòmhnall Dubh **clàr fiodha** a-mach às gach bàta anns an eilean, gus nach fhaigheadh an sagart air falbh. Ach, latha a bha seo, chunnaic an sagart bàta a’ dol seachad air Canaigh. Dh’iarr e air a’ chriutha thighinn gu tìr agus rinn e dol-às – ged a bha am bàta a’ dol don Eilean Sgitheanach, seach a dh’Uibhist. Fhad ’s a bha e a’ seòladh air falbh, dh’èigh an sagart, mar gum biodh, air Dòmhnall Dubh, “biodh do **dhust** an seo gun a bhith air a thiodhlacadh a cheart cho fada ’s a chùm thu mise ann.”

Nuair a bha Dòmhnall a’ bàsachadh bha e ann an èiginn. Chuala e fead taobh a-muigh an taighe. Dh’fhalbh e a-mach ach bha mac bantraich an sin. Chuir esan Dòmhnall Dubh air ais na leabaidh.

Thachair sin dàrna turas. Chuir mac na banntraich stad air a-rithist. Ach chunnaic iad fear na sheasamh air cnoc mu choinneamh an taighe. Bha am fear sin cho àrd 's gun robh iad a' faicinn Eilein Rùm eadar a chasan. Dh'fhalbh am famhair, a' coiseachd air uachdar na mara gu ruige Rùm. Bhon uair sin tha an linne eadar Canaigh is Rùm air a bhith air leth garbh.

Nuair a chaochail Dòmhnall Dubh thàinig droch shìde. Bha a dhust glaiste ann an Canaigh airson seachd seachdainean – dìreach mar a dh'iarr an sagart. Mu dheireadh thall, ràinig a chiste an Tobha Mòr ann an Uibhist far an robh seann chladh Chloinn Raghnaill. 'S iomadh ball de Chloinn Raghnaill a chaidh a thiodhacadh an sin, agus cha b' e Dòmhnall Dubh am fear a b' fheàrr dhiubh.

* * * * *

Faclan na Litreach: Eilean Chanaigh: *the Isle of Canna*; An Corra-dhùn: *Coroghan (Castle)*; Dòmhnall Dubh na Cuthaig: *Black Donald of the Cuckoo*; fuaim: *noise, sound*; muile-mhàgag: *toad*; mac banntraich: *a widow's son*; famhair: *giant*.

Abairtean na Litreach: a' tuiteam às a chèile: *falling to pieces*; chùm fear de chinn-chinnidh Chloinn Raghnaill a bhean na prìosanach ann: *one of the chiefs of Clanranald kept his wife a prisoner there*; nam biodh cuideigin a' cur dragh air: *if somebody were annoying him*; bhiodh e a' maoidheadh air: *he would threaten him*; gun cuireadh e a' chuthag an sàs na aghaidh: *that he would use the cuckoo against him*; chaidh X agus an sagart a-mach air a chèile: *X and the priest fell out*; bha ainmhidh annasach a' leantainn a' bhàta: *a strange animal was following the boat*; air mullach gach stuaigh: *on the crest of each wave*; gun rachadh am bàta fodha: *that the boat would sink*; dh'iarr e air a' chreutair thighinn air bòrd: *he asked the creature to come aboard*; mu choinneamh an taighe: *opposite the house*; a' coiseachd air uachdar na mara: *walking on the surface of the sea*; ràinig a chiste an Tobha Mòr: *his coffin reached Howmore*; 's iomadh ball de X a chaidh a thiodhacadh an sin: *many members of X were buried there*; cha b' e X am fear a b' fheàrr dhiubh: *X was not the best of them*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: biodh do **dhust** an seo gun a bhith air a thiodhacadh a cheart cho fada 's a chùm thu mise ann: *you might not find it easy to locate the word dust in a Gaelic dictionary. It is used euphemistically in some dialects for human remains or a human body following death. The word corp is acceptable in some places, where dust is not used at all. But in other communities you would say dust Dhòmhnail for "Donald's remains" not corp Dhòmhnail. If you live in a traditional Gaelic speaking area, find out what people there say. If you don't, ask your teacher's advice. The sentence in the Litir means "let your body remain here without being buried for as long as you kept me [here]."*

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: Thug Dòmhnall Dubh **clàr fiodha** a-mach às gach bàta anns an eilean: *Black Donald took a wooden plank out of every boat on the island. Clàr has many meanings (perhaps too many!), including several types of flat surface or object. Clàr fiodha here is a wooden plank in a boat.*

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