

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Taigh nam Bodach II

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 rodgy.maclea@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 627. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 323 corresponds to Litir 627.

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Thaigh nam Bodach – no Taigh na Cailliche mar a ghabhas cuid air – ann an Gleann Cailliche, làimh ri Gleann Lìomhann ann an Siorrachd Pheairt. ’S e rud iongantach a th’ ann, ann an àite brèagha, sìtheil am measg nam beann. Bha mi eòlach air ro làimh oir tha dealbh dheth air còmhdach an leabhair *Folklore of the Scottish Highlands* le Anna Ros. Ach bha e fada na b’ fheàrr a bhith ann is an rud fhaicinn dhomh fhìn.

Tha an t-àite sa bheil e gu math fada a-mach às an rathad, ach cha robh mi fhìn ’s mo chompanaich buileach leinn fhèin. Thàinig fear a thadhail air an taigh fhad ’s a bha sinn faisg air. Chan eil mi cinnteach an robh e ag ùrnaigh no dìreach a’ meòrachadh air beulaibh an taighe, ach bha e follaiseach gun tug an t-àite buaidh mhòr air.

’S e *Taigh na Cailliche* a tha Ros, a tha na sgoilear de bheul-aithris, a’ gabhail air. Tha iomadh ciall air **cailleach**, mar a bhios fios agaibh. Am measg an fheadhainn aig Dwelly tha *old woman, nun* agus seo: *supernatural or malign influence dwelling in dark caves, woods and corries*. ’S iomadh stòiridh a th’ againn mu na caillichean a bhiodh a’ fuireach anns na beanntan agus a bhiodh a’ dìon nan sgìrean aca. Tha mi air còrr is ceud ainm-àite a lorg ann an Alba anns a bheil am facal “cailleach” a’ nochdadh.

Tha Anna Ros dhen bheachd gu bheil an cleachdadh aig Taigh na Cailliche co-cheangailte ri adhradh don Chaillich, rud a bha cumanta aig aon àm. Tha i a’ sgrìobhadh mu dheidhinn “*the genuine antiquity of the cult*”. Agus tha i ag ràdh gun robh muinntir an àite a’ coimhead air a’ Chaillich mar spiorad coibhneil. Seo an stòiridh a fhuair i à beul-aithris: Air droch latha geamhraidh o chionn fhada, nuair a bha cur-is-cathadh ann, chunnacas fear agus bean a’ tighinn a-nuas far na beinne ann an ceann shuas a’ ghlinne. Bha iad le chèile anabarrach mòr.

Dh’iarr iad fasnach is aoigheachd bho mhuinntir an àite, agus fhuair iad sin. Bha na daoine coibhneil dhaibh. Thogadh taigh-tughaidh don dithis agus thug sin toileachas dhaibh.

Bha am boireannach trom le leanabh agus tro thìde rugadh leanabh-nighinne dhi. Bha an aimsir an-còmhnaidh fàbharach nuair a bha an teaghlach a’ fuireach anns a’ ghleann. Bha an sprèidh fallain agus bha am bàrr math.

Ach thàinig latha nuair a bha aig an teaghlach ri falbh. Mus do dh’fhalbh iad, **thug iad gealltanach seachad** – nam biodh an taigh aca air a chumail an òrdugh agus nam biodh muinntir an àite gan cuimhneachadh, bhiodh na geamhraidhean ciùin agus

na samhraidhean blàth. Bhiodh sìth is sonas is beartas aig na daoine a bh' air a bhith coibhneil dhaibh.

Mar chuimhneachan air a h-uile càil, chaidh ionad beag a thogail ann an cruth an taighe. Aig a' Bhealltainn a h-uile bliadhna, bhiodh na trì clachan a bha a' riochdachadh nan trì "diathan" – a' Chailleach, am Bodach agus an Nighean – air an toirt a-mach. Air an latha ro Oidhche Shamhna, bhiodh iad air an cur a-steach don taigh a-rithist airson an cumail blàth is cofhurtail fad a' gheamhraidh. Agus chan eil an cleachdadh air sgur fhathast.

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Faclan na Litreach: coibhneil: *kind*; cur-is-cathadh: *snowing and blizzards*; fasgadh: *shelter*; aoigheachd: *hospitality*; taigh-tughaidh: *thatched house*.

Abairtean na Litreach: 's e rud iongantach a th' ann: *it's an amazing thing*; tha dealbh dheth air còmhdach an leabhair: *there is a picture of it on the cover of the book*; a-mach às an rathad: *out of the way*; cha robh mi fhìn 's mo chompanaich buileach leinn fhèin: *myself and my companions weren't entirely by ourselves*; an robh e ag ùrnaigh no dìreach a' meòrachadh: *was he praying or simply meditating*; gun tug an t-àite buaidh mhòr air: *that the place had a big effect on him*; a bhiodh a' dìon nan sgìrean aca: *who would protect their areas*; co-cheangailte ri adhradh don Chaillich: *connected to worshipping the Cailleach*; chunnacas fear agus bean a' tighinn a-nuas far na beinne: *a man and wife were seen coming down from the mountain*; ceann shuas a' ghlinne: *the upper part of the glen*; le chèile anabarrach mòr: *both extremely large*; thug sin toileachas dhaibh: *that made them happy*; tro thìde rugadh leanabh-nighinne dhi: *in time a baby girl was born to her*; an-còmhnaidh fàbharach: *always favourable*; bha an sprèidh fallain agus bha am bàrr math: *the livestock was healthy and the crops were good*; nam biodh an taigh aca air a chumail an òrdugh: *if their house were kept in order*; bhiodh na geamhraidhean ciùin agus na samhraidhean blàth: *the winters would be calm and the summers warm*; bhiodh iad air an cur a-steach don taigh a-rithist: *they would be put into the house again*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Tha iomadh ciall air ***cailleach***: *[the word] cailleach has many meanings. Another look at cailleach this week, this time at its origins.*

Fascinatingly, given that it sometimes represents pre-Christian deities or supernatural feminine figures, the word is thought by some authorities to have Christian origins. Caille, a veil, might be derived from pallium, the Latin for a cloak, mantle or veil, a feature of dress within the Catholic Church. The Latin p- was converted by our Q-Celtic speaking ancestors to a c- (pallium is used in English in its original Latin form). Alternatively pallium and caille derive from a common ancestral root. A cailleach is a 'veiled one' and is the term used for a Christian nun (sometimes made explicit as 'cailleach dhubh'). That a decidedly non-Christian figurine, representative of a deity, and a Christian holy woman should share the same word, without any sense of pejoration, might be seen as a legacy of a broad spiritual heritage in the Gàidhealtachd.

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: **thug iad gealltanas seachad:** *they made [gave] a promise.*

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