

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Beathaichean, a chaidh à bith, air mapaichean na h-Alba (3)

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.maclea@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 705. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 401 corresponds to Litir 705.

Ri taobh rathad mòr an A9 aig Druim Uachdair, chìtear beinn mhòr air a bheil *An Torc*, no ann am Beurla, *The Boar of Badenoch*. Thathar ag ràdh gur e cumadh na beinne as coireach ris an ainm. Tha i coltach ri druim tuirc, gu h-àraidh bhon cheann a tuath. Ach tha cuideachd stòiridh ann, co-cheangailte ris a’ bheinn, gu bheil taibhs-tuirc a’ tathaich oirre.

Gu deas air an Torc, tha beinn air a bheil *The Sow of Atholl*. Tha seann ainm oirre cuideachd, a th’ air na mapaichean fhathast – *Meall an Dobharchain*. Tha cuid a’ dèanamh dheth gu bheil sin a’ ciallachadh *the hill of the watercress* ach chan eil sin ro choltach dhòmhsa. Saoilidh mi gu bheil Meall an Dobharchain a’ ciallachadh *the hill of the boundary*, stèidhichte air an t-seann fhacal *dobhar*, a bha a’ ciallachadh ‘crìoch eadar dà oighreachd’ (uaireannan stèidhichte air uisge, ’s dòcha, oir bha *dobhar* cuideachd a’ ciallachadh ‘uisge’). Agus dè bha eadar Meall an Dobharchain agus an Torc? Bha a’ chrìoch eadar Athall is Bàideanach. Sin far a bheil i fhathast.

Tha amharas agam gur ann am Beurla a chaidh an t-ainm *Sow of Atholl* a chruthachadh mar sgàthan air *The Boar of Badenoch*, ach chan urrainn dhomh a bhith cinnteach às a sin. Chaidh aithris ann an naoi ceud deug is seachd-deug (1917) gur e *A’ Mhuc Athallach* a bh’ oirre mar ainm ann an Gàidhlig. Ach an robh sin na eadar-theangachadh air a’ Bheurla, no am buineadh an t-ainm do sheann dualchas Gàidhlig? Ma tha fios agaibh fhèin air a’ ghnòthach, bu mhath leam cluinntinn bhuaibh.

Tha adhbhar eile ann airson ainm an tuirc-nimhe a bhith air clàr-dùthcha na Gàidhealtachd, a bharrachd air cumadh beinne no gun robh am beathach sin beò ann uaireigin. ’S e sin gu bheilear ag aithneachadh àiteachan far an robh tuirc ann, a rèir beul-aithris. Agus tha beul-aithris a’ cur gu mòr ri sealladh nan Gàidheal air a’ Ghàidhealtachd.

Mar eisimpleir, tha Loch an Tuirc agus Càrn Loch an Tuirc ann an Ros an Ear, deas air Beinn Uais. Agus rin taobh tha Beinn a’ Ghuilbein. Far am faicear *guilbein* no *gulbain* no a leithid co-cheangailte ri beinn, ’s ann tric a tha an stòiridh ainmeil *Diarmad agus Gràinne* stèidhichte ann. Anns an sgeulachd sin, tha Diarmad a’ marbhadh torc-nimhe, ach tha an torc-nimhe cuideachd ag adhbharachadh bàs a’ ghaigich.

An e sin as coireach ris an ainm-àite *Càrn an Tuirc* eadar Gleann Sìth agus Bràigh Mhàrr? Faisg air làimh tha *Beinn Ghulbain*, an t-àite as ainmeile ann an Alba airson stòiridh Dhiarmaid agus Gràinne. ’S ann air Beinn Ghulbain a chaidh an torc, agus Diarmad, a mharbhadh.

Faisg air Loch an Lagain, deas air Creag Mèagaidh, tha cnoc ann air a bheil *Tòrr a' Ghuilbinn*. Faisg air, tha *Lochan an Tuirc*. 'S iongantach mura h-e beul-aithris as coireach ri ainmeachadh an tuirc an sin cuideachd.

An e sin e airson nam beathaichean a bha uaireigin ann an Alba agus a chaidh à bith? Uill, chan e buileach. An-ath-sheachdain, anns an Litir mu dheireadh air a' chuspair seo, bheir sinn sùil air dà chreutair a thugadh air ais a dh'Alba, agus a nochdas ann an ainmean-àite. Agus cuiridh mi geall gun cuir fear dhiubh iongnadh oirbh. Chun na h-ath-sheachdain, ma-thà, beannachd leibh.

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Faclan na Litreach: Druim Uachdair: *Drumochter*; druim tuirc: *a boar's back*; beul-aithris: *oral tradition*; Loch an Lagain: *Loch Laggan*.

Abairtean na Litreach: chìthear beinn mhòr: *a big hill will be seen*; thathar ag ràdh gur e cumadh na beinne as coireach ris an ainm: *it's said that the mountain's shape is responsible for the name*; gu h-àraidh bhon cheann a tuath: *especially from the north*; gu bheil taibhs-tuirc a' tathaich oirre: *that the ghost of a boar roams there*; tha cuid a' dèanamh dheth: *some people reckon*; a' chrìoch eadar Athall is Bàideanach: *the boundary between Atholl and Badenoch*; sin far a bheil i fhathast: *that's where it is still [to this day]*; tha amharas agam gur ann am Beurla a chaidh an t-ainm a chruthachadh: *I suspect the name was created in English*; mar sgàthan air: *as a mirror to*; chan urrainn dhomh a bhith cinnteach às a sin: *I can't be certain of that*; am buineadh an t-ainm do sheann dualchas: *did the name belong to an old heritage*; gu bheillear ag aithneachadh àiteachan: *that places are recognised*; deas air Beinn Uais: *south of Ben Wyvis*; tha Diarmad a' marbhadh torc-nimhe: *Diarmad kills a fierce wild boar*; tha an torc-nimhe ag adhbharachadh bàs a' ghaisgich: *the wild boar causes the death of the hero*; 's iongantach mura h-e beul-aithris as coireach: *it's likely that oral tradition is responsible*; cuiridh mi geall gun cuir fear dhiubh iongnadh oirbh: *I bet one of them will surprise you*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Meall an Dobharchain (*the Gaelic name for the Sow of Atholl*) is usually explained as 'the hill of the watercress', which has always seemed unlikely to me. Although *dobhar-lus* means 'watercress' it can actually apply to any aquatic plant (*dobhar* is an obsolete Gaelic word for 'water' that is preserved in *dòbhran* 'otter'). But even that seems unlikely, on the basis of ecology or landscape, to have given the mountain its name. *Dobhar* is also given in *Armstrong's dictionary* as 'the border of a country; a territory' (it's *dobhair* in *Dwelly*) and this seems more likely to be the root of *dobharchan*, as Meall an Dobharchain marks the ancient northern limit of Atholl, where it meets Badenoch. The name means 'the hill of the boundary'. If you have any thoughts on this name, I'd be pleased to hear from you.

Gnàthas -cainnt na Litreach: **An e sin e** airson nam beathaichean a bha uaireigin ann an Alba agus a chaidh à bith?: *is that it for the animals that used to live in Scotland and became extinct?*

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