

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Iain Garbh (2)

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 717. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 413 corresponds to Litir 717.

Seo criomag bàrdachd dhuibh. A bheil fios agaibh cò sgrìobh i agus cò dha a bha i?

*Bu tu am fear curanta mòr,
Bu mhath cumadh, is treòir,
O d’ uilinn gu d’ dhòrn,
O d’ mhullach gu d’ bhròig,
Mhic Mhuire mo leòn,
Thu bhith ’n innis nan ròn,
'S nach fhaighear thu.*

Uill, tha aon rud follaiseach, nach eil? Chan eil cuspair an dàin beò tuilleadh. Chaill e a bheatha le bhith air a bhàthadh aig muir. Tha e a-nise ann an ‘innis nan ròn’. A bharrachd air sin, ’s e duine làidir, eireachdail a bh’ ann.

’S e Iain Garbh Mac ’Ille Chalum cuspair an dàin. B’ esan ceann-cinnidh nan Leòdach ann an Ratharsair – an seachdamh fear dhiubh. Bha e beò anns an t-seachdamh linn deug. Bha mi ag innse sgeulachd mu dheidhinn an t-seachdain sa chaidh. Ach bha sin à beul-aithris. Agus cha ghabh a h-uile càil à beul-aithris a chreidsinn!

’S e fìor dhuine a bh’ ann an Iain Garbh, ge-tà. Chaidh a chlàradh aig an àm sin gun do chaill e a bheatha le bhith air a bhàthadh. Sgrìobh Màiri nighean Alasdair Ruaidh an dàn dha, air a bheil ‘Marbhrann do dh’Iain Garbh’. Bidh daoine ga sheinn fhathast.

Bu mhath leam innse dhuibh mu bheatha is bàs Iain Ghairbh. Fhuair e ceannas air Clann ’ic Leòid Ratharsair ann an sia ceud deug, ceathrad ’s a h-ochd (1648). Bha e pòsta aig Seònaid, nighean Ruairidh Mòr Dhùn Bheagain. Bha e ainmeil. Bhathar ag ràdh gum b’ esan am fear a bu làidire agus a b’ eireachdaile a bha beò ri linn.

Fhuair e bàs ann an sia ceud deug, seachdad ’s a h-aon (1671). Bha e air a bhith ann an Leòdhas, far an robh cuirm co-cheangailte ri baisteadh fear no tè de chloinn nan Sìophortach. Faisg air costa an ear-thuath dhen Eilean Sgitheanach, ann an droch shìde, chaidh a’ bhirlinn aige fodha.

Chailleadh a h-uile duine – Iain Garbh agus sia duine deug eile. Bhathar ag ràdh gun robh an stoirm cho dona ’s gun robh clachan mòra a’ chladaich air an tilgeil don tìr. **Bha a h-uile duine a’ caoidh a’ chall.**

Ach an e an stoirm leatha fhèin a dh’adhbharaich an tubaist? Uill, tha e coltach gur dòcha gun robh rudeigin eile ceangailte ris a’ ghnòthach – deoch làidir. Ann an Làmh-sgrìobhainn Chnoc Mhoire – rud ris an canar am *Wardlaw Manuscript* ann am

Beurla – tha an t-Urramach Seumas Friseal a’ dèanamh aithris air a’ chùis. Agus tha esan a’ coireachadh deoch làidir. *‘Drunkness did the mischief,’* sgrìobh e.

A rèir Mhgr Fhriseil, bha na Ratharsaich a’ gabhail deoch làidir air a’ chladach mus do sheòl iad. Thug fear Alasdair MacLeòid rabhadh do dh’Iain Garbh, ag ràdh ris nach bu chòir dha falbh air an latha sin. Bhiodh a h-uile duine air am bàthadh. Thuirt e sin trì tursan. Chan eil fhios agam cò Alasdair MacLeòid a bha sin. An robh an dà-shealladh aige? No an robh e dìreach a’ tomhas mar a bha an aimsir?

Co-dhiù, cha do ghabh Iain Garbh ri a chomhairle. Chaidh e air bòrd. Agus chan fhacas tuilleadh e. Cha tàinig corp sam bith gu tìr. Cha robh dad air a lorg ach sprùilleach bhon bhàta agus dà chù mharbh.

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Faclan na Litreach: eireachdail: *handsome*; ceannas: *headship*; Ratharsair: *Raasay*; An t-Urramach Seumas Friseal: *Rev James Fraser*; an dà-shealladh: *the second sight*; corp: *body*.

Abairtean na Litreach: criomag bàrdachd: *a snippet of poetry*; a bheil fios agaibh cò sgrìobh i agus cò dha a bha i?: *do you know who wrote it and to whom it was [written]*; bu mhath cumadh, is treòir: *of fine shape and prowess*; o d’ uilinn gu d’ dhòrn: *from your elbow to your fist*; o d’ mhullach gu d’ bhròig: *from your crown to your shoe*; Mhic Mhuire mo leòn thu bhith ’n innis nan ròn: *Son of Mary, my pain is that you are in the abode of the seals*; ’s nach fhaighear thu: *and that you can’t be recovered*; cuspair an dàin: *the subject of the poem*; chaill e a bheatha le bhith air a bhàthadh aig muir: *he lost his life by being drowned at sea*; ceann-cinnidh nan Leòdach: *the clan chief of the MacLeods*; cha ghabh a h-uile càil à beul-aithris a chreidsinn: *not everything from oral tradition can be believed*; cuirm co-cheangailte ri baisteadh fear no tè de chloinn nan Sìophortach: *a ceremony associated with the baptism of one of the Seaforth’s children*; chaidh a’ bhirlinn aige fodha: *his birlinn went down*; chailleadh a h-uile duine: *everybody was lost*; gun robh clachan mòra a’ chladaich air an tilgeil don tìr: *that large stones from the shore were thrown onto the land*; a’ coireachadh deoch làidir: *blaming alcoholic drink*; mus do sheòl iad: *before they sailed*; an robh e dìreach a’ tomhas mar a bha an aimsir?: *was he simply assessing the weather?*; chan fhacas tuilleadh e: *he was never seen again*; sprùilleach bhon bhàta agus dà chù mharbh: *wreckage from the boat and two dead dogs*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: **Bu tu am fear curanta mòr:** *You were the brave and great man. Bu is the past tense form of the assertive verb ‘is’. We might say ‘s tu am fear as onaraiche dhiubh ‘you are the most honest man of them’. If we’re addressing somebody with the bu form, however, it really presumes they are no longer living. You might say to somebody who is alive bu tu am fear a bu làidire aig an àm sin ‘you were the strongest man at that time’. It’s grammatically correct but perhaps a little unnatural. That is why you will mostly come across this type of usage in panegyric poetry to departed subjects.*

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: **Bha a h-uile duine a’ caoidh a’ chall:** *everybody was mourning the loss.*

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