

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Loch Cuithir agus a' Chaile

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 734. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 430 corresponds to Litir 734.

Loch Cuithir. A bheil sibh eòlach air? Tha e anns an Taobh Sear, ann an ceann a tuath an Eilein Sgitheanaich. Tha e faisg air baile croitearachd air a bheil An Leth-allt. Tha an loch suidhichte fo thè de na beanntan as drùidhtiche anns an eilean, taobh a-muigh a' Chuilthinn, co-dhiù. Is ise Sgùrr a' Mhadaidh Ruaidh.

Tha Loch Cuithir gu math sìtheil, agus bha mi ann o chionn ghoirid air feasgar brèagha samhraidh. Cha chluinnear ri taobh an locha ach bìogail a' bhrù-ghil agus mèilich nan caorach. 'S e àite math a th' ann do dhuine a tha a' lorg sìth is sàmhchair.

Ach **cha robh Loch Cuithir riamh cho sàmhach sin**. Bha gnìomhachas tionnsgalach ann aig aon àm, a bha a' toirt obair do mhuinntir an àite. B' e sin Gnìomhachas na Cailc.

Ged a tha *cailc* a' seasamh ann an Gàidhlig airson *chalk*, cha b' e cailc dhen t-seòrsa sin a bh' ann, ach stuth ris an canar *diatomite*. Tha e a' tighinn bho shligean dhà-dhadaman, *diatoms*, a bha beò o chionn mìltean bhliadhnaichean. 'S e dà-dhadam lus beag bìodach – meanbh-bheò, gu dearbh – a tha beò ann an uisge.

Nuair a gheibh iad bàs, bidh an sligean air an càrnadh air a' ghrund. Tro thìde bidh iad air am fàsgadh ri chèile agus nì iad clach bhog bhàn. Faodar a' chlach seo a dhèanamh na fùdar. Tha i làn *silica* agus, mar sin, gu math feumail do mhac-an-duine. Bhathar ga cleachdadh, mar eisimpleir, airson sìolachadh, airson uisge a shùghadh agus airson bacadh a chur air call teas.

Bha a' chaile ann an leapannan fo thrì troighean de mhòine. Agus cha robh an loch cho mòr 's a tha e an-diugh. Bha mòran dheth air a chòmhdachadh le còinneach. Bha an t-àite fliuch, agus b' fheudar pumpaichean a chur an sàs fad na h-ùine. Bha a' chaile fhèin gu math fliuch. Mar sin, thogadh sabhal faisg air an loch far an robh i air a tiormachadh gu ìre. Thòisich an gnìomhachas anns a' bhliadhna mu dheireadh dhen naoidheamh linn deug (1899).

Tha trì mìle de mhòinteach ann eadar Loch Cuithir agus an cladach aig Inbhir Tobhta. Airson a' chaile a thoirt don chladach, thogadh rathad-iarainn. Agus shìos air a' chladach bha ionad-ròstaidh ann, far an robh a' chaile air a tiormachadh buileach agus air a bleith. Anns an ròstadh, bha na criomagan luibhean am measg na cailc air an losgadh.

Bhiodh a' chaile a' falbh a-mach gu long ann an eathraichean. Air làithean mar sin, bha suas ri ochdad duine a' faighinn cosnadh, eadar luchd na cailc agus luchd nam bàtaichean. Bha suas ri caogad ag obair aig an Leth-allt fhèin.

Thàinig an gnìomhachas gu ceann aig toiseach a' chiad chogaidh. Ach thòisich e às ùr anns na caogadan. Chaidh rathad a thogail don loch. Thogadh factaraidh ùr ann an Ùig, air taobh thall Thròndairnis. Bha làraidhean a' toirt cailc fhliuch eadar Loch Cuithir agus Ùig. Tha feadhainn dhen bheachd gur e sin a chuir às don ghnothach aig toiseach nan seasgadan.

Faodar leughadh mun gnìomhachas anns an leabhar Ghàidhlig 'A' Chaile' le Richard Deveria. 'S e caibideil inntinneach a th' ann, ann an eachdraidh mhòr ceann a tuath an Eilein Sgitheanaich.

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Faclan na Litreach: an Taobh Sear: *Trotternish to the east of the ridge, taking in Staffin*; An Leth-allt: *Lealt (the name means a burn with a high bank on one side)*; tionnsgalach: *industrial*; cailc: *diatomite*; dà-dhadam: *diatom*; meanbh-bheò: *plankton*.

Abairtean na Litreach: A bheil sibh eòlach air?: *do you know it?*; suidhichte fo thè de na beanntan as drùidhtiche: *situated under one of the most impressive mountains*; taobh a-muigh a' Chuilthinn: *outside the Cuillin*; cha chluinnear ach biogail a' bhrùghil agus mèilich nan caorach: *the only things that are [to be] heard are the chattering of the wheatear and the bleating of the sheep*; sìth is sàmhchair: *peace and quiet*; air an càrnadh air a' ghrund: *piled up on the base [of the water body]*; air am fàsgadh ri chèile: *squeezed together*; faodar a' chlach seo a dhèanamh na fùdar: *this stone can be made into a powder*; airson sìolachadh, airson uisge a shùghadh agus airson bacadh a chur air call teas: *for filtering, for water absorption and for heat insulation*; ann an leabannan fo thrì troighean de mhòine: *in beds under three feet of peat*; air a chòmhdachadh le còinneach: *covered with moss*; b' fheudar pumpaichean a chur an sàs: *it was necessary to work pumps*; thogadh sabhal far an robh i air a tiormachadh gu ìre: *a barn-like building was built where it [the diatomite] was partially dried*; air a tiormachadh buileach agus air a bleith: *fully dried and ground*; bha na criomagan luibhean am measg na cailc air an losgadh: *the fragments of plants among the diatomite were burned*; a-mach gu long ann an eathraichean: *out to a ship in small boats*; gur e sin a chuir às don ghnothach aig toiseach nan seasgadan: *that that was what put paid to the business at the beginning of the sixties*; faodar leughadh mun gnìomhachas: *the business can be read about*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: *Do any of you have thoughts on the meaning of Cuithir in Loch Cuithir? I suspect it might be based on a Norse original kví 'animal pen, enclosure' which has given us the Gaelic cuithe, meaning the same. This might also be the first element in the Cuith-raing/Quirang, a famous arrangement of hills a little further to the north. If you have any thoughts, I'd be pleased to hear from you.*

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: **cha robh Loch Cuithir riamh cho sàmhach sin:** *Loch Cuithir wasn't always as quiet as that.*

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