

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Gilleasbuig MacDhòmhnail, ‘Gille na Ciotaig’

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 798. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 494 corresponds to Litir 798.

Tha sanas air a’ ghàrradh ann an Cladh Chille Chuimein. Tha e a’ cuimhneachadh bàrd Gàidhlig a bha ainmeil ri a linn. Chaidh Gilleasbuig MacDhòmhnail a thiodhlacadh anns a’ chladh sin ann an ochd ceud deug is còig-deug (1815), ach chan eil clach-uaighe aige. Cha robh e a’ fuireach anns an sgìre agus cha robh càirdean aige ann.

Bha e ann an Cille Chuimein oir bha e air an rathad a dh’Inbhir Nis. Bhiodh bàtaichean-aiseig a’ ruith air Loch Nis aig an àm sin, a’ dol a dh’ionnsaigh Inbhir Nis. Tha dùil gum b’ e **fàth a thurais** na dàin aige fhoillseachadh. ’S iad muinntir Comunn Gàidhlig Inbhir Nis a chuir an sanas ann, a’ comharrachadh a’ bhàird.

Rugadh Gilleasbuig ann an seachd ceud deug is caogad (1750) ann am Paibeil ann an Uibhist a Tuath. Bha a ghàirdean clì na bu ghiorra na ’n àbhaist, le meanbh-chorragan air. Bha a ghàirdean deas ceart gu leòr, agus ’s ann leis an làimh dheis a bha e a’ sgrìobhadh.

Bha Gilleasbuig ainmeil airson a bhith ri aoir. Chlàir Alasdair MacIlleMhìcheil naidheachd mu dheidhinn turas a bha Gilleasbuig a’ tadhal air caraid ann am Beàrnasdal san Eilean Sgitheanach. Fhuair an t-each aige mu sgaoil agus chaidh e a-steach don phàirc ionaltraidh aig fear-taca Bheàrnasdail. Bha cliù aigesan mar spìocaire.

Dh’iarr am fear-taca airgead-diòlaidh air Gilleasbuig airson na dh’ith an t-each de dh’fheur. Chuir Gilleasbuig leth-chrùn air a’ gheata ach thòisich e air òran aoireil a chruthachadh is aithris. Dh’iarr am fear-taca air a chuid airgid a thoirt leis, agus gun a bhith a’ gabhail an òrain tuilleadh. Dh’fhalbh Gilleasbuig air muin eich le a leth-chrùn na sporan. Ach bha e fhathast a’ gabhail an òrain!

Tha stòiridh ann gun robh ceann-cinnidh nan Dòmhnallach, Sir Seumas Dòmhnallach Shlèite, a’ sealg ann an Uibhist a Tuath. Bha Gilleasbuig na ghille fhathast aig an àm. Thàinig Sir Seumas tarsainn air teaghlach air an àirigh. B’ iad sin pàrantan Ghilleasbuig.

Bha Gàidhlig aig Sir Seumas agus chuir e ceistean air a’ bhoireannach mu a teaghlach. Dh’inns i dha gun robh dithis ghillean aice a’ faighinn foghlam ann an sgoil na paraiste, agus gun robh fear dhiubh gun chomas ann am fear de na gàirdeanan aige. Feumaidh gun do thuig Sir Seumas gun robh i a’ ciallachadh gun robh a’ chearrag air. Oir thuirt e, ‘Is bochd nach e Colla a th’ air mar ainm. Nam b’ e, bhiodh Colla Ciotach eile againn ann an cinneadh nan Dòmhnallach.’ Tha mi an dùil gur e sin as coireach

gur e ‘Gille na Ciotaig’ no ‘Gilleasbuig na Ciotaig’ a chanadh daoine ris mar fhrith-ainm, ged nach robh e **leis a’ chearraig**.

Mar a thuirt mi, bha Gilleasbuig air an rathad a dh’Inbhir Nis nuair a chaochail e. Thathar an dùil gun do thadhail e air Alasdair Stiùbhart ann an Cille Chuimein. Bha esan uaireigin na mhaighstir-sgoile ann an Uibhist a Tuath. Agus thathar a’ smaoineachadh gun deach feadhainn de dhàin Ghilleasbuig fhoillseachadh anns a’ chruinneachadh de bhàrdachd air an robh *Stewart’s Collection*. Ach, gu mì-fhortanach, tha e coltach gun deach mòran dhiubh a chall. Is mòr am beud.

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Faclan na Litreach: Cladh Chille Chuimein: *Kilcumin cemetery, Fort Augustus*; clach-uaighe: *gravestone*; bàtaichean-aiseig: *ferries*; Paibeil: *Paible*; aoir: *satire*; airgead-dìolaidh: *money in compensation*; leth-chrùn: *a half-crown*; Shlèite: *of Sleat (Skye)*; àirigh: *shieling*; ceann-cinnidh: *clan chief*.

Abairtean na Litreach: bha e air an rathad a dh’Inbhir Nis: *he was on the way to Inverness*; a’ comharrachadh a’ bhàird: *commemorating the bard*; bha a ghàirdean clì na bu ghiorra na ’n àbhaist, le meanbh-chorragan air: *his left arm was shorter than normal, with very small fingers on it*; ’s ann leis an làimh dheis a bha e a’ sgrìobhadh: *it’s with his right hand that he wrote*; a’ tadhal air caraid ann am Beàrnasdal: *visiting a friend in Bernisdale*; fhuair an t-each aige mu sgaoil: *his horse escaped*; a-steach don phàirc ionaltraidh aig fear-taca Bheàrnasdail: *into the grazing pasture of the tacksman of Bernisdale*; bha cliù aigesan mar spìocaire: *he was renowned as a miser*; airson na dh’ith an t-each de dh’fheur: *for the grass the horse ate*; thòisich e air òran aoireil a chruthachadh is aithris: *he started to create and recite*; a chuid airgid a thoirt leis: *to take his money with him*; gun a bhith a’ gabhail an òrain tuilleadh: *not to sing the song anymore*; na sporan: *in his purse*; a’ faighinn foghlam ann an sgoil na paraiste: *receiving an education in the parish school*; gun robh fear dhiubh gun chomas ann am fear de na gàirdeanan aige: *that one of them was incapable of using one of his arms*; gur e sin as coireach gur e ‘Gille na Ciotaig’ a chanadh daoine ris: *that that’s the reason people called him ‘the left-handed lad’*; bha esan uaireigin na mhaighstir-sgoile ann an Uibhist a Tuath: *he was at one time a schoolmaster in North Uist*; tha e coltach gun deach mòran dhiubh a chall: *it appears that many of them were lost*; is mòr am beud: *what a pity*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: ged nach robh e **leis a’ chearraig**: *although he wasn’t left-handed. This is one way of expressing left-handedness. Another is with the noun ciotag or the adjective ciotach. The famous MacDonald warrior, Alasdair MacColla Chiotaich, was the son of left-handed Coll, although both Coll and Alasdair actually appear to have been ambidextrous, certainly as regards the use of a claymore. Gille na Ciotaig was, by all accounts, actually right-handed because he had a withered left arm – hence the explanation that his nickname might have arisen as a result of a misunderstanding on the part of Sir James MacDonald, the clan chief.*

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: Tha dùil gum b’ e **fàth a thurais** na dàin aige fhoillseachadh: *it’s thought that the purpose of his journey was to publish his poems.*

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