

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Gormshuil na Maighe (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.macleon@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 940. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 636 corresponds to Litir 940.

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Ghormshuil Mhòr na Maighe. Mus tig mi don sgeul mu bhàs a’ ghille aice, bu mhath leam aithris a dhèanamh air a’ chunntas ainmeil mun luing Spàinntich a chuir i fodha far cladach Mhuile. B’ e a’ bhliadhna còig ceud deug, ochdad ’s a h-ochd (1588) agus bhuineadh an long don mhòr-chabhlach a bha a’ dol a thoirt ionnsaigh air Sasainn mus do dh’èirich stoirm.

Chaidh an long a-steach a Bhàgh Thobar Mhoire. Bha an aimsir ciùin ach nuair a bha iad sa bhàgh, dh’fhairich iad crathadh sa chrann.

‘**Thoiribh sùil, ’illean**,’ dh’òrdaich an caiptean. ‘Dè bha siud?’

‘O, tha ròcas mòr dubh ann,’ thuirt iad.

‘Chan eil an sin ach an Doideag Mhuileach,’ ars an caiptean, aig an robh eòlas air gnothaichean os-nàdarrach. Bha e a’ ciallachadh le sin bana-bhuidseach. Thàinig crathadh eile air an t-soitheach. Bha sin na bu làidire. ’S iad bana-bhuidsich à Tiriodh agus Ìle a bu chuireach an turas seo. Bha iad a’ feuchainn ris an long a chur fodha ach cha robh iad làidir gu leòr.

An uair sin, bha crathadh mòr mòr ann. Bhri na ròpan a bha a’ cumail a h-uile càil ri chèile. ‘O,’ ars an caiptean, ‘’s e sin Gormshuil na Maighe. Agus tha sinn caillte.’ Chaidh an soitheach fodha far an robh i faisg air Tobar Mhoire. Agus tha i an sin fhathast air grunn na mara.

Air ais gu Loch Abar, ma-thà. Mar a bha mi ag innse dhuibh an t-seachdain sa chaidh, thuirt Gormshuil ri a ceann-cinnidh, Loch Iall, gun crochadh e a mac latha air choreigin. Chaidh Loch Iall às àicheadh sin. ‘Eadhon ged a bhiodh do mhac airidh air crochadh,’ thuirt e, ‘nì mi cinnteach gum bi e air a shàbhaladh.’

Chaidh na bliadhnaichean seachad, agus bha mac Gormshuil, mac nàbaidh aice a bha na banntarach agus gille eile a-muigh sa mhonadh. Thòisich connsachadh eadar mac na banntarach agus an gille eile. Thug mac na banntarach buille don fhear eile agus fhuair e bàs sa spot.

Bha dùil aig mac na banntarach gum biodh e air a chrochadh. B’ e an aon ghille aig a’ bhanntarach agus bha a mhàthair troimhe-chèile. Chuimhnich Gormshuil an gealltanais a thug Loch Iall dhi agus dh’iarr i air a mac innse gum b’ esan a dh’adhbaraich bàs a’ ghille. Chaidh a mac a chur don phrìosan aig Loch Iall ann an Achadh na Cairidh. Cha robh fios aig Loch Iall, ge-tà, gum b’ esan mac Gormshuil.

Chaidh Gormshuil fhèin gu ruige Achadh na Cairidh airson iarraidh air Loch Iall an gille aice a shàbhaladh. Bha i faisg air Achadh na Cairidh nuair a ràinig i allt far am fac’ i bradan ann an linne. Bha i a’ smaoinichadh gum biodh e furasta am

bradan a ghlacadh. Chaidh i air a glùinean, a' dèanamh deiseil airson am bradan a ghlacadh. Gu h-obann bha beum-slèibhe ann agus thug an t-allt air falbh i. Chaidh a bàthadh ann an Loch Lòchaidh. 'S e **Allt a' Bhradain** a th' air an allt sin an-diugh mar chuimhne air na thachair.

Cha robh fios aig Loch Iall gun robh Gormshuil air a bhith air an rathad a bhruidhinn ris. Agus chaidh an gille aice a chrochadh gu bàs, mar a dh'inns i a thachradh bliadhnaichean roimhe.

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Faclan na Litreach: ròcas: *rook*; an Doideag Mhuileach: *the Mull witch*; os-nàdarrach: *supernatural*; cailte: *lost*; buille: *blow*; gealltanais: *promise*; Achadh na Cairidh: *Achnacarry*.

Abairtean na Litreach: mun luing Spàinntich a chuir i fodha far cladach Mhuile: *about the Spanish ship she sank off the coast of Mull*; bhuineadh an long don mhòr-chabhlach a bha a' dol a thoirt ionnsaigh air Sasainn: *the ship belonged to the armada that was going to attack England*; a-steach a Bhàgh Thobar Mhoire: *into Tobermory Bay*; dh'fhairich iad crathadh sa chrann: *they felt a shaking in the mast*; 's iad bana-bhuidsich à Tiriodh agus Ìle a bu chuireach an turas seo: *it's witches from Tiree and Islay that were responsible this time*; bhris na ròpan a bha a' cumail a h-uile càil ri chèile: *the ropes that were keeping everything together broke*; gun crochadh e a mac latha air choreigin: *that he would hang her son some day*; chaidh Loch Iall às àicheadh sin: *Lochiel denied that*; ged a bhiodh do mhac airidh air crochadh: *though your son were deserving of hanging*; mac nàbaidh aice a bha na banntarach: *the son of her neighbour who was a widow*; far am fac' i bradan ann an linne: *where she saw a salmon in a pool*; air a glùinean: *on her knees*; chaidh a bàthadh ann an Loch Lòchaidh: *she was drowned in Loch Lochy*; air a bhith air an rathad a bhruidhinn ris: *had been on the road to speak to him*; chaidh an gille aice a chrochadh gu bàs, mar a dh'inns i a thachradh bliadhnaichean roimhe: *her son was hanged, as she said would happen years before*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Allt a' Bhradain: *the burn of the salmon. There are actually two candidates for the burn in which Gormshuil (despite being one of the most powerful witches in Scottish history) met her fate. Both run into Loch Lochy just south of Achnacarry. One is Allt a' Bhradain; the other is just to the south and has a larger catchment so is a more likely candidate. It is Allt Choille-ros given on the OS maps as Allt Coire Choille-rai. Mary MacKellar wrote that both names referred to the same burn which was also called Allt Gormshuil although that name does not appear to have survived. If you have local knowledge of the place and know which burn claimed Gormshuil's life, I would be delighted to hear from you!*

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: Thoiribh sùil, 'illean: *take a look, lads.*

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