

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

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An Loireag

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 963. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 659 corresponds to Litir 963.

Dè th’ ann an loireag? A bheil sibh eòlach air an fhacal? Loireag. A bheil e a’ ciallachadh, saoil, ‘handsome shaggy cow’, ‘fat little girl’ no ‘pancake’? Uill, a rèir faclair Dwelly, tha e a’ ciallachadh a h-uile gin dhiubh sin – bò eireachdail mholach, caileag bheag reamhar agus bonnach no breacag. Agus dà rud eile a bharrachd – ‘petrel’ (seòrsa de dh’eun-mara) agus ‘water-nymph’ no ‘water-sprite’.

Tha mi airson innse dhuibh mun fheadhainn mu dheireadh – an loireag **mar chreutair os-nàdarrach**, mar a chaidh aithris ann an *Carmina Gadelica*. Bhiodh ùidh mhòr aig an loireig ann an obair a’ chlà – ann am fighe, luathadh agus nighe. Gu sònraichte ann an luathadh. B’ e sin obair nam ban agus, mar sin, ’s iad boireannach a bu mhotha a bhiodh a’ dèiligeadh ris na loireagan.

Anns an t-seann aimsir, bhiodh boireannaich a’ luathadh a’ chlà còmhla ann am buidhnean. Bhiodh iad a’ gabhail òrain aig an aon àm. Tha mòran de na h-òrain-luathaidh air an seinn fhathast, an dà chuid ann an Alba agus Alba Nuadh.

Bhiodh loireagan a’ dèanamh cinnteach nach biodh an t-aon òran air a sheinn dà thuras aig an aon luathadh. Dh’fheumadh tòrr òran a bhith aig na boireannaich! Agus bha na loireagan cruaidh air boireannach sam bith aig an robh guth a bha ‘cruaidh, reasgach, sgreagach’. Nan cluinneadh i a leithid de ghuth os cionn chàich, bhiodh i a’ goid a’ bhainne bho sprèidh a’ bhaile agus gan cur fo gheasaibh gus nach biodh comas aca gluasad.

Bha loireag uaireigin a’ fuireach làimh ris a’ Bheinn Mhòir ann an Uibhist a Deas. Bha cuideachd bodach a’ fuireach an cois na beinne. Bhiodh an loireag a’ deoghail a bhà. Dh’fheuch a nighean ri teicheadh a chur air an loireig ach cha deach leatha. Thill i don taigh agus dh’inns i do a h-athair nach èisteadh an loireag no a’ bhò rithe.

Leum am bodach chun an dorais. Bha e a’ mionnachadh air an loireig agus **air a’ bhoin**. Thilg e clach mhòr air an loireig. Ach chaill e i agus bhuail e a’ bhò. Cha mhòr nach do mharbh e a’ bhò.

Ghremich e air adharc na bà. Ann an ainm Chaluim Chille chaoimh, dh’iarr e air a’ bhoin dèanamh air falbh bhon loireig. Air sgàth ’s gun robh ainm Chaluim Chille cho cumhachdach, leum an loireag air falbh bhon bhoin, agus leum a’ bhò air falbh bhon loireig.

Theich an loireag gu Coire Choradail tuath air a’ bheinn agus thòisich i air seinn. Seo na sheinn i:

*Laoigh bhreaca bhoireann, Laoigh bhreaca bhoireann, Laoigh bhreaca bhoireann,
Doinnean anns an Dàmhair.*

*Bhodaich bhig à bun a’ choire, Bhodaich bhig à bun a’ choire, Bhodaich bhig à bun
a’ choire, Coradal agus Craigeo.*

*Bhodaich bhig a' chòta ghearra, Bhodaich bhig a' chòta ghearra, Bhodaich bhig a' chòta ghearra, Circeadal agus Cragabhig.
Bhodaich bhig à bun a' bhealaich, Bhodaich bhig à bun a' bhealaich,
Bhodaich bhig à bun a' bhealaich, Treise dha do làmhach, Mealam dhut do shlàinte,
Laoigh bhreaca bhoireann.*

Tha e inntinneach a bhith a' coimhead airson nan ainmean-àite anns an òran air a' mhapa. Tha Coradal ann, ceart gu leòr. Ach cha do lorg mi Circeadal, Craigeo no Cragabhig. Agus chan aithne dhomh dè thachair don loireig às dèidh sin. Fhad 's as aithne dhomh, chan fhacas i airson ùine mhòr.

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Faclan na Litreach: *bonnach, breacag: pancake [the English is often used as well]; eun-mara: seabird.*

Abairtean na Litreach: *bò eireachdail mholach: a handsome, shaggy cow; bhiodh ùidh mhòr aig an loireig ann an obair a' chlà: the loireag was greatly interested in the working of the tweed; fighe, luathadh agus nighe: weaving, waulking (fulling) and cleaning; obair nam ban: women's work; bhiodh iad a' gabhail òrain aig an aon àm: they would sing songs at the same time; nach biodh an t-aon òran air a sheinn dà thuras aig an aon luathadh: that the same song wouldn't be sung twice at the one waulking; dh'fheumadh tòrr òran a bhith aig na boireannaich: the women would have to have [know] many songs; guth a bha 'cruaidh, reasgach, sgreadach': a voice that was hard and metallic, out of tune and overwhelmed the others [translation from Carmina Gadelica]; bhiodh i a' goid a' bhainne bho sprèidh a' bhaile agus gan cur fo gheasaibh: she would steal the milk from the cows of the townland, putting a spell on them; an cois na beinne: next to the mountain; bhiodh X a' deoghail a bhà: X would suck [the milk from] his cow; dh'fheuch a nighean ri teicheadh a chur air: his daughter tried to chase away; chaill e i agus bhuail e a' bhò: he missed her and hit the cow; ghreimich e air adharc na bà: he took hold of the cow's horn; ann an ainm Chaluim Chille chaoimh: in the name of kindly Columba; Laoigh bhreaca bhoireann: speckled female calves; doinnean anns an Dàmhair: a storm in the deer-rut time; bhodaich bhig a' chòta ghearra: little old man of the short coat [was he a sìthiche?!]; treise dha do làmhach: strength to your hand; mealam dhut do shlàinte: I pray you have [good] health; chan fhacas i: it hasn't been [wasn't] seen.*

Puing-chànain na Litreach: *bha e a' mionnachadh air an loireig agus air a' bhoine: he was swearing at the loireag and the cow. The preposition air traditionally slenderises the feminine noun loireag (where the article is present) and puts the noun bò into a special dative singular form, boine. This is not so commonly heard today but, as the story is traditional, I felt it was appropriate to use a slightly 'archaic' form.*

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: *an loireag mar chreutair os-nàdarrach: the loireag as a supernatural creature.*

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