

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Dìol Bhaltair an Gàdhaig

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 1,018. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 714 corresponds to Litir 1,018.

An t-seachdain seo tha mi ann an Gàdhaig ann am Bàideanach, ann an ceann a deas Pàirc Nàiseanta a’ Mhonaidh Ruaidh. Chan eil ach sluagh beag bìodach a’ fuireach ann an Gàdhaig an-diugh, ach tha dualchas Gàidhlig air leth aig an sgìre sin. Tha i làn bheanntan a tha briste le uillt is lochan, agus tha a h-ainm a’ tighinn bhon fhacal Ghàidhlig *gàg*, a’ ciallachadh ‘eag’ no ‘*cleft*’. Bha na seann Ghàidheil eòlach air mar ‘Gàdhaig nam Feadan Fiar’ no ‘*Gaick of the crooked streams*’.

Cha mhòr gu bheil cànan eile air mapa Ghàdhaig seach a’ Ghàidhlig fhèin. Ach tha aon ainm-àite annasach ann. Eadar Loch an Dùin, am Meall Odhar Mòr, am Meallan Buidhe agus Coire na Craoibhe, tha *Vinegar Hill*. Sin an t-ainm air an leathad gu sear air mullach a’ Mheallain Bhuidhe. Ciamar a fhuair ainm Beurla a-steach gu sin?

Uill, gu fortanach, thug an sgoilear Gàidhlig, Alasdair MacBheathain, a bheachd air a’ ghnòthach. Bhuineadh MacBheathain do Bhàideanach. Nam biodh fios aig duine, bhiodh fios aigesan. Agus sgrìobh e anns an leabhar aige mu ainmean-àite na Gàidhealtachd gur e ainm an leathaid ann an Gàidhlig *A’ Mhìn-choiseachd ‘the easy walking’*. ‘*The English,*’ sgrìobh e, ‘*is a fancy name founded on the Gaelic.*’ A’ Mhìn-choiseachd – *Vinegar...*? Uill, chan eil mìneachadh nas fheàrr na sin agam.

Bha droch chliù aig Gàdhaig am measg muinntir Bhàideanach is Athall. Tha abairt ann: ‘*S mòr a b’ fheàrr leam a bhith an Druim Uachdair na bhith ann an Gàdhaig nan creagan gruamach ‘I’d much rather be in Drumochter than in Gaick of the gloomy crags*’. Nise, faodaidh Druim Uachdair a bhith fuar is gruamach aig amannan cuideachd! Ach bidh Gàdhaig nas miosa: ‘*S mòr a b’ fheàrr leam a bhith an Druim Uachdair na bhith ann an Gàdhaig nan creagan gruamach*’.

Bha mallachd ionadail ann cuideachd – *Dìol Bhaltair an Gàdhaig ort!* Tha sin a’ ciallachadh ‘*Walter’s fate in Gaick to you*’. Dìol Bhaltair an Gàdhaig ort. ‘S e fìor dhroch mhallachd a tha sin, oir tha e a’ buntainn ris a’ bhàs uabhasach a dh’fhuiling Bhaltair Cuimeanach, Triath Bhàideanach, anns an treas linn deug.

Bha a dhachaigh ann an Ruadhainn, faisg air Ceann a’ Ghiùthsaidh. Bha e ag iarraidh gum biodh rathad ceart air a thogail eadar Bàideanach agus Athall. Bha e a-muigh a’ coimhead air an t-slighe sa mhonadh deas air Ruadhainn ann an dà cheud dheug, caogad ’s a h-ochd (1258).

Air an rathad a-mach, thug Bhaltair òrdugh seachad. Dh’fheumadh a h-uile boireannach – eadar còig-deug agus trithead bliadhna a’ dh’aois – a bha ag obrachadh na talmhainn ann an Ruadhainn a bhith **dearg-rùisgte**.

Annas an àrd-mhonadh sear air Loch an Dùin, tha allt air a bheil Allt a' Chaoirnich. Tha àite ainmeil an sin air a bheil *Leum nam Fiann*, far am biodh daoine a' leum thar an uillt. Cha robh Bhaltair cho comasach ris na Fianna, ge-tà. Thuit e far each, ach chaidh a chas an sàs san stiorap. Feumaidh gun robh geas – no eagal – air an each, agus chaidh e a Ruadhainn na dheann. Nuair a ràinig e Ruadhainn, cha robh air fhàgail de Bhaltair ach aon chas – fhathast san stiorap. Nuair a chaidh feadhainn a choimhead airson a chòrr de a chorp, lorg iad e, agus dà iolaire ga reubadh às a chèile.

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Faclan na Litreach: Gàdhaig: *Gaick*; Bàideanach: *Badenoch*; Alasdair MacBheathain: *Alexander MacBain*; bhuineadh X do: *X belonged to*; mallachd ionadail: *a local curse*; na dheann: *in a hurry*.

Abairtean na Litreach: ceann a deas Pàirc Nàiseanta a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh: *the southern end of the Cairngorms National Park*; chan eil ach sluagh beag bìodach a' fuireach ann: *there's only a tiny population living there*; làn bheanntan a tha briste le uillt is lochan: *full of mountains that are broken by burns and lochs*; cha mhòr gu bheil cànan eile air mapa Ghàdhaig: *there is hardly another language on the map of Gaick*; an t-ainm air an leathad gu sear air X: *the name of the slope east of X*; chan eil mìneachadh nas fheàrr na sin agam: *I don't have a better explanation than that*; bha droch chliù aig Gàdhaig am measg muinntir Bhàideanach is Athall: *Gaick had a bad reputation among the people of Badenoch and Atholl*; tha e a' buntainn ris a' bhàs uabhasach a dh'fhuiling Bhaltair Cuimeanach, Triath Bhàideanach, annas an treas linn deug: *it is connected to the terrible death that Walter Comyn, the Lord of Badenoch, suffered in the 13th Century*; bha a dhachaigh ann an Ruadhainn, faisg air Ceann a' Ghiùthsaidh: *his home was in Ruthven, near Kingussie*; a' coimhead air an t-slighe sa mhonadh: *looking at the route on the high country*; eadar còig-deug agus trithead bliadhna a' dh'aois: *between fifteen and thirty years of age*; ag obrachadh na talmhainn: *working the land*; far am biodh daoine a' leum thar an uillt: *where people would leap across the burn*; chaidh a chas an sàs san stiorap: *his foot got caught in the stirrup*; feumaidh gun robh geas – no eagal – air an each: *the horse must have been under a spell – or fear*; nuair a chaidh feadhainn a choimhead airson a chòrr de a chorp: *when some people went to look for the rest of his body*; dà iolaire ga reubadh às a chèile: *two eagles tearing it apart*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: *Despite his death, Walter Comyn's vision of a proper 'road' linking Badenoch and Atholl did come to fruition and was widely used before the building of the route through Drumochter. It is today a hillwalkers' track, known in Gaelic as Rathad nan Cuimeanach 'the Comyns' Road' or Rathad nan Caoirneach (as in its southern reaches it runs adjacent to Allt a' Chaoirnich, the word Caoirneach meaning 'place of rowans'). The track goes past Leum nam Fiann where Walter met his sorry end.*

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: dh'fheumadh a h-uile boireannach a bhith **dearg-rùisgte**: *every woman would have to be stark naked.*

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