

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

An Uamh Mhòr (1)

Each week the West Highland Free Press publishes the text for Ruairidh 's "Letter to Gaelic Learners" on BBC Radio nan Gàidheal (103.5-105 FM). Broadcasts are as follows: 10.00 pm on Sunday, following the Gaelic Learners' programme 'Beag air Bheag', with a repeat at 10.30 pm on Wednesday. This is Litir 1,041. There is also a simpler version – An Litir Bheag – which is broadcast at 4.03 pm each Sunday. Litir Bheag 737 corresponds to Litir 1,041. The Litir is also available at www.bbc.co.uk/litir and www.learnghaelic.scot/litir.

Tha mi air ais ann am Bàideanach an t-seachdain seo oir bu toigh leam innse dhuibh mun Uaimh Mhòir sear air Ceann a' Ghiùthsaidh. Tha i faisg air baile-fearainn air a bheil Raitts, no Ràt ann an Gàidhlig. Tha mòran de mhuinntir an àite a' gabhail 'Raitts Cave' oirre. Ach chan eil i nàdarrach. 'S e seòrsa de thaigh fo-thalamh a th' innte, seach uamh nàdarrach.

Air mapaichean an latha an-diugh, chì sibh 'souterrain' far a bheil i. Air seann mhapaichean, ge-tà, chì sibh 'Pict House' no 'Pictish House' no 'Earth-house'. Tha seann stòiridh co-cheangailte rithe. Ach, mus tig mi gu sin, bu mhath leam innse dhuibh mun turas a chaidh an neach-saidheans ainmeil, Sir Daibhidh Brewster, ann.

Ann an ochd ceud deug, trithead 's a còig (1835), bha Brewster a' gabhail làithean-saora ann am Baile a' Bhile, dachaigh an uachdarain, Mac a' Phearsain – no MacMhuirich. Bha Brewster pòsta aig Juliet, nighean an uachdarain, Seumas Bàn, no mar a chanar ann am Beurla ris, *James 'Ossian' MacPherson*.

Bha Brewster gu math aithnichte ri a linn. Am measg mòran eile, chruthaich e an *stereoscope 3-D* agus an *kaleidoscope*. An robh fios agaibh gur e Albannach a chruthaich an *kaleidoscope*?

Thug Brewster sùil air an Uaimh Mhòir a bha làn chlachan is sprùilleach aig an àm. Thug e an sprùilleach a-mach agus lorg e taigh fo-thalamh a bha iongantach. Bha e fada is rudeigin caol, le leacan cloiche air gach taobh. Bha am mullach air a dhèanamh de leacan cuideachd. Sin mar a tha an t-àite, an ìre mhath, chun an latha an-diugh.

Tha an Uamh ann an cruth crudha-eich. Tha an ceann os-chearclach dhith a' coimhead chun a' chinn a deas – a dh'ionnsaigh a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh agus beanntan Athall. Tha an sealladh aiste brèagha.

Chan eil fhios a'm dè an coltas a bh' air an dùthaich nuair a chaidh an Uamh Mhòr a thogail, ach an-diugh tha i ann am meadhan pàirc ionaltraidh do chrodh no caoraich. Tha feansa timcheall oirre airson stad a chur air sprèidh bho bhith a' faighinn a-steach.

Cha b' e sin a' chiad turas a rinneadh iomradh air an uaimh. Tràth anns an naoidheamh linn deug, sgrìobh fear às an sgìre mu a deidhinn. Chuir esan ainm eile oirre – *MacNiven's Cave* – Uamh Chlann 'ic Ille Naoimh. Carson a tha sin? Uill, tha seann sgeulachd a tha a' dèanamh ceangal eadar an Uamh agus Clann 'ic Ille Naoimh. Tha mi airson a h-aithris dhuibh.

O chionn fhad an t-saoghail, bha Clann 'ic Ille Naoimh rudeigin cumhachdach ann am Bàideanach. Bha iad ann an caidreabh leis na Cuimeanaich – Iarlan Bhàideanach. Thug Clann 'ic a' Phearsain à Loch Abar taic do Rìgh Raibeart am Brusach ann a bhith a' smachdachadh nan Cuimeanach. Thug an Rìgh fearann dhaibh ann am Bàideanach – fearann a bha roimhe leis na Cuimeanaich. Dh'èirich naimhdeas, mar sin, eadar na Cuimeanaich agus Clann 'ic a' Phearsain. Bha sin a' ciallachadh gun robh Clann 'ic Ille Naoimh cuideachd nan nàimhdean aig Clann 'ic a' Phearsain.

A rèir beul-aithris, thog Clann 'ic Ille Naoimh creach air fearann aig Mac a' Phearsain à Cluainidh, taobh an Lagain. An toiseach, cha do chuir Mac a' Phearsain feachd ri chèile. An àite sin, chuir e a nighean gu ruige Clann 'ic Ille Naoimh mar theachdaire. Ach, mar a chì sinn anns an ath Litir, **cha do shoirbhich leatha.**

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Faclan na Litreach: Bàideanach: *Badenoch*; Ceann a' Ghiùthsaidh: *Kingussie*; baile-fearainn: *farm, fermtoun*; Clann 'ic Ille Naoimh: *the MacNivens*; Loch Abar: *Lochaber*; nàimhdean: *enemies*.

Abairtean na Litreach: 'S e seòrsa de thaigh fo-thalamh a th' innte, seach uamh nàdarrach: *it's a sort of underground house, rather than a natural cave*; tha seann stòiridh co-cheangailte rithe: *there is an old story linked to it*; làithean-saora ann am Baile a' Bhile, dachaigh an uachdarain: *holidays in Balavil, the home of the laird*; pòsta aig Juliet: *married to Juliet*; làn chlachan is sprùilleach: *full of stones and rubble*; fada is rudeigin caol, le leacan cloiche air gach taobh: *long and rather narrow, with stone slabs on each side*; cruth crudha-eich: *the shape of a horseshoe*; tha an ceann os-chearclach dhith a' coimhead chun a' chinn a deas: *the convex end of it looks towards the south*; a dh'ionnsaigh a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh agus beanntan Athall: *towards the Cairngorms and the mountains of Atholl*; tha an sealladh aiste brèagha: *the view from it is beautiful*; ann am meadhan pàirc ionaltraidh do chrodh no caoraich: *in the middle of a grazing field for cattle or sheep*; airson stad a chur air sprèidh bho bhith a' faighinn a-steach: *to stop livestock from getting in*; a' chiad turas a rinneadh iomradh air an uaimh: *the first time the cave was mentioned*; o chionn fhad an t-saoghail: *a long time ago*; ann an caidreabh leis na Cuimeanaich: *in an association with the Cummings*; fearann a bha roimhe leis na Cuimeanaich: *land that was previously owned by the Cummings*; thog Clann 'ic Ille Naoimh creach air fearann aig Mac a' Phearsain à Cluainidh, taobh an Lagain: *the MacNivens made a cattle raid on the land of MacPherson of Cluny, over Laggan way*; cha do chuir X feachd ri chèile: *X did not put together a band of men*; chuir e a nighean gu ruige Clann 'ic Ille Naoimh mar theachdaire: *he sent his daughter to MacNiven as a messenger*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Chan eil fhios a'm: *I don't know*. It's acceptable to write agam as a'm, particularly in a situation where it is pronounced that way – which is generally the case in informal speech. The apostrophe replaces the missing letters. You will see agad sometimes written as a'd in the same way – eg 'eil fhios a'd. (the Gaelic equivalent of the throw-away 'you know' or 'ye ken').

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: cha do shoirbhich leatha: *she wasn't successful*.

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