

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Naomh Meircheard (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 1,103. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 799 corresponds to Litir 1,103.

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Naomh Meircheard agus Gleann Moireasdan. Anns an t-seann aimsir, nuair a bhiodh cuideigin a’ bàsachadh, bhiodh an t-each a b’ fheàrr aige air a thoirt seachad don uachdaran. B’ e sin **an t-each-ursainn**. Mura robh each aig an duine, gheibheadh an t-uachdaran an aon luach ann an crodh no caoraich.

Uill, dusan ceud bliadhna an dèidh bàs **Meircheard**, chaochail fear ann an Gleann Moireasdan. Dh’fhàg e bantrach às a dhèidh. Cha robh each aig an duine, agus thug bàillidh na h-oighreachd leis luach eich ann an caoraich. Bha am bàillidh ag obair don uachdaran Ghranndach, ris an canadh iad ‘Mac Phàdraig’.

Air an oidhche sin, bha am bàillidh na laighe san leabaidh, nuair a chuala e guth. Thuirt an guth:

*Is mise Meircheard mòr nam feart,
'S mi a' dol dhachaigh san anmoch;
Is inns thusa do Mhac Phàdraig
Nach fheàrrd' e gu bràth am meanbh-chrodh!*

Bha eagal a bheatha air an duine. Dh’inns e do Mhac Phàdraig dè thachair. Chaidh na caoraich a thoirt ais don bhantraich sa bhad. Bhon latha sin a-mach, cha bhiodh an t-uachdaran ag iarraidh each-ursainn ann an Gleann Moireasdan.

Tha cunntas mu Mheircheard anns an t-seann leabhar ris an canar Leabhar Ùrnaighean Obar Dheathain, no *The Aberdeen Breviary*. Chan eil an cunntas ag ainmeachadh Ghleann Moireasdan. Ach tha e ag innse dhuinn mu bhàs an naomh. Chaidh e don Ròimh. Bheannaich am Pàp, Griogair, e.

Chaidh Meircheard dhachaigh, a’ searmonachadh air an rathad. Ràinig e Cinn Chàrdainn, an dùthaich aige fhèin. Bha fios aige nach robh a bhàs fad-às. Thug e òrdugh do a shearbhantan a chorp a chur air cairt. Bhiodh a’ chairt a’ gluasad leatha fhèin. Far an stadadh i – b’ e sin an t-àite airson a thiodhlacadh.

Chaochail an naomh. Chaidh a dhust a chur air cairt. Thoisich na cuibhlichean air tionndadh leatha fhèin. Chaidh a’ chairt tarsainn Uisge Dè, agus stad i far a bheil a-nise an t-seann eaglais ann an Cinn Chàrdainn.

Air ais gu Gleann Moireasdan, ma-thà. Airson ceudan bhliadhnaichean an dèidh bàs Meircheard, bha an clag aige fhathast anns a’ ghleann – aig Clachan Meircheard. Daoine a bha tinn – cha robh aca ach buntainn ris, agus ùrnaigh a dhèanamh, agus thigeadh piseach orra. Nuair a bha tiodhlacadh gu bhith ann, bhiodh an clag a’ seirm leis fhèin, ag ràdh, ‘Dhachaigh, dhachaigh, gu do leabaidh bhuan!’

Dh'fhàg Meirheard rabhadh aig na daoine gun a bhith a' cur a' chluig a dh'uisge. Ge-tà, timcheall na bliadhna ochd ceud deug is seachdad (1870), thilg fear don abhainn e. Chaidh e fodha agus chan fhacas a-rithist e. Chaidh an duine gu ruige Farrais. Nuair a bha e na bhodach, bha fear òg à Gleann Moireasdan ag obair ann am Farrais. Chunnaic e an duine. Dh'inns e seo do a chàirdean sa ghleann. Thug iadsan tastan dha airson deoch a cheannach don duine, gus an innseadh e cà' robh an clag. Ach, nuair e ràinig am fear òg Farrais, bha am bodach dìreach air bàsachadh. Bu mhòr am beud.

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Faclan na Litreach: Naomh Meirheard: *St. Merchard*; banntach: *widow*; bàillidh na h-oighreachd: *the estate factor*; nam feart: *of the miracles*; a' searmonachadh: *preaching*; Cinn Chàrdainn: *Kincardine [O'Neil]*; Uisge Dè: *River Dee*; tobhta: *ruin*; Farrais: *Forres*; tastan: *shilling*.

Abairtean na Litreach: bhiodh an t-each a b' fheàrr aige air a thoirt seachad don uachdaran: *his best horse would be given to the landlord*; an aon luach ann an crodh no caoraich: *the same value in cattle or sheep*; don uachdaran Ghranndach, ris an canadh iad 'Mac Phàdraig': *for the Grant landlord, whom they called 'Mac Phàdraig'*; a' dol dhachaigh san anmoch: *going home in the evening*; inns thusa do X: *you tell X*; nach fheàrrid' e gu bràth am meanbh-chrodh: *that he will never benefit from the sheep [literally 'little cattle']*; bha eagal a bheatha air X: *X was frightened out of his wits*; chaidh e don Ròimh: *he went to Rome*; bheannaich am Pàp e: *the Pope blessed him*; nach robh a bhàs fad-às: *that his death wasn't far away*; thug e òrdugh do a shearbhantan a chorp a chur air cairt: *he ordered his servants to put his body on a cart*; a' gluasad leatha fhèin: *moving by itself*; far an stadadh i – b' e sin an t-àite airson a thiodhacadh: *where it stopped – that was the place to bury him*; chaidh a dhust a chur air cairt: *his remains were put on a cart*; cha robh aca ach buntainn ris, agus ùrnaigh a dhèanamh, agus thigeadh piseach orra: *they only had to touch it, and make a prayer, and they would get better*; dhachaigh, gu do leabaidh bhuan: *home, to your eternal bed*; chaidh e fodha agus chan fhacas a-rithist e: *it sank and was never seen again*; bu mhòr am beud: *what a great pity*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: bàs Meirheard: *the death of Merchard*. One would expect the genitive of a personal name like this to be the lenited Mheirheard or lenited and slenderised Mheirheid. That is indeed the form given for place names in Glenmoriston by scholars like William Mackay (who was from Glen Urquhart). However, local Gaelic speakers, interviewed in the 20th century, named places like Clachan Meirhead (they didn't pronounce the 'r') and Suidhe Meirhead, without lenition and slenderisation. The name is very old and derived from Mo Eirheard 'my Erchard', which might explain the situation in part.

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: an t-each-ursainn: *the heriot* [a horse or other livestock which was a death tax imposed by a landlord on the family of a tenant who died]. An appalling pan-European feudal tradition.

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