

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Iseabail Gowdie (3)

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 1,125. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 821 corresponds to Litir 1,125.

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mun ‘bhana-bhuidsich’ Iseabail Gowdie. Dh’aidich i gun robh i an sàs ann am buidseachd. Nuair a bha i ann an cruth maighich, nam biodh cù ga bìdeadh, bhiodh na lotan rim faicinn air a’ bhoireannach fhèin nuair a bha i air ais ann an cruth daonna. Co-dhiù, sin a thuirt i fhèin ris na fir a bha ga ceasnachadh mu bhuidseachd anns a’ bhliadhna sia ceud deug, seasgad ’s a dhà (1662). ’S dòcha gur e an rud a bu chonaile a thuirt i, gun robh càirdeas feiseil eadar na bana-bhuidsichean agus an Donas.

Chuir an luchd-ceasnachaidh tagradh don Chomhairle Dhìomhair ann an Dùn Èideann – buidheann chumhachdach. Bha iad dhen bheachd gun robh fianais gu leòr aca airson Gowdie agus boireannach eile – Seònaid Breadhead – a dhìteadh air casaidean de bhuidseachd.

Bha a’ Chomhairle Dhìomhair air fios a chur a-mach, ge-tà, nach fhaodadh ciùrradh a bhith mar phàirt de phròiseas a chuireadh neach air beulaibh cùirte airson buidseachd. Ann an cùis Gowdie is Breadhead, thuirt a’ Chomhairle nach bu chòir dhaibh a bhith air am faighinn ciontach nam biodh iad às an rian. Thathar a’ smaoinichadh gun deach Gowdie a chur gu bàs, ged nach eil sin **uile-gu-lèir** soilleir. Mar a bha mi ag innse dhuibh o chionn ceala-deug, bidh muinntir an àite a’ comharrachadh cnoc far an robh i, a rèir beul-aithris, air a losgadh gu bàs.

Tha cuid amharasach mu na cunntasan aig Gowdie de chruth-atharrachadh, Banrigh nan Sìthichean agus an Donas fhèin. Tha iad ag ràdh gu bheil iad uabhasach coltach ris na chanadh na seanchaidhean. An robh Iseabail dìreach ag aithris stuth à sgeulachdan a bhuineadh don dualchas? ’S dòcha gun robh i a’ sireadh lasachadh anns a’ pheanas a gheibheadh i le bhith ag ‘aideachadh’ gun robh i ri buidseachd.

Tha cuid eile an amharas gun robh Gowdie a’ fulang le tinneas inntinn. Gu h-ionadail, timcheall Allt Èireann, tha beachd ann gun robh i a’ fulang le tinneas air a bheil *ergotism*. Gheibh daoine e le bhith ag ithe fungas a tha a’ fàs air lusan arbhair. Agus tha feadhainn eadhon ag ràdh gur dòcha gun deach a h-èigneachadh le saighdearan a bha anns an sgìre ri linn Bhlàr Allt Èireann – agus gun do dh’adhbharaich sin tinneas na h-inntinn.

Cò aige tha fios dè an fhirinn a th’ ann. Tha e soilleir, ge-tà, gu bheil an cunntas aig Iseabail Gowdie mu a beatha mar ‘bhana-bhuidseach’ am measg nan cunntasan as iongantach de a leithid a th’ againn.

Ann an latha an-diugh, tha i ainmeil gu leòr. Chaidh ceithir nobhailean a sgrìobhadh mu a deidhinn. Chruthaich an sgrìobhaiche-ciùil Seumas Mac a' Mhaoilein pìos-ciùil airson orcastra air a bheil *'The Confession of Isobel Gowdie'*.

Ach, airson dà cheud bliadhna an dèidh a bàis, cha robh i ainmeil idir. Ann an ochd ceud deug, trithead 's a trì (1833), ge-tà, chaidh na h-aideachaidhean aice fhoillseachadh anns an leabhar *'Ancient Criminal Trials in Scotland'* le Raibeart Pitcairn.

Tha sin gam thoirt air ais gu *Downie Hill*, a chaidh a shealltainn dhomh le caraaid, mar a mhìnich mi o chionn ceala-deug. 'S e sin cnoc far an do choinnich Iseabail ris na sìthichean, a rèir beul-aithris. Tha cuid a' cumail a-mach gum bithear ga faicinn fhathast agus gur e an taibhse aice 'Am Boireannach Uaine' a chì daoine timcheall Allt Èireann bho àm gu àm.

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Faclan na Litreach: luchd-ceasnachaidh: *interrogators*; o chionn ceala-deug: *a fortnight ago*; amharasach: *suspicious*; cruth-atharrachadh: *shapeshifting*; Banrigh nan Sìthichean: *The Queen of the Fairies*; seanchaidhean: *shennachies, keepers of tradition*; tinneas inntinn: *mental illness*; Blàr Allt Èireann: *The Battle of Auldearn*; sgrìobhaiche-ciùil: *[musical] composer*; na h-aideachaidhean aice: *her confessions*; Am Boireannach Uaine: *The Green Woman*.

Abairtean na Litreach: ann an cruth maighich: *in the form of a hare*; nam biodh cù ga bìdeadh, bhiodh na lotan rim faicinn: *if a dog was biting her, the wounds would be seen*; ann an cruth daonna: *in human form*; na fir a bha ga ceasnachadh mu bhuidseachd: *the men who were questioning her about witchcraft*; an rud a bu chronaile: *the most damaging thing*; càirdeas feiseil eadar na bana-bhuidsichean agus an Donas: *sexual relations between the witches and the Devil*; gun robh fianais gu leòr aca airson X a dhìteadh air casaidean de bhuidseachd: *that they had enough evidence to convict X on charges of witchcraft*; nach fhaodadh ciùrradh a bhith mar phàirt de phròiseas a chuireadh neach air beulaibh cùirte airson buidseachd: *that torture could not be part of a process that would put a person in front of a court for witchcraft*; nach bu chòir dhaibh a bhith air am faighinn ciontach: *that they should not have been found guilty*; nam biodh iad às an rian: *if they were insane*; bidh muinntir an àite a' comharrachadh cnoc far an robh i air a losgadh gu bàs: *local people will point out a hill where she was burned to death*; sgeulachdan a bhuineadh don dualchas: *stories that belonged to the heritage*; lasachadh anns a' pheanas a gheibheadh i: *a lessening of the punishment she would receive*; fungas a tha a' fàs air lusan arbhair: *a fungus that grows on cereal plants*; gur dòcha gun deach a h-èigneachadh: *that perhaps she was raped*; am measg nan cunntasan as iongantaiche de a leithid a th' againn: *among the most amazing accounts of the like that we have*; gum bithear ga faicinn fhathast: *that she is still seen*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Bha a' Chomhairle Dhìomhair air fios a chur a-mach: *the Privy Council had sent out information [instructions]. This is the type of construction which we use to make the pluperfect or past perfect tense (corresponding to 'had done' in English). The preposition air here does not mean 'on' but instead means 'after, behind'. It was originally iar. Bha mi air a dhèanamh = 'I was after doing it' ie I had done it.*

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: ged nach eil sin **uile-gu-lèir** soilleir: *although that is not **entirely** clear.*

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