

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Dòmhnall Alasdair MacCoinnich (2)

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: 2:55pm on Sunday as part of BBC Radio nan Gàidheal's hour-long learning zone, following the Gaelic Learners' programme 'SpeakGaelic Extra', with a repeat at 10.30 pm on Wednesday. This is Litir 1,282. There is also a simpler version – An Litir Bheag – which is broadcast at 2:30pm each Sunday. Litir Bheag 978 corresponds to Litir 1,282. The Litir is also available at www.bbc.co.uk/litir and www.learn Gaelic.scot/litir. Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learn Gaelic.scot.

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Dhòmhnall Alasdair MacCoinnich agus an leabhar aige *Wonder Tales from Scottish Myth and Legend*.

Tha a' chiad chaibideil mu dheidhinn na Cailliche Beura no, mar a sgrìobh e fhèin, *Beira, Queen of Winter*. A rèir beul-aithris, bha tobar air Cruachan Bheann ann an Earra-Ghàidheal. Bhiodh a' Chailleach a' tarraing uisge bhuaithe gach latha. Aig àm èirigh na grèine, bhiodh i a' togail leac a bha a' còmhdachadh an tobair. Gach feasgar, aig àm dhol-fodha na grèine, bhiodh i ga cur thairis air an tobar a-rithist.

Ge-tà, oidhche bha seo, dhìochuimhnich i an leac a chur air ais na h-àite. Cho luath 's a chaidh a' ghrian fodha, bhrùchd uisge às an tobar. Cha robh stad air. Ruith e leis a' bhruthach agus lion e an gleann gu h-ìosal. Chruthaich sin Loch Obha. Thathar ag innse sgeulachd car coltach mu chruthachadh Loch Nis.

Chruthaich a' Chailleach Bheura beanntan na h-Alba. Lìon i cliabh le **clachan agus crèadh**. Nuair a bha i a' leum bho àite gu àite, bhiodh an stuth bhon chliabh a' tuiteam a-mach. 'S iomadh eilean a chaidh a chruthachadh anns an dòigh sin.

Cha robh i ag obair leatha fhèin. Bha ochdnar shearbhantan aice – cailleachan eile. Agus bha mic aice. Bha iad uile mòr mòr, mar a bha i fhèin. Cha robh na mic dòigheil. Bhiodh iad a' dìreadh nam beann agus a' tilgeil chlachan air a chèile. 'S e sin as coireach gu bheil uiread de chlachan mòra nan laighe air leathadan na Gàidhealtachd.

Chruthaich a' Chailleach Beinn Uais ann an Ros an Ear. Bha an obair doirbh oir bha a searbhantan trang ann an àite eile agus bha i ag obair leatha fhèin. Latha a bha seo, bha i sgìth agus thuit i. Thàinig na clachan agus crèadh a-mach às a' chliabh aice. Thuit iad ri taobh Beinn Uais. Agus 's ann mar sin a chruthaich i Beinn Uais Bheag.

Bha òrd sònraichte aig a' Chaillich. Nuair a bhuail i an talamh leis gu h-aotrom, bhiodh an talamh an uair sin cho cruaidh ris an iarainn. Nuair a bhuail i an talamh gu cruaidh, chruthaich i gleann.

Bha càirdeas sònraichte eadar i fhèin agus ainmhidhean nam beann. Bhiodh i a' bleoghann nan èillean agus nan gobhar. Nuair a bhiodh an t-uisge a' sruthadh far nam beann anns a' gheamhradh, a' dèanamh sruthlagan geala, bhiodh na seann daoine ag ràdh gun robh a' Chailleach Bheura a' bleoghann nan gobhar. Chan e uisge a bha a' ruith, ach bainne.

Turas anns a' bhliadhna, bhiodh a' Chailleach a' falbh a Choire Bhreacain faisg air Eilean Sgarba. Bha sin airson a seàla mhòr a ghlanadh. Bhiodh i a' tilgeil na seàla a-steach don mhuir far an robh an Coire a' goil. Bhiodh i ga saltradh ann gus an robh i glan.

An uair sin, bhiodh i a' cur na seàla thairis air mullaichean nam beann airson a tiormachadh. Nuair a thogadh i i, bhiodh na mullaichean geal, còmhdhaichte le sneachd a' gheamhraidh.

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Faclan na Litreach: Dòmhnall Alasdair MacCoinnich: *Donald Alexander Mackenzie*; Loch Obha: *Loch Awe*; Loch Nis: *Loch Ness*; ochdnar shearbhanntan: *eight servants*; a' dìreadh: *ascending*; Beinn Uais: *Ben Wyvis*; Beinn Uais Bheag: *Little Ben Wyvis*; ag aithneachadh: *recognising*; sruthlagan: *streamlets*; Coire Bhreacain: *Corryvreckan*; Sgarba: *Scarba*; a' goil: *boiling*; ga saltradh: *trampling it underfoot*.

Abairtean na Litreach: A rèir beul-aithris, bha tobar air Cruachan Bheann ann an Earra-Ghàidheal: *according to oral tradition, there was a well on Ben Cruachan in Argyll*; aig àm èirigh na grèine, bhiodh i a' togail leac a bha a' còmhdachadh an tobair: *at sunrise, she would lift a slab that was covering the well*; gach feasgar, aig àm dhol-fodha na grèine: *every evening, at sunset*; ge-tà, oidhche bha seo, dhìochuimhnich i an leac a chur air ais na h-àite: *however, one particular night, she forgot to put the slab back in its place*; bhrùchd uisge às an tobar: *water poured out of the well*; ruith e leis a' bhruthach agus lìon e an gleann gu h-ìosal: *it ran down the slope and filled the glen below*; a' tuiteam gu làr: *falling to the ground*; 's iomadh eilean a chaidh a chruthachadh anns an dòigh sin: *many an island was created in that way*; cha robh i ag obair leatha fhèin: *she wasn't working on her own*; 's e sin as coireach gu bheil uiread de chlachan mòra nan laighe air leathadan na Gàidhealtachd: *that's the reason there are so many large stones lying on the [mountain] slopes of the Highlands*; bha òrd sònraichte aig a' Chaillich: *the Cailleach had a special hammer*; cho cruaidh ris an iarainn: *as hard as [the] iron*; a' bleoghann nan èildean agus nan gobhar: *milking the hinds and the goats*; airson a seàla mhòr a ghlanadh: *to clean her great shawl*; airson a tiormachadh: *to dry it*; bhiodh na mullaichean geal, còmhdhaichte le sneachd a' gheamhraidh: *the summits would be white, covered with winter snow*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Lìon i cliabh le **clachan agus crèadh**: *she filled a creel with stones and soil*. The phrase I have chosen (translating from the author's English version) literally means 'stones and clay' but it is found in traditional Gaelic rhymes, and has a degree of uaim 'alliteration' so it sounds better (to my ears, at least) than 'clachan agus ùir'.

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: Bhiodh a' Chailleach a' tarraing uisge bhuaithe gach latha: *the Cailleach would be drawing water from it every day*.

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