

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

M.E.M. Donaldson (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 1,293. There is also a simpler version – An Litir Bheag – which is broadcast at 2:30pm each Sunday. Litir Bheag 989 corresponds to Litir 1,293. The Litir is also available at www.bbc.co.uk/litir and www.learnghaelic.scot/litir. Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learnghaelic.scot.

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu M.E.M. Donaldson agus an leabhar aice '*Wanderings in the Western Highlands and Islands*'. Anns an leabhar, tha dealbh-camara a thog i de dh'fhear-iùil nam beann a bha ainmeil ri a linn. B' esan Iain MacCoinnich às an Eilean Sgitheanach. Thug e **gu leòr de dhaoine don Chuiltheann à Sligeachan**. Agus 's e a thug ainm do Sgùrr MhicCoinnich, tè de bheanntan a' Chuilthinn.

Dh'fhalbh Donaldson a-mach air chuairt cuide ri Iain MacCoinnich grunn tursan. Am measg sin, bha latha fada doirbh à Sligeachan gu ruige Camas Fhionnairigh air cladach Loch Sgàbhaig – agus air ais a Shligeachan. Aon turas chaidh iad seachad air loch air a bheil – air na mapaichean – Loch na Crèitheach. Tha e a' ciallachadh '*the loch of the brushwood*'. Bhithinn an dùil gur e Loch na Creithich a bhiodh air, agus sgrìobh Donaldson 'Loch na Creubhaig'. Bu toigh leam faighinn a-mach le cinnt de chanas muinntir an àite ris. Co-dhiù, dhearbh an t-ùghdar gun robh '*brushwood*' gu leòr a' fàs air bruach an ear an locha aig an àm ud.

Sgrìobh Donaldson cuideachd dà rud inntinneach a thog Iain MacCoinnich leatha nuair a bha iad a' coiseachd an sin. B' e a' chiad rud gum fac' iad dà fhaoileig a bha a' ruagadh iolair-mhara. A rèir Donaldson, bha na h-iolairean-mara a' neadachadh air a' Chloich Ghlais, beinn chas làimh ri Blà-bheinn. Tha na h-ùghdarrasan ag innse dhuinn nach robh iolairean-mara beò ann an Alba tràth san fhicheadamh linn. Bha iad air an toirt a-steach a-rithist à Nirribhidh anns na seachdadan. Saoil an e iolair-bhuidhe a chunnaic i seach iolair-mhara?

Bha còmhradh car inntinneach eadar Donaldson agus Iain MacCoinnich mu dheidhinn nathraichean an latha sin. Dh'inns Iain dhi gun robh feadhainn ann, le cinnt. Nuair a thigeadh nathair faisg air caora, ge-tà, bhiodh a' chaora a' saltradh air a ceann agus ga marbhadh! Uill, an cuala sibh fhèin rud dhen t-seòrsa sin? Saoil an robh MacCoinnich a' tarraing aiste?!

Anns an leabhar aice, '*Wanderings in the Western Highlands and Islands*', tha Donaldson a' toirt an leughadair bhon Eilean Sgitheanach gu Loch Aillse. Tha i a' tadhal air Gleann Eilg. Os cionn a' Ghlinne Bhig, far a bheil na dùin ainmeil, tha loch beag ann air a bheil Loch Iain Mhic Aonghais.

Bha fios agam gun robh sgeul de dh'each-uisge co-cheangailte ris an loch, agus tha Donaldson ag innse an sgeòil dhuinn, mar a chuala i e aig bean a' mhinisteir. Chunnaic Iain MacAonghais each brèagha ri taobh an locha. Dh'fhaighnich e de

bhodach glic am biodh e ceart gu leòr nan cuireadh e an t-each gu feum. Thuir am bodach gum bitheadh – nam beannaicheadh e e. Ach dh’fheumadh e seachnadh buileach a bhith a’ dol air muin an eich.

Mar sin, ghabh Iain grèim air an each. Rinn an t-each obair dha gu dòigheil. Ach latha a bha seo, leum Iain air a mhuin. Dh’fhalbh deagh shunnd an eich. Leum e don uisge le Iain fhathast air a mhuin. Chan fhacas sgeul tuilleadh air Iain bochd ach a-mhàin a sgamhan a chaidh a lorg air fleod anns an loch.

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Faclan na Litreach: dealbh-camara: *photograph*; Iain MacCoinnich: *John MacKenzie*; às an Eilean Sgitheanach: *from the Isle of Skye*; Camas Fhionnairigh: *Camasunary*; Loch Sgàbhaig: *Loch Scavaig*; Nirribhidh: *Norway*; Loch Aillse: *Lochalsh*; Gleann Eilg: *Glenelg*; dùin: *brochs*; each-uisge: *water-horse, kelpie*.

Abairtean na Litreach: fear-iùil nam beann a bha ainmeil ri a linn: *a mountain guide who was famous in his day*; bu toigh leam faighinn a-mach le cinnt: *I’d like to find out with certainty*; dè chanas muinntir an àite ris: *what the local people call it*; a’ fàs air bruach an ear an locha: *growing on the eastern side of the loch*; aig an àm ud: *at that time*; b’ e a’ chiad rud gum fac’ iad dà fhaoileig: *the first thing was that they saw two seagulls*; a’ ruagadh iolair-mhara: *chasing a sea eagle*; a’ neadachadh air a’ Chloich Ghlais: *nesting on Clach Glas*; beinn chas làimh ri Blà-bheinn: *a steep mountain next to Blaven*; tràth san fhicheadamh linn: *early in the 20th century*; saoil an e iolair-bhuidhe a chunnaic i seach iolair-mhara?: *perhaps it was a golden eagle she saw rather than a sea eagle*; nuair a thigeadh nathair faisg air caora: *when a snake would come near a sheep*; bhiodh a’ chaora a’ saltradh air a ceann agus ga marbhadh: *the sheep would stamp on its head and kill it*; dh’fhaighnich e de bhodach glic: *he asked an old man*; am biodh e ceart gu leòr nan cuireadh e an t-each gu feum: *if it would be alright if he made use of the horse*; nam beannaicheadh e e: *if he would bless it*; dh’fheumadh e seachnadh buileach a bhith a’ dol air muin an eich: *he would have to completely avoid riding the horse*; dh’fhalbh deagh shunnd an eich: *the horse’s good mood left him*; a sgamhan a chaidh a lorg air fleod: *his lungs that were found floating*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Thug e gu leòr de dhaoine don Chuiltheann à

Sligeachan: *he took many people to the Cuillins from Sligachan. You will sometimes hear people refer to these iconic mountains in English as ‘the Cuillin’ which is a reflection of the Gaelic name which is singular and masculine – An Cuiltheann. Bha mi air a’ Chuiltheann an-dè ‘I was in the Cuillins yesterday’. There is a tendency today to refer also to ‘beanntan a’ Chuilthinn’ (which I include in the following sentence) but this is not necessary. An Cuiltheann will do on its own!*

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: Saoil an robh MacCoinnich a’ tarraing aiste?: *I wonder if MacKenzie was teasing her.*

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