

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Calum agus Màiri (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: 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 1,316. There is also a simpler version – An Litir Bheag – which is broadcast at 2:30pm each Sunday. Litir Bheag 1,012 corresponds to Litir 1,316. The Litir is also available at www.bbc.co.uk/litir and www.learnghaelic.scot/litir. Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learnghaelic.scot.

Tha mi a' dol a dh'innse sgeul dhuibh, no co-dhiù geàrr-chunntas de sgeul. Tha e mu dheidhinn muinntir nan ròn. Tha e a' tighinn bhon leabhar 'Tales of the Seal People' le Donnchadh MacUilleim. Chaidh innse dha le fear Aonghas MacNèill a bha ag obair mar ribear choineanach ann an Earra-Ghàidheal. Fhuair e an sgeul ann an Gàidhlig bho a sheanmhair.

Tha cladh ann am baile beag air taobh an iar na Gàidhealtachd. Tha clach-uaghach anns a' chladh, ann an cumadh cridhe, air a bheil ceithir faclan sgrìobhte: 'To Malcolm and Mary'. Gu Calum agus Màiri. Bha an sgrìobhadh ann am Beurla. Tha mi a' dol a mhìneachadh a' ghnothaich dhuibh. Tha e car annasach.

O chionn fhada bha teaghlach a' fuireach taobh a' chladaich faisg air a' bhaile. Bha iad ri croitearachd agus iasgach. Bha dithis chloinne aca – càraid. 'S e Calum a bh' air a ghille mar ainm, agus 's e Màiri a bh' air a phiuthar.

Bha an dithis a' faighinn air adhart gu math, agus 's e clann èasgaidh a bh' annta. Bha iad gu math taiceil dom pàrantan. Thàinig dìreach aon rud eatarra. Bhiodh Màiri a' tarraing à Calum airson coltas òrdaig-coise **air a chois dheis**. Bha i air leth mòr. 'Mo chreach, a Chaluum,' chanadh i, 'tha coltas sgreadaidh air an òrdaig mhòir agad.'

'**Chan eil leasachadh air,**' chanadh a bràthair. 'S ann mar seo a rugadh mi.'

Nise, bha Calum fìor mhath air snàmh. Uaireannan bhiodh e a' snàmh am measg nan ròn a thigeadh timcheall air.

'A Chaluum,' chanadh Màiri, 'mura sguir thu, chan fhada gus am bi thu fhèin nad ròn!' Agus chanadh Calum gum biodh e air leth toilichte nan tachradh sin.

Dh'fhàs a' chlann suas agus dh'fhàg iad an sgoil aig aois ceithir-deug. Chaidh Calum a chuideachadh athair leis an eathar. Rinn iad iasgach leis na lin-mhòra.

Feasgar a bha seo, aig àm a' chiaraidh, chaidh Calum agus athair a-mach anns an eathar. Dh'èirich stoirm gun rabhadh. Thionndaidh iad am bàta agus rinn iad iomradh a dh'ionnsaigh na tìre. Ach cha robh iad luath gu leòr. Chaidh an soitheach a chur bun-os-cionn.

Bha athair Chaluum math gu leòr air snàmh agus bha fios aige gun robh Calum fhèin fìor chomasach mar shnàmhadair. 'Gach fear dha fhèin!' dh'èigh e. 'Snàmh gu tìr!' Ge-tà, nuair a ràinig e an cladach, cha robh sgeul air a mhac.

Chaidh e dhachaigh. Ruith a bhean agus a nighean ga ionnsaigh, toilichte gun robh e fhathast beò. ‘Càit a bheil Calum?’ thuirt iad. ‘Nach eil e còmhla riut?’ Mhìnich an duine gun robh Calum caillte aig muir. Airson latha an dèidh latha an dèidh latha, chaidh muinntir an àite a choimhead airson a’ ghille no co-dhiù airson a chuirp. Ach cha do lorg iad dad.

An dèidh grunn seachdainean, thàinig atharrachadh air Màiri. Cha bhruidhneadh i ri duine. Chan itheadh i a biadh. Chaill i cuideam. Cha dèanadh i càil ach coiseachd air an tràigh, a’ coimhead a-mach gu muir. Bha a cridhe briste.

Lorg a h-athair an t-eathar aige air a’ chladach. Bha e fhathast slàn. Thill an duine don iasgach. Ach bha Màiri bhochd beò ann am mulad. Cha robh i ag iarraidh bruidhinn ri duine. Latha a bha seo, ge-tà, dh’atharraich cùisean agus innsidh mi dhuibh mu dheidhinn anns an ath Litir.

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Faclan na Litreach: Donnchadh MacUilleim: *Duncan Williamson*; Aonghas MacNèill: *Angus MacNeil*; a sheanmhair: *his grandmother*; bun-os-cionn: *upside-down*.

Abairtean na Litreach: co-dhiù geàrr-chunntas de sgeul: *at least a summary of a story*; muinntir nan ròn: *the seal people (seals that can change into human form)*; ribear choineanach ann an Earra-Ghàidheal: *a rabbit trapper in Argyll*; tha clach-uaghach anns a’ chladh, ann an cumadh cridhe: *there is a gravestone in the cemetery, in the shape of a heart*; air a bheil ceithir faclan sgrìobhte: *on which are written four words*; bha dithis chloinne aca – càraid: *they had two children – twins*; ’s e Calum a bh’ air a ghille mar ainm: *he was called Malcolm*; ’s e clann èasgaidh a bh’ annta: *they were obliging children*; taiceil dom pàrantan: *helpful to their parents*; thàinig dìreach aon rud eatarra: *just one thing came between them*; tha coltas sgreadaidh air an òrdaig mhòir agad: *your big toe looks awful*; chanadh a bràthair: *her brother would say*; ’s ann mar seo a rugadh mi: *this is how I was born*; uaireannan bhiodh e a’ snàmh am measg nan ròn: *sometimes he would swim among the seals*; chan fhada gus am bi thu fhèin nad ròn: *it won’t be long until you are a seal*; gum biodh e air leth toilichte nan tachradh sin: *that he would be delighted if that were to happen*; a chuideachadh athair leis an eathar: *to help his father with the boat*; rinn iad iasgach leis na lìn-mhòra: *they went fishing with the longlines*; rinn iad iomradh a dh’ionnsaigh na tìre: *they rowed towards the land*; fìor chomasach mar shnàmhadair: *very capable as a swimmer*; gach fear dha fhèin: *every man for himself*; chaidh muinntir an àite a choimhead airson a’ ghille no co-dhiù airson a chuirp: *the local people went to look for the lad or at least for his body*; bha Màiri bhochd beò ann am mulad: *poor Mary was afflicted by deep sadness*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Bhiodh Màiri a’ tarraing à Calum airson coltas òrdaig-coise **air a chois dheis**: *Mary would be teasing Calum for the appearance of the big toe on his right foot*. Cas ‘foot’ is a feminine noun which traditionally slenderises in the dative singular case (which it is here after the preposition ‘air’). ‘On the foot’ is air a’ chois; ‘on his foot’ is air a chois. The adjective follows the noun and similarly is lenited and slenderised so ‘on his right foot’ is air a chois dheis.

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: Chan eil leasachadh air: *it can’t be helped (changed)*.

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