

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Am Fear Liath Mòr (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 1,339. There is also a simpler version – An Litir Bheag – which is broadcast at 2:30pm each Sunday. Litir Bheag 1,035 corresponds to Litir 1,339. The Litir is also available at www.bbc.co.uk/litir and www.learnghaelic.scot/litir. Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learnghaelic.scot.

Ann an Litir 8 – a sgrìobh mi **cha mhòr** sia bliadhna fichead air ais – bha mi ag innse dhuibh mun t-sreapadair Tormod Collie. Bha Collie gu math measail air a' Chuiltheann anns an Eilean Sgitheanach. B' e cuspair na Litreach taibhs anns a' Mhonadh Ruadh air a bheil mar ainm '**Am Fear Liath Mòr**'.

Tha mi a' tilleadh don chuspair sin anns an Litir seo air dà adhbhar. Anns a' chiad dol a-mach, 's ann o chionn ceud bliadhna a dh'fhoillsich Collie a bheachd, co-dhiù ann am Breatainn, gun robh taibhs a' fuireach faisg air mullach Beinne MhicDuibh. Bha sin aig coinneamh de Chlub a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh ann an Obar Dheathain ann an naoi ceud deug is còig air fhichead (1925).

'S e an t-adhbhar eile gu bheil mi air tilleadh don chuspair gun do bhris mi gealladh. Feumaidh mi aideachadh – le beagan nàire – gun do gheall mi dhuibh – no do luchd-èisteachd nan Litrichean aig an àm sin – gun innsinn dhaibh cò an taibhs a bh' ann, co-dhiù ann am beachd muinntir an àite. Tha mi air a bhith a' coimhead tro thasglann nan Litrichean, feuch faighinn a-mach an do choilean mi an gealltanais sin. Tha e a' coimhead coltach nach do choilean. Obh obh. Mo leisgeul airson sin. Cuiridh mi sin ceart an-ceartuair!

Ach an toiseach, thèid sinn air ais ceud bliadhna. Dh'inns Tormod Collie – a bha na Phroifeasair de Cheimigeachd Orgànach ann an Oilthigh Lunnainn – aig coinneamh de Chlub a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh – gun robh e air eagal a bheatha a ghabhail trithead 's a còig bliadhna roimhe. Bha e leis fhèin, a' coiseachd thar mullach Beinne MhicDuibh – a' bheinn as àirde sa Mhonadh Ruadh.

Chuala Collie fuaim annasach. Bha i ceòthach agus chan fhac' e dad. Airson gach trì no ceithir ceumannan a ghabhadh esan, bhiodh aona bhrag mhòr ann air a chùlaibh, mar gu robh cas mhòr mhòr a' bualadh na talmhainn. Bha Collie a' smaoinneachadh gur e famhair a bh' ann. Mu dheireadh, ghabh e eagal cho mòr 's gun do ruith e sìos a' bheinn airson ceithir no còig mìle gun stad gus an do ràinig e a' choille.

Cha b' e sin a' chiad turas, ge-tà, a dh'inns Collie mu na thachair dha an latha sin. Bliadhnaichean roimhe, bha e ann an Sealann Nuadh. Dh'inns e do shreapadairean anns an dùthaich sin mun taibhs a dh'fhairich e air Beinn MacDuibh. Chuala an sreapadair is neach-saidheans, Alasdair Kellas, mu dheidhinn sin, agus sgrìobh e gu Collie mun taibhs.

Rugadh Kellas ann an Obar Dheathain agus, mar shreapadair, feumaidh gun robh e eòlach air a' Mhonadh Ruadh. Bha e gu math aithnichte air feadh an t-saoghail airson an rannsachaidh a rinn e air comasan daoine a bhith a' sreap, gun ogsaidean a bharrachd, gu mullaichean nam beann as àirde anns an t-saoghal. Bha e dhen bheachd gum biodh daoine comasach dhol gu mullach Beinn Everest às aonais ogsaidean a bharrachd. Chaidh a dhearbhadh gun robh e ceart ann an naoi ceud deug, seachdad 's a h-ochd (1978) nuair a rinn Reinhold Messner agus Peter Habeler a' chùis. Co-dhiù, sgrìobh Kellas gu Collie gun robh e fhèin air am Fear Liath Mòr fhaicinn.

Agus tha barrachd dhaoine na sin air aithris gun do dh'fhairich iad am Fear Liath Mòr. Bheir sinn sùil air feadhainn aca an-ath-sheachdain.

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Faclan na Litreach: taibhs: *ghost, spectre, apparition*; Club a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh: *The Cairngorm Club*; Obar Dheathain: *Aberdeen*; tasglann: *archive*; Obh obh: *Oh dear*; Ceimigeachd Orgànach: *Organic Chemistry*; Sealann Nuadh: *New Zealand*; sreapadairean: *climbers*.

Abairtean na Litreach: ag innse dhuibh mun t-sreapadair Tormod Collie: *telling you about the climber Norman Collie*; measail air a' Chuiltheann: *keen on the Cuillin(s)*; a' tilleadh don chuspair air dà adhbhar: *returning to the subject for two reasons*; anns a' chiad dol a-mach: *in the first instance*; 's ann o chionn ceud bliadhna a dh'fhoillsich X: *it's a hundred years since X revealed*; faisg air mullach Beinne MhicDuibh: *near the summit of Beinn MacDuibh (Ben MacDui)*; luchd-èisteachd nan Litrichean aig an àm sin: *the listeners to [of] the Litrichean at that time*; feuch faighinn a-mach an do choilean mi an gealltanais: *to try and find out if I fulfilled the promise*; mo leisgeul airson sin: *my apology for that*; cuiridh mi sin ceart an-ceartuair: *I'll rectify that presently*; chan fhac' e dad: *he saw nothing*; airson gach trì no ceithir ceumannan a ghabhadh esan: *for every three or four steps he would take*; bhiodh aona bhrag mhòr ann air a chùlaibh: *there would be one great sharp sound behind him*; mar gu robh cas mhòr mhòr a' bualadh na talmhainn: *as if an enormous foot were hitting the ground*; ghabh e eagal cho mòr 's gun do ruith e airson ceithir no còig mìle gun stad: *he was so overcome with fear that he ran for four or five miles without stopping*; gus an do ràinig e a' choille: *until he reached the forest*; comasan daoine a bhith a' sreap, gun ogsaidean a bharrachd: *the abilities of people to climb without additional oxygen*; chaidh a dhearbhadh gun robh e ceart: *it was proven that he was correct*; tha barrachd dhaoine na sin air aithris gun do dh'fhairich iad X: *more people than that have reported sensing (feeling) X*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Am Fear Liath Mòr: *The Great (or Big) Grey Man*.

This is how the Gaelic-speakers of the Monadh Ruadh referred to the spectre, according to those who recorded the phenomenon. It's a slightly unusual word-order, as one might expect Am Fear Mòr Liath, with the colour descriptor in a terminal position as in Am Bodach Beag Dubh or An Cù Mòr Ruadh. But the Beinn MacDuibh phenomenon was recorded as 'Ferla Mòr' and even Am Fear Glas Mòr.

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: a sgrìobh mi **cha mhòr** sia bliadhna fichead air ais: *that I wrote almost 26 years ago*.

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