

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Cailleach Bheag nam Bòcan

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 1,358. There is also a simpler version – An Litir Bheag – which is broadcast at 2:30pm each Sunday. Litir Bheag 1,054 corresponds to Litir 1,358. 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 airson innse dhuibh mu Chailleach Bheag nam Bòcan. B' e seo am far-ainm a bh' aig muinntir Uibhist a Deas agus Èirisgeigh air tè a bhiodh a' tadhal air na h-eileanan. Chaidh a far-ainm eadar-theangachadh mar '*the little middle-aged lady who is preoccupied with ghosts*'. Sin agaibh Cailleach Bheag nam Bòcan.

'S e an t-ainm ceart a bh' oirre Ada Goodrich-Freer. Bha i beò anns an dàrna leth dhen naoidheamh linn deug, agus sa chiad phàirt dhen fhicheadamh linn. Bha i eòlach air sagart ainmeil Èirisgeigh, Mgr Ailein (Dòmhnallach). Nuair a bha esan a' sgrìobhadh mu a deidhinn ann am Beurla, 's e '*lady of the ghosts*' no '*the little lady*' a bha e a' gabhail oirre.

Bha ùidh mhòr aig Freer ann an gnothaichean os-nàdarrach. Chruinnich i beul-aithris ann an Tiriodh agus anns na h-Eileanan A-muigh a bha co-cheangailte ri gnothaichean nach b' urrainn mìneachadh gu furasta – taibhsearachd is bòcain 's a leithid sin.

Ach cha robh Gàidhlig aice. 'S e ban-Shasannach a bh' innte. Ciamar a b' urrainn dhi, ma-thà, beul-aithris a chruinneachadh bho eileanaich aig nach robh Beurla no aig an robh glè bheag dhith? Uill, le bhith a' cleachdadh na chruinnich feadhainn eile – mar eisimpleir Mgr Ailein.

Bha Ada Goodrich-Freer an sàs ann am buidheann ris an canar *Society for Psychological Research*, an SPR. Bha iad a' faighinn airgead bho Mharcas Bhòid. Fhuair Freer taic airgid airson a dhol do na h-eileanan airson rannsachadh a dhèanamh air gnothaichean os-nàdarrach. Bha i ag innse do dhaoine gun robh sinnsearan aice on Ghàidhealtachd, ach cha robh. Cha robh i onarach mu eachdraidh a beatha fhèin.

Bha i an sàs ann an rannsachadh air taigh mòr ann an Siorrachd Pheairt, aig an robh cliù mar **an taigh as motha** ann an Alba **air an robh tàbharnadh**. Tha sin a' ciallachadh gum biodh bòcain a' tathaich an taighe nas trice na taigh sam bith eile ann an Alba. 'S e **Taigh Bhail' Eachainn** an t-ainm a bh' air an àite. Tha Bail' Eachainn ri taobh Uisge Tatha eadar Bail' an Luig agus Obar Pheallaidh.

Ghabh an SPR an taigh air mhàl. Bha am fear leis an robh e a' fuireach thall thairis. Bha seo ann an ochd ceud deug, naochad 's a seachd (1897). Am measg nan daoine a chuir seachad ùine ann bha Mgr Ailein. Bha Freer eòlach air on a chaidh i a dh'Èirisgeidh agus Uibhist a Deas dà bhliadhna roimhe.

Chualas fuaimean anns an taigh ach bha cuid dhen bheachd nach robh ann ach èadhar anns na pìoban-uisge! Sgrìobh Freer altan anns a' phàipear-naidheachd Tim Lunnainn mu dheidhinn an rannsachaidh aice. Bha feadhainn dhen bheachd nach robh ann ach toradh a mac-meanmna.

Tha cuid dhen bheachd gun robh Freer eas-onarach agus gun do ghabh i brath air Mgr Ailein nuair a bha i anns na h-eileanan. Bha an sagart measail oirre agus thug e dhi cuid de na leabhrannan aige anns an do rinn e notaichean mu thachartasan annasach. Chleachd Freer tòrr dhen stuth aige gun a bhith ag innse gur ann bhuaithe a thàinig e. Dh'fhàs i cliùmhhor – airson greis co-dhiù, mus do thuig daoine gun robh i air brath a ghabhail air an t-sagart.

Anns an ath Litir, bheir sinn sùil air eisimpleirean dhen bheul-aithris a chruinnich Mgr Ailein fhèin.

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Faclan na Litreach: os-nàdarrach: *supernatural*; Tìriodh: *Tìree*; na h-Eileanan A-muigh: *the Outer [Western] Isles*; ban-Shasannach: *an English woman*; Marcas Bhòid: *the Marquis of Bute*; altan: *articles*; Tìm Lunnainn: *The Times of London*.

Abairtean na Litreach: am far-ainm a bh' aig muinntir Uibhist a Deas agus Èirisgeigh air tè a bhiodh a' tadhal air na h-eileanan: *the nickname that the people of South Uist and Eriskay had for a woman who would visit the islands*; bha i eòlach air sagart ainmeil Èirisgeigh, Mgr Ailein (Dòmhnallach): *she knew the famous Eriskay priest, Father Allan (McDonald)*; nach b' urrainn mìneachadh gu furasta: *that could not be easily explained*; taibhsearachd is bòcain 's a leithid sin: *the second sight and ghosts and things like that*; bho eileanaich aig nach robh Beurla no aig an robh glè bheag dhith: *from islanders who spoke no English or only a little [of it]*; gun robh sinnsearan aice on Ghàidhealtachd: *that she had ancestry from the Highlands*; cha robh i onarach mu eachdraidh a beatha fhèin: *she wasn't honest about her own history*; gum biodh bòcain a' tathaich an taighe nas trice na taigh sam bith eile: *that ghosts would haunt the house more often than any other house*; tha Bail' Eachainn ri taobh Uisge Tatha eadar Bail' an Luig agus Obar Pheallaidh: *Ballechin is next to the River Tay between Ballinluig and Aberfeldy*; ghabh X an taigh air mhàl: *X rented the house*; chualas fuaimean: *noises were heard*; bha feadhainn dhen bheachd nach robh ann ach toradh a mac-meanmna: *some folk reckoned it was just the product of her imagination*; gun do ghabh i brath air X: *that she took advantage of X*; bha an sagart measail oirre: *the priest liked her*; thug e dhi cuid de na leabhrannan aige: *he gave her some of his notebooks*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: 'S e Taigh Bhail' Eachainn an t-ainm a bh' air an àite: *the place was called Ballechin House. Ballechin is pronounced similarly to Bail' Eachainn (with the emphasis on the personal name) which means 'Eachann's farm/dwelling' or 'Hector's farm/dwelling', Hector being commonly used as an anglicised form of Eachann. The Gaelic scholar Charles M Robertson, a native of Perthshire, tells us that Eachann was a son of King James II and an ancestor of later proprietors of the house (which was demolished in the 1960s, although outbuildings remain to this day).*

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: an taigh as motha ann an Alba air an robh tàbharnadh: *the most haunted house in Scotland*.

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