

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Miol-mhòr a' Chuain

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 1,413. There is also a simpler version – An Litir Bheag – which is broadcast at 2:30pm each Sunday. Litir Bheag 1,109 corresponds to Litir 1,413. The Litir is also available at www.bbc.co.uk/litir and www.learnghaelic.scot/litir. Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learnghaelic.scot.

Dè a' Ghàidhlig a th' air 'sea serpent'? Tha còig diofar fhaclan no abairtean ann am faclair Dwelly – cràigean, cuartag mhòr a' chuain, mial-mhòr a' chuain, nathair-mhara agus cirean-cròin. Agus tha seo anns an Fhaclair Bheag – *mial-mhòr* 'giant creature (especially a whale or monster)'. Anns an Litir seo, cleachdaidh mi sin airson 'sea-serpent' – mial-mhòr.

Carson a tha mi a' beachdachadh air seo, co-dhiù? Uill, mar a bha mi a' mìneachadh anns na beagan Litrichean mu dheireadh, bha mi a' toirt sùil air Courier Inbhir Nis bhon bhliadhna ochd ceud deug, seachdad 's a dhà (1872). Agus bha aithris ann leis an tiotal 'The Sea-Serpent?' le comharra-ceist aig an deireadh.

Dh'fhoillsich an Courier cunntas sgrìobhte a thàinig bho fhear a bha gu math earbsach, a rèir a' phàipeir. Chan eil ainm a' nochdadh anns a' chunntas.

Bha am fear seo anns a' bhàta-sheòlaidh aige. Chaidh e fhèin agus feadhainn eile gu ruige Loch Shubhairne ann an Cnòideart, air taobh an iar na Gàidhealtachd. Cuide ris bha **a dhithis nighean**, ogha, ministear eaglaise à Sasainn agus sgalaig.

Bha iad a' seòladh ann an Linne Shlèite nuair a thàinig fèath. B' fheudar dhaibh am bàta iomradh. Mar sin, bha iad a' coimhead air cùlaibh an t-soithich. Agus **b' ann an sin a bha an sealladh**.

Bha sreath de chumaidhean dorcha ann. Anns a' chiad dol a-mach bhathar a' smaoineachadh gur e sgaoth pheileagan a bh' ann. Ach an uair sin, ghluais na cumaidhean thairis air sruth an eathair agus chunnaic na daoine gur e aon chreutair a bh' ann. Bha e eadar leth-cheud agus ochdad troigh ann am fad.

Bha trì prosbaigean air bòrd. Mar sin, fhuair na daoine deagh shealladh air a' mhial-mhòir. Bha i fada agus caol. Bha ceann beag aice, ach chan fhacas sùilean air. Bha croitean air a druim. Agus cha robh lannan oirre, mar a bhiodh air iasg. Cha robh i coltach ri ainmhidh sam bith air an robh na daoine eòlach. Gun teagamh, 's e mial-mhòr a bh' ann!

Chuir na daoine seachad an oidhche ann an Loch Shubhairne. Nuair a thill iad dhachaigh air an làrna-mhàireach, ràinig iad beul an locha. Agus cò bha a' feitheamh riutha ach a' mhial-mhòr! An turas seo, bha beagan gaoithe ann agus bha am bàta fo sheòl. Chaidh a' mhial-mhòr tarsainn na slighe-mara air an robh iad. Bha i mu cheud gu leth slat air thoiseach orra. Bha a ceann letheach os cionn na mara agus bha an creutair a' gluasad gu luath.

An turas seo chuala na daoine fuaim mar srann, agus a' mhial-mhòr a' gluasad tron uisge. Lean i oirre a dh'ionnsaigh Chaol Reatha, ag èirigh agus a' cromadh. Ach bha ciaradh an fheasgair ann agus dh'fhalbh an creutair à sealladh anns an dorchadas.

Tha aon rud air leth inntinneach mun chunntas. Cha robh iomradh air uilebheist Loch Nis. Bha còrr is caogad bliadhna gu bhith ann mus biodh aithrisean mu Niseag a' nochdadh ann am pàipearan-naidheachd Bhreatainn.

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Faclan na Litreach: bàta-seòlaidh: *yacht*; Loch Shubhairne: *Loch Hourn*; Cnòideart: *Knoydart*; ogha: *grandson*; sgalag: *servant*; sgaoth pheileagan: *a school of porpoises*; prosbaigean: *binoculars*; lannan: *(fish) scales*; fo sheòl: *under sail*; ciaradh an fheasgair: *dusk*; uilebheist Loch Nis: *The Loch Ness Monster*; Niseag: *Nessie*.

Abairtean na Litreach: le comharra-ceist aig an deireadh: *with a question mark at the end*; cunntas sgrìobhte a thàinig bho fhear a bha gu math earbsach, a rèir a' phàipeir: *a written account that came from a man who was very reliable, according to the paper*; chan eil ainm a' nochdadh anns a' chunntas: *his name doesn't appear in the account*; bha iad a' seòladh ann an Linne Shlèite nuair a thàinig fèath: *they were sailing in the Sound of Sleat when it fell calm*; b' fheudar dhaibh am bàta iomradh: *they had to row the boat*; bha iad a' coimhead air cùlaibh an t-soithich: *they were looking behind the vessel*; sreath de chumaidhean dorcha: *a series of dark shapes*; ghluais na cumaidhean thairis air sruth an eathair: *the shapes moved across the boat's wake*; eadar leth-cheud agus ochdad troigh ann am fad: *between fifty and eighty feet in length*; chan fhacas sùilean air: *no eyes were observed on it*; bha croitean air a druim: *there were humps on her back*; nuair a thill iad dhachaigh air an làrna-mhàireach, ràinig iad beul an locha: *when they returned home next day, they reached the mouth of the loch*; mu cheud gu leth slat air thoiseach orra: *about 150 yards ahead of them*; fuaim mar srann: *a whizzing noise*; lean i oirre a dh'ionnsaigh Chaol Reatha: *she continued on towards Kyle Rhea*; ag èirigh agus a' cromadh: *rising and falling*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Cuide ris bha a **dhithis nighean**: *along with him was his two daughters*. Dithis is a noun meaning 'two people' and it commands another noun in the genitive plural. Thus, for 'two sons', we say dithis mhac not dithis mic. And for 'two daughters' we say dithis nighean with the 'n' lenited in speech (although we don't show this in writing). However, in the example above, we also have the third person masculine possessive pronoun 'a', meaning 'his'. Thus, we have a dhithis nighean 'his two daughters'; 'her two daughters' would be a dithis nighean.

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: b' ann an sin a bha an sealladh: *what a view they had* (lit. 'it was there that the view was').

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