

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Aibhnichean Naomha

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 1,417. There is also a simpler version – An Litir Bheag – which is broadcast at 2:30pm each Sunday. Litir Bheag 1,113 corresponds to Litir 1,417. 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 mun t-sàr-sgoilear Uilleam MacBhatair no William J. Watson. Chaidh an leabhar aige 'The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland' fhoillseachadh ann an naoi ceud deug, fichead 's a sia (1926). Anns a' chaibideil aige mu ainmean aibhnichean, sgrìobh e tòrr rudan inntinneach mu na pearsaichean a bha co-cheangailte ri uisge ann an saoghal nan seann Cheilteach.

Tha dà earrainn anns an t-seann leabhar *Vita Sancti Columbae* – Beatha Chalum Chille – a tha ag innse dhuinn gun robh uisge coisrigte – co-dhiù ann an seadh pàganach – do na Cruithnich. Chuala Calum Cille mu fhuaran a bha naomh dhaibh agus dha robh an sluagh ag adhradh. Agus tha iomradh air abhainn air an robh *Nigra Dea* ann an Laidinn – a' ciallachadh 'A' Bhan-dia Dhubh'.

Tha MacBhatair ag innse dhuinn gun robh aibhnichean naomh do na Ceiltich air tìr-mòr na Roinn-Eòrpa. Tha sin air a dhearbhadh leis na h-ainmean aibhnichean a tha a' crìochnachadh ann an – ona. 'S iad eisimpleirean Damona, Nemetona, Ritona agus Axona. Lean a leithid de shealladh air na h-aibhnichean eadhon an dèidh do Chrìosdachd tighinn do na dùthchannan sin.

Tha MacBhatair a' toirt sùil air na creutairean 'os-nàdarrach' a tha ceangailte ri aibhnichean ann an Alba. Tha e ag innse dhuinn mu 'river sprite' a bha a' fuireach ann an Gleann Cuaich ann an Siorrachd Inbhir Nis; **b' e a h-ainm Cuachag.**

Agus ann an Gleann Èite bha creutair os-nàdarrach ann. B' ise Èiteag. Tha MacBhatair a' sgrìobhadh gun robh e eòlach air fear a bha eòlach air fear a bh' air tachairt ri Èiteag.

Sgrìobh an sgoilear Ceilteach, Seòras MacEanraig, gun robh abairt aig Gàidheil ann an Srath Spè mu Uisge Neithich. Nuair a bha i a' sìor lionadh, agus tuil gu bhith ann, chanadh na daoine, 'tha na Neithichean a' tighinn' (*the Nethy sprites are coming*).

Agus, ann am Beinn nam Fadhla, tha allt ann air an robh A' Ghamhnach 'the farrow cow' mar ainm. Nuair a bha daoine a' dol tarsainn an uillt, bhiodh iad a' tilgeil sop feòir don uisge, agus a' cantainn 'fodar don Ghamhnaich' (fodder for the Gamhnach).

Agus tha e ag innse dhuinn mu na h-ùrnisgean ann am Braghaid Albainn – creutairean a bha car coltach ri daoine agus a bha a' fuireach faisg air uillt agus

àthannan. B' e am fear a b' ainmeile dhiubh Peallaidh a thug ainm do dh'Obar Pheallaidh ann an Siorrachd Pheairt. Sin *Aberfeldy* ann am Beurla.

Cha robh Peallaidh a' fuireach a-mhàin ann an Obar Pheallaidh, ge-tà.

Chithear a lorg-coise air clach ann an Gleann Lìomhann – rud ris an canar 'Caslorg Pheallaidh'.

Agus, mu dheireadh, tha aithris aig MacBhatair mu Chailleach na h-Abhann no '*the river hag*' ann an Siorrachd Rois. Bha ise beò aig na h-àthannan air Abhainn Orthainn – àite a bha cunnartach airson a dhol a-null anns an t-seann aimsir. Tha MacBhatair dhen bheachd gun tàinig Orthainn math dh'fhaodte bhon t-seann Cheilteis Orotana – le 'ona' aig an deireadh. Tha naomhachd co-cheangailte ri uillt is aibhnichean na h-Alba.

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Faclan na Litreach: sàr-sgoilear: *excellent scholar*; dà earrainn: *two sections*; a' Bhan-dia Dhubh: *the black goddess*; tìr-mòr na Roinn-Eòrpa: *the mainland of Europe*; os-nàdarrach: *supernatural*; Gleann Cuaich: *Glen Quoich*; Gleann Èite: *Glen Etive*; Seòras MacEanraig: *George Henderson*; Srath Spè: *Strathspey*; Uisge Neithich: *River Nethy*; ùruisgean: *urisks*; Braghaid Albainn: *Breadalbane*; àthannan: *fords*; Gleann Lìomhann: *Glenlyon*; Abhainn Orthainn: *River Orrin*; math dh'fhaodte: *perhaps*.

Abairtean na Litreach: Anns a' chaibideil aige mu ainmean aibhnichean: *in his chapter about river names*; tòrr rudan inntinneach mu na pearsaichean a bha co-cheangailte ri uisge: *many interesting things about the personalities who were connected with water*; saoghal nan seann Cheilteach: *the world of the Old Celts*; gun robh uisge coisrigte – co-dhiù ann an seadh pàganach – do na Cruithnich: *that water was sanctified – at least in a pagan sense – to the Picts*; chuala Calum Cille mu fhuaran a bha naomh dhaibh agus dha robh an sluagh ag adhradh: *Columba heard about a fountain that was sacred to them and which the populace worshipped*; iomradh air abhainn air an robh *Nigra Dea* ann an Laidinn: *an account of a river called Nigra Dea in Latin*; eadhon an dèidh do Chrìosdachd tighinn do na dùthchannan sin: *even after Christianity had come to those lands*; gun robh e eòlach air fear a bha eòlach air fear a bh' air tachairt ri Èiteag: *that he knew a man who knew a man who had met with Èiteag*; bhiodh iad a' tilgeil sop feòir don uisge: *they would throw a wisp of grass into the water*; b' e am fear a b' ainmeile dhiubh Peallaidh: *the most famous of them was Peallaidh*; tha naomhachd co-cheangailte ri uillt is aibhnichean na h-Alba: *sacredness is connected to the burns and rivers of Scotland*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: **Chithear** a lorg-coise: *his footprint can be seen*. *Chithear is a passive future form of the irregular verb faic 'see'. Chì mi means 'I will see'; chì sibh is 'you will see'. However, with this verb, the future tense can also be used to mean 'can/am able to'. Thus, chì mi can also mean 'I can see' e.g. chì mi na beanntan 'I can see the mountains. This also applies to the passive future form; thus chithear na beanntan can mean 'the mountains can be seen' (as well as 'will be seen').*

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: b' e a h-ainm Cuachag: *her name was Cuachag*.

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