

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

A special programme, in the form of a “letter”, designed for Gaelic learners who already have some knowledge of the language. A short vocabulary and comments on points of grammar and figures of speech are included with the text. If you have comments, Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 424. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 120 corresponds to Litir 424.

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh an t-seachdain sa chaidh mu *chrìos Chuchulainn*, an lus air a bheil *meadowsweet* ann am Beurla. A bheil sibh eòlach air Cuchulainn? Tha e mar phàirt de dhualchas Gàidhealach na h-Èireann 's na h-Alba. A rèir beul-aithris bha ceangal aige don Eilean Sgitheanach. 'S e gaisgeach a bh' ann.

Tha e a' nochdadh ann am beul-aithris na h-Alba anns a' chruinneachadh aig Iain Òg Ìle – *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*. Tha an stòiridh a' mìneachadh mar a fhuair e ainm. Bha uaireigin ann an Alba rìgh air an robh Cumhal mar ainm. Bha cù mòr aige a bhiodh a' cumail sùil air a chrodh. Nuair a bha an crodh air an cur air feurachadh, 's e an cù a bhiodh gan treòrachadh. Chumadh an cù sùil air a' chrodh tron latha. Agus air an fheasgar bheireadh e an crodh dhachaigh.

Bha daoine a' fuireach faisg air taigh an rìgh agus bha mac aca. Bhiodh iad a' cur **am mic** gu taigh an rìgh air gnothaichean a h-uile feasgar. Co-dhiù, feasgar brèagha a bha seo, bha an gille a' dol gu taigh an rìgh air gnothach. Bha caman is ball aige agus bha e a' cluich leotha air an rathad. Thachair cù an rìgh ris agus thòisich e air cluich leis a' bhall. Thog e am ball na bheul agus ruith e air falbh leis.

Chaidh an gille an tòir air a' chù. Bhuail e am ball le a chaman fhad 's a bha am ball ann am beul a' choin. Phut e sìos a sgòrnan e le cas a' chomain. Thachd e an cù. Leis gun robh e air an cù a mharbhadh, b' fheudar dha fhèin sùil a chumail air crodh an rìgh, an àite a' choin. Bhiodh e a' cur a' chruidh air feurachadh gach madainn. Bhiodh e gan iomain a-mach, a' dèanamh cinnteach nach robh iad air an goid, is gan iomain dhachaigh aig deireadh an latha.

Bidh cuimhne agaibh gur e Cumhal ainm an rìgh. Leis gun do mharbh an gille an cù, agus leis gun robh e fhèin air a dhol an àite a' choin, 's e Cù Chumhail a bha daoine a' gabhail air. Chaidh sin atharrachadh aig a' cheann thall gu Cuchulainn.

Uill, sin an stòiridh le dreach Albannach air, agus dreach an naoidheamh linn deug cuideachd. Ach tha e a' **tighinn a-steach orm** gu bheil athair Fhinn – an seann ghaisgeach Gàidhealach – agus fear eile air a dhol an lùib a chèile an seo. B' e ainm slàn Fhinn – Fionn MacCumhail – oir b' e Cumhal athair. Ach ann an Èirinn chan e athair Fhinn a tha an sàs anns an sgeulachd seo, ach fear Culann.

'S e Setanta an t-ainm-baistidh a bh' air Cuchulainn. Fhuair e an t-ainm ùr aige nuair a mharbh e an cù-faire fiadhaich aig Culann. Leis nach robh cù aig Culann

tuilleadh, ghabh Setanta àite a' choin. Bha e fhèin an uair sin mar chù-faire dha – “Cù Chulainn”.

Co-dhiù, 's e fìor sheann ghaisgeach a bh' ann an Cuchulainn. Tha e a' nochdadh anns an sgeulachd as sine a th' againn a bhuineas do na Gàidheil – *Táin Bó Cuailnge*. Bha e làidir is brèagha agus, a rèir cuid, bha seachd corrigan aige air gach làimh, seachd òrdagan air gach cois agus seachd clachan-sùla anns gach sùil. Nuair a bha e a' sabaid bhiodh e a' dol às a rian agus cha robh duine ann a bha comasach air a' chùis a dhèanamh air. Sin Cuchulainn, agus chan eil sinn ullamh leis fhathast...

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Faclan na Litreach: thachd: *choked*; ainm-baistidh: *given (baptism) name*; cù-faire: *watch-dog*.

Abairtean na Litreach: crios Chuchulainn: *meadowsweet [lit. Cuchullin's belt]*; 's e gaisgeach a bh' ann: *he was a [legendary] hero*; Iain Òg Ìle: *the 19th Century folklorist, JF Campbell*; a' mìneachadh mar a fhuair e ainm: *explains how he got his name*; rìgh air an robh Cumhal mar ainm: *a king called Cumhal*; nuair a bha an crodh air an cur air feurachadh: *when the cattle were put out to graze*; a bhiodh gan treòrachadh: *that would guide them*; bheireadh e an crodh dhachaigh: *he would take the cattle home*; caman is ball: *a shinty stick and ball*; thog e am ball na bheul: *he picked up the ball in his mouth*; an tòir air: *in pursuit of*; phut e sìos a sgòrnan e le cas a' chomain: *he pushed it down its throat with the shaft of the shinty stick*; b' fheudar dha fhèin sùil a chumail air crodh an rìgh: *he himself had to look after the king's cattle*; gan iomain a-mach: *driving them out*; ainm slàn Fhinn: *Fionn's full name*; Fionn MacCumhail: *Fingal*; b' e Cumhal athair: *Cumhal was his father*; leis nach robh cù aig Culann tuilleadh: *as Culann no longer had a dog*; ghabh Setanta àite a' choin: *Setanta took the dog's place*; an sgeulachd as sine a th' againn a bhuineas do na Gàidheil: *the oldest story we have which belongs to the Gaels*; Táin Bó Cuailnge: *The Cattle Raid of Cooley*; bha seachd corrigan aige air gach làimh: *he had seven fingers on each hand*; seachd òrdagan air gach cois: *seven toes on each foot*; seachd clachan-sùla anns gach sùil: *seven pupils in each eye*; bhiodh e a' dol às a rian: *he would go berserk*; chan eil sinn ullamh leis fhathast: *we're not finished with him yet*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Bhiodh iad a' cur **am mic** gu taigh an rìgh: *they would send their son to the king's house. Do you know why it is am mic here? It is in the genitive case following the verbal noun [a'] cur (and it is a definite noun with an article in front of it). The genitive singular of mac is mic. And the article is am because it is a possessive article ("their") and precedes an "m".*

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: tha e a' tighinn a-steach orm gu bheil athair Fhinn agus fear eile air a dhol an lùib a chèile: *it occurs to me that Fionn's father and another man have been confused*.

* Tha “Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh” air a maoinachadh le Seirbheis nam Meadhanan Gàidhlig.