

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Fèill na Bealltainn (2)

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 1,138. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 834 corresponds to Litir 1,138.

An t-seachdain sa chaidh bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Fhèill na Bealltainn agus mu na teintean a bhathar a’ togail air mullaichean chnoc. Ann an Carmina Gadelica, tha Alasdair MacIlleMhìcheil ag innse dhuinn tuilleadh mun teine. Bha a h-uile teine anns an sgìre air a mhùchadh. Cha robh ann an uair sin ach an aon teine air mullach cnuic no mullach monaidh. ’S e *teine-èiginn* a chanadh daoine ris an fhear sin. A rèir choltais, cha robh e air a chur thuige le bhith a’ cleachdadh lasairean no èibhleagan bho na seann teintean. ’S e teine gu tur ùr a dh’fheumadh a bhith ann. Bha na teintean taighe air an dèanamh às ùr bhon teine mhòr seo.

Mar phàirt dhen deas-ghnàth, bha an teine-èiginn **air a roinn na dhà leth**. An uair sin, bha daoine agus crodh air an cur eadar ‘dà theine Bhealltainn’ mar dhòigh gus an dèanamh ‘fiorghlan’.

Nuair a bha e ann an Leòdhas ann an ochd ceud deug, seachdad ’s a trì (1873), chuala MacIlleMhìcheil seanfhacal mun chùis aig bodach: *A Mhoire! A mhicein, bu dorra dhòmhsa sin a dhèanamh dhut na dhol eadar dà theine mhòr Bheall.* Nise, tha e doirbh a ràdh an tuirt am bodach ‘Bheall’, mar a tha sgrìobhte ann an Carmina Gadelica, no ’s dòcha ‘Bheul’. Ach ’s e sin a chlàr MacIlleMhìcheil – *Ah Mary! Lad, it would be more difficult for me to do that for you than to pass between the two great fires of Beall. A Mhoire! A mhicein, bu dorra dhòmhsa sin a dhèanamh dhut na dhol eadar dà theine mhòr Bheall.*

Bha an abairt aig daoine cuideachd – *eadar dà Bhealltainn*. O shean, bha e a’ ciallachadh bliadhna – an t-àm eadar a’ Bhealltainn agus an ath Bhealltainn. Ge-tà, a rèir choltais, dh’atharraich ciall na h-abairt an dèidh don mhìosachan atharrachadh. Bha i an uair sin a’ ciallachadh a’ chiad cheala-deug dhen Chèitean, eadar a’ Bhealltainn agus a’ Bhealltainn dhen t-seann nòs. ’S e àm math a th’ ann a bhith a’ cur eadar an dà Bhealltainn. Tha mi a’ ciallachadh le sin a bhith a’ cur glasraich no lusan eile.

Chruinnich an sagart ainmeil, Maighstir Ailein, beul-aithris o chionn còrr is ceud bliadhna. Seo abairt a chruinnich e: **Latha Buidhe Bealltainn, thig a’ chuthag às a taigh geamhraidh.** *At Beltane the cuckoo emerges from its winter home.*

Tha a’ chuthag ceangailte gu mòr ris a’ Bhealltainn ann am mac-meanmna nan Gàidheal. Ach tha eun eile ann a fhuair ainm Gàidhlig ann an co-cheangal ris a’ Bealltainn. ’S e sin an *leth-ghuilbneach*. Ann am Beurla, canaidh daoine *whimbrel* ris. Ach ’s e an t-ainm Gàidhlig as cumanta a th’ air – *Eun-Bealltainn*. Bidh e a’ tighinn am follais aig an àm sin dhen bhliadhna.

Tha ‘eun’ eile ceangailte ris an fhèill seo. ’S e sin *glaisean cumhach na Bealltainn* – *the mournful wee bird of Beltane*. Chan e seo eun ann an dha-rìribh, ge-tà – ach gaoth fhuar a bhios a’ sèideadh ann am meadhan a’ Chèitein – mar a chanadh am bodach eile – am *blast* mu dheireadh dhen gheamhradh.

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Faclan na Litreach: teine-èiginn: ‘*need-fire*’; fìorghlan: *pure*; a mhicein: *lit. son sonnie (vocative case)*; glasraich: *vegetables*; cuthag: *cuckoo*; eun-Bealltainn: *whimbrel*.

Abairtean na Litreach: na teintean a bhathar a’ togail air mullaichean chnoc: *the fires that were being built on hilltops*; bha a h-uile teine anns an sgìre air a mhùchadh: *every fire in the area was extinguished*; cha robh e air a chur thuige le bhith a’ cleachdadh lasairean no èibhleagan bho na seann teintean: *it wasn’t lit by the use of flames or embers from the old fires*; ’s e teine gu tur ùr a dh’fheumadh a bhith ann: *it had to be a new fire*; bha daoine agus crodh air an cur eadar ‘dà theine Bhealltainn’: *people and cattle were put between the ‘two fires of Beltane’*; dh’atharraich ciall na h-abairt an dèidh don mhìosachan atharrachadh: *the meaning of the phrase changed after the calendars changed*; a’ chiad cheala-deug dhen Chèitean, eadar a’ Bhealltainn agus a’ Bhealltainn dhen t-seann nòs: *the first fortnight of May, between Beltane and the Old Style Beltane*; ’s e àm math a th’ ann a bhith a’ cur: *it’s a good time to be planting*; chruinnich an sagart ainmeil, Maighstir Ailein, beul-aithris: *the famous priest, Father Allan, collected oral tradition*; bidh e a’ tighinn am follais aig an àm sin dhen bhliadhna: *it becomes obvious at that time of the year*; tha ‘eun’ eile ceangailte ris an fhèill seo: *there is another ‘bird’ connected to this festival*; *glaisean cumhach na Bealltainn: the mournful wee bird (e.g. sparrow) of Beltane*; chan e seo eun ann an dha-rìribh, ge-tà: *this is not a bird in reality, however*; gaoth fhuar a bhios a’ sèideadh ann am meadhan a’ Chèitein: *a cold wind that blows in the middle of May*; mar a chanadh am bodach eile: *as the other old man would say [i.e. ‘as might be said’]*; am *blast* mu dheireadh dhen gheamhradh: *the last blast of winter*.

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: Mar phàirt dhen deas-ghnàth, bha an teine-èiginn **air a roinn na dhà leth**: *as part of the ceremony, the ‘need-fire’ was divided into two halves*.

Seanfhacal na Litreach: **Latha Buidhe Bealltainn, thig a’ chuthag às a taigh geamhraidh**: *on Beltane day, the cuckoo emerges from its winter home*.

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