

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Loch nan Dùbhrachan

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 1,291. There is also a simpler version – An Litir Bheag – which is broadcast at 2:30pm each Sunday. Litir Bheag 987 corresponds to Litir 1,291. The Litir is also available at www.bbc.co.uk/litir and www.learnghaelic.scot/litir. Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learnghaelic.scot.

Ma tha sibh air a dhol gu cùrsa no tachartas aig Sabhal Mòr Ostaig – ‘Colaiste na Gàidhlig’ anns an Eilean Sgitheanach – tha deagh sheans ann gum bi sibh eòlach air Loch nan Dùbhrachan. Tha an loch ri taobh rathad mòr Shlèite, an A851, aig ceann an rathaid bhig a tha a’ dol **gu ruige An t-Òrd agus Tòcabhaig**.

Bho àm gu àm, bidh oileanaich agus luchd-obrach an t-Sabhail Mhòir a’ snàmh anns an loch. Tha fhios gu bheil e blàth gu leòr as t-samhradh, ged a bhios a’ mheanbh-chuileag ann aig amannan.

Ach dè tha an t-ainm a’ ciallachadh – Loch nan Dùbhrachan? Tha an t-Suirbhidh Òrdanaich a’ cumail a-mach gu bheil e a’ ciallachadh – math dh’fhaodte – *‘the loch of dimness or dark shades or loch of gloom’*. ’S dòcha gu bheil sin ceart ach ann an Slèite fhèin tha beachd ann gu bheil e a’ ciallachadh *‘the loch of the spirits’*. Bidh cuid ga fhuaimneachadh mar Loch nan Dùraichean no Uairichean. Agus tha an t-ainm a’ dol le seann sgeul.

Tha mi a’ dol a dh’innse dhuibh mar a fhuair M.E.M. Donaldson – Mary Ethel Muir Donaldson – an sgeul agus mar a dh’aithris i e anns an leabhar aice *‘Wandering in the Western Highlands and Islands’*. Chaidh an leabhar fhoillseachadh o chionn ceud bliadhna ’s a h-aon. Tha i ag ràdh gun robh muinntir an àite dhen beachd gun robh each-uisge a’ fuireach anns an loch. Tha i ag innse dhuinn gun robh gu leòr fhathast a’ creidsinn anns a leithid de chreutair o chionn ceud bliadhna.

Tha an t-ùghdar ag innse dhuinn mu chòmhradh a bh’ aice le seann duine. Dh’innse e dhi gun robh e an sàs, leth-cheud bliadhna roimhe, ann an oidhirp each-uisge Loch nan Dùbhrachan a ghlacadh. Ged as e ‘each-uisge’ a chanadh daoine ris, bha e na bu choltaiche ri bò le muing fhada. A bharrachd air sin, bhiodh e a’ dèanamh lorgan-coise a bh’ ann an cumadh botal-fiona.

Nuair a thàinig an latha airson an t-each-uisge a ghlacadh, bha e mar latha-fèille anns an sgìre. Cha deach na sgoilearan don sgoil agus thàinig sluagh mòr gu ruige Loch nan Dùbhrachan o fhad is farsaing. Bha feadhainn ann an cairtean a bh’ air an tarraing le eich. Bha gu leòr dhramaichean air an gabhail cuideachd – barrachd na bhiodh air an gabhail eadhon aig tiodhlacadh!

Bha dà bhàta bheag aca. Bha iad air an cur air bhog anns an loch agus bha lìon air a shìneadh eatarra. Dh’rgh iad an lìon bho cheann gu ceann dhen loch. Chaidh a ghlacadh le rudeigin air a’ ghrunn – seann chraobh no clach no rudeigin dhen t-

seòrsa. Leis nach robh e ann an comas nan daoine an lion a tharraing tuilleadh, bha cuid de na daoine a' smaoinichadh gun robh an t-each-uisge an sàs ann! Theich iad, agus an t-eagal orra!

Ge-tà, chan e an t-each-uisge a bh' ann. Nuair a bha an obair seachad, cha robh dad anns an lion ach dà gheadas. Mar sin, an robh an t-ùghdar – M.E.M. Donaldson – dhen bheachd **gun robh iad air a bhith a' ruith na gaoithe** agus nach robh creutair dhen t-seòrsa sin ann an Loch nan Dùbhrachan? Cha robh! Bha i dhen bheachd gun do dh'fhàilnich orra an t-each-uisge a ghlacadh ach gun robh e fhathast beò anns an loch!

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Faclan na Litreach: each-uisge: *water-horse, kelpie*; latha-fèille: *holiday*; dhragh iad: *they dragged*; grunn: *bottom [of loch]*; theich: *fled*; dà gheadas: *two pike (a species of fish)*.

Abairtean na Litreach: Ma tha sibh air a dhol gu cùrsa no tachartas: *if you have been to a course or event*; tha deagh sheans ann gum bi sibh eòlach air: *there is a good chance you will know*; rathad mòr Shlèite: *the main Sleat road*; ceann an rathaid bhig: *the end of the minor road*; bidh oileanaich agus luchd-obrach an t-Sabhail Mhòir a' snàmh anns an loch: *students and staff of Sabhal Mòr will go swimming in the loch*; ged a bhios a' mheanbh-chuileag ann aig amannan: *although midges [the midge] are present at times*; bidh cuid ga fhuaimneachadh mar: *some people pronounce it as*; mar a dh'athris i e: *as she reported it*; chaidh an leabhar fhoillseachadh o chionn ceud bliadhna 's a h-aon: *the book was published 101 years ago*; mu chòmhradh a bh' aice le seann duine: *about a conversation she had with an elderly man*; leth-cheud bliadhna roimhe: *fifty years previously*; bha e na bu choltaiche ri bò le muing fhada: *it was more like a cow with a long mane*; lorgan-coise a bh' ann an cumadh botal-fiona: *footprints that were in the shape of a wine bottle*; o fhad is farsaing: *from far and wide*; bha feadhainn ann an cairtean a bh' air an tarraing le eich: *some people were in horse-drawn carts*; bha gu leòr dhramaichean air an gabhail: *plenty of drams were taken*; barrachd na bhiodh air an gabhail eadhon aig tiodhlacadh: *even more than would be taken at a funeral*; bha iad air an cur air bhog anns an loch agus bha lion air a shìneadh eatarra: *they were set afloat on the loch and a net was stretched between them*; gun robh an t-each-uisge an sàs ann: *that the water-horse was tangled in it*; gun do dh'fhàilnich orra: *that they failed*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: a tha a' dol gu ruige An t-Òrd agus Tòcabhaig: *that goes to Ord and Tokavaig*. Gu ruige might look like a compound preposition but it works like a simple preposition in that it commands a noun in the nominative case; thus we say gu ruige An t-Òrd. You might compare it to dhan Òrd (dative case) and chun an Ùird (genitive case).

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: **gun robh iad air a bhith a' ruith na gaoithe: that they had been chasing the wind** (an equivalent to the English 'they had been on a wild goose chase').

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