

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Uilleam Hare (3)

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 1,370. There is also a simpler version – An Litir Bheag – which is broadcast at 2:30pm each Sunday. Litir Bheag 1,066 corresponds to Litir 1,370. 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 mhurtair Uilleam Hare. O chionn bhliadhnaichean, sgrìobh mi mu dheidhinn agus mun duine a bha ri murt cuide ris, Uilleam Burke – airson an leabhair 'Mort Mhòr!' Bha mi faisg air deireadh mo chuid rannsachaidh air a' chùis. Bha mi a' dol a-steach a Leabharlann Inbhir Nis agus a thachair mi ri fear às a' Chomraich a bha a' tighinn a-mach. Fear a bha càirdeach dhomh fad-às agus a bha mion-eòlach air eachdraidh na sgìre. Tha eagal orm nach eil e beò an-diugh.

Dh'innis mi dha gun robh mi a' rannsachadh cùis Bhurke is Hare agus thuirt e rium, 'Uill, tha fios agad gun deach Hare a dh'fhuireach air a' Chomraich ...?' Abair iongnadh a bha sin dhomh! Cha robh mi air an sgeul sin a chluinntinn riamh roimhe.

Seo agaibh an sgeul, a rèir beul-aithris. Theich Hare le cead na rìoghachd a Dhùn Phris. Chaidh e à fianais an sin no math dh'fhaodte ann an ceann a tuath Shasainn.

Uaireigin an dèidh sin, nochd coigreach air a' Chomraich fon ainm Seumas Maxwell, ged a tha na clàran ag innse dhuinn gur e Uilleam Maxwell a bh' air gu h-oifigeil. Fhuair e cead fuireach ann an taigh falamh a bha leis an Eaglais. Bha sin ann an Camas Teile, am baile beag far a bheil bùth na Comraich an-diugh. Tha tobhta taigh Mhaxwell ri fhaicinn fhathast.

Bha bean aig Maxwell. Tha cuid ag ràdh gum buineadh i don sgìre. Ach tha feadhainn a' cumail a-mach gun do lorg e bean ann an àite eile. Tha aon rud fìor. Mas e Hare a bh' ann am Maxwell, chan e a' chiad bhean aige a bh' innte – an tè a bha còmhla ris ann an Dùn Èideann. Tha e coltach gun do thrèig ise an duine aice an dèidh na cùis-chùirte, agus gun do thill i a dh'Èirinn.

Bha daoine eòlach air Maxwell mar **Am Breabadair Teine**. 'S e sin am frith-ainm a bh' air no – mar a chanar ann an Gàidhlig na Comraich – an **aithnig** aige. *His nickname*.

Chan eil daoine buileach cinnteach carson as e am Breabadair Teine a bh' air. Bha stòiridh ann gun robh e air a losgadh le aol no math dh'fhaodte ann an spreadhadh oir 's e spreadhadair a bh' ann roimhe. Bha làrach na tubaist air aodann. Tha sin a' tighinn ri sgeul gun do thuit Hare a-steach a shloc-aoil ann an Lunnainn.

Ach tha beachd ann gur e 'loisgte' a chanadh daoine ri cuideigin a bh' air a losgadh, seach 'teine', agus tha am facal 'loisgte' a' nochdadh ann an aon aithris mun duine. Tha feadhainn ag ràdh gun robh Maxwell fìor mhath mar bhreabadair agus gun

robh dòigh-fhighe luath ùr aige – agus gur e sin as coireach gur e ‘breabadair teine’ a bh’ air mar aithnig. *The fiery weaver*, mar gum biodh.

Bhathar ag ràdh gun robh maraichean às a’ Chomraich ann an Dùn Èideann aig àm cùis-chùirte Bhurke, agus gum fac’ iad Hare. Bha iad ag aithneachadh Maxwell mar Hare nuair a nochd e air a’ Chomraich.

Ach a bheil sin fìor? Tha eachdraiche air a bhith a’ toirt sùil gheur o chionn ghoirid air Hare agus Maxwell. A bheil esan dhen bheachd gur e an aon duine a bh’ ann? Innsidh mi dhuibh anns an ath Litir!

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Faclan na Litreach: Leabharlann Inbhir Nis: *Inverness Library*; coigreach: *stranger, outsider*; Camas Teile: *Camusteel*; tobhta: *(house) ruin*; spreadhadh: *explosion*; spreadhadair: *blaster, person who uses explosives*; làrach: *scar, mark*; sloc-aoil: *lime pit*; maraichean: *seafarers*; eachdraiche: *historian*.

Abairtean na Litreach: faisg air deireadh mo chuid rannsachaidh air a’ chùis: *near the end of my research on the matter*; thachair mi ri fear às a’ Chomraich: *I met a man from Applecross*; càirdeach dhomh fad-às: *distantly related to me*; mion-eòlach air eachdraidh na sgìre: *exceptionally knowledgeable about the history of the area*; tha fios agad gun deach Hare a dh’fhuireach air a’ Chomraich: *you know that Hare went to live in Applecross*; abair iongnadh a bha sin dhomh: *that was an enormous surprise to me*; cha robh mi air an sgeul sin a chluinntinn riamh roimhe: *I had never heard that tale before*; theich Hare le cead na rioghachd a Dhùn Phris: *Hare fled to Dumfries with the permission of the authorities*; chaidh e à fianais: *he disappeared*; taigh falamh a bha leis an Eaglais: *an empty house that was owned by the Church*; am baile beag far a bheil bùth na Comraich: *the small village where the Applecross Shop is*; gum buineadh i don sgìre: *that she belonged to the area*; an tè a bha còmhla ris ann an Dùn Èideann: *the woman that was with him in Edinburgh*; gun do thrèig ise an duine aice: *that she abandoned her husband*; air a losgadh le aol: *burned with lime*; a bheil esan dhen bheachd gur e an aon duine a bh’ ann?: *does he think they were the same person?*

Puing-chànain na Litreach: **Am Breabadair Teine:** *this has been interpreted locally as the ‘burnt weaver’ with an explanation that Maxwell had been injured and burned during blasting operations when he worked as a road contractor in England. But another explanation is given by Alasdair MacIver (Ailidh Buidhe) of Shildaig (born 1887) who was recorded by the School of Scottish Studies in 1962 (he mistakenly refers to Hare as Burke). In his tale, which can be heard on the Tobar an Dualchais website, he says that the newcomer to Applecross, whose ‘adopted’ name he refuses to give, built a new type of loom which made him so effective and fast at weaving that he earned the nickname ‘Breabadair Teine’.*

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: ‘S e sin an aithnig aige: *that is his nickname. This is the word (based on aithne) used in Wester Ross Gaelic. It is in Dwelly’s dictionary but is absent in most Scottish and Irish dictionaries.*

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