

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Clach na h-Aifrinn (1)

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 1,381. There is also a simpler version – An Litir Bheag – which is broadcast at 2:30pm each Sunday. Litir Bheag 1,077 corresponds to Litir 1,381. The Litir is also available at www.bbc.co.uk/litir and www.learnghaelic.scot/litir. Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learnghaelic.scot.

Anns an dà Litir mu dheireadh bha sinn ann an Gleann Ruaidh ann am Bràigh Loch Abar. Tha dualchas Gàidhealach air leth aig an sgìre sin, ged nach eil a' Ghàidhlig fhèin cho làidir innte an-diugh.

Anns an Litir seo, tha sinn a' dol a dh'fhuireach ann an Gleann Ruaidh. Bidh sinn a' toirt sùil air seann chlach iongantach agus air an sgeul a tha ceangailte rithe. Tha a' chlach ri taobh an rathaid **letheach suas an gleann**. Air aon taobh dhith, tha ìomhaighean snaighte oirre – cailis, abhlan agus na litrichean IHS. Tha na trì ceangailte ris a' chreideamh Chaitligeach – creideamh a tha fhathast beò ann am Bràigh Loch Abar.

Thàinig mi tarsainn air an sgeul mun chloich an toiseach anns an leabhar *Highways and Byways in the Central Highlands* le Seton Gordon. An uair sin, lorg mi cunntas ann an Gàidhlig, sgrìobhte le Calum Iain MacGill-Eain, a chruinnich beul-aithris bho dhaoine ann am Bràigh Loch Abar anns na caogadan.

Seo mar a tha an sgeul a' tòiseachadh: *Tha clach ri taobh an rathaid ris an abair iad Clach na h-Aifrinn*. Litrich Calum Iain 'aifrinn' A-I-D-H-R-I-N-N.

Tha an sgeul a' leantainn mar seo: *Tha i shuas mu choinneamh àite ris an abair iad Creithneachan ann an Gleann Ruaidh. Bha uaireigin an siud agus bha fear a' dol dhachaigh ris an abradh iad Aonghas Mòr. Nuair a bha e mu choinneamh Creithneachan a bha seo, thàinig na sìthichean a chur stad air.*

Tha an sgeul a' leantainn: Bha leth de na sìthichean a' glodhaich, 'Cha leig sinn seachad Aonghas Mòr.' Bha leth eile air an taobh thall a' glodhaich, 'Leigidh sinn seachad Aonghas Mòr.'

Chunnaic Aonghas Mòr gu robh **an aon chunntas** air gach taobh. Bha a' bhòt co-ionann. A-nise thug Aonghas taic dha fhèin, agus fhuair e seachad.

Tha stòiridhean eile ann car dhen aon seòrsa. Bha feadhainn a' cumail a-mach gun robh bòcan a' fuireach aig an allt a tha suas an rathad bhon chloich. Bha e cho cunnartach 's nach robh daoine deònach a dhol tarsainn an uillt ann an dorchadas na h-oidhche.

Cha robh muinntir an àite toilichte mun t-suidheachadh. Dh'iarr iad air sagart taic a thoirt dhaibh. Chaidh an sagart gu clach mhòr a bha air bruach chas ri taobh an

uillt. Chùm e aifreann an sin, feuch faighinn cuidhteas a' bhòcain. Agus bhon uair sin, ghabh muinntir an àite 'Clach na h-Aifrinn' oirre mar ainm.

Shaoileadh sibh gur e 'The Mass Stone' a bhiodh air a' chloich ann am Beurla. 'S e sin a bh' oirre. Ach bidh feadhainn an-diugh a' gabhail 'The Chalice Stone' orra, oir tha cailis – *chalice* – snaighte oirre.

Seo mar a thachair e. Bha Clach na h-Aifrinn uaireigin na bu mhotha na tha i an-diugh. Mar a thuirt mi, bha i air bruach chas os cionn an uillt. Chaidh a' bhruch a chrìomadh leis an allt agus, an dèidh ùine, thuit a' chlach don allt fhèin. Bha i briste.

Thog na fir a bu làidire anns an sgìre am pìos as motha a-mach às an allt. Chuir iad air ais i gu h-àrd air a' bhruch. Ach bha an t-allt fhathast a' crìomadh na talmhainn. Agus chaidh a' chlach a ghluasad don àite far a bheil i an-diugh. Agus cò rinn an snaigheadh oirre? Innsidh mi sin dhuibh anns an ath Litir.

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Faclan na Litreach: Gleann Ruaidh: *Glen Roy*; Bràigh Loch Abar: *Brae Lochaber*; Calum Iain MacGill-Eain: *Calum (Iain) Maclean*; co-ionann: *equal*; bòcan: *spectre, ghost*; sagart: *priest*; cailis: *chalice*; Clach na h-Aifrinn: *The Mass Stone*.

Abairtean na Litreach: Air aon taobh dhith, tha ìomhaighean snaighte oirre: *on one side of her there are images carved on her*; cailis, abhlann agus na litrichean IHS: *a chalice, a (consecrated) wafer and the letters IHS*; ceangailte ris a' chreideamh Chaitligeach: *connected to the Catholic religion*; thàinig mi tarsainn air an sgeul mun chloich an toiseach: *I first came across the tale about the stone*; mu choinneamh àite ris an abair iad Creithneachan: *opposite a place called Cranachan*; bha fear a' dol dhachaigh ris an abradh iad Aonghas Mòr: *a man called Big Angus was going home*; tha an sgeul a' leantainn: *the story continues*; bha leth de na sìthichean a' glaothaich: *half of the fairies were shouting*; cha leig sinn seachad X: *we shall not let X pass*; air an taobh thall: *on the other side*; leigidh sinn seachad X: *we shall let X pass*; tha stòiridhean eile ann car dhen aon seòrsa: *there are other stories of somewhat the same ilk*; nach robh daoine deònach a dhol tarsainn an uillt: *that people were not willing to cross the burn*; ann an dorchadas na h-oidhche: *in the darkness of the night*; chùm e aifreann an sin, feuch faighinn cuidhteas a' bhòcain: *he held mass there in an attempt to get rid of the spectre*; chaidh a' bhruch a chrìomadh leis an allt: *the bank was eroded by the burn*; gu h-àrd air a' bhruch: *high on the bank*; a' crìomadh na talmhainn: *eroding the land*;

Puing-chànain na Litreach: Chunnaic X gu robh **an aon chunntas** air gach taobh: *X saw that there was the same number on each side*. Calum Iain Maclean wrote the traditionally correct an t-aon chunntas rather than an aon chunntas. As *cunntas* is a masculine noun (like all nouns ending -as), the t- would be expected in front of *aon*, as it would also appear (in the nominative singular case) in front of a masculine noun that starts with a vowel. However, in the modern era, such a distinction is disappearing in a structure like this, probably under the influence of the dative form

(e.g. anns an aon chunntas). *For ‘that is the same horse’ you are more likely to hear ‘s e sin an aon each’ rather than the more traditional ‘s e sin an t-aon each’.*

Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach: letheach suas an gleann: *halfway up the glen.*