

An Litir Bheag

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

An Litir Bheag is a shortened and simplified version of Ruairidh's Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh (also available on the BBC website), designed for those who are at an earlier stage of learning Gaelic. The topic each week is the same as Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh so that, once the Litir Bheag is mastered, a student of the language might wish to try the full Litir. This is Litir Bheag 613 (which corresponds to Litir 917). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you about Munnu, an old Celtic saint. His baptismal name was Finten. The Abbot of Iona, Baithéne, refused to take Finten as a monk. St Columba had said to him that Finten would be an abbot, rather than a monk.

Finten received a blessing from Baithéne and he sailed to Ireland. That account came from Vita Columbae. It was written by Adamnan, the ninth abbot of Iona.

There are accounts of Finten from Ireland. When he was a lad, he was involved in herding. He was leaving his cattle in the forest while he was learning at a monastery. But the forest was full of wolves.

His father scolded him. 'Don't be upset, father,' said Finten. 'If you permit me to be learning, you will not lose any of your cattle.' Next day, his father saw two wolves in the forest. They were looking after the cattle as if they were two droving dogs.

Finten – or Munnu – is remembered in personal names in Scotland. In olden times, some people adopted the name Gille Mhunnu to show devotion to him. Thus, the surname Mac Gille Mhunnu appeared.

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Mhunnu, seann naomh Ceilteach. B' e Finten ainm-baistidh. Dhiùlt Aba Ì, Baithéne, Finten a ghabhail mar mhanach. Bha Calum Cille air a ràdh ris gum biodh Finten na aba, seach na mhanach.

Fhuair Finten beannachd bho Bhaithéne agus sheòl e a dh'Èirinn. Thàinig an cunntas sin à Beatha Chaluim Chille. Chaidh a sgrìobhadh le Eònan, naoidheamh aba Ì.

Tha cunntasan às Èirinn mu Fhinten. Nuair a bha e na ghille, bha e ri buachailleachd. Bha e a' fàgail a chruidh anns a' choille fhad 's a bha e ag ionnsachadh ann am manachainn. Ach bha a' choille làn mhadaidhean-allaidh.

Thug athair trod dha. 'Na gabhaibh dragh, athair,' thuirt Finten. 'Ma leigeas sibh leam a bhith ag ionnsachadh, cha chaill sibh gin dhen chrodh agaibh.' Air an làrna-mhàireach, chunnaic athair dà mhadadh-allaidh anns a' choille. Bha iad a' coimhead às dèidh a' chruidh mar a bhiodh dà chù dròbhaidh!

Tha Finten – no Munnu – air a chuimhneachadh ann an ainmean pearsanta ann an Alba. Anns an t-seann aimsir, ghabh feadhainn an t-ainm Gille Mhunnu orra mar urram dha. Mar sin, nochd an t-ainm-cinnidh Mac Gille Mhunnu. Ann an dreach

In Anglicised form, that appears as Makilmone, Mckilmoun, Makmun, McIlmune, Mackilune and others.

Today, the surnames MacMunn and Munn are common enough. They came from Mac Mhunnu. You will recall that Finten – or Fiontan – was the saint’s baptismal name. Thus, the name Gille Fhiontain appeared. From that came the surnames we have today – MacClinton and McAlinden. I also imagine that MacClintock – Mac Gill’ Fhionntaig – marks the very same man. Perhaps McLentick comes from the same root – and that names of this type were shortened to Lindsay.

Did you notice something [one thing]? The name MacClinton – and Clinton – remember Finten. Thus, the name of this Gaelic saint is remembered in the woman who was struggling four months ago for the leadership of the United States. Perhaps we should be calling her Hillary Nic Gill’ Fhiontain in Gaelic!

na Beurla, tha sin a’ nochdadh mar Makilmone, Mckilmoun, Makmun, McIlmune, Mackilune agus eile.

Anns an latha an-diugh, tha na h-ainmean-cinnidh MacMunn agus Munn cumanta gu leòr. ’S ann à Mac Mhunnu a thàinig iad. Bidh sibh a’ cuimhneachadh gum b’ e Finten – no Fiontan – ainm-baistidh an naoimh. Mar sin, nochd an t-ainm Gille Fhiontain Às a sin, thàinig na h-ainmean-cinnidh a th’ againn an-diugh – MacClinton agus McAlinden. Tha dùil cuideachd gu bheil MacClintock – Mac Gill’ Fhionntaig – a’ comharrachadh an dearbh dhuine. Ma dh’fhaodte gu bheil McLentick a’ tighinn bhon aon fhreumh – agus gun deach ainmean dhen t-seòrsa seo a ghiorrachadh gu Lindsay.

An do mhothaich sibh do dh’aon rud? Tha an t-ainm MacClinton – agus Clinton – a’ cuimhneachadh Finten. Mar sin, tha ainm an naoimh Ghàidhealaich seo air a chuimhneachadh anns an tè a bha a’ strì o chionn ceithir mìosan airson ceannas nan Stàitean Aonaichte. ’S dòcha gur e Hillary Nic Gill’ Fhiontain a bu chòir dhuinn a bhith a’ gabhail oirre ann an Gàidhlig!