



## An Gille Ruadh - The Red-haired Boy

le Iain M. Macleoid à Bailailein / by John M. Macleod of Balallan

### An Gille Ruadh

Ann an Lunasdal 1460 chaidh mic Dhomhnaill Mhicamhlaidh an Uig a mhurt gu lèir ach dithis, Iain Ruadh 'an Gille Ruadh' agus a bhràthair a b' òige nach robh ach 'na leanaban. 'S e mic seann Thormoid Mhicleoid à Pabaigh a rinn seo, agus thachair e air sgàth aon mhairt. Latha bha siud agus seann Thormoid agus na sgallagan aige ag aiseag mhart bho cladach Leodhais aig a Chneip gu Pabaigh. Bha beathach a bhuineadh do chlann 'ic Amhlaidh 'nam measg agus dh' fhidir clann 'ic Amhlaidh seo. Rinn iad air a' chladach agus anns an spàirn gus am beathach mairt a thoirt bho na Leodaich, thuit seann Thormod air a bheul fodha agus chaill e dà fhiacail air tobhta a' bhàta. Dh' fhuiling am bodach moran pèin agus chaill e tòrr fala agus nuair a ràinig iad Pabaigh rinn e air gu a leabaidh agus thuit e ris na sgallagan aige gun guth a radh ri 'bhean mu ciamar a chaill e na fiacan - ach cha tug iadsan feart air.

'S e ban-Sgitheanach a bh' ann am bean Thormoid agus tha e coltach gur e boireannach neimheil agus dioghaltach agus guineach a bh' innte.

Bha na mic aca aig an àm seo air turas gu na h-Eileanan Flannach agus nuair a thill iad is iad ag ithe bidh, thilg i dà fhiacail an athair air am beulaibh air a' bhòrd.

An oidhche sin fhèin chaidh na balaich air tìr ann an Reif agus mhurt iad a h-uile mac le Domhnall Macamhlaidh ach an 'Gille Ruadh' a bha còmhla ri 'oide ann am Mealasta agus an leanabh-balaich a b' òige a bha còmhla ri a bhanaltruim ann an taigh eile ann an Reif. Lorg na murtairean an leanabh agus bha cuid dhiùbh airson cur às dha, ach co-dhiù cha do rinn iad sin; ach thilg iad e thairis air gàrradh agus bhriseadh a chas.

Latharna-mhàireach nuair a chuala seann Thormod an naidheachd ann am Pabaigh 's e thuit a bhean ris, 'Tha gu leòr fala nis mu fhiacan mo chuilean-sa'. Fhreagair Tormod i, 'A boireannaich olc, air sgàth na murt a chomhairlich thu do d' mhic a dheanamh, theid a h-uile mac leat fhèin a mhurt agus cha teid aon ac' às'. 'S e fàistneachd fhior a bha seo.

Chuir uachdaran Leodhais, bràthair Thormoid, fios thuige nach fhaodadh e fhèin no a chuid mhac an aghaidhean a shealltainn 'na làthair-san tuilleadh - chuir a' bhrùidealachd a bha air tachairt sgàig air.

Bha an 'Gille Ruadh' a nis mu thrì bliadhna deug a dh' aois, their cuid, agus bha e a' fuireach còmhla ri oide, Fionnlagh Ciar Macrisnidh, ann am Mealasta, agus seach gun do dh' fheuch na Leodaich cur às do'n 'ghille ruadh' aig Tobhta Choinnich, deas air Loch Reasort, rinn Fionnlagh an àird inntinn gun cuireadh e e gu ruige Muile.

Ghabh Macilleathain, Triath Loch Buidhe, gu caoimhneil is gu fialaidh ris a' 'ghille ruadh', a chuir seachad seachd bliadhna an sin, agus dh' ionnsaich e mar a làimhsicheadh e chladheamh gu h-ealanta agus mar a chuireadh e saighead air ghleus; chanadh daoine gun sgathadh e putan feir còta gun an t-aodach a dhochann.

Nuair a bha an 'gille ruadh' fichead bliadhna a dh' aois bha e a nis deiseil airson dioghaltas. Thill e a Leodhas, gu Mealasta, is e 'na dheagh shabaistiche.

Aon latha Sàbaid is na daoine a' cruinneachadh gu Baile na Cille, chunnaic Tormod Og Macleoid - aon de na muirtearan - còmhlan dhaoine tighinn tarsaing na gainmhich agus duine àrd tapaidh 'nam measg. 'Nam biodh Iain 'Ruadh' Macamhlaidh beò chanainn gur e siud e,' arsa Tormod. 'Ach chan fhada gus am bi mi cinnteach. Bha fasan aig a' 'Ghille Ruadh' nuair a fhliuchadh e a chasan ann an allt no abhainn gun cuireadh e a làmh gu a cheann is tha iad a nis a' tighinn gu sruthan'.

Nuair a fhliuch an 'Gille Ruadh' a chasan anns an t-sruthan, thog e a làmh gu 'cheann agus rinn Tormod Og às 'na dheann gus am faigheadh e tearmunn 's an eaglais. Chuir dithis a bha 'n làthair bacadh air oir bha an 'Gille Ruadh' air maoidheadh orra roimh laimh mur a deanadh iad sin gun cailleadh iad am beatha fhèin.

Rug an 'Gille Ruadh' air Tormod dìreach nuair a bha e a' leum tarsaing air balla an àite-dion aige, agus shàth e a chladheamh troimh mhionach Thormoid. Thog an 'Gille Ruadh' an uairsin a chladheamh gu 'shròin agus thuit e, 'Ni siud a' chùis dhutsa, Thormoid Mhicleoid'. An oidhche sin fhèin chaidh an 'Gille Ruadh' sìos a Bhaltois an dùil

a dhol a null a Phabaigh ach fhuair e a mach gu robh dithis de mhic seann Thormoid a' caithris na h-oidhche ann a Bhaltos.

Mharbh e fear dhiùbh air rèidhlean reidh ris an canar 'Rèidhlean Uilleim' agus am fear eile air tràigh ghainmhich ann a Bhaltos ris an canar 'Tràigh Ailein'.

Bha an ceathramh mac aig seann Thormod - an aon fhear a bha nise beò - a' fuireach air na Lochan agus cha robh esan idir air compàirt a ghabhail ann am murt bhalach Mhicamhlaidh, ach a dh' aindeoin sin bha an 'Gille Ruadh' an tòir aisans cuideachd.

Rinn e air na Lochan agus bha e a' falach ann an caochladh àitean gus an lorgadh e am fear mu dheireadh de mhic sheann Thormoid.

Tha 'Àirigh a' Ghille Ruaidh' air cùl Airigh-bhruthaich, agus tha 'Cnoc a' Ghille Ruaidh' eadar ceann shìos Bhailailein agus Abhainn Lacasaigh agus tha 'Àirigh a' Ghille Ruaidh' faisg air Grimsiadair.

Latha bha siud bha an 'Gille Ruadh' agus a bhràthair - am fear a chaidh a chas a bhriseadh - a' tighinn air an slighe a nuas taobh Cnoc na Croiche anns a' Ghearraidh Chruaidh nuair a thachair iad ris an fhear air an robh an 'Gille Ruadh' an tòir.

Rinn an Leodach air a' mhuir agus chaidh e air an t-snàmh chun a' chaisteil air taobh eile a' bhàigh, gu Caisteal Mhicleoid, bràthair athar. Leig an 'Gille Ruadh' saighead às a dheidh agus leòn e e an cùl 'amhaich. Nuair a ràinig an Leodach an caisteal cha leigeadh an t-Uachdaran, bràthair athar, leis cas a chur air tìr agus b' fheudar dha snàmh air ais tarsaing a' bhàigh agus chaidh e air tìr aig Aird Chlèirich far na mharbh an 'Gille Ruadh' e. Bha nis fàistneachd sheann Thormoid air a coimhlionadh gu tur.

Phòs an 'Gille Ruadh' nighean an Uachdaran Mhicilleathain à Muile oir bha i air tuiteam ann an gaol leis an uair a bha e 'san eilean sin.

Tha beul-aithris eile ag radh gun do thadhail an 'Gille Ruadh' air caileag air àirigh mus do dh' fhalbh e a Mhuile agus gun do dh' fhàg e tiòdhlag aice mar a thuir caraid measarra à Bearnaraigh rium - ach air na Lochan 's e chanadh sinn gun rinn e i trom - agus gu robh e sia bliadhna deug a dh' aois aig an àm. Nuair a thill e a Leodhas ceithir bliadhna an deidh sin gun deach e a choimhead air a' chaileag agus gun do dh' fhaighnich e dhi, nuair a chunnaic e am balachan a bh' aice cò b' athair dha. 'O,' ars ise, 'dh' fhalbh e às an tìr'. 'An aithnicheadh tu e?' ars esan. 'Dh' aithnicheadh nam faicinn e oir bha sgall aig iomall fuil a chinn'. Thug an 'Gille Ruadh' dheth a bhonaid agus sheall e dhi an sgall. "S tusa e," ars ise agus phòg iad a cheile, phòs iad agus bha teaghlach mòr aca an deidh siud.

Ge be dè an eachdraidh a tha fìor no bheil tè seach tè dhiùbh fìor tha aon rud cinnteach agus 's e sin gum b' e an 'Gille Ruadh' seanair Dhomhnuill 'Chàim' Mhicamhlaidh a bha 'na linn fhèin ainmeil ann an Leodhas airson a bhearta threubhantais no 's docha airson a dhò-bheartan - ach 's e sgeulachd eile tha sin.

### **The Red-Haired Boy**

In August 1460 all of Donald Macaulay's sons were murdered except for two, Iain 'the red-haired boy', and his younger brother who was only a baby. It was the sons of Norman Macleod 'Senior' of Pabbay who were responsible, and it was all over one cow. One day, Norman 'Senior' and his menservants were taking cows from the shore at Kneep in Lewis to Pabbay. There was a beast belonging to the Macaulay's amongst them and the Macaulay boys wondered why. They made for the shore and in the struggle to get the beast off the Macleod's, old Norman fell face down and lost two teeth on the side of his boat. The old man suffered a lot of pain and lost a lot of blood. When they arrived at Pabbay he went to bed, and warned his servants not to say a word about how he lost his teeth to his wife - but they ignored him.

Norman's wife was from Skye and it appears that she was a vengeful, spiteful and sharp woman.

While this was going on their sons were on a trip to the Flannan Isles and when they returned they were sitting having their food when she came and threw their father's two teeth on to the table in front of them.

On that same night the boys went ashore at Reef and murdered all of Donald Macaulay's sons except for the 'red-haired boy' who was with a relative in Mealasta and the baby boy who was with a nursemaid in another house in Reef. The murderers found the baby and some of them wanted to murder him, but anyway, somehow his life was spared, although they did throw him over a wall resulting in his leg being broken.

The following morning when Norman 'senior' heard the news in Pabbay his wife said to him, 'There's enough blood been shed now over my darling's teeth'. Norman answered her saying, 'You wicked woman, because of the murders you instigated for your sons to carry out, every one of your own sons will be murdered for revenge and none of them will be spared'. This prophecy was to come true.

The Lewis landlord, Norman's brother, sent him news that neither he nor his sons were to show their faces near him again - the brutality of what had happened had sickened him.

The 'red-haired boy' was now about thirteen years of age, some say, and he was staying with a relative, Finlay Macritchie, in Mealasta, and since the Macleod's had tried to kill the 'red-haired boy' at Tobhta Choinnich, south of Loch Resort, Finlay decided to send him to Mull for safety.

Maclean, the Chief at Loch Buidhe, took to the 'red-haired boy' very warmly and generously. The boy spent seven years there, and learnt how to handle a sword skilfully and shoot an arrow accurately; people would say that he could slice the button off a coat without touching the material.

When the 'red-haired boy' reached twenty years of age he was ready to get revenge; he returned to Lewis, to Mealasta, as an excellent fighter.

One Sabbath while the people were gathering at St Colm's Church, Norman Macleod Junior - one of the murderers - saw a group of people coming in up the beach with a large strapping man among them. 'If Iain "red-haired" Macaulay was alive I would say that that was him,' said Norman. 'But it won't be long before I find out. The 'red-haired boy' had a habit of lifting his hand to his head when he got his feet wet in a stream or river and they are now reaching a stream'.

When the 'red-haired boy' got his feet wet in the stream, he lifted his hand to his head and Norman Junior made off as fast as he could to get refuge in the Church. Two of them that were with him tried to stop him as the 'red-haired boy' had threatened to kill them if they tried that. The 'red-haired boy' caught Norman just as he was jumping over the wall to safety, and pierced right through Norman's stomach with the sword. The 'red-haired boy' then lifted his sword to his nose and said, 'That will do you Norman Macleod'. On that same night the 'red-haired boy' went down to Valtos hoping to go over to Pabbay but he found out that two of old Norman's sons were spending the night at Valtos.

He murdered one of them on a field that they call 'William's Field' and the other one on a beach at Valtos called 'Allan' Beach'.

Norman Senior's fourth son - the only one still alive - was living in Lochs and had taken no part in the murders of the Macaulay boys, but in spite of that the 'Red-haired Boy' wanted to get him as well.

He set out for Lochs hiding in different places until he eventually found the fourth Macaulay boy.

The 'red-haired boy's' sheiling is behind Airidhbhruch, and the 'hill of 'the red-haired boy' is between the far end of Balallan and the Laxay River, and there is also a 'red-haired boy's' sheiling near Grimshader.

One day while the 'red-haired boy' and his brother - the one whose leg broke - were coming through Lochs, whom did they come across but the boy they were looking for.

The Macleod boy headed for the sea and swam across to his uncle's castle, 'Macleod's Castle', across the bay. The 'red-haired boy' shot an arrow, which wounded him in the back of his neck. When the Macleod boy arrived at the castle the chief, his uncle, wouldn't let him put a foot ashore, and so he had to swim back across the bay. When he got ashore the 'red-haired boy' killed him. Now Norman Senior's prophecy had come completely true.

The 'red-haired boy' married the daughter of Chief Maclean of Mull as she had fallen in love with him while he was staying there.

Oral tradition also spoke of the 'red-haired boy' meeting a girl at a sheiling before he left for Mull and leaving her a gift, as a good friend of mine from Bernera put it - but in Lochs we would say she fell pregnant by him - and that he was aged about sixteen at the time. When he returned to Lewis about four years after that he went to see the girl and asked her, after seeing the little boy, who the little one's father was. 'O', she said, 'He left the country'. 'Would you recognise him?' he asked. 'Yes, if I saw him, because he has a scar on his head at his hairline'. The 'red-haired boy' took off his bonnet and showed her his scar. 'You're him,' she said and they kissed. They married and had a big family after that.

Whichever story is true there is one thing for sure, and that is that the 'red-haired boy' was the grandfather of Donald 'Càm' Macaulay who was famous in Lewis in his day for his bravery or maybe even his wickedness - but that is another story.

[ends]

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See also Hebridean Connections, for more information about 'An Gille Ruadh', John Roy Macaulay:

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