
Further Remarks on the 'Ciuthach'

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danger of too rigid an insistence on the *minutiae* of the classical tradition is to deter young writers from attempting composition in Welsh at all. What will be wanted in the future will be normative grammars, which will indicate what forms may be used in different styles. The *Cynghanedd* poetry may well cling to older forms, when the freer song and lyric, the novel and the drama have adopted a literary language less removed from the practice of the best public speaking. A careful reader of Professor J. Morris Jones's classic work will find much that will suggest new developments in both the descriptive and the normative grammar of the Welsh tongue. Professor J. Morris Jones has done well to bring out the significant fact, that there is in Welsh an elevated literary tradition in the use of the language, and this will be a very valuable piece of information for philologists who tend to concentrate attention only on the forms and the vocabulary of Welsh. Evidence of great acuteness and labour on the part of the author is visible on every page, and his teaching is already having its effect on the present day writing of Welsh, though there are also signs of a misapprehension and misapplication of his teaching. The Grammar, of which the first volume has now appeared, will ever be a standing monument to his patriotic zeal and knowledge of the Welsh tongue.

E. ANWYL.

NOTES

'An Riabhach Mòr'

Referring to the note on the word *riabhach*, which appeared in your issue of August last, is it not possible that this sobriquet for the devil is really a corruption of 'An Reabhach Mòr'? In Irish the word *reabhach* (from *reabh*=a wile, trick) signifies 'one who plays tricks, the devil.' When this word became obsolete in Scottish Gaelic, and its import was forgotten, it would naturally in such an instance, by a process common to all languages, be replaced by *riabhach*, a word almost identical in form and still in everyday use: hence 'An Riabhach Mòr' (=the great grizzled one) instead of 'An Reabhach Mòr' (=the great trickster, the great devil).

MACGILLERIBHAICH.

Further Remarks on the 'Ciuthach'

Dr. Watson has made such a close study of the *Ciuthach*, as his article in the *Celtic Review* of January 1914 sufficiently demonstrates, that it seems almost unnecessary to supplement his statements. But it may be interesting to add a third version of the *Creag a' Chiuthaich* story, as recorded by me in a paper called 'The Kewach's Castle,' which appeared in *The Antiquary* of July 1908. 'The Kewach's Castle' formerly crowned a little islet that stands out from the shore and overlooks the broad sands of Uig Bay, in the west of Lewis. To-day, all that remains of the stronghold is an irregular

circle of stones. But tradition tells us that this was once the home of a redoubtable giant, known as Kewach, son of Nuaran, or Nu-ag-aran.¹ This Kewach was one of four brothers who then dominated the whole of that neighbourhood. Two of them dwelt in the island of Berneray, the 'Borva' of Black's *Princess of Thule*. Of these, one brother, named Glom, had his seat at Barra-Glom; while the castle of the other was known as Teeda-Borra, that giant bearing the peculiar name of Teeda, or Teed. The fourth of the sons of Nuaran was called Dearg, or the Red One, and his tower, which stands upon a rocky eminence above the eastern entrance of Loch Roag, was styled Dearg's Castle, or *Dùn Deirg*. Its modern name is the Doon of Carloway (Gaelic, *Dùn Charlobhaigh*), from its situation beside the township of Carloway. The distance between Dearg's tower and that of his brother, the Kewach, is twelve miles; the two other brothers occupying positions about midway. In the opinion of the late Captain Thomas, who had made a study of such structures, the strongholds were essentially alike, although differing in detail. . . .'

The Kewach of Uig and his three brothers are all described as enemies of the legendary race of the Fians. It was at their hands that Dearg met his death, in the island of Skye. And they slew his brother of Uig, also, near his own castle; in proof of which the Kewach's Grave (fourteen feet long) is shown to this day. Some time before his death, however, the Kewach performed a remarkable feat. He had been assailed all day long by a Fian, shooting at him from the opposite or southern shore of the bay. The Kewach, of course, responded; but apparently neither of them possessed great skill in archery—although it must be admitted the distance was great. At last the Kewach wounded his enemy. He was quick to avail himself of this advantage. Leaping down from his castle wall, he strode across the broad sands and up the slope where his disabled enemy stood, supporting himself against a small cliff. Him the Kewach seized in his arms, and then thrust against the face of the cliff with such supernatural violence that he actually crushed him into the solid rock! Evidence of this amazing climax is still visible, for the Kewach's Rock (*Creag a' Chiuthaich*) yet retains the impression of the flattened Fian, whose outlines, however, are vague beyond recognition. I may add that I took a photograph, which I still have, of this phenomenon. It is really a 'fault' in the rock, different in colour and character from the rest of the cliff. It has no resemblance to a human figure.

Here we have the Fian and not the Ciuthach represented as defeated and crushed. It may be that, as a mere bird of passage, I did not pay sufficient attention to the details. However, my version was written down while it was still fresh in my memory. There can be no harm in stating

¹ 'Nu-ag-aran' is probably the 'Nuamharan' of *Celtic Review*, Jan. 1914, p. 207, written according to English phonetics. *Uamh* acquires a guttural sound in some districts, as *uaigh* and *uag*.

that I was in the company of Mr. Macrae of Timsgarry, and other friends, on that occasion, although I would not saddle anybody else with an inaccuracy of which I may be guilty.

Dr. Watson's suggestion that the Ciuthach may have been a broch-dweller is supported by the Lewis tradition, which assigns a broch, or a building akin to a broch, to each of the four sons of Nuaran. The Ciuthach appears, however, in another connection, not necessarily inconsistent with the idea that he was a broch-dweller, in the story of the flight of Diarmaid and Grainne. This incident is also referred to by Dr. Watson in his Ciuthach article. But it is useful to supplement his remarks by a further quotation from the *Antiquary* article already cited. It will be remembered that the Ciuthach, or a ciuthach (for the term is certainly generic in some cases), intruded himself upon Diarmaid and Grainne when they were living in a large cave by the sea-shore, whether at Carraig an Daimh, in Kintyre, or at Kinvarra, in the west of Tiree, or elsewhere. 'He came to them on a night of mist and storm and sleet, a night so wild that even Diarmaid, "the third best hero of the Fians," did not venture to stir from the cave. The Ciuthach came to them, says the story, from out of the Western ocean, in his skin-boat or *curachan*, propelled by two oars; and one version has the prosaic addition that he brought with him a string of fish. In he came to their sea-cave in his light skiff, which he drew up and laid upon a shelf of rock. At first he was hospitably received by Diarmaid and by Grainne alike, who entertained him for several days. According to one account, Diarmaid and his self-invited guest amused themselves by playing at *tailleasg*, otherwise "wedges" or dice. The Ciuthach won; and he demanded Grainne as his prize. Some versions denote that he had already won this wanton lady, without any difficulty; and all are agreed in saying that, up to this point, Diarmaid had coldly repelled the advances made to him by Grainne. Be this as it may, there was a sudden and fierce struggle between the two men, which ended by Diarmaid slaying the Ciuthach.'

In this incident, assuming it to have a basis in fact, there is one specially interesting feature. This is the picture of the Ciuthach in his *curachan*, or light skin-skiff, emerging out of the Western ocean on a night so wild that even Diarmaid was afraid to venture from the cave. There is only one kind of skin-boat that can live in such a stormy sea as the story indicates, and that is the decked canoe formerly used in the north-east of Scotland by people known as Finn-men. The only surviving specimen of such a canoe, used in Scottish waters, is preserved in Marischal College, Aberdeen. It was propelled, not by two oars, but by a double-bladed paddle, and if the Ciuthach used such a paddle to propel such a canoe, he could weather almost any storm. Much has been written about the *curach*, but nothing so far about the *curachan*. Perhaps a study of this latter word may bear out the theory that the Ciuthachs who lived in brochs and caves made use of the same kind of skin-canoe as the people remembered in Orkney and Shetland as Finn-men.

DAVID MACRITCHIE.