

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 349 (which corresponds to Litir 653). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleane@bbc.co.uk.

I want to read you a section from a book. The book came out last year. It contains beautiful, idiomatic Gaelic. Here is the first section:

Sitting her on my own in front of the computer that brings the world to my ken, with Google Word showing me the old house in Gollair, I wish I were back there listening to the old men and old women chatting under the gloomy light of the tilley lamp, the fire roaring, smoke of the [pipe] tobacco and the cigarettes in my eyes ... and the fluent, substantive conversation of the guests in my ears.

Doesn't that create a picture?! The book is called Steall à Iomadh Lòn. The author is John Alick MacPherson. Here is the next paragraph.

It's not in my eyes but in the nostrils of memory that the tobacco smoke is today. I was taken with the old men's pipes, clay pipes belonging to those who didn't smoke much and amber pipes belonging to those with fingers that were just as black as the tobacco itself. Years after that I saw an even more unusual smoker's pipe: a large lobster claw. It was owned by an old woman from

Tha mi airson earrannan a leughadh dhuibh à leabhar. Thàinig an leabhar amach an-uiridh. Tha Gàidhlig bhrèagha, ghnàthasach ann. Seo a' chiad earrann:

Na mo shuidhe an seo ann an uaigneas air beulaibh a' choimpiutair a tha toirt na cruinne na mo shealladh, agus Google Word a' sealltainn dhomh an t-seann taighe ann an Gollair, b' fheàrr leam gu robh mi air ais ann ag èisteachd ri na bodaich 's na cailleachan a' seanchas fo sholas mùgach na tilidh, braidseal air an teine, ceò an tombaca 's nan toitean na mo shùilean ... agus seanchas siùbhlach susbainteach nan cèilichean na mo chluasan.

Nach eil sin a' togail dealbh?! 'S e an t-ainm air an leabhar *Steall à Iomadh Lòn*. 'S e an t-ùghdar Seonaidh Ailig Mac a' Phearsain. Seo an ath pharagraf:

Chan ann na mo shùilean ach ann an cuinneanan na cuimhne a tha fàileadh an tombaca an-diugh. Bha annas agam dha na pìoban a bh' aig na bodaich, pìoban crèadha aig an fheadhainn nach robh smocadh mòran agus pìoban òmair aig an fheadhainn le corragan a cheart cho dubh ris an tombaca fhèin. Bliadhnaichean an dèidh sin chunna mi pìob-thombaca a bha na b' annasaiche buileach: ìne mhòr giomaich. B' ann aig

South Uist.

And John Alick MacPherson creates a fine picture of a habit of the old men – that would not be appreciated by everybody: The filling and lighting of the pipe was a ceremony: pulverizing the tobacco – the Bogey Roll and Black Twist – in the palm of one hand with the thumb of the other hand and then pushing it carefully into the pipe. After sucking the pipe for a while, they would spit with unfailing accuracy and it would crackle on the grate of the stove.

The book is a pleasure to read. I'll leave you with a puzzle from it – a puzzle of the type that would be told in the ceilidh house[s]. A small child can pick it up in its hand, [but] and twelve men with a rope cannot lift it. The solution is 'a hen's egg'! Goodbye.

cailleach an Uibhist a Deas a bha i.

Agus tha Seonaidh Ailig a' dèanamh dealbh math de chleachdadh nam bodach – nach biodh tlachdmhor don a h-uile duine: 'S e deas-ghnàth a bh' ann an lìonadh is lasadh na pìoba: a' pronnadh an tombaca – am Bogey Roll 's am Black Twist – ann am bois aon làimh le òrdag mhòr na làimhe eile agus an uair sin ga bhruthadh gu cùramach a-steach dhan a' phìob. An dèidh a bhith deoghal na pìoba son greis thilgeadh iad smugaid le cuimse gun fhàillingeadh agus bhiodh i bragadaich air grèata an stòbh.

Tha an leabhar gu math taitneach. Fàgaidh mi sibh le tòimhseachan bhuaithe – tòimhseachan dhen t-seòrsa a bhiodh a' dol sna taighean-cèilidh. Togaidh leanabh beag na dhòrn e, 's cha thog dà dhuine dheug le ròp e. 'S e am fuasgladh 'ugh circe'! Beannachd leibh.