

## 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 369 (which corresponds to Litir 673). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk).

*Loch Beannacharain is at the upper end of Strathconon. That's in Ross-shire. Near to the loch, there is a farm called Scardroy in English. In the original Gaelic, that's Sgàrd Ruaidh. According to oral tradition, it's cattle blood that is responsible for the red colour. Here is the story:*

*John of the light-brown hair, son of black-haired Donald, was from Lochaber. He was famous for plundering cattle. The chief of the MacKenzies of Gairloch, Alasdair Breac ("pock-marked") was unhappy. He was wanting to stop Iain.*

*Alasdair found the hero Alasdair Buidhe Mackay from Strathoykell. He hired Alasdair Buidhe. He was wanting him to stop Iain Geal Donn.*

*One day, Iain and his companion went to Amat in Easter Ross. They lifted twelve beasts there. One of them was a bull.*

*They returned through Strathconon. They drove the cattle hard. They stopped at Loch Beannacharain for the night. They called the place Scardroy. Their animals were bleeding.*

*Alasdair Buidhe had a lackey. He was a young Lochaber man. That lad told Alasdair that the robbers were*

Tha Loch Beannacharain aig ceann shuas Shrath Chonainn. Tha sin ann an Siorrachd Rois. Faisg air an loch tha baile-fearainn ann air a bheil Scardroy ann am Beurla. Anns a' Ghàidhlig thùsail, 's e sin Sgàrd Ruaidh. A-rèir beul aithris, 's e fuil aig beathaichean mairt as coireach ris an dath ruadh. Seo an stòiridh:

Bha Iain Geal Donn mac Dhòmhnail Dhuibh à Loch Abar. Bha e ainmeil airson a bhith a' togail creach. Bha ceann-cinnidh Clann 'ic Coinnich Gheàrrloch, Alasdair Breac, mì-thoilichte. Bha e ag iarraidh stad a chur air Iain.

Lorg Alasdair an gaisgeach Alasdair Buidhe MacAoidh à Srath Òiceall. Dh'fhastaich e Alasdair Buidhe. Bha e ag iarraidh air stad a chur air Iain Geal Donn.

Latha a bha seo, chaidh Iain agus a chompanaich gu ruige An Àmait, ann an taobh sear Rois. Thog iad dusan beathach an sin. Fear dhiubh, 's e tarbh a bha ann.

Thill iad tro Shrath Chonainn. Dh'iomain iad an crodh gu cruaidh. Stad iad aig Loch Beannacharain airson na h-oidhche. Chuir iad an t-ainm Sgàrd Ruaidh air an àite. Bha na beathaichean aca a' dortadh fala.

Bha sgalag aig Alasdair Buidhe. 'S e Abrach òg a bha ann. Thug an gille sin

*going to be in a shieling bothy at Loch Beannacharain. The two of them went there quietly. Alasdair pressed the muzzle of his gun to the boy. He forced the lad to promise he would be loyal to him.*

*In the bothy, the robbers were roasting a piece of the bull. They didn't know about Alasdair Buidhe. Alasdair put his lackey at the door. Alasdair went to the other end of the bothy. He pulled up a divot a little from the roof. He saw Iain Geal Donn at the fire. Iain was pleased. All the men were around the fire.*

*Suddenly, Iain shouted to his companions, "Look out – I'm getting the smell of [gun]powder!" But, before they moved, Alasdair Buidhe shot his gun at Iain. Alasdair jumped down from the roof. And we'll see what happened then, next week.*

fios do dh'Alasdair gun robh na mèirlich a' dol a bhith ann am bothan-àirigh aig Loch Beannacharain. Chaidh an dithis aca ann gu sàmhach. Chuir Alasdair dos a ghunna ris a' ghille. Thug e air a' ghille gealltainn gum biodh e dìleas dhà.

Anns a' bhothan, bha na mèirlich a' ròstadh pìos dhen tarbh. Cha robh fios aca mu Alasdair Buidhe. Chuir Alasdair a sgalag aig an doras. Chaidh Alasdair gu ceann eile a' bhothain. Thog e sgrath bhon mhullach pìos beag. Chunnaic e Iain Geal Donn aig an teine. Bha Iain toilichte. Bha na fir gu lèir timcheall an tèine.

Gu h-obann, dh'èigh Iain do a chompanaich, "An aire – tha mi a' faighinn fàileadh pùdair!" Ach, mus do ghluais iad, loisg Alasdair Buidhe a ghunna air Iain. Leum Alasdair sìos far a' mhullaich. Agus chì sinn dè thachair an uair sin an-ath-sheachdain.