

**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 393 (which corresponds to Litir 697). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk).

*A year or two ago, I was one day in a hazel wood. The wood was near Loch Ness. Along with me was Essie Stewart. Essie is a traveller. She is well-known for telling stories. She has great Gaelic. And a lot of stories!*

*When Essie was young, she was living in a tent during the summer. It's hazel rods that were keeping the tent up. Essie was showing me the best rods for that.*

*Essie was raised near Lairg in Sutherland. The travellers were getting permission to take rods from the wood. But, that day on Loch Ness-side, well ... we followed the old Gaelic adage – 'a salmon from the pool, a rod from the wood and a deer from the hill – theft that shamed no man'. I'll say that again – 'a salmon from the pool, a rod from the wood and a deer from the hill – theft that shamed no man'.*

*Why were they using hazel in preference to another wood? Well, hazel is easy to bend. It's at the end of the year that they were harvesting the rods. That was in November and December. Why? Well, there wasn't so much sap in the trees. And, because of that, they were easier to*

O chionn bliadhna no dhà, bha mi latha ann an coille-challtainn. Bha a' choille faisg air Loch Nis. Còmhla rium, bha Easaidh Stiùbhart. Tha Easaidh na neach-siubhail. Tha i ainmeil airson a bhith ag innse sgeulachdan. Tha deagh Ghàidhlig aice. Agus tòrr sgeulachdan!

Nuair a bha Easaidh òg, bha i a' fuireach ann an teanta as t-samhradh. 'S e slatan calltainn a bha a' cumail na teanta shuas. Bha Easaidh a' sealltainn dhomh dè na slatan a b' fheàrr a bha ann airson sin.

Thogadh Easaidh faisg air an Luirg ann an Cataibh. Bha an luchd-siubhail a' faighinn cead airson slatan a thoirt às a' choille. Ach, an latha sin taobh Loch Nis, uill ... lean sinn an seanfhacal Gàidhlig – breac à linne, slàt à coille, 's fiadh à fireach – mèirle nach do ghabh duine riamh nàir' aiste. Canaidh mi sin a-rithist – breac à linne, slàt à coille, 's fiadh à fireach – mèirle nach do ghabh duine riamh nàir' aiste.

Carson a bha iad a' cleachdadh calltainn, seach fiodh eile? Uill, tha calltainn furasta a lùbadh. 'S ann aig deireadh na bliadhna a bha iad a' buain nan slatan. Bha sin anns an t-Samhain agus anns an Dùbhlachd. Carson? Uill, cha robh uiread de shùgh anns na craobhan. Agus, air sgàth sin, bha iad na

*bend.*

*The travellers were looking for straight rods. The rods were thick enough to keep the tent up. But they weren't too thick. They were still easy enough to bend.*

*They were putting an end of it in the ground. They were putting the other end in a cleft in a stone wall, with a bend in it. As time elapsed, they enlarged the bend. It took a few months.*

*People were sometimes coppicing hazel woods. Was that the type of wood in which Essie was getting her rods? She told me it wasn't. And how often were the Gaels coppicing? We'll look at that question next week.*

b' fhasa a lùbadh.

Bha an luchd-siubhail a' coimhead airson slatan dìreach. Bha na slatan tiugh gu leòr airson an teanta a chumail suas. Ach cha robh iad ro thiugh. Bha iad fhathast furasta gu leòr a lùbadh.

Bha iad a' cur ceann dheth san talamh. Bha iad a' cur a' chinn eile ann an eag ann an gàrradh, le lùb ann. Mar a chaidh an ùine seachad, rinn iad an lùb na bu mhotha is na bu mhotha. Bha e a' toirt beagan mhìosan.

Bha daoine uaireannan a' dèanamh preasarlach no preas-choille de choille-challtainn. An e sin an seòrsa coille anns an robh Easaidh a' faighinn a slatan? Dh'inns i dhomh nach e. Agus dè cho tric 's a bha na Gàidheil a' dèanamh phreasarlach? Bheir sinn sùil air a' cheist sin an-ath-sheachdain.