

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 487 (which corresponds to Litir 791). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleane@bbc.co.uk.

You'll be familiar with the fairies. If not personally, you'll have heard stories about them. Do you know how the fairies came into being? There's no account of them in the Bible, as far as I'm aware. I don't think that Charles Darwin passed an opinion on them either. But the old Gaels had an opinion on the matter. Here's an account from Mingulay in the nineteenth century.

The people on those islands were familiar with a seabird called the famhlag-mhara or amhlag-mhara. The name means 'sea swallow'. The bird's name in English is 'storm petrel'. They nest in holes on crags or in the ground. They fly into the holes at speed.

The Proud Angel was living in Heaven. He started a rebellion amongst the angels. He said he was going to leave. He was going to create his own kingdom. Many angels followed him.

So many were leaving Heaven, that the Son shouted, 'Father! Father! The city is being emptied!' At that, the Father ordered the gates of Heaven and

Bidh sibh eòlach air na sìthichean. Mura h-eil gu pearsanta, bidh sibh air stòiridhean a chluinntinn mun deidhinn. Ach a bheil fios agaibh mar a thàinig na sìthichean gu bith? Chan eil cunntas orra sa Bhìoball, fhad 's as aithne dhomh. Cha chreid mi gun tug Teàrlach Darwin beachd orra nas motha. Ach bha beachd aig na seann Ghàidheil air a' chuspair. Seo agaibh cunntas a thàinig à Eilean Mhiùghlaigh anns an naoidheamh linn deug.

Bha na daoine anns na h-eileanan sin eòlach air eun-mara air a bheil famhlag-mhara no amhlag-mhara. Tha an t-ainm a' ciallachadh *sea swallow*. 'S e ainm an eòin ann am Beurla *storm petrel*. Bidh iad a' neadachadh ann an tuill ann an creagan no anns an talamh. Bidh iad ag itealaich a-steach do na tuill gu luath.

Bha an t-Aingeal Pròiseil a' fuireach ann an Nèamh. Thòisich e ar-a-mach am measg nan ainglean. Thuirt e gun robh e a' dol a dh'fhalbh. Bha e a' dol a chruthachadh rìoghachd dha fhèin. Lean mòran ainglean air.

Bha uiread a' fàgail Nèamh 's gun do dh'èigh am Mac, 'Athair! Athair! Thathar a' falmhachadh a' bhaile!' Aig a sin, dh'òrdaich an t-Athair gum biodh gèatachan Nèamh agus Ifrinn air an

Hell to be closed. Heaven and Hell were locked shut.

The ones who were on the inside, they were inside. But the ones who had left Heaven and hadn't reached Hell, they flew into holes in the ground. They were just like the storm petrels.

They are the fairies. Since then they have been living under the ground. They can only leave when they get permission from the King. They are not allowed to leave on Thursdays. That's gentle Columba's Day. They're not allowed to leave on Fridays. That's the Son's Day. They're not allowed to go on Saturdays as that's Mary's Day. Nor on Sundays as that's the Lord's Day. And that's the story of how the fairies came into being a long time ago.

dùnadh. Bha Nèamh agus Ifrinn dùinte, glaiste.

An fheadhainn a bh' air an taobh a-staigh, bha iad a-staigh. Ach an fheadhainn a bh' air Nèamh fhàgail agus nach do ràinig Ifrinn, dh'itealaich iad a-steach gu tuill anns an talamh. Bha iad dìreach mar na famhlagan-mara.

Is iad sin na sìthichean. Bhon uair sin tha iad air a bhith a' fuireach fon talamh. Chan fhaod iad falbh a-mach ach a-mhàin nuair a gheibh iad cead bhon Rìgh. Chan eil cead aca falbh a-mach air Diardaoin. 'S e sin Latha Chaluim Chille Chaoimh. Chan eil cead aca falbh a-mach air Dihaoine. 'S e sin Latha a' Mhic. Chan eil cead falbh air Disathairne oir 's e sin Latha Moire. No air Didòmhnaich oir 's e sin Latha an Tighearna. Agus sin agaibh an stòiridh air mar a thàinig na sìthichean gu bith o chionn fhada.