

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 513 (which corresponds to Litir 817). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

Sandy the dog went to Dingwall. His master, Hugh, was short of tobacco. Hugh put a half-crown in a kerchief around the dog's neck. He asked it to go to the tobacconist.

Sandy reached the shop. The shopkeeper untied the kerchief. He took the money out. There was a piece of paper around it. He tied the kerchief again to the dog's neck.

When the dog reached the house, Hugh untied the kerchief and he got his tobacco. He saw the piece of paper. 'If this works,' wrote the shopkeeper, 'send the dog to me every Friday. I'll have your favourite tobacco on Fridays.' And every Friday, Sandy would leave for the shop to pick up the tobacco.

One day there was another man – one-eyed Paddy – in the shop when Sandy came. He had a house three miles out of Dingwall on the same road as Hugh's croft.

Paddy observed the procedure with the dog. 'Strange,' he said to the shopkeeper. 'That dog doing its master's bidding like that.'

Chaidh Sandaidh an cù a dh'Inbhir Pheofharain. Bha a mhaighstir, Ùisdean, gann de thombaca. Chuir Ùisdean leth-chrùn ann an nèapraigear timcheall amhaich a' choin. Dh'iarr e air a dhol gu bùth an tombaca.

Ràinig Sandaidh a' bhùth. Dh'fhuasgail fear na bùtha an nèapraigear. Thug e an t-airgead a-mach. Chuir e tombaca ann na àite. Bha pìos pàipeir timcheall air. Cheangail e an nèapraigear a-rithist ri amhaich a' choin.

Nuair a ràinig an cù an taigh, dh'fhuasgail Ùisdean an nèapraigear agus fhuair e a thombaca. Chunnaic e am pìos pàipeir. 'Ma dh'obraicheas seo,' sgrìobh fear na bùtha, 'cuir an cù thugam a h-uile Dihaoine. Bidh an tombaca as fheàrr leat an-còmhnaidh agam Dihaoine.' Agus a h-uile Dihaoine, bhiodh Sandaidh a' falbh don bhùth, a' togail an tombaca.

Latha a bha seo, bha fear eile – Padaidh Cam – sa bhùth, nuair a thàinig Sandaidh. Bha taigh aige trì mìle a-mach à Inbhir Pheofharain air an aon rathad air an robh croit Ùisdein.

Chunnaic Padaidh an gnothach leis a' chù. 'Annasach,' thuirt e ri fear na bùtha. 'An cù sin a' dèanamh toil a mhaighstir mar sin.'

'Aye,' said the shopkeeper, 'he comes every Friday. He reaches the shop at quarter to midday.'

Sandy left with the tobacco. Paddy also left. He saw that the dog was taking the same road as himself.

Next Friday, Paddy was waiting for Sandy near his house. 'Come here,' Paddy said to the dog. He had a biscuit.

The dog took the biscuit. He allowed Paddy to undo the kerchief. Paddy took the money out. He tied the kerchief again. He asked the dog to leave for the shop.

After a while, Sandy reached the shop. 'There you are, Sandy,' the shopkeeper said. 'Five minutes late today.'

The shopkeeper untied the kerchief. He was surprised the money was not there. He didn't know what to do. Eventually, he put half a crown's worth of tobacco in the kerchief. He put a piece of paper in as well, asking Hugh to send him a crown the following week. And we'll see what happened when the dog arrived home.

'Aidh,' thuir fear na bùtha, 'bidh e a' tighinn a h-uile Dihaoine. Ruigidh e a' bhùth aig cairteal gu meadhan-latha.'

Dh'fhalbh Sandaidh leis an tombaca. Dh'fhalbh Padaidh cuideachd. Chunnaic e gun robh an cù a' gabhail an aon rathaid ris fhèin.

An ath Dihaoine, bha Padaidh a' feitheamh ri Sandaidh faisg air an taigh aige. 'Trohad seo,' thuir Padaidh ris a' chù. Bha briosgaid aige.

Ghabh an cù a' bhriosgaid. Leig e le Padaidh an nèapraigear fhuasgladh. Thug Padaidh an t-airgead a-mach. Cheangail e an nèapraigear a-rithist. Dh'iarr e air a' chù falbh don bhùth.

An ceann greis, ràinig Sandaidh a' bhùth. 'Sin thu, a Shandaidh,' thuir fear na bùtha. 'Còig mionaidean air dheireadh an-diugh.'

Dh'fhuasgail fear na bùtha an nèapraigear. Ghabh e iongnadh nach robh an t-airgead ann. Cha robh fios aige dè dhèanadh e. Mu dheireadh, chuir e luach leth-chrùn de thombaca san nèapraigear. Chuir e bileag pàipeir ann cuideachd, ag iarraidh air Ùisdean crùn a chur thuige an ath sheachdain. Agus chì sinn dè thachair nuair a ràinig an cù a dhachaigh.