

# **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 528 (which corresponds to Litir 832). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk).*

*In the spring of this year, I took a trip to Wales. A man I know was running a course. He was looking at one of the stories of the Mabinogion. Do you know the Mabinogion? They are the ancient stories of Wales.*

*The course was showing us the places where the different parts of the story happened. They are marked on the face of the land. And, in one place, on the seabed!*

*The story that was told to us was 'Math, Son of Mathonwy'. In the tale, there is a character called Llew. He shares an origin with Lugh, the old hero and Gaelic pagan god. Lugh is named with us in the month – An Lùnastal (August). Llew is named in places in North Wales, such as Nantlle 'the stream of Llew'.*

*The story is too long to tell you in its entirety. But I'd like to tell you a segment of it.*

*Math, the leader of Gwynedd was looking for a virgin. He sent a message to Arianrhod, his sister's daughter.*

*'Are you a virgin?' he asked.*

*'Yes,' replied Arianrhod.*

As t-Earrach am-bliadhna, ghabh mi cuairt don Chuimrigh. Bha fear as aithne dhomh a' ruith cùrsa. Bha e a' toirt sùil air tè de sgeulachdan nam Mabinogion. A bheil sibh eòlach air na Mabinogion? 'S iad seann sgeulachdan na Cuimrigh.

Bha an cùrsa a' sealltainn dhuinn nan àiteachan far an do thachair na diofar phàirtean dhen sgeulachd. Tha iad air an comharrachadh air aghaidh na tìre. Agus, ann an aon àite, air grunn na mara!

B' e an sgeulachd a chaidh aithris dhuinn 'Math, Mac Mhathonwy'. Anns an sgeulachd, tha caractar air a bheil Llew. Tha an aon tùs aige ri Lugh, an seann ghaisgeach is dia pàganach Gàidhealach. Tha Lugh ainmichte againn anns a' mhìos – An Lùnastal. Tha Llew ainmichte ann an àiteachan ann an ceann a tuath na Cuimrigh, leithid Nantlle 'allt Llew'.

Tha an stòiridh ro fhada airson innse dhuibh air fad. Ach bu mhath leam earrann dheth aithris dhuibh.

Bha Math, mòr-mhaor Gwynedd a' lorg òigh. Chuir e fios gu Arianrhod, nighean piuthar dha.

'A bheil thu nad òigh?' dh'fhaighnich e.

'Tha,' fhreagair Arianrhod.

*Math took out his magic wand. He asked the young woman to step over it. When she did that, she gave birth to a baby boy. He was a big baby. Arianrhod made for the door. While she was doing that, she gave birth to another baby boy. That one was small. Arianrhod's brother, Gwydion, put a cover over him. He hid him in a chest.*

*You'll understand that Arianrhod was not a virgin. She had two babies. The first one, his name was Dylan. That means 'Ocean'. He was baptized. Then he went to the sea. He submerged himself. He was swimming like a fish.*

*Gwydion returned to the wee lad. He took him to the nearby village. A woman there agreed to raise the boy. He didn't have a name at that time.*

*Next week, I'll tell you about places on the beautiful coast of Wales, where Arianrhod, Dylan and the wee lad are named.*

Thug Math a shlat dhraoidheil a-mach. Dh'iarr e air a' bhoireannach òg ceum a ghabhail thairis oirre. Nuair a rinn i sin, rugadh leanabh-gille dhi. 'S e leanabh mòr a bha ann. Rinn Arianrhod air an doras. Fhad 's a bha i a' dèanamh sin, rugadh leanabh-gille eile dhi. Bha am fear sin beag. Chuir bràthair Arianrhod, Gwydion, còmhdach thairis air. Chuir e am falach e ann an ciste.

Tuigidh sibh nach e òigh a bha ann an Arianrhod. Bha dithis leanabh aice. A' chiad fhear, 's e Dylan a bha air mar ainm. Tha sin a' ciallachadh 'Cuan'. Bha e air a bhaisteadh. An uair sin chaidh e don mhuir. Chaidh e fodha. Bha e a' snàmh cho math ri iasg.

Thill Gwydion don ghille bheag. Thug e don bhaile faisg air làimh e. Dh'aontaich boireannach an sin an gille a thogail. Cha robh ainm air aig an àm sin.

An-ath-sheachdain, innsidh mi dhuibh mu àiteachan air cladach brèagha na Cuimrigh far a bheil Arianrhod, Dylan agus an gille beag air an ainmeachadh.