

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 590 (which corresponds to Litir 894). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling the old story 'Ewen the son of the goat'. The landlord, the Lord of Donan Castle, entered Effie's house. He saw Flora and Ewen. 'Whom do I have here?' he asked.

'My wife and my son,' replied Kenneth.

'I don't believe you,' said the lord. 'You're hiding something from me. I'm going to take these two to my castle on Eilean Donan.'

'O, son of the goat, what will happen to you?' said Kenneth to the lad.

'Son of the goat, did you say?' said the landlord. He was startled. He was remembering an old prophecy. It said that a man called 'the son of the goat' would take over his country.

Flora took hold of Ewen. She took out a knife. 'If you force me to go to Eilean Donan,' she said, 'I'll kill myself and the lad.'

The lord yielded. But he left a loyal clansman, Black [haired] Hector, at Ardlair to make sure they didn't flee.

Bha mi ag aithris na seann sgeulachd 'Eòghann Mac a' Ghobhair'. Chaidh an t-uachdaran, Morair Caisteal Dhonnain, a-steach gu taigh Oighrig. Chunnaic e Fionnghal agus Eòghann. 'Cò tha agam a seo?' dh'fhaighnich e.

'Mo bhean 's mo mhac,' fhreagair Coinneach.

'Chan eil mi gad chreidsinn,' thuirt am morair. 'Tha thu a' cleith rudeigin bhuam. Tha mi a' dol a thoirt na dithis seo don chaisteal agam air Eilean Donnain.'

'O, Mhic a' Ghobhair, dè thachras dhut?' thuirt Coinneach ris a' ghille.

'Mac a' Ghobhair, thuirt thu?' ars an t-uachdaran. Chlisg e. Bha e a' cuimhneachadh seann fhàidheadaireachd. Bha i ag ràdh gun gabhadh fear air an robh 'Mac a' Ghobhair' thairis an dùthaich aige.

Ghabh Fionnghal grèim air Eòghann. Thug i sgian a-mach. 'Ma bheir sibh orm falbh a dh'Eilean Donnain,' thuirt i, 'cuiridh mi às dhomh fhin 's don ghille.'

Ghèill am morair. Ach dh'fhàg e fear-cinnidh dìleas aige, Eachann Dubh, aig Àird Làir airson dèanamh cinnteach nach teicheadh iad.

A few days later, Kenneth and Hector returned from hunting. There was no sign of anybody in the house. Hector was angry.

Next morning, Kenneth and Hector went out to find the others. Kenneth was hoping they were in the cave. Nobody but themselves knew the cave. When he was close to the mouth of the cave, he obtained intelligence that they were inside it. Hector saw and heard nothing.

Eachann was concerned about the landlord. Without saying anything, he left to speak with him. Kenneth saw him leaving. He went up to the cave. After a few days, they all left for Poolewe.

There was a big ship at anchor there. A boat came from the ship. Kenneth and Flora went to the lower part of the shore. They waved to the crew. But who was on board but Black Hector! He was returning at the head of a force.

Fortunately, Ewen and Effie were hiding. But Flora and Kenneth were taken into custody. They were taken to Eilean Donan. Ewen would reach maturity before he would again meet with the Lord of Donan Castle.

Beagan làithean an dèidh sin, thill Coinneach agus Eachann bho bhith a' sealg. Cha robh sgeul air duine anns an taigh. Bha Eachann feargach.

An ath mhadainn, chaidh Coinneach agus Eachann a-mach a lorg chàich. Bha Coinneach an dòchas gun robh iad san uaimh. Cha robh duine sam bith ach iad fhèin eòlach air an uaimh. Nuair a bha e faisg air beul na h-uamha, fhuair e fios gur ann na broinn a bha iad. Chan fhaca is cha chuala Eachann dad.

Bha Eachann a' gabhail dragh mun uachdaran. Gun guth a ràdh, dh'fhalbh e a bhruidhinn ris. Chunnaic Coinneach e a' falbh. Chaidh e suas don uaimh. An dèidh beagan làithean, theich iad uile gu Poll Iù.

Bha long mhòr air acair an sin. Thàinig eathar far na luinge. Chaidh Coinneach is Fionnghal gu ceann shìos a' chladaich. Smèid iad air a' chriutha. Ach cò bha air bòrd ach Eachann Dubh! Bha e a' tilleadh air ceann feachd.

Gu fortanach, bha Eòghann agus Oighrig am falach. Ach chaidh Fionnghal agus Coinneach a chur an grèim. Chaidh an toirt a dh'Eilean Donnain. Bhiodh Eòghann a' tighinn gu ìre mus coinnicheadh e a-rithist ri Morair Caisteal Dhonnain.