

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 633 (which corresponds to Litir 937). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you about Mary of Callert, one of the Camerons of Callert in Lochaber. There wasn't a woman in the land who was nicer in appearance or nature. Everybody loved her. Well, everybody except her father. He was hard on her.

One day, her father put her out of the house. She went to live in Lundavra with her uncle. A ship came to Loch Leven. The clan chief's wife bought cloth from them. The cloth was impregnated with the black fever [thought to be typhus]. Everybody in Callert House grew ill. Mary came home to help them. Everybody died – except Mary herself.

Mary had to live in the house by herself. Nobody would come near her. They feared that they themselves would get the fever. They wouldn't let Mary out and they wouldn't let anybody else in.

However, Mary had a lover – Patrick Campbell from Inverawe. He went there to save Mary. He went at night, rowing a boat quietly. He took her out through the chimney. She threw her clothes into the sea. Patrick put his own plaid around her to keep her warm.

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Mhàiri Challaird, tè de Chamshronaich Challaird ann an Loch Abar. Cha robh tè anns an dùthaich a bha na bu shnoige ann an coltas no nàdar. Bha gràdh aig a h-uile duine oirre. Uill, a h-uile duine ach a h-athair. Bha esan cruaidh oirre.

Latha a bha seo, chuir a h-athair a-mach às an taigh i. Chaidh i a dh'fhuireach ann an Lunn Dà Bhrà còmhla ri a h-uncail. Thàinig long gu Loch Lìobhann. Cheannaich bean a' chinn-chinnidh clò bhuapa. Bha an clò air a thruailleadh leis an fhiabhras dhubh. Dh'fhàs a h-uile duine ann an Taigh Challaird tinn. Thàinig Màiri dhachaigh airson cobhair a dhèanamh orra. Chaochail iad uile – ach Màiri fhèin.

B' fheudar do Mhàiri fuireach anns an taigh leatha fhèin. Cha tigeadh duine faisg oirre. Bha an t-eagal orra gum faigheadh iad fhèin am fiabhras. Cha leigeadh iad Màiri a-mach agus cha leigeadh iad duine eile a-steach.

Ge-tà, bha leannan aig Màiri – fear Pàdraig Caimbeul à Inbhir Atha. Chaidh e ann airson Màiri a shàbhaladh. Chaidh e ann air an oidhche, ag iomradh bàta gu sàmhach. Thug e a-mach i tron t-similear. Thilg i a h-aodach don mhuir. Chuir Pàdraig a bhreacan fhèin timcheall oirre airson a cumail blàth.

He took her home. He gave her new clothes. They married almost immediately and he built her a house in the wood. They were by themselves for three months. They wanted to be sure that they weren't infected. But, unfortunately, they weren't married long. Patrick fell at the Battle of Inverlochy against Montrose. That was in 1645.

Mary suffered a broken heart on account of her spouse's death. She composed a song for him. In the song, she says that Patrick was buried behind their house. It's thought that he was wounded at Inverlochy and that he made his way home. He died there. Then Mary's story gets even more poignant, as you'll hear next week.

Thug e dhachaigh i. Thug e aodach ùr dhi. Phòs iad cha mhòr sa bhad agus thog esan taigh dhi anns a' choille. Bha iad leotha fhèin airson trì mìosan. Bha iad airson a bhith cinnteach nach robh an tinneas oirre. Ach, gu mì-fhortanach, cha robh iad pòsta fada. Thuit Pàdraig aig Blàr Inbhir Lòchaidh an aghaidh Montròs. Bha sin ann an sia ceud deug, ceathrad 's a còig (1645).

Dh'fhuiling Màiri cridhe briste air sgàth bàs a cèile. Rinn i òran dha. Anns an òran tha i ag ràdh gun deach Pàdraig a thiodhlacadh air cùl an taighe aca. Thathar a' smaoinichadh gun robh e air a leòn aig Inbhir Lòchaidh agus gun do rinn e a shlighe dhachaigh. Chaochail e an sin. An uair sin, tha eachdraidh Màiri a' fàs nas tiamhaidhe buileach, mar a chluinneas sibh an-ath-sheachdain.