

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 640 (which corresponds to Litir 944). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you the story 'how woad came to Scotland' [or, more likely, indigo as it was from India]. The Barra orphan lad was in India. His barrow was full of golden rods. He returned home. He showed the golden rods to the farmer. 'What are you going to do with those?' asked the farmer.

'I'm going to leave them to you,' said the lad.

'Oh,' said the farmer, 'don't leave them to me at all. They belong to you. You are now wealthy.'

They were at home for a few days. 'A big estate is being sold,' said the farmer. 'It's an indigo estate. I'll go to the auction. I'll buy the estate for you.'

'Very good,' said the lad.

The farmer went to the auction. He bought the estate. 'You now own the estate,' he said to the lad. The lad kept the employees on the estate and things went well for him.

Years elapsed. Who appeared one day at the farmer's house but the mate. He had returned from the

Bha mi ag innse na sgeulachd 'Mar a Thàinig an Guirmean a dh'Alba'. Bha an dilleachdan Barrach anns na h-Innseachan. Bha am bara aige làn de shlatan òir. Thill e dhachaigh. Sheall e na slatan òir don tuathanach. 'Dè tha thu a' dol a dhèanamh le sin?' dh'fhaighnich an tuathanach.

'Tha mi a' dol gam fàgail agaibh fhèin,' ars an gille.

'O,' ars an tuathanach, 'na fàg agams' idir iad. 'S ann leat fhèin a tha iad. Tha thu beartach a-nise.'

Bha iad beagan làithean aig an taigh. 'Tha oighreachd mhòr ga reic,' thuirt an tuathanach. 'S e oighreachd ghuirmein a th' innte. Thèid mise dhan rùp. Ceannaichidh mi an oighreachd dhut fhèin.'

'Glè mhath,' ars an gille.

Chaidh an tuathanach don rùp. Cheannaich e an oighreachd. 'S ann leat fhèin a tha an oighreachd a-nise,' thuirt e ris a' ghille. Chùm an gille an luchd-obrach air an oighreachd agus chaidh gnothaichean gu math dha.

Chaidh bliadhnaichean seachad. Cò nochd latha a bha seo aig taigh an tuathanaich ach am meat. Bha e air

seven seas. 'Where's the lad?' he asked.

'Well,' said the farmer, 'the lad is better off today than you or me.'

They went to visit him. They reached his estate house. The lad came to the door. He and the mate shook each other's hands. The mate asked him what had happened to him.

The lad explained the situation to him. 'Who's on the boat today?' he asked.

'Only the old ones you know,' said the mate.

'Very good,' said the lad. 'We'll fill the boat with a load of indigo. But I'll put the captain off, and part of the crew with him – the ones who were against me. You'll get command of the boat.'

'Very good,' said the mate. They organised everything. They loaded the boat with indigo and they sailed to Scotland. That was the first time indigo reached Scotland – thanks to an orphan from Barra. And that's my story.

tilleadh bho na seachd cuantan. 'Ca'l an gille?' dh'fhaighnich e.

'Uill,' ars an tuathanach, 'tha an gille nas fheàrr dheth an-diugh na tha thusa no mise.'

Chaidh iad a chèilidh air. Ràinig iad an taigh mòr aige. Thàinig an gille chun an dorais. Rug e fhèin 's am meat air làimh air a chèile. Dh'fhaighnich am meat dheth gu dè a bh' air èirigh dha.

Mhìnich an gille an suidheachadh dha. 'Cò th' air a' bhàta an-diugh?' dh'fhaighnich e.

'Chan eil ach an t-seann fheadhainn air a bheil thu eòlach,' ars am meat.

'Glè mhath,' ars an gille. 'Lìonaidh sinn am bàta le luchd de ghuirmean. Ach cuiridh mi an sgiobair dhith, agus pàirt dhen chriutha leis – an fheadhainn a bha nam aghaidh. Gheibh thusa comann air a' bhàta.'

'Glè mhath,' ars am meat. Chuir iad a h-uile sìon air dòigh. Luchdaich iad am bàta le guirmean agus sheòl iad gu ruige Alba. B' e sin a' chiad turas a ràinig an guirmean Alba – taing do dhilleachdan à Barraigh. Agus 's e sin mo sgeulachd.