

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 780 (which corresponds to Litir 1,084). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

Do you know the old manuscript, The Wardlaw Manuscript? It was written in the middle of the 17th Century. It tells us a lot about the history of the Frasers of Lovat. I want to tell you a story from the manuscript.

There was once a man called the red-haired blacksmith. He asked a servant of his, Donald MacAllister, to get him withes of blackthorn. Donald went to a blackthorn bush. He climbed up in the tree. But the knife fell from his hand.

When the knife hit the ground, it made a clinking sound. When Donald picked up the knife he found a clay pot. He dug the pot out. It was full of gold.

Donald only took a ring with him. He closed the pot and put it back. He returned to the smiddy, where a daughter of the smith was baking bread.

'Janet,' said Donald, 'give me a bannock or two and I'll give you a beautiful ring.

Janet gave him bannocks, and Donald gave her the ring. I'm sure she was pleased.

A bheil sibh eòlach air an t-seann làmh-sgrìobhainn, *The Wardlaw Manuscript*? Bha i air a sgrìobhadh ann am meadhan an t-seachdamh linn deug. Tha i ag innse tòrr mu eachdraidh Chlann 'ic Shimidh – *the Frasers of Lovat*. Tha mi airson stòiridh innse dhuibh às an làmh-sgrìobhainn.

Bha fear ann uaireigin air an robh an Gobha Ruadh. Dh'iarr e air sgalag aige, Dòmhnall MacAlasdair, gadan droighinn fhaighinn dha. Chaidh Dòmhnall gu preas droighinn. Shreap e suas anns a' chraoibh. Ach thuit an sgian às an làimh aige.

Nuair a bhuail an sgian anns an talamh, rinn i gliongadaich. Nuair a thog Dòmhnall an sgian, lorg e poit-chrèadha. Chladhaich e a' phoit a-mach. Bha i làn òir.

Cha tug Dòmhnall leis ach fàinne. Dhùin e a' phoit agus chuir e air ais i. Thill e don cheàrdaich, far an robh nighean aig a' ghobha a' fuine aran.

'A Sheònaid,' arsa Dòmhnall, 'thoir dhomh bonnach no dhà agus bheir mise fàinne bhrèagha dhut.'

Thug Seònaid bonnaich dha, agus thug Dòmhnall an fhàinne dhi. Tha fhios gun robh i toilichte.

The red-haired smith returned home. He saw the gold ring on his daughter's finger.

'Where did you get that ring?' he asked.

'From Donald MacAllister,' she replied.

The smith went to speak to Donald. He found out about the gold that the servant [had] found.

'Keep quiet about it,' said the blacksmith. 'Do your work. Don't say anything to anybody. At the end of the say, we'll go there together.'

Donald didn't understand that the red-haired smith wasn't honest. The smith went to the blackthorn bush. He found the pot. He picked it up and, indeed, it was full of gold.

The smith went home with the pot. He hid it in a locked chest. At the end of the working day, he went to where Donald was. The two of them went to the bush.

But there was no sign of the pot. There was only a small depression. 'But it was here,' said Donald.

'Be quiet,' said the other man, 'it was only a dream. There was no gold here!' And what happened then? You'll find out in the next Litir.

Thill an Gobha Ruadh dhachaigh. Chunnaic e an fhàinne òir air corrag a nighinn.

'Càite an d' fhuair thu an fhàinne sin?' dh'fhaighnich e.

'O Dhòmhnall MacAlasdair,' fhreagair i.

Chaidh an gobha a bhruidhinn ri Dòmhnall. Fhuair e a-mach mun òr a lorg an sgalag.

'Cùm sàmhach mu dheidhinn,' thuirt an gobha. 'Dèan d' obair. Na can guth ri duine. Aig deireadh an latha, thèid sinn ann còmhla.'

Cha do thuig Dòmhnall nach robh an Gobha Ruadh onarach. Dh'fhalbh an gobha don phreas droighinn. Lorg e a' phoit. Thog e i agus, gu dearbh, bha i làn òir.

Dh'fhalbh an gobha dhachaigh leis a' phoit. Chuir e am falach i ann an ciste ghlaiste. Aig deireadh an latha-obrach, chaidh e far an robh Dòmhnall. Chaidh an dithis don phreas.

Ach cha robh sgeul air a' phoit. Cha robh ann ach sloc beag. 'Ach bha i an seo,' thuirt Dòmhnall.

'Ist,' thuirt am fear eile, 'cha robh ann ach aisling. Cha robh òr an seo ann!' Agus dè thachair an uair sin? Gheibh sibh a-mach anns an ath Litir.