

# **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 865 (which corresponds to Litir 1,169). Ruairidh can be contacted at [roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk).

*I want to tell you about a quatrain. I mean by that a short song – a lullaby – in which there are four lines. A woman sang it. She was next to a cradle in her own house. She was, to all appearances, singing the song for a baby in the cradle. But was there a baby in the cradle?*

*Here is the quatrain. Bà hó, bà hó, bà hó, my baby; Your relations are plentiful in the low country of the glens; Some of them in Kintrye are excellent pipers; And some of them are in Oban on a dining table in the ale-house.*

*Do you understand it? Tha do chàirdean glè lionmhor an ìochdar nan gleannan – your relations are plentiful in the low country of the glens. Tha cuid an Cinn Tìre nam pìobairean ro mhath. Some of the 'baby's' relations in Kintyre are excellent on the pipes. Tha cuid dhiubh san Òban air bhòrd san taigh-leanna. That means that some others of the baby's relations are on a dining table in the inn. It wasn't a baby that was in the cradle but a sheep – a sheep's carcass.*

*Here's how it happened. There was a shepherd living near Tarbert Loch Fyne in Argyll. It was*

*Tha mi airson innse dhuibh mu rann. Tha mi a' ciallachadh le sin òran beag – tàladh – anns a bheil ceithir loidhnichean. Sheinn boireannach e. Bha i ri taobh creathail anns an taigh aice fhèin. Bha i, a rèir choltais, a' gabhail an òrain airson leanabh anns a' chreathail. Ach an robh leanabh sa chreathail?*

*Seo agaibh an rann: Bà hó, bà hó, bà hó, mo leanabh; Tha do chàirdean glè lionmhor an ìochdar nan gleannan; Tha cuid an Cinn Tìre nam pìobairean ro mhath; 'S tha cuid dhiubh san Òban air bhòrd san taigh-leanna.*

*A bheil sibh ga thuigsinn? Tha do chàirdean glè lionmhor an ìochdar nan gleannan – your relations are plentiful in the low country of the glens. Tha cuid an Cinn Tìre nam pìobairean ro mhath. Tha cuid de chàirdean 'an leanaibh' ann an Cinn Tìre fìor mhath air a' phìob-mhòir. Tha cuid dhiubh san Òban air bhòrd san taigh-leanna. Tha sin a' ciallachadh gu bheil feadhainn eile de chàirdean an leanaibh air bòrd-bìdh ann an taigh-seinnse. Chan e leanabh a bha sa chreathail ach caora – closach caorach.*

*Seo mar a thachair e. Bha cìobair a' fuireach faisg air Tairbeart Loch Fìn ann an Earra-Ghàidheal. Bha amharas ann*

*suspected that he was rustling sheep. Officers went to his house. He wasn't there. But his wife was there. She had a sheep carcass. She put it in the cradle and covered it with blankets.*

*While the men were rummaging, the woman sat beside the cradle. She sang a lullaby to keep the 'baby' at ease and quiet. I reckon that the officers had no Gaelic whatsoever.*

*Bà hó, bà hó, bà hó, my baby; your relations are plentiful in the low country of the glens; Some of them in Kintyre are excellent pipers; And some of them are in Oban on a dining table in the ale-house.*

*The shepherd's wife was involved in deceit. But she got away with it.*

*I cannot say if that story is true. I suspect it is merely a fictional anecdote!*

gun robh e ri mèirle chaorach. Chaidh oifigearan don taigh aige. Cha robh e fhèin a-staigh. Ach bha a bhean a-staigh. Bha closach caorach aice. Chuir i anns a' chreathail e, agus chòmhdaich i e le plaideachan.

Fhad 's a bha na fir a' sporghail, shuidh am boireannach ri taobh a' chreathail. Ghabh i tàladh airson an 'leanabh' a chumail socair, sàmhach. Tha mi a' dèanamh dheth nach robh Gàidhlig sam bith aig na h-oifigearan.

Bà hó, bà hó, bà hó, mo leanabh; Tha do chàirdean glè lìonmhor an ìochdar nan gleannan; Tha cuid an Cinn Tìre nam pìobairean ro mhath; 'S tha cuid dhiubh san Òban air bhòrd san taigh-leanna.

Bha bean a' chiobair ri mealladh. Agus fhuair i às leis.

Chan urrainn dhomh a ràdh a bheil an sgeul sin fìor. Tha amharas agam nach eil ann ach naidheachd bhreugach!