

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 878 (which corresponds to Litir 1,182). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

I want to tell you an old story from Mull. It's called 'Lochbuie and his two herdsmen'.

The laird of Lochbuie had two herdsmen. The wife of the first [second] herdsman came to the house of the other herdsman. Something was boiling in a pot.

'What do you have in the pot?' said the woman who came in.

'Porridge,' replied the other.

'What sort of porridge?'

'Black porridge.' That was a thin porridge lacking meat or vegetables.

'Oh,' said the visiting woman. 'The landlord has enough oxen. Our husbands can go together and steal one of his oxen. You'll then have meat.'

The night came. The herdsmen came together. 'We'll go to the wood and we'll build a fire,' said one of them. 'I'll stay by the fire. You steal an ox and bring it to me. I'll take it home. I can deny I stole it. You can deny that you took it home.'

At that time, the laird had power to hang a person without going to a court of law. And

Tha mi airson seann sgeulachd à Muile aithris dhuibh. 'S e an t-ainm a tha oirre 'Locha Buidhe 's a Dhà Bhuachaille'.

Bha dà bhuachaille aig tighearna Loch a Bhuidhe. Thàinig bean an dàrna buachaille gu taigh a' bhuachaille eile. Bha rudeigin a' goil ann am poit.

'Dè tha agad sa phoit?' ars an tè a thàinig a-steach.

'Brochan,' fhreagair an tè eile.

'Dè an seòrsa brochain?'

'Dubh-bhrochan.' 'S e brochan tana a bha sin, gun fheòil no glasraich.

'Hut,' thuirt an tè a bha a' dèanamh cèilidh. 'Tha daimh gu leòr aig an uachdaran. Faodaidh na daoine againn falbh còmhla agus fear de na daimh aige a ghoid. Bidh feòil agad an uair sin.'

Thàinig an oidhche. Thàinig na buachaillean còmhla. 'Thèid sinn don choille agus togaidh sinn teine,' thuirt fear dhiubh. 'Fanaidh mise aig an teine. Goid thusa damh agus thoir thugam e. Bheir mise dhachaigh e.' Faodaidh mise dhol às àicheadh gun do ghoid mi e. Faodaidh tusa dhol às àicheadh gun tug thu dhachaigh e.'

Aig an àm sin, bha cumhachd aig tighearna duine a chrochadh gun a dhol gu cùirt-lagha. Agus bha Loch a Buidhe

Lochbuie had hanged a man that very day. That was in the same wood as the herdsmen [were]. His body was still there.

A group of gentry were in Lochbuie's estate house. They bet that none of Lochbuie's men would be bold enough to go to the wood and remove a shoe from a foot of the hanged man.

Lochbuie accepted the bet. He asked one of his men – MacFadyen – to bring back the dead man's shoe. MacFadyen agreed. He went to the wood in the dark. He came close to the site of the hanging. And he saw a living man next to a fire. He was of the opinion that the 'dead' man was not dead at all!

He ran to the big house. He told the gentry that the hanged man was still alive.

'As we said, Lochbuie ...' said the gentry. 'You only have cowards working for you!' We'll see what happened then in the next Litir.

air fear a chrochadh an latha sin fhèin. Bha sin anns an aon choille san robh na buachaillean. Bha a chorp fhathast ann.

Bha buidheann de dh'uaislean ann an taigh mòr Locha Buidhe. Chuir iad geall nach biodh duine aig Locha Buidhe treun gu leòr gus a dhol don choille agus bròg a thoirt far cas an duine chrochte.

Ghabh Locha Buidhe ris a' gheall. Dh'iarr e air fear aige – MacPhàidein – bròg an duine mhairbh a thoirt air ais. Dh'aontaich MacPhàidein. Dh'fhalbh e don choille anns an dorchadas. Thàinig e faisg air làrach a' chrochaidh. Agus chunnaic e fear beò ri taobh teine. Bha e dhen bheachd nach robh an duine 'marbh' marbh idir!

Ruith e don taigh mhòr. Dh'inns e do na h-uaislean gun robh an duine a chaidh a chrochadh fhathast beò.

'Mar a thuir sinn, a Locha Buidhe ...' arsa na h-uaislean, 'Chan eil agad mar luchd-obrach ach gealtairean!' Chì sinn dè thachair an uair sin anns an ath Litir.