

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 897 (which corresponds to Litir 1,201). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

Calum Iain Maclean, the collector of folklore, left us many amazing recordings. Among them there is an account of the last wolf in Sunart, near Strontian. The man who told the story was Donald MacPherson, brown-haired Donald. He was of the opinion that the story goes back four or five hundred years.

There was only one wolf left in the area. A woman from Ardgour was walking to Strontian by herself. She had a load of wool. She was going to a carding mill. She was walking all day through Glen Gour.

When she didn't appear as expected, some people went out to look for her. They found her body. They knew that it was a wolf that had killed her. They took her body to a shieling bothy. They kept night-watch over her body. Near dawn, they saw the wolf. It was trying to get into the bothy! The men jumped up. The wolf fled ahead of them.

Some people left with the woman's body to bury it. But some others remained up in the glen to find the wolf. Their leader was John of Drumnatorran. He had a capable greyhound.

Dh'fhàg Calum Iain MacGillEathain, an cruinniche beul-aithris, tòrr chlàran iongantach againn. Nam measg, tha cunntas dhen mhadadh-allaidh mu dheireadh ann an Suaineart, faisg air Sròn an t-Sìthein. B' e am fear a dh'inns an sgeul Dòmhnall Mac a' Phearsain, Dòmhnall Donn. Bha esan dhen bheachd gu bheil an sgeul a' dol air ais ceithir no còig ceud bliadhna.

Bha dìreach aon mhadadh-allaidh air fhàgail anns an sgìre. Bha boireannach à Àird Ghobhar a' coiseachd gu Sròn an t-Sìthein leatha fhèin. Bha eallach clòimhe aice. Bha i a' dol gu muileann-càrdaidh. Bha i a' coiseachd fad an latha tro Ghleann nan Gobhar.

Nuair nach do nochd i mar a bha dùil, chaidh feadhainn a-mach a choimhead air a son. Lorg iad a corp. Bha fhios aca gur e madadh-allaidh a thug bàs dhi. Thug iad a corp gu bothan-àirigh. Rinn iad caithris na h-oidhche air a corp. Faisg air briseadh an latha, chunnaic iad am madadh. Bha e a' feuchainn ri faighinn a-steach don bhothan! Leum na daoine suas. Theich am madadh-allaidh romhpa.

Dh'fhalbh feadhainn le corp a' bhoireannaich airson a thiodhlacadh. Ach dh'fhuirich feadhainn eile shuas anns a' ghleann airson am madadh a lorg. B' e an ceannard aca Iain Dhruim an Torrain. Bha mialchù comasach aige.

John and his dog went out to try to find the wolf. The storyteller tells us about the great journey they took across glens and mountains. He names many place-names.

It was the dog that found the wolf. It was at the mouth of a cave in a remote place. Now, Iain had the first powder-gun that came to the area. John fired a shot at the wolf. It was wounded but was not killed.

John went to where the wolf was. Here's what Dòmhnall Donn said about John: 'he drew his hunting-knife ... [and] he dispatched the last wolf that was in Sunart ... he lifted the wolf on his back and ... he hung it on a tree ... near the place called Anaheilt.

Chaidh Iain agus a chù a-mach, feuch am madadh a lorg. Tha an sgeulaiche ag innse mun turas mhòr a ghabh iad thairis air glinn is beanntan. Tha e ag ainmeachadh tòrr ainmean-àite.

'S e an cù a lorg am madadh. Bha e air beul uamha ann an àite iomallach. Nise, 's ann aig Iain a bha a' chiad ghunna-fùdair a thàinig riamh don sgìre. Loisg Iain urchair air a' mhadadh. Bha e air a leòn ach cha robh e air a mharbhadh.

Chaidh Iain far an robh am madadh. Seo na thuirt Dòmhnall Donn mu Iain: 'tharraing e a chorc-seilg ... [agus] chuir e crìoch dheireannach air a' mhadadh-allaidh mu dheireadh a bha an Suaineart ... thog e am madadh air a dhruim 's ... chroch e air craobh e ... faisg air an àite ris an abrar Àth na h-Èilde'.