

## **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 930 (which corresponds to Litir 1,234). Ruairidh can be contacted at [fios@learngaelic.scot](mailto:fios@learngaelic.scot).

*I've been reading an account of the fern fires that would be held in olden times at Halloween in the Highlands. I mean by that 'fern fires'. Young folk would gather bracken through the day. The fuel was piled up on a hill near the village. At dusk, the fire was lit. Many people appeared at the bonfire.*

*When the fire had gone down, each person was getting a small stone. There was a different mark on each stone. The oldest person was putting their stone at the edge of the ash.*

*The others were following, putting their own stones there until there were stones right around the entirety of the ash.*

*Nobody was going close to the place through the night., Next morning, they were looking at it. If a stone had moved from its place during the night, people were believing that the person who put it there would die with a year. The same was true if the person's footprint was found in the ash.*

*The Halloween ceremony was not complete, however. The young ones were trying to find out who they*

Tha mi air a bhith a' leughadh cunntas mu na teintean rainich a bhiodh ann o shean air Oidhche Shamhna air a' Ghàidhealtachd. Tha mi a' ciallachadh le sin 'fern fires'. Bha feadhainn òga a' cruinneachadh raineach tron latha. Bha an connadh air a chàrnadh air cnoc faisg air a' bhaile. Aig ciaradh an fheasgair, bha an teine air a lasadh. Bha na h-uibhir a' nochdadh aig a' bhraidseal.

Nuair a bha an teine air a dhol sìos, bha gach duine a' faighinn clach bheag. Bha comharra eadar-dhealaichte air gach clach. Bha an neach a bu shine a' cur na cloiche acasan aig oir na luathre.

Bha an fheadhainn eile ga leantainn, a' cur an clachan fhèin ann gus an robh clachan timcheall na luathre gu lèir.

Cha robh duine a' dol faisg air an àite tron oidhche. An ath mhadainn, bha iad a' toirt sùil air. Nam biodh clach air a dhol far an àite aice thairis air an oidhche, bha daoine a' creidsinn gum biodh an neach a chuir ann i a' faighinn bàs taobh a-staigh bliadhna. Bha an aon rud fìor nam biodh lorg-coise an duine anns an luathre.

Cha robh deas-ghnàth na Samhna seachad, ge-tà. Bha an fheadhainn òga a' feuchainn ri faighinn a-mach cò bha iad

*were going to marry. They were going to a barn. There was a door at each end of it. The doors were opened.*

*The person had a riddle. There was a piece of silver in it. The person was then riddling in the name of the Devil.*

*While this happening an apparition of somebody was entering. That 'person' was taking the riddle from the person that was riddling. And they looked like the future spouse.*

*Why am I telling you this? Well, I was thinking last week that I was finished with the Rev. James Robertson of Callander. But I wasn't, because it's him that wrote this account in 1791.*

a' dol a phòsadh. Bha iad a' dol gu sabhal. Bha doras aig gach ceann dheth. Bha na dorsan air am fosgladh.

Bha criathar aig an duine. Bha pìos airgid ann. Bha an neach an uair sin a' criathradh ann an ainm an Droch Fhir.

Nuair a bha seo a' dol air adhart, bha samhla de chuideigin a' tighinn a-steach. Bha an 'neach' sin a' toirt a' chriathair on neach a bha a' criathradh. Agus bha coltas orra mar an cèile a bha gu bhith ann.

Carson a tha mi ag innse seo dhuibh? Uill, bha mi a' smaoinichadh an t-seachdain sa chaidh gun robh mi deiseil leis an Urramach Seumas MacDhonnchaidh à Calasraid. Ach cha robh, oir is esan a sgrìobh an cunntas seo ann an seachd ceud deug, naochad 's a h-aon (1791).