

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 978 (which corresponds to Litir 1,282). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

I was telling you about Donald Alexander Mackenzie and his book 'Wonder Tales from Scottish Myth and Legend'. It was published in 1917.

The first chapter is about the Cailleach Bheur or, as he wrote himself, 'Beira, Queen of Winter'. There was a well on Ben Cruachan in Argyll. The Cailleach was drawing water from it every day. At sunrise, she would lift a slab that was covering the well. Every evening, at sunset, she would put it over the well again.

However, one night, she forgot to put the slab back in its place. As soon as the sun went down, water poured out of the well. There was no stopping it. It ran down the slope and filled the glen below. That created Loch Awe.

The Cailleach Bheur created mountains also. She filled a creel with stones and soil [clay]. When she was jumping from place to place, the stuff from the creel was falling out. She created many islands like that.

She had sons. They were all big. But they weren't good-tempered and

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Dhòmhnall Alasdair MacCoinnich agus an leabhar aige *Wonder Tales from Scottish Myth and Legend*. Chaidh fhoillseachadh ann an naoi ceud deug is seachd-deug (1917).

Tha a' chiad chaibideil mu dheidhinn na Cailliche Beura no, mar a sgrìobh e fhèin, *'Beira, Queen of Winter'*. Bha tobar air Cruachan Bheann ann an Earra-Ghàidheal. Bha a' Chailleach a' tarraing uisge bhuaithe gach latha. Aig àm èirigh na grèine, bhiodh i a' togail leac a bha a' còmhdachadh an tobair. Gach feasgar, aig àm dhol-fodha na grèine, bhiodh i ga cur thairis air an tobar a-rithist.

Ge-tà, oidhche bha seo, dhìochuimhnich i an leac a chur air ais na h-àite. Cho luath 's a chaidh a' ghrian fodha, bhrùchd uisge às an tobar. Cha robh stad air. Ruith e leis a' bhruthach agus lion e an gleann gu h-ìosal. Chruthaich sin Loch Obha.

Chruthaich a' Chailleach Bheur beanntan cuideachd. Lion i cliabh le clachan agus crèadh. Nuair a bha i a' leum bho àite gu àite, bha an stuth bhon chliabh a' tuiteam a-mach. Chruthaich i iomadh eilean anns an dòigh sin.

Bha mic aice. Bha iad uile mòr. Ach cha robh iad dòigheil agus bhiodh

they would fight with each other. They would climb the mountains, throwing stones at each other. That's why there are so many large stones lying on hillslopes of the Highlands.

The Cailleach had a special hammer. When she lightly hit the ground with it, the ground would then be as hard as iron. When she hit the ground hard, she created a glen. Then she would break the mountains with the hammer – so that each one would have a different shape.

She had a special relationship with the animals of the mountains. She would be milking the hinds and the goats. When water was pouring off the hills, making white streamlets, the old people were saying that the Cailleach Bheur was milking the goats. It wasn't water that was flowing, but milk.

iad a' sabaid le chèile. Bhiodh iad a' dìreadh nam beann agus a' tilgeil chlachan air a chèile. 'S e sin as coireach gu bheil uiread de chlachan mòra nan laighe air leathadan na Gàidhealtachd.

Bha òrd sònraichte aig a' Chaillich. Nuair a bhuaill i an talamh leis gu h-aotrom, bhiodh an talamh an uair sin cho cruaidh ris an iarainn. Nuair a bhuaill i an talamh gu cruaidh, chruthaich i gleann. An uair sin bhiodh i a' briseadh nam beann leis an òrd – gus am biodh cruth eadar-dhealaichte air gach tè.

Bha càirdeas sònraichte eadar i fhèin agus ainmhidhean nam beann. Bhiodh i a' bleoghann nan èildean agus nan gobhar. Nuair a bha an t-uisge a' sruthadh far nam beann, a' dèanamh sruthlagan geala, bha na seann daoine ag ràdh gun robh a' Chailleach Bheura a' bleoghann nan gobhar. Chan e uisge a bha a' ruith, ach bainne.