

## **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 1,014 (which corresponds to Litir 1,318). Ruairidh can be contacted at [fios@learngaelic.scot](mailto:fios@learngaelic.scot).

*I'm going to conclude the story about Mary and her brother, Malcolm. The years went by. Mary never married. She had one close friend. He was a minister. His name was Robert. He was ten years younger than Mary. He wasn't married himself. But they did not have a romantic relationship. They were just good friends.*

*Mary's parents died. She reached the age of sixty. Robert was often visiting her. He went there one day, and Mary was in bed. 'Come, Robert,' she said. 'Sit by my side.'*

*'What is wrong?' he asked*

*'I won't live long,' she replied.*

*'Will you do something for me?'*

*'Yes,' said Robert. 'Anything.'*

*'Put your hand under my pillow.'*

*He did that and he pulled out a little red book. 'Read it,' she said. 'When I die, I'll leave everything to the Church. But will you put a small stone at the head of my grave. A stone in the shape of a heart with four words on it – "To Malcolm and Mary".'*

*Robert agreed to do that for her. Two dates later, Mary died. She was laid out in a grave near her parents' grave. And Robert put a heart-shaped stone at*

Tha mi a' dol a chur crìoch air an sgeulachd mu Mhàiri agus a bràthair, Calum. Chaidh na bliadhnaichean seachad. Cha do phòs Màiri riamh. Bha aon dlùth-charaid aice. Bha esan na mhinistear. 'S e Raibeart an t-ainm a bha air. Bha e deich bliadhna na b' òige na Màiri. Cha robh e fhèin pòsta. Ach cha robh suirghe ann eatarra. Bha iad dìreach nan deagh charaidean.

Chaochail pàrantan Màiri. Ràinig i aois seasgad. Bha Raibeart a' cèilidh oirre gu tric. Chaidh e ann latha a bha seo, agus bha Màiri anns an leabaidh. 'Thig, a Raibeart,' thuirt i. 'Dèan suidhe ri mo thaobh.'

*'Dè tha ceàrr?' dh'fhaighnich e.*

*'Cha bhi mi beò fada,' fhreagair i. 'An dèan thu rudeigin dhomh?'*

*'Nì,' thuirt Raibeart. 'Rud sam bith.'*

*'Cuir do làmh fo mo chluasaig.'*

Rinn e sin, agus thug e a-mach leabhar beag dearg. 'Leugh e,' thuirt i. 'Nuair a gheibh mi bàs, bidh mi a' fàgail a h-uile nì agam don Eaglais. Ach an cuir thu clach bheag aig ceann na h-uaghach agam. Clach ann an cumadh cridhe le ceithir faclan oirre – "Gu Calum agus Màiri".'

Dh'aontaich Raibeart sin a dhèanamh dhi. Dà latha an dèidh sin, chaochail Màiri. Bha i air a càradh ann an uaigh faisg air uaigh a pàrantan. Agus chuir Raibeart clach ann an cumadh cridhe aig

*the head of her grave. Written on it were 'To Malcolm and Mary'.*

*Robert read the little red book many times. He knew about the relationship between Mary and Malcolm. But he never said a word to anyone about it.*

*A surprising thing happened. After days of bad weather, the ground was saturated. There were strange footprints near Mary's grave. One of the toes was missing on the right foot. Nobody knew how that could be. But the minister knew!*

*Shortly before Robert died, he told a group of local people about Mary and Malcolm. Among them was Angus MacNeil's grandmother. Before she died, she told Angus why that strange heart-shaped stone was in the village cemetery.*

ceann a h-uaghach. Sgrìobhte oirre bha 'Gu Calum agus Màiri'.

Leugh Raibeart an leabhar beag dearg iomadach turas. Bha fios aige mun chàirdeas eadar Màiri agus Calum. Ach cha tuirt e guth ri duine mu dheidhinn.

Thachair rud iongantach. An dèidh làithean de dhroch shìde, bha an talamh bog fliuch. Bha lorgan-coise annasach faisg air uaigh Màiri. Bha tè de na h-òrdagan a dhìth air a' chois dheis. Cha robh fios aig duine mar a dh'fhaodadh sin a bhith. Ach bha fios aig a' mhinistear!

Goirid mus do chaochail Raibeart, dh'inns e mu Mhàiri agus Calum do bhuidheann de mhuinntir an àite. Nam measg, bha seanmhair Aonghais MhicNèill. Mus do chaochail ise, dh'inns i do dh'Aonghas carson a bha a' chlach annasach sin, ann an cumadh cridhe, ann an cladh a' bhaile.