

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 1,046 (which corresponds to Litir 1,350). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

I was in Galloway last year. In the 'Book Town' – Wigtown – I bought a collection of stories from Galloway. There is an old Gaelic heritage in some of them.

One story stood out. It is called 'Rowan Reek' – which means 'the smoke of the rowan tree'. I'll retell the story in Gaelic.

Dan McKendrick and his wife were living in the village of Sorbie south of Wigtown. They had a son called Thomas – or Tammie. Thomas was a wicked lad. He was unmannerly and badly behaved all the time. Dan and his wife reckoned he was not their own son, but a changeling. Fairies put the changeling there in place of their own baby.

They went to speak to a wise old woman called Lucky McRobert. Lucky agreed to help them.

She went to Dan's house. As soon as she entered, the young lad, Thomas, was threatening and rude. Lucky was certain he was a changeling.

There was a fire in the middle of the floor. The old woman placed a stool either side of it. She asked the

Bha mi ann an Gall-Ghàidhealaibh an-uiridh. Ann am 'Baile nan Leabhraichean' – Baile na h-Ùige – cheannaich mi cruinneachadh de sgeulachdan à Gall-Ghàidhealaibh. Tha seann dualchas Gàidhlig ann an cuid dhiubh.

Stob aon sgeul a-mach. 'S e an t-ainm a tha air 'Rowan Reek' – a' ciallachadh 'toit na craoibh-chaorainn'. Nì mi ath-innse air an sgeul ann an Gàidhlig.

Bha Dan MacEanraig agus a bhean a' fuireach ann am baile Sorbie deas air Baile na h-Ùige. Bha mac aca air an robh Tòmas – no Tammie – mar ainm. Bha Tòmas na bhalach aingidh. Bha e ri mì-mhodh agus droch ghiùlan fad na h-ùine. Bha Dan agus a bhean dhen bheachd nach e an gille aca fhèin a bha ann, ach tàcharan. Chuir sìthichean an tàcharan ann an àite an leanaibh aca fhèin.

Chaidh iad a bhruidhinn ri seann bhoireannach glic air an robh Lucky NicRaibeirt mar ainm. Dh'aontaich Lucky taic a thoirt dhaibh.

Chaidh i gu taigh Dan. Cho luath 's a chaidh i a-steach, bha an gille òg, Tòmas, ri bagairt is mì-mhodh. Bha Lucky deimhinne gur e tàcharan a bha ann.

Bha teine ann am meadhan an ùrlair. Chuir an seann bhoireannach stòl air gach taobh dheth. Dh'iarr i air pàrantan

lad's parents to sit on them. She put a candle in a candlestick holder, and she lit it. She put an 'adder bead' in the wax. An adder bead is a special stone that was used in magic charms.

Dan had cut logs of rowan wood. Lucky placed the logs on the fire. There was a riddle on top of them. The lad tried to flee, but his father kept hold of him. Lucky tied his feet and hands together with strips of red cloth.

She put the changeling on the riddle. The lad's lungs filled with smoke. He was shouting and swearing. But the woman kept him on the fire. Finally, the boy left with the smoke through the chimney and disappeared.

Then there was a knocking at the door. There was a nice wee lad there. 'I'm Tammie McKendrick,' he said in a quiet gentle voice. 'May I come in?'

a' ghille suidh' orra. Chuir i coinneal ann an coinnlear agus las i i. Chuir i clach-nathrach anns a' chèir. 'S e clach-nathrach clach shònraichte a bha air a cleachdadh ann an geasan.

Bha Dan air logaichean de chraobh-chaorainn a ghearradh. Chuir Lucky na logaichean air an teine. Bha ruideil air am muin. Dh'fheuch an gille ri teicheadh, ach chùm athair grèim air. Cheangail Lucky a làmhan agus a chasan ri chèile le stiallan de chlà dearg.

Chuir i an tàcharan air an ruideil. Lion sgamhan a' ghille le toit. Bha e ag èigheachd agus a' mionnachadh. Ach chùm am boireannach air an teine e. Mu dheireadh, dh'fhalbh an gille leis an toit tron t-similear agus chaidh e à fianais.

An uair sin, bha gnogadh air an doras. Bha gille beag laghach ann. 'Is mise Tòmas MacEanraig,' thuirt e ann an guth beag socair. 'Am faod mi thighinn a-steach?'