

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 1,049 (which corresponds to Litir 1,353). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

I was telling you a tale from Maol Ghall-Ghàidheil, The Mull of Galloway. The word mull came from the Gaelic maol. Maol, in this context, means 'cape'.

The Mull of Galloway is rocky, with high cliffs. There is another famous mull, somewhat similar to it. That is Maol Chinn Tìre, The Mull of Kintyre. It's a rocky place. The word creag appears in place-names. But, on the maps, there is no sign of Creag an t-Sionnaich ('the crag of the fox').

More 's the pity because the Gaelic scholar, Alexander Carmichael, told a strange tale about Creag an t-Sionnaich and how it got its name.

A fox was living there a long time ago. It would be hunting a good distance from its den. It would be hunting farmers' sheep.

The farmers were also losing their dogs. The dogs were chasing the fox. They were reaching the Mull's cliffs and falling to their deaths.

However, the fox did not suffer any harm. The next day, it would be returning to hunt. It was as healthy as a trout.

Nobody understood how the fox was tricking them. The farmers hired a fox-hunter. He went down the cliff on a

Bha mi ag innse sgeulachd dhuibh à Maol Gall-Ghàidheil, *The Mull of Galloway*. Thàinig am facal *mull* bhon Ghàidhlig *maol*. Tha *maol*, anns a' cho-theacsa seo, a' ciallachadh 'cape'.

Tha Maol Ghall-Ghàidheil creagach, le bearraidhean àrda. Tha maol ainmeil eile ann, car coltach ris. 'S e sin Maol Chinn Tìre, *The Mull of Kintyre*. 'S e àite creagach a tha ann. Tha am facal *creag* a' nochdadh ann an ainmean-àite. Ach, air na mapaichean, chan eil sgeul air Creag an t-Sionnaich.

Is mòr am beud oir dh'inns an sgoilear Gàidhlig, Alasdair MacIlleMhìcheil, sgeul annasach mu dheidhinn Creag an t-Sionnaich agus mar a fhuair i a h-ainm.

Bha sionnach a' fuireach ann o chionn fhada. Bhiodh e a' sealg pìos mòr air falbh bhon t-saobhaidh aige. Bhiodh e a' sealg nan caorach aig tuathanaich.

Bha na tuathanaich a' call an con cuideachd. Bha na coin a' ruagadh an t-sionnach. Bha iad a' ruigsinn bearradh a' Mhaoil agus a' tuiteam dom bàs.

Ge-tà, cha do dh'fhuiling an sionnach cron sam bith. An ath latha, bhiodh e a' tilleadh gu sealg. Bha e cho fallain ri breac.

Cha do thuig duine mar a bha am madadh gam mealladh. Dh'fhastaich na tuathanaich brocair. Chaidh e sìos am

<p><i>rope. He found a young rowan tree that was growing out of the rock. He understood what was happening.</i></p> <p><i>The fox would jump off the crag. But it would be aiming for the rowan tree, catching a branch with its mouth. With its weight, the branch would bend, allowing the fox to jump off, onto a narrow ledge. And the tree would return to how it was before. The fox-hunter cut the tree and put it back in a crevice.</i></p> <p><i>The next time the fox jumped, the tree did not withstand its weight. Its carcass was found at the base of the cliff. A branch was still in its mouth.</i></p> <p><i>That fox was famous as Sionnach na Maoile ‘the fox of the Mull’. There was a simile – ‘as crafty as the fox of the Mull’. Indeed, it was crafty.</i></p>	<p>bearradh air ròpa. Lorg e craobh-chaorainn òg a bha a’ fàs a-mach às a’ chreig. Thuig e na bha a’ tachairt.</p> <p>Bhiodh an sionnach a’ leum far na creige. Ach bhiodh e ag amas air a’ chraoibh-chaorainn, a’ glacadh geug le a bheul. Le a chuideam, bhiodh an geug a’ lùbadh, a’ leigeil leis a’ mhadadh leum dheth gu palla cumhang. Agus bhiodh a’ chraobh a’ dol air ais mar a bha i roimhe. Gheàrr am brocair a’ chraobh agus chuir e air ais i ann am fròg.</p> <p>An ath thuras a leum an sionnach, cha do sheas a’ chraobh ri a chuideam. Chaidh a chlosach a lorg aig bonn a’ bhearraidh. Bha geug fhathast na bheul.</p> <p>Bha am madadh sin ainmeil mar <i>Sionnach na Maoile</i>. Bha an samhla ann – <i>cho seòlta ri sionnach na Maoile</i>. ’S e a bha seòlta, gu dearbh.</p>
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