

# **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 1,092 (which corresponds to Litir 1,396). Ruairidh can be contacted at [fios@learngaelic.scot](mailto:fios@learngaelic.scot).*

*In the census in 1881. Mary MacKellar's profession was recorded as 'Poetess and Litterateur'. She was well-known but she had to make a living. Thus, she wrote a guide-book in English: 'Guide to Fort William and Lochaber'. She wrote a Gaelic article, encouraging people to take out life insurance. And she compiled the booklet: 'A Tourist's Hand-book of Gaelic and English Phrases'. Her book – 'Poems and Songs, Gaelic and English' – appeared in 1880.*

*She wrote fiction in newspapers and articles about the Camerons in the Oban Times. She died in September 1890. She was buried in the Kilmallie Cemetery in Lochaber.*

*I would like to tell you about a paper she wrote for the Gaelic Society of Inverness. It is called 'The Sheiling: Its Traditions and Milking Songs'.*

*In the paper, Mary explains how the women were making butter and cheese at the shieling. She has songs that the women would sing there. And she tells a story about a milking-stool that was connected to Bonnie Prince Charlie.*

*Ann's a' chunntas-sluaigh ann an ochd ceud deug, ochdad 's a h-aon (1881), chaidh dreuchd Màiri NicEalair a chlàradh mar 'Poetess and Litterateur'. Bha i ainmeil, ach bha aice ri bith-beò a dhèanamh. Mar sin, sgrìobh i leabhar-iùil Beurla: 'Guide to Fort William and Lochaber'. Sgrìobh i alt Gàidhlig, a' brosnachadh dhaoine gus àrachas-beatha a thoirt a-mach. Agus chuir i ri chèile an leabhran: 'A Tourist's Hand-book of Gaelic and English Phrases'. Nochd leabhar aice – *Poems and Songs, Gaelic and English* – ann an ochd ceud deug is ochdad (1880)*

*Sgrìobh i ficsean ann am pàipearan-naidheachd, agus altan mu na Camshronaich ann an Tìm an Òbain. Chaochail i as t-Sultain ochd ceud deug is naochad (1890). Chaidh a tiodhlacadh ann an Cladh Chill Mhàilidh ann an Loch Abar.*

*Bu mhath leam innse dhuibh mu phàipear a sgrìobh i do Chomunn Gàidhlig Inbhir Nis. 'S e an t-ainm a tha air 'The Sheiling: Its Traditions and Milking Songs'.*

*Ann's a' phàipear, tha Màiri a' mìneachadh mar a bha na boireannaich a' dèanamh ìm agus càise air an àirigh. Tha òrain aice a bhiodh na boireannaich a' seinn ann. Agus tha i ag innse sgeul mu stòl-bleoghainn a bha co-cheangailte ris a'*

*Màiri saw the stool in the house of a friend, Alexander Carmichael, in Edinburgh. It was at one time in a shieling bothy – I reckon in Uist. After the Battle of Culloden, a stranger came into the bothy where there were three girls. He sat down on the stool. He took a drink of milk. The girls didn't know who it was until afterwards.*

*When they found out that it was the Prince, they were fighting about who would keep the 'throne'. One of the girls lost a tooth. The other two allowed that girl to keep the stool. It was retained in her family. One of the girl's descendants gave it to Alexander Carmichael. The stool is today in the West Highland Museum in Fort William. Mary MacKellar would be pleased that it is now in the town where she was born.*

Phrionnsa Òg, Teàrlach Eideard Stiùbhart.

Chunnaic Màiri an stòl ann an taigh a caraaid, Alasdair MacIlleMhìcheil, ann an Dùn Èideann. Bha e uaireigin ann am bothan-àirigh – saoilidh mi ann an Uibhist. An dèidh Blàr Chùil Lodair, thàinig coigreach a-steach don bhothan far an robh trìuir chloinn-nighean. Shuidh e sìos air an stòl. Ghabh e deoch bainne. Cha robh fios aig a' chloinn-nighean cò bha ann gu an dèidh làimhe.

Nuair a fhuair iad a-mach gur e am Prionnsa a bha ann, bha iad a' sabaid mu cò ghleidheadh an 'rìgh-chathair'. Chaill tè de na nigheanan fiacail. Leig an dithis eile leis an nighinn sin an stòl a chumail. Chaidh a ghleidheadh anns an teaghlach aice. Thug cuideigin ann an sliochd na h-ìghne gu Alasdair MacIlleMhìcheil e. Tha an stòl an-diugh ann an Taigh-tasgaidh Taobh an Iar na Gàidhealtachd anns a' Ghearasdan. Bhiodh Màiri NicEalair toilichte gu bheil e a-nise anns a' bhaile anns an do rugadh i.