

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 1,094 (which corresponds to Litir 1,398). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

<p>Cha tàinig tràigh gun mhuir-làn na dèidh 'there was never an ebb that wasn't followed by a high tide'. Cha tàinig tràigh gun mhuir-làn na dèidh. This proverb appears in the song 'Mo Rùn Geal Dileas'. It's a love song. Some people still sing it. Here is the chorus:</p> <p><i>My faithful, faithful, faithful fair one My faithful fair one, won't you return over here? I myself won't return to you, my love, I cannot, For, my love, I am lying ill.</i></p> <p>The author fell deeply in love with the subject of his poem. But matters were not going well and that left him suffering depression. Here is the fifth verse:</p> <p><i>I spent a month exhausted in fever. Without expecting on one night that I would survive: The object of my thoughts day and night Were that I would be relieved if you were with me.</i></p> <p>Where was the author from? That is not clear from the song. But he wasn't living on Islay as that was where his beloved was living. Here's how that information appears in the song:</p>	<p>Cha tàinig tràigh gun mhuir-làn na dèidh 'there was never an ebb that wasn't followed by a high tide'. Cha tàinig tràigh gun mhuir-làn na dèidh. Tha an seanfhacal seo a' nochdadh anns an òran 'Mo Rùn Geal Dileas'. 'S e òran gaoil a tha ann. Bidh feadhainn ga sheinn fhathast. Seo an t-sèist:</p> <p><i>Mo rùn geal, dileas, dileas, dileas, Mo rùn geal dileas, nach till thu nall?</i></p> <p><i>Cha till mi fhèin riut, a ghaoil, chan fhaod mi, 'S ann tha mi, ghaoil, na mo laighe tinn.</i></p> <p>Ghabh an t-ùghdar trom-ghaol air cuspair a dhàin. Ach cha robh cùisean a' dol gu math agus dh'fhàg sin inntinn trom. Seo an còigeamh rann:</p> <p><i>Thug mi mìos ann am fiabhras claidhte, Gun dùil rium oidhche gum bithinn beò: B' e fàth mo smaointean a latha 's a dh'oidhche, Gum faighinn faothachadh 's tu bhith 'm chòir.</i></p> <p>Cò às a bha an t-ùghdar? Chan eil sin soilleir bhon òran. Ach cha robh e a' fuireach ann an Ìle, oir sin far an robh a leannan a' fuireach. Seo mar a tha am fiosrachadh sin a' nochdadh anns an òran:</p>
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It's a pity I wasn't in the form of a seagull

Swimming lightly on the crests of the waves:

*And I'd take a trip to the isle of Islay
Where is the maiden who left my
mind heavy.*

It's thought that the song was written by John Maclean. He was the tacksman at Torloisk on Mull. He met a young woman, Ishbel Campbell, from Ballinaby on Islay. He was wanting to marry her. She wasn't willing to give him an answer immediately. And he went abroad for nine months.

In the sixth verse, it appears that he has accepted they will not be marrying each other. However, we shall see in the next Litir that that is not the final word on the matter.

I'll not struggle against the tree that will not bend with me,

Though apples grew at the end of each branch;

My fond farewell to you if you have left me,

There was never an ebb that wasn't followed by a high tide.

Is truagh nach robh mi an riochd na faoilinn

A shnàmhadh aotrom air bhàrr nan tonn:

*Is bheirinn sgrìobag don eilean Ìleach
Far bheil an ribhinn dh'fhàg m' inntinn trom.*

Thathar a' smaoineachadh gun robh an t-òran air a sgrìobhadh le Iain MacIlleathain. B' esan fear-taca an Torr Loisgte ann am Muile. Thachair e ri tè òg, Iseabail Chaimbeul, à Bail' an Àbaidh ann an Ìle. Bha e ag iarraidh a pòsadh. Cha robh i deònach freagairt a thoirt dha sa mhionaid. Agus dh'fhalbh e a-null thairis airson naoi mìosan.

Anns an t-siathamh rann, tha e a' coimhead coltach gu bheil e air gabhail ris nach biodh iad a' pòsadh a chèile. Ge-tà, chì sinn anns an ath Litir nach e sin am facal mu dheireadh air a' chùis.

Cha bhi mi strì ris a' chraoibh nach lùb leam,

Ged chinneadh ùbhlan air bhàrr gach geug;

Mo shoraidh slàn leat ma rinn thu m' fhàgail,

Cha tàinig tràigh gun mhuir-làn na dèidh.