

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 1,095 (which corresponds to Litir 1,399). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

I was telling you about the song 'Mo Rùn Geal Dìleas'. It was written by John Maclean from Torloisk on Mull. He was wanting to marry Ishbel Campbell from Ballinaby on Islay. But he was refused.

John is remembered in oral tradition. Here is a weird story about him.

He was ill, and Lowland doctors were treating him. But he wasn't improving. He sent for John Beaton, the Ollamh Muileach ('learned man from Mull'). He was doctor to Maclean of Duart. He examined John, who was lying in bed. He asked the Lowland doctors to remain outside.

The thing that was making the other man ill was an abscess low down in his throat. It was impossible to reach with an instrument. How was the physician going to burst it?

He concluded that a violent movement of the muscles in the throat was the best way. It was violent laughter or vomiting that would do that. It wouldn't be a 'normal' treatment.

Here's where the story gets weird. The physician lowered his trousers – in front of the other man. He picked up a fire shovel. He emptied his bowels on to it. He put the shovel back on the fire. He

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mun òran 'Mo Rùn Geal Dìleas'. Bha e air a sgrìobhadh le Iain MacIlleathain às an Torr Loisgte ann am Muile. Bha e ag iarraidh Iseabail Chaimbeul, à Bail' an Àbaidh ann an Ìle, a phòsadh. Ach chaidh a dhiùltadh.

Tha Iain air a chuimhneachadh ann am beul-aithris. Seo agaibh sgeul neònach mu dheidhinn.

Bha e tinn, agus bha dotairean Gallta a' frithealadh dha. Ach cha robh e a' dol am feabhas. Chuir e fios air Iain Peutan, an t-Ollamh Muileach. Bha esan na dhotair aig MacIlleathain Dhubhaird. Thug e sùil air Iain, a bha na laighe san leabaidh. Dh'iarr e air na dotairean Gallta fuireach a-muigh.

'S e an rud a bha a' dèanamh an fhir eile tinn – lionnach no neasgaid [*an abscess*] fada shìos san amhaich aige. Bha e do-dhèante a ruigsinn le inneal. Ciamar a bha an lighiche a' dol ga bhriseadh?

Cho-dhùin e gur e gluasad bras de na fèithean san amhaich an dòigh a b' fheàrr. 'S e lachanaich no dìobhairt a dhèanadh sin. Chan e leigheas 'àbhaisteach' a bhiodh ann.

Seo far am bi an sgeul a' fàs neònach. Dh'ìslich an lighiche a bhriogais – air beulaibh an fhir eile. Thog e sluasaid-teine. Dh'fhalmaich e innidh ann. Chuir e an t-sluasaid air ais air an teine. Ròst e am

roasted the faeces. When it was dry, he made a powder of it.

The physician wrapped the powder in paper, and he put it on a table. Then he asked the Lowland doctors to return.

They examined the package. 'What is this medicine?' they asked. It had a strange smell. One of them wetted his finger in his mouth. He put it into the powder and then back into his mouth to get a taste of the stuff. Well, the Laird of Torloisk could no longer contain himself! He started to laugh uproariously.

That burst the abscess. John started to get better immediately. Shortly after that, when he was fit and healthy, John Maclean wrote the song 'Mo Rùn Geal Dileas'.

buachar. Nuair a bha e tioram, rinn e pùdar dheth.

Phasgaich an lighiche am pùdar ann am pàipear agus chuir e air bòrd e. Dh'iarr e an uair sin air na dotairean Gallta tilleadh a-steach.

Thug iad sùil air a' phasgan. 'Dè an stuth-leighidh a tha seo?' dh'fhaighnich iad. Bha fàileadh neònach air. Fhliuch fear dhiubh a chorrach na bheul. Chuir e a-steach don phùdar i, agus an uair sin air ais na bheul airson blasad fhaighinn dhen stuth. Uill, cha robh comas aig Fear an Torr Loisgte smachd a chumail air fhèin tuilleadh. Thòisich e air lachanaich.

Bhris sin an lionnach. Thòisich Iain air a dhol am feabhas sa mhionaid. Goirid an dèidh sin, agus e slàn, fallain, sgrìobh Iain MacIllEathain an t-òran 'Mo Rùn Geal Dileas'.