

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 1,096 (which corresponds to Litir 1,400). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

I was telling you about the Ollamh Muileach. There were four people of that name. The last one, and the most famous of them, was Doctor John. He was alive in the 17th century. Tales and anecdotes are still told about the man, and about his abilities as a physician.

A particular man was suffering from sore eyes. He went to seek advice from the Ollamh Muileach.

'I wouldn't be upset about your eyes,' said the doctor. 'But ... your knees ... oh dear.'

'What's wrong with my knees?' asked the other.

'It won't be long before horns are growing on them,' replied the Ollamh Muileach.

'Horns?' said the other. 'Good gracious!'

'There's only one treatment,' said the doctor. 'Keep your hands on your knees for three weeks, day and night.'

The other man accepted his advice. After three weeks, he returned. There were no horns on his knees. 'And how are your eyes?' asked the doctor.

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mun lighiche ainmeil 'An t-Ollamh Muileach'. Bha ceathrar ann, air an robh an t-ainm sin. B' e am fear mu dheireadh agus am fear a b' ainmeile aca – an Dotair Iain. Bha e beò anns an t-seachdamh linn deug. Thathar ag innse sgeulachdan is naidheachdan fhathast mun duine, agus mu na comasan aige mar lighiche.

Bha fear a bha seo a' fulang sùilean goirte. Chaidh e a shireadh comhairle aig an Ollamh Mhuileach.

'Cha ghabhainn dragh mu do shùilean,' thuirt an dotair. 'Ach ... do ghlùinean ... obh obh.'

'Dè tha ceàrr air mo ghlùinean?' dh'fhaighnich am fear eile.

'Chan fhada gum bi adharcan à' fàs orra,' fhreagair an t-Ollamh Muileach.

'Adharcan?!' ars am fear eile. 'Mo chreach!'

'Chan eil ann ach aon leigheas,' thuirt an dotair. 'Cùm do làmhan air do ghlùinean airson trì seachdainean, a latha 's a dh'oidhche.'

Ghabh am fear eile ri a chomhairle. An dèidh trì seachdainean, thill e. Cha robh adharcan air a ghlùinean. 'Agus ciamar a tha do shùilean?' dh'fhaighnich an dotair.

'Fine enough,' replied the other man.

'That's good,' said the Ollamh Muileach. 'Go home. Don't worry about the horns. And don't rub your eyes with your hands again!'

There is another tale called 'The Frog and the Nettle'. The Ollamh Muileach had one daughter. She became ill. Nobody could do anything for her, and she died.

Her father dissected her body. He found a living frog in her intestine. He was sure that it was the frog that caused her death. But he kept the frog alive. He gave it the same food that his own family were taking each day.

One day, he was away from the house. The others had thick nettle soup for dinner. The frog ate its fill of it. And, shortly after that, it died.

The Ollamh Muileach was of the opinion that if he had given nettle soup to his daughter, that the frog would have died and she would be alive. He recommended nettle soup as food for the Gaels in Spring. And we still take it.

'Math gu leòr,' fhreagair am fear eile.

'Is math sin,' ars an t-Ollamh Muileach. 'Thalla dhachaigh. Na gabh dragh mu na h-adharcan. Agus na suath do shùilean le do làmhan a-rithist!'

Tha sgeul eile ann air a bheil 'An Losgann agus an Deanntag'. Bha aon nighean aig an Ollamh Mhuileach. Dh'fhàs i tinn. Cha robh comas aig duine càil a dhèanamh dhi, agus chaochail i.

Rinn a h-athair corp-sgianadaireachd air a bodhaig. Lorg e losgann beò anns a' chaolan aice. Bha e deimhinne gur e an losgann a dh'adhbharaich a bàs. Ach chùm e an losgann beò. Thug e an aon bhiadh dha 's a bha a theaghlach fhèin a' gabhail gach latha.

Latha a bha seo, bha e air falbh bhon taigh. Bha càl-deanntaig aig càch airson dinnear. Ghabh an losgann a leòr dheth. Agus, goirid an dèidh sin, bhàsaich e.

Bha an t-Ollamh Muileach dhen bheachd nam biodh e air càl-deanntaig a thoirt do a nighinn, gum biodh an losgann air bàs fhaighinn, agus gum biodh ise beò. Mhol e càl-deanntaig mar bhiadh do na Gàidheil as t-Earrach. Agus bidh sinn ga ghabhail fhathast.