

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 1,110 (which corresponds to Litir 1,414). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

<i>Ninety years ago, there was a strike. I mean by 'strike' that workers were refusing to work. They were women and there were many Gaelic-speakers among them. They were the herring girls.</i> <i>Those women were travelling around the coast of Britain. They were following the herring fishers. And the fishers were following the herring shoals. The women were involved in gutting. It was hard, disagreeable work.</i> <i>The herring were plentiful at the end of spring and the beginning of summer in the Minch. Through the summer they would move south, to places like Mallaig, the Isle of Man and the north of Ireland. In the autumn, the shoals would be plentiful in the North Sea, off the east coast of England. The girls would then go to maritime ports like Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft.</i> <i>Their life was hard. They worked long days. They had accommodation that was pitiful. Their wages were very poor. Many people reckoned that there was only one way to improve matters. That was by going on strike.</i>	O chionn naochad bliadhna bha stailc ann. Tha mi a' ciallachadh le 'stailc' gun robh luchd-obrach a' diùltadh a bhith ag obair. 'S e boireannaich a bha annta agus bha an t-uabhas de luchd na Gàidhlig nam measg. B' iad sin clann-nighean an sgadain. Bha na boireannaich sin a' siubhal timcheall costa Bhreatainn. Bha iad a' leantainn iasgairean an sgadain. Agus bha na h-iasgairean a' leantainn nan sgaothan sgadain. 'S ann ri cutadh a bha na boireannaich. 'S e obair chruaidh, neo-thlachdmhor a bha ann. Bha na sgadain pailt aig deireadh an earraich agus toiseach an t-samhraidh anns a' Chuan Sgìth. Tron t-samhradh, bhiodh iad a' falbh gu deas, gu àiteachan mar Mhalaig, Eilean Mhanainn agus ceann a tuath na h-Èireann. As t-fhoghar, bhiodh na sgaothan sgadain pailt anns a' Chuan a Tuath, far chosta sear Shasainn. Bhiodh a' chlann-nighean an uair sin a' dol gu puirt-mhara mar Great Yarmouth agus Lowestoft. Bha am beatha doirbh. Bha làithean fada aca. Bha àiteachan fuirich aca a bha grot. Bha an tuarastal gu math truagh. Bha gu leòr dhen bheachd nach robh ann ach aon dòigh airson gnothaichean a thoirt am feabhas. B' e sin le bhith a' dol air stailc.
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<i>In 1936 there was a big strike in Great Yarmouth and other towns in East Anglia. The situation of the herring girls came to the attention of the people of Britain. On the 25th of October, the Daily Express carried a headline – ‘3000 Scots Fisher-girls on Strike’.</i> <i>The herring girls were refusing to do any work until they had a rise in their income from ten pence a barrel to a shilling (that’s twelve pence) a barrel. Five years previously they were receiving a shilling, but their wages had decreased with the retraction of the economy.</i> <i>In Yarmouth, the herring girls stopped six people who were breaking the strike. The police came on horseback and scattered the women. But the government and companies relented. Some of the Gaelic-speaking herring girls got the good news of a wage rise from a minister in the pulpit – in Gaelic.</i>	Ann an naoi ceud deug, trithead ’s a sia (1936) bha stailc mhòr ann an <i>Great Yarmouth</i>, agus bailtean eile ann an <i>East Anglia</i>. Thàinig suidheachadh chlann-nighean an sgadain gu aire mòr-shluagh Bhreatainn. Air a’ chòigeamh latha air fhichead dhen Dàmhair, bha ceann-naidheachd aig an <i>Daily Express</i> – ‘3000 Scots Fisher-girls on Strike’. Bha a’ chlann-nighean a’ diùltadh obair sam bith a dhèanamh gus am biodh àrdachadh anns an tuarastal aca bho deich sgillinn gach baraille gu tastan (sin dusan sgillinn) gach baraille. Còig bliadhna roimhe bha iad a’ faighinn tastan, ach bha an tuarastal air a dhol sìos le crìonadh na h-eaconomaidh. Ann an Yarmouth, chuir a’ chlann-nighean stad air sianar a bha a’ briseadh na stailce. Thàinig na poilis air muin-eich agus sgaoil iad na boireannaich. Ach ghèill an riaghaltas agus na companaidhean. Fhuair cuid dhen chloinn-nighean Ghàidhealach an deagh naidheachd mun àrdachadh tuarastail bho mhinistear anns a’ chùbaid – ann an Gàidhlig.
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