

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 217 (which corresponds to Litir 521). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleane@bbc.co.uk.

I'd like to tell you a story. A story with the name of Black-haired John of Lewis, the Sailor.

Black-haired John was the son of a fisherman. He lived with his uncle. That was near Stornoway in Lewis. This particular evening, John saw a beautiful ship. She was sailing into the harbour. John was greatly interested in boats. He went out to the ship. He went on board.

The captain asked if John would like to be a sailor. John replied that he would.

"Go home," said the captain. "Get permission to sail with me."

John returned the next day. He told the captain that he got permission from his uncle. "And did he say anything about an engagement?" said the captain. "Oh, yes," replied Black-haired John. "I'll be on board for five years. I'll learn seamanship."

"And what did he say about wages?" the captain asked.

"He said that I'll get a halfpenny at the end of the first month. I'll get two halfpennies at the end of the second month. And it will double like that every month to the

Bu mhath leam stòiridh innse dhuibh. Stòiridh leis an ainm Iain Dubh Leòdhasach, an Seòladair.

B' e mac iasgair a bh' ann an Iain Dubh. Bha e a' fuireach còmhla ri uncail. Bha sin faisg air Steòrnabhagh ann an Leòdhas. Feasgar a bha seo, chunnaic Iain long bhrèagha. Bha i a' seòladh a-staigh don chala. Bha ùidh mhòr aig Iain ann am bàtaichean. Chaidh e a-mach don luing. Chaidh e air bòrd.

Dh'fhaighnich an sgiobair am bu toigh le Iain a bhith na sheòladair. Fhreagair Iain gum bu toil.

"Thalla dhachaigh," ars' an sgiobair. "Faigh cead airson seòladh leam."

Thill Iain an ath latha. Dh'innis e don sgiobair gun d' fhuair e cead o uncail. "Agus an tuir e dad mu mhuinntireas?" ars' an sgiobair. "O, thubhairt," fhreagair Iain Dubh. "Bidh mi air bòrd fad còig bliadhna. Bidh mi ag ionnsachadh seòladaireachd."

"Agus dè thuir e mu thuarastal?" dh'fhaighnich an sgiobair.

"Thuir gum faigh mi bonn-a-sia aig ceann a' chiad mhìos. Bidh mi a' faighinn dà bhonn-a-sia aig ceann an dara mìos. Agus bidh e a' dùblachadh

end of the five years.”

The captain smiled. Without thinking, he said, “You’ll get that, lad.” Next day, the ship sailed away with John on board. She went to foreign countries. At the end of four years she returned to England. She reached her own port.

The folk who owned the ship came on board. One of them asked where they got the young sailor. “On the Isle of Lewis,” the captain replied.

“Are you giving him good wages?” said the first man. “Because he’s a good sailor.”

“Well,” said the captain, “I haven’t given him any wages yet.” The captain explained the bargain. “He himself asked for a halfpenny at the end of the first month,” he said, “and two halfpennies at the end of the second month, doubling like that every month.”

“What did you do?!” said the man who owned the ship. “You promised the lad more than the ship is worth!”

The captain saw that was true. What was going to happen to Black John? The story continues next week.

mar sin gach mìos gu deireadh nan còig bliadhna.”

Rinn an sgiobair gàire. Gun smaoineachadh, thuir e, “Gheibh thu sin, a laochain.” Air an ath latha, sheòl an long air falbh, le Iain air bòrd. Chaidh i do dhùthchannan cèin. Aig ceann ceithir bliadhna thill i a Shasainn. Ràinig i am port aice fhèin.

Thàinig an fheadhainn leis an robh an long air bòrd. Dh’fhaighnich fear dhiubh cà’ d’ fhuair iad an seòladair òg. “Fhuair ann an Eilean Leòdhais,” fhreagair an sgiobair.

“A bheil thu a’ toirt tuarastal math dha?” thuir a’ chiad fhear. “Oir ’s e seòladair math a tha ann.”

“Uill,” ars’ an sgiobair, “cha tug mi tuarastal sam bith dha fhathast.” Mhìnich an sgiobair am bargan. “Dh’iarr e fhèin bonn-a-sia aig ceann a’ chiad mhìos,” thuir e, “agus dà bhonn-a-sia aig ceann an dara mìos, a’ dùblachadh mar sin gach mìos.”

“Dè rinn thu?!” thuir am fear leis an robh an long. “Gheall thu don ghille tuilleadh nas fhiach an long fhèin!”

Chunnaic an sgiobair gun robh sin fìor. Dè bha a’ dol a thachairt do dh’Iain Dubh? Tha an stòiridh a’ leantainn an ath-sheachdain.