

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 240 (which corresponds to Litir 544). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was in Sutherland recently. I was in Bun Ilidh. That's the Gaelic for Helmsdale. I heard about a tree in the area. The name it has, or had, is The Làmh Tree. You'll know the Gaelic word làmh. The Làmh Tree – Craobh na Làimhe. It's interesting that it's The Làmh Tree that people say in English, rather than The Hand Tree.

The tree was growing south of Helmsdale. It was next to a burn near [West] Garty Lodge. There was a bridge across the burn near the tree. But how did the tree get its name? Well, I'll tell you.

Many years ago there was a lad working at the lodge. He was a conbhair. That means dog-handler. Conbhair. There was no harm in the lad. But he was a hunchback. And the young female servants were scared of him.

There was a young milking maid working at the lodge. Her name was Annabel. She was living close to the lodge. Every night she was going home over the bridge.

One night there was terrible weather. The burn was in spate. The

Bha mi ann an Cataibh o chionn ghoirid. Bha mi ann am Bun Ilidh. 'S e sin a' Ghàidhlig air Helmsdale. Chuala mi mu dheidhinn craobh anns an sgìre. 'S e an t-ainm a tha oirre, no a bha oirre, The Làmh Tree. Bidh sibh eòlach air an fhacal Ghàidhlig làmh. The Làmh Tree – Craobh na Làimhe. Tha e inntinneach gur e The Làmh Tree a chanas daoine ann am Beurla, seach The Hand Tree.

Bha a' chraobh a' fàs gu deas air Bun Ilidh. Bha i ri taobh allt faisg air Loids Ghartaidh. Bha drochaid tarsainn an uillt faisg air a' chraoibh. Ach ciamar a fhuair a' chraobh a h-ainm? Uill, innsidh mi dhuibh.

Iomadh bliadhna air ais bha gille ag obair anns an loids. 'S e conbhair a bha ann. Tha sin a' ciallachadh dog-handler. Conbhair. Cha robh olc sam bith sa ghille. Ach bha e crotach. Agus bha eagal air na bana-shearbhantan òga roimhe.

Bha banarach òg ag obair ann. 'S e Annabel an t-ainm a bha oirre. Bha i a' fuireach faisg air an loids. Gach oidhche bha i a' dol dhachaigh tarsainn na drochaid.

Oidhche a bha seo bha droch shìde ann. Bha tuil anns an allt.

bridge left [was washed away] with the flood. The dog-boy knew what [had] happened. He waited at the burn to tell Annabel there was no bridge there. He leaned against a tree to get shelter.

When Annabel reached the place, the dog-boy put his hand out. He was wanting to stop Annabel. She thought he was attacking her. She ran away towards the bridge. She fell into the burn. She was drowned.

The next day the boy was dead at the base of the tree. There was a hand-print burned onto the tree. After that, nobody was willing to go near the tree.

And is it still there – The Làmh Tree? Unfortunately not. It fell in a storm many years ago. What a shame [great is the pity].

Dh'fhalbh an drochaid leis an tuil. Bha fios aig a' chonbhair air na thachair. Dh'fhuirich e aig an allt airson innse do dh'Annabel nach robh an drochaid ann. Chaidh e an taic craobh airson fasgadh fhaighinn.

Nuair a ràinig Annabel an t-àite, chuir an conbhair a làmh a-mach. Bha e ag iarraidh stad a chur air Annabel. Bha ise a' smaoinichadh gun robh an gille a' toirt ionnsaigh oirre. Ruith i air falbh a dh'ionnsaigh na drochaid. Thuit i don allt. Chaidh a bàthadh.

Air an làrna-mhàireach bha an gille marbh aig bonn na craoibhe. Bha lorg làimhe loisgte air a' chraoibh. Às dèidh sin, cha robh duine deònach a dhol faisg air a' chraoibh.

Agus a bheil i fhathast ann – Craobh na Làimhe? Gu mì-fhortanach, chan eil. Thuit i ann an stoirm mòran bhliadhnaichean air ais. Is mòr am beud.