

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 268 (which corresponds to Litir 572). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

Rev Alexander Pope was a minister in Reay (parish) in the eighteenth century. Reay is in Caithness. Mr Pope spoke Gaelic. It was a Gaelic congregation he had.

He was a strong man. He had a stick. He was using the stick on the people of the congregation. That was to "encourage" them to go to church.

Here is a story about him. I can't say if it's true or not. There was a man called Donald. He was refusing to go to church. Mr Pope went to visit Donald.

He reached Donald's house late in the afternoon. Donald didn't know who he was. He got food and a bed in Donald's house, although he was a stranger. That was the custom at the time.

The two men spent the evening together. They were in fine fettle. They had plenty of chat. The time came to go to bed. Mr Pope said, "You must say a prayer, Donald."

"I won't do that," replied Donald.

"You must," said Mr Pope.

Bha An t-Urramach Alexander Pope na mhinistear ann am Meagrath anns an ochdamh linn deug. Tha Meagrath ann an Gallaibh. Bha Gàidhlig aig Mgr Pope. 'S e coitheanal Gàidhlig a bha aige.

'S e duine làidir a bha ann. Bha bata aige. Bha e a' cleachdadh a' bhata air muinntir a' choitheanail. Bha sin airson am "brosnachadh" a dhol don eaglais.

Seo stòiridh mu dheidhinn. Chan urrainn dhomh a ràdh co-dhiù tha e fìor gus nach eil. Bha fear ann air an robh Dòmhnall mar ainm. Bha e a' diùltadh a dhol don eaglais. Chaidh Mgr Pope a chèilidh air Dòmhnall.

Ràinig e taigh Dhòmhnail annoch feasgar. Cha robh fios aig Dòmhnall cò bha ann. Fhuair e biadh is leabaidh ann an taigh Dhòmhnail, ged as e srainnsear a bha ann. B' e sin an cleachdadh aig an àm sin.

Chuir an dithis am feasgar seachad còmhla. Bha iad ann an deagh shunnd. Bha seachas gu leòr aca. Thàinig an t-àm airson a dhol a laighe. Thuirt Mgr Pope, "Feumaidh tu ùrnaigh a ghabhail, a Dhòmhnail."

"Cha dèan mi sin," fhreagair Dòmhnall.

“I’ll force you to, and on your knees.”

“Huh,” said Donald. “Not even Mr Pope, the minister, could make me say a prayer.”

“I’m Mr Pope,” said the minister, “You’re a sinner. I’m ordering you to go on your knees.”

Donald was angry. He stood up to the minister. The two men fought. It’s Mr Pope that won. Donald yielded to him. He said a prayer.

A change came over Donald that night. He started to go to church. After a while he became an elder. He had great respect for the minister. And the minister had great respect for him.

“Feumaidh tu,” thuir Mgr Pope. “Bheir mi ort a dhèanamh, agus air do ghlùinean.”

“Huh,” arsa Dòmhnall. “Cha b’ urrainn do eadhon Mgr Pope, am ministear, toirt orm ùrnaigh a ghabhail.”

“Is mise Mgr Pope,” thuir am ministear. “’S e peacach a tha annad. Tha mi a’ toirt òrdugh dhut dhol air do ghlùinean.”

Bha Dòmhnall feargach. Sheas e an aghaidh a’ mhinisteir. Rinn an dithis sabaid. ’S e Mgr Pope a thug buaidh. Ghèill Dòmhnall dha. Ghabh e ùrnaigh.

Thàinig atharrachadh air Dòmhnall air an oidhche sin. Thòisich e air a dhol don eaglais. An ceann greis bha e na èildear. Bha spèis mhòr aige don mhinistear. Agus bha spèis mhòr aig a’ mhinistear dhasan.