

## 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 285 (which corresponds to Litir 589). Ruairidh can be contacted at [roddy.macleane@bbc.co.uk](mailto:roddy.macleane@bbc.co.uk).

*I was telling you about the Bratach Shìth – or Fairy Flag. It's in Dunvegan Castle on Skye. People were saying – when it's raised at a time of conflict, that a fairy host will come. The fairies will give help to the people who have the flag.*

*But there's a condition. It's going to happen three times. After that, the flag will not work again. Or, worse than that, there will be a disaster. The famous seer, the Brahan Seer, said that four things were going to happen. The fourth Norman (the clan chief) would die in an accident; a Campbell would gain ownership of the stacks called "MacLeod's Maidens"; a fox would give birth to a litter in Dunvegan Castle; and the Fairy Flag would be unfurled for the third time. When all of that had happened, the MacLeods' glory would disappear.*

*But how many times was the flag raised? Some say just twice. Perhaps at the Battle of Bloody Bay in Mull around 1480. Or perhaps on Skye itself. For example, there was a battle in Trumpan. A force of MacDonalds of Clanranald from Uist set fire to a church. There was*

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mun Bhrataich Shìth – no Fairy Flag. Tha i ann an Caisteal Dhùn Bheagain anns an Eilean Sgitheanach. Bha daoine ag ràdh – nuair a tha i air a togail aig àm spàirne, gun tig feachd shìthichean. Bidh na sìthichean a' toirt taic do na daoine aig a bheil a' bhratach.

Ach tha cùmhnant ann. Tha e a' dol a thachairt trì tursan. Às dèidh sin, cha bhi a' bhratach ag obair a-rithist. No, nas miosa na sin, bidh sgrios ann. Thuirt am fiosaiche ainmeil, Coinneach Odhar, gun robh ceithir rudan a' dol a thachairt. Bhiodh an ceathramh Tormod (an ceann-cinnidh) a' faighinn bàs ann an tubaist; bhiodh Caimbeulach a' faighinn sealbh air na stacan air a bheil "Maighdeannan MhicLeòid"; bhiodh àl aig sionnach ann an Caisteal Dhùn Bheagain; agus bhiodh a' Bhratach Shìth a-mach airson an treas turais. Nuair a bha a h-uile càil sin ann, bhiodh glòir nan Leòdach a' falbh.

Ach cia mheud turas a thogadh a' bhratach? Tha cuid ag ràdh dìreach dà thuras. 'S dòcha aig Blàr Bàgh na Fala ann am Muile timcheall ceithir cheud deug is ochdad (1480). No 's dòcha anns an Eilean Sgitheanach fhèin. Mar eisimpleir, bha cath anns an Trùmpan. Chuir feachd de Dhòmhnallaich Chlann

*a MacLeod congregation inside. But a force of MacLeods came from Dunvegan. They took with them the Fairy Flag. The flag was raised. They defeated the MacDonalds.*

*It is reported that the Fairy Flag was taken out in secret for a third time. That was in 1799. Shortly after that, the fourth Norman died at sea. A Campbell bought MacLeod's Maidens. A fox had a litter in Dunvegan Castle. And much of the power and glory of the MacLeods disappeared. Just as the Brahan Seer had said.*

*But Coinneach said one other thing – that [the] glory would return to the MacLeods. That would be when they had a new clan chief called Iain Breac (pock-marked John). Perhaps the MacLeods are still waiting for him.*

Raghnaill à Uibhist teine ri eaglais. Bha coitheanal Leòdach anns an eaglais. Ach thàinig feachd Leòdach à Dùn Bheagain. Thug iad leotha a' Bhratach Shìth. Thogadh a' bhratach. Rinn iad a' chùis air na Dòmhnallaich.

Tha aithris ann gun deach a' Bhratach Shìth a thoirt a-mach ann an dìomhaireachd airson treas turais. Bha sin ann an seachd ceud deug, naochad 's a naoi (1799). Goirid às dèidh sin, fhuair an ceathramh Tormod bàs aig muir. Cheannaich Caimbeulach Maighdeannan MhicLeòid. Rugadh àl do shionnach ann an Caisteal Dhùn Bheagain. Agus dh'fhalbh mòran dhen chumhachd is glòir a bh' aig Clann 'ic Leòid. Dìreach mar a thuir Coinneach Odhar.

Ach thuir Coinneach aon rud eile – gun tilleadh an glòir do na Leòdaich. Bhiodh sin nuair a bhiodh ceann-cinnidh ùr aca air an robh Iain Breac. 'S dòcha gu bheil na Leòdaich a' feitheamh ris fhathast.