

**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 292 (which corresponds to Litir 596). Ruairidh can be contacted at [roddy.macleam@bbc.co.uk](mailto:roddy.macleam@bbc.co.uk).

*Have you ever heard of faire chlaidh? Graveyard watch. Faire chlaidh. People were believing that the spirit of a person who had been buried was keeping watch over the dead. He was doing that until another man was buried. People were wanting that that man's spirit would not be keeping vigil too long. Sometimes that caused discord and fighting.*

*John MacDonald, the Lochaber Bard, told Calum Maclean an anecdote about it. A particular minister was taking a stroll. He was near a ford on the bank of the Spean River. Two groups of people came. They were going to the cemetery on the far side of the river. Each group had a coffin. There was an argument. They started to fight. The group that won got the opportunity to go to the graveyard first. The spirit of their man was not having to wait long until the next dead person came.*

*Another type of watching also took place in the graveyards. There was a gravestone in Kilmonivaig Cemetery near Spean Bridge. There was a hole in the stone. The hole was made by a bullet.*

*Some people were stealing*

*An cuala sibh riamh mu faire chlaidh? Graveyard watch. Faire chlaidh. Bha daoine a' creidsinn gun robh an spiorad aig duine a bha air a thiodhlacadh a' cumail faire air na mairbh. Bha e a' dèanamh sin gus an robh duine eile air a thiodhlacadh. Bha daoine ag iarraidh nach robh aig spiorad an duine sin a bhith a' cumail faire ro fhada. Uaireannan dh'adhbh-araich sin strì is sabaid.*

*Dh'inns Iain Dòmhnallach, Bàrd Loch Abar, do Chalum Mac-Ghilleathain naidheachd mu dheidhinn. Bha ministear a bha seo a' gabhail cuairt. Bha e faisg air àth air bruach Abhainn Spiothain. Thàinig dà bhuidhinn de dhaoine. Bha iad a' dol don chladh air taobh thall na h-aibhne. Bha ciste-laighe aig gach buidhinn. Bha argamaid ann. Thòisich iad air sabaid. Fhuair a' bhuidheann a bhuannaich an cothrom a dhol don chladh an toiseach. Cha robh aig spiorad an duine aca ri feitheamh fada mus tigeadh an ath dhuine marbh.*

*Bha faire de sheòrsa eile a' dol anns na cladhan cuideachd. Bha clach-uaighe ann an Cladh Chill Mo Naomhaig faisg air Drochaid an Aonachain. Bha toll anns a' chloich. Chaidh an toll a dhèanamh le peilear.*

*bodies from graveyards – people like Burke and Hare. A man from Lochaber was a student in Edinburgh. He was doing medicine. A body came to the laboratory. It was a woman. She had good teeth. The student thought that the teeth were like those of a woman from his own area. Her name was “the wife of Donald son of John”.*

*The student wrote [a letter] home. He asked if anybody had died recently. News came that “the wife of Donald son of John” [had] died.*

*Anyway, on a particular night, John MacDonald’s father was in Kilmonivag Cemetery. He was keeping watch against grave robbers. He had a gun. He became tired. He fell asleep. He suddenly woke up. He saw something. He fired the gun. But it wasn’t a robber. It was a gravestone. And the bullet made a hole in the stone.*

Bha feadhainn a’ goid chorp bho chladhan – daoine mar Burke is Hare. Bha fear à Loch Abar na oileanach ann an Dùn Èideann. Bha e a’ dèanamh dotaireachd. Thàinig corp don deuchainn-lann. ’S e boireannach a bha ann. Bha fiaclan math aice. Bha an t-oileanach dhen bheachd gun robh na fiaclan coltach ri fiaclan tè às an sgìre aige fhèin. ’S e bean Dhòmhnail ’ic Iain an t-ainm a bha oirre.

Sgrìobh an t-oileanach dhach-aigh. Dh’fhaighnich e an robh duine sam bith air bàs fhaighinn o chionn ghoirid. Thàinig fios gun do chaochail bean Dhòmhnail ’ic Iain.

Co-dhiù, oidhche a bha seo bha athair Iain Dhòmhnallaich ann an Cladh Chill Mo Naomhaig. Bha e a’ cumail faire an aghaidh mèirlich nan corp. Bha gunna aige. Dh’fhàs e sgìth. Thuit e na chadal. Dhùisg e gu h-obann. Chunnaic e rudeigin. Loisg e an gunna. Ach chan e mèirleach a bha ann. ’S e clach-uaighe a bha ann. Agus rinn am peilear toll anns a’ chloich.