

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 317 (which corresponds to Litir 621). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.macleon@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you the story The Descendants of the Speckled Horse who was Never Wise. It's from the Loch Lomond area. The story tells how the name Mac an Oighre or MacNair/Macnair came into being. Mac an Oighre means "the son of the heir".

The MacFarlanes of Arrochar had lost much of their land. MacFarlane's first son – the heir – was intending to go to Edinburgh. He was going to try to get land that had been his back from the King. But he didn't have a good horse. He was wanting a loan of a beautiful speckled horse from his half-brother.

"You won't get the horse on loan. We're afraid that we won't get it back," said the mother of his half-brother, his stepmother.

But the lad said he would bring back the horse fit and healthy. "Give me the right to your land as a guarantee," said his stepmother. "If you don't bring the horse home fit and healthy, your brother will get your land."

The lad was naïve. He accepted the deal. But his stepmother was involved in deceit. She spoke to the

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh an stòiridh *Sliochd an Eich Bhrìc Nach Robh Riamh Glic*. Tha e à sgìre Loch Laomainn. Tha an stòiridh ag innse mar a thàinig an t-ainm Mac an Oighre, no *MacNair*, gu bith. Tha Mac an Oighre a' ciallachadh "the son of the heir".

Bha Clann Phàrlain an Arair air mòran dhen fhearann aca a chall. Bha a' chiad mhac – an t-oighre – aig MacPhàrlain am beachd a dhol a Dhùn Èideann. Bha e a' dol a dh'fheuchainn ri fearann aige fhaighinn air ais bhon Rìgh. Ach cha robh each math aige. Bha e ag iarraidh each bòidheach breac fhaighinn bho a leth-bhràthair air iasad.

"Chan fhaigh thu an t-each air iasad. Tha an t-eagal oirnn nach fhaigh sinn air ais e," thuirt màthair a leth-bhràthar, a mhuime.

Ach thuirt an gille gun toireadh e an t-each air ais slàn fallain. "Thoir dhomh còir don fhearann agad mar bharantas," thuirt a mhuime. "Mura toir thu an t-each dhachaigh slàn fallain, gheibh do bhràthair am fearann agad."

Bha an gille faoin. Ghabh e ris a' bhargan. Ach bha a mhuime ri foill. Bhruidhinn i ris an t-searbhant a bha

servant who was going with the heir to Edinburgh. She gave him poison to give to the speckled horse. And she gave him a reward to poison the horse.

The heir left for Edinburgh. He was riding the speckled horse. The servant was on another horse. They stopped for the night at a hotel. The servant put the horses into the stable. He put the poison in the speckled horse's food. The next day, they found the speckled horse dead in the stable.

The two men returned home. The stepmother demanded the heir's land for her own son. The heir lost his land to his half-brother.

After that, the clansfolk had no respect for the old heir. The people would call him "The Speckled Horse". He married and had children. It's from his son that the name Mac an Oighre – or MacNair/Macnair – came. And the people would call their descendants "The Descendants of the Speckled Horse who was Never Wise".

a' dol cuide ris an oighre a Dhùn Èideann. Thug i puinnsean dha airson a thoirt don each bhreac. Agus thug i duais dha airson an t-each a phuinnseanachadh.

Dh'fhalbh an t-oighre a Dhùn Èideann. Bha e a' marcachd an eich bhric. Bha an searbhant air each eile. Stad iad airson na h-oidhche aig taigh-òsta. Chuir an searbhant na h-eich don stàball. Chuir e am puinnsean ann am biadh an eich bhric. An ath latha, lorg iad an t-each breac marbh anns an stàball.

Thill an dithis dhachaigh. Dh'iarr a' mhuime fearann an oighre airson a mic fhèin. Chaill an t-oighre am fearann aige do a leth-bhràthair.

Às dèidh sin, cha robh spèis aig muinntir na fine don t-seann oighre.

- S e "An t-Each Breac" a chanadh daoine ris. Phòs e agus bha clann aige.
- S ann bho a mhac-san a thàinig an t-ainm Mac an Oighre – no *MacNair*. Agus ris an t-sliochd aca, chanadh na daoine "Sliochd an Eich Bhric Nach Robh Riamh Glic".