

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 337 (which corresponds to Litir 641). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.macleon@bbc.co.uk.

Do you know the word amhaisg – A-M-H-A-I-S-G? It means a wee guy of evil intent. Sometimes it appears in English as awisk – A-W-I-S-K. Anyway, here is a really old story from the heritage of the Gaels – The Awisks.

There were three soldiers who [had] fled from the army. They were walking for two days. They were hungry. They sat down beside a hill. They saw a large red dog.

One of them arose. He followed the dog. He hadn't gone [didn't go] far when he saw a castle. He saw a handsome woman at a window. The woman called to him to go to a back door. He did that and he went in. The woman took him to a beautiful room.

Food was set in front of him. There was a big half-cheese [amongst the food]. It was getting dark. A light was lit. When the soldier sat to take food, the woman picked up the light. She left with it and she left the soldier in darkness. He remembered his hungry friends. He placed the half-cheese in his bag.

After a while, the woman

A bheil sibh eòlach air an fhacal amhaisg – A-M-H-A-I-S-G? Tha e a' ciallachadh duine beag aig a bheil droch rùn. Uaireannan bidh e a' nochdadh ann am Beurla mar awisk – A-W-I-S-K. Co-dhiù, seo agaibh fìor sheann stòiridh à dualchas nan Gàidheal – *Na h-Amhaisgean*.

Bha trì saighdearan ann a theich bhon arm. Bha iad a' coiseachd airson dà latha. Bha an t-acras orra. Shuidh iad ri taobh cnoc. Chunnaic iad cù mòr ruadh.

Dh'èirich fear dhiubh. Lean e air a' chù. Cha deach e astar mòr nuair chunnaic e caisteal. Chunnaic e boireannach dreachmhor aig uinneag. Ghlaodh am boireannach ris a dhol gu doras cùil. Rinn e sin agus chaidh e a-steach. Thug am boireannach do sheòmar brèagha e.

Chaidh biadh a chur air a bheulaibh. Bha leth de mhulachag càise ann. Bha e a' fàs dorch. Chaidh solas a lasadh. Nuair a shuidh an saighdear airson biadh a ghabhail, thog am boireannach an solas. Dh'fhalbh i leis agus dh'fhàg i an saighdear ann an dorchadas. Chuimhnich esan air na caraidean acrach aige. Chuir e an leth-mhulachaig na mhàileid.

An ceann greis, thill am

returned with the light. "It was strange that you took the light away," said the soldier to her.

"Strange is the man who can't put food in his mouth without a light," she replied. She looked up and down for the cheese. Eventually, she found it in his bag. She was displeased. She asked for the soldier to be thrown amongst the big dogs.

Next day, the other two soldiers saw the red dog again. One of them followed it. He went to the castle. He saw the attractive woman. The woman called to him to go to a back door. He did that and he went in. The woman took him to a beautiful room. Food was placed in front of him. Amongst the food was a quarter of mutton.

When the soldier sat to take his food, the woman took the light away. The soldier remembered his companion. He put the quarter of mutton in his bag. And the story will continue next week.

boireannach leis an t-solas. "Bha e neònach gun tug thu an solas air falbh," thuirt an saighdear rithe.

"Tha an duine neònach nach urrainn biadh a chur na bheul gun solas," fhreagair i. Dh'iarr i a' mhulachag suas is sìos. Mu dheireadh, lorg i na mhàileid i. Bha i mì-thoilichte. Dh'iarr i gum biodh an saighdear air a thilgeil am measg nan con mòra.

Air an làrna-mhàireach, chunnaic an dithis shaighdearan eile an cù ruadh a-rithist. Lean fear dhiubh air. Chaidh e don chaisteal. Chunnaic e am boireannach dreachmhor. Ghlaodh am boireannach ris a dhol gu doras cùil. Rinn e sin agus chaidh e a-steach. Thug am boireannach do sheòmar brèagha e. Chaidh biadh a chur air a bheulaibh. Am measg a' bhìdh bha ceathramh muilt.

Nuair a shuidh an saighdear a ghabhail a' bhìdh, thug am boireannach an solas air falbh. Chuimhnich an saighdear air a' chompanach. Chuir e an ceathramh muilt na mhàileid. Agus leanaidh an stòiridh an-ath-sheachdain.