

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 432 (which corresponds to Litir 736). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you about the channel my son swam between Flodigarry and Eilean Flodigarry. It was difficult enough in daylight. But how would it be at night?

According to oral tradition, in olden times, a young man would swim the channel at night. That was to see his sweetheart. Here is the story.

Iain Ruadh was living on the island. He was a widow. His daughter Mary lived with him.

Mary had taken a fancy to a young man in Flodigarry. His name was Allan. Iain stopped Mary from seeing Allan.

At that time, a water-bull was visiting Flodigarry every night. It was damaging the crops. The people were afraid of it.

Anyway, Allan was swimming to the island each night. Mary was meeting him secretly on the shore.

One particular night, she was on the shore waiting. Allan came to land in a terrible state. He was exhausted. He told Mary that he heard a big noise when he was swimming. A large beast was snorting. It frightened Allan. He

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mun chaolas a shnàmh an gille agam eadar Flòdaigearraidh agus Eilean a' Chinn Mhòir. Bha e doirbh gu leòr ann an solas an latha. Ach ciamar a bhitheadh e air an oidhche?

A rèir beul-aithris, anns an t-seann aimsir, bhiodh fear òg a' snàmh a' chaolais air an oidhche. Bha sin airson a leannan fhaicinn. Seo an stòiridh.

Bha Iain Ruadh a' fuireach anns an eilean. Bha e na bhantrach. Bha a nighean Màiri a' fuireach còmhla ris.

Bha nòisean aig Màiri do dh'fhear òg ann am Flòdaigearraidh. 'S e Ailean an t-ainm a bha air. Chuir Iain stad air Màiri bho bhith a' faicinn Ailean.

Aig an àm sin, bha tarbh-uisge a' tadhal air Flòdaigearraidh gach oidhche. Bha e a' dèanamh sgrios air a' bhàrr. Bha eagal air na daoine roimhe.

Co-dhiù, bha Ailean a' snàmh don eilean gach oidhche. Bha Màiri a' coinn-eachadh ris gu dìomhair air a' chladach.

Oidhche bha seo, bha i air a' chladach a' feitheamh. Thàinig Ailean gu tìr ann an droch staid. Bha e claoidhte. Dh'inns e do Mhàiri gun cuala e fuaim mòr nuair a bha e a' snàmh. Bha biast mhòr a' srannartaich. Chuir e eagal air Ailean. Bha e cinnteach gur e an tarbh-

was certain it was the water-bull.

Mary was frightened as well. It wasn't safe for Allan to swim to the island any more. She agreed to elope with him.

Allan returned the next night in a boat. On the way, he once more heard loud snorting. A large black head went past the boat. But it wasn't a water-bull. It was Iain Ruadh's large black bull. It was going to eat the grass in Flodigarry!

Allan chose not to tell Mary the truth. He was afraid that she wouldn't elope with him. He kept quiet. The couple went to Australia.

Years later, Mary and Allan were back on Skye. Allan told what had happened and that it was her father's black bull, rather than the water-bull, that had caused them to go away together.

uisge a bha ann.

Bha an t-eagal air Màiri cuideachd. Cha robh e sàbhailte do dh'Ailean a bhith a' snàmh don eilean tuilleadh. Dh'aontaich i teicheadh còmhla ris.

Thill Ailean an ath oidhche ann am bàta. Air an t-slighe, chuala e srannartaich mhòr a-rithist. Chaidh ceann mòr dubh seachad air a' bhàta. Ach chan e tarbh-uisge a bha ann. 'S e a bha ann an tarbh mòr dubh aig Iain Ruadh. Bha e a' dol a dh'ithe an fheadir ann am Flòdaigearraidh!

Roghnaich Ailean gun a bhith ag innse na firinn do Mhàiri. Bha an t-eagal air nach teicheadh i leis. Chùm e sàmhach. Theich an cupall gu Astràilia.

Bliadhnaichean às dèidh làimh, bha Màiri is Ailean air ais anns an Eilean Sgitheanach. Dh'inns Ailean mar a thachair, agus gur e an tarbh dubh aig a h-athair, seach an tarbh-uisge, a thug orra falbh còmhla.