

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 452 (which corresponds to Litir 756). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk.

Near Valtos, in Trotternish on the Isle of Skye, there is an old dun called the Dùn Dearg. There is a story connected to it – a story called 'The Giants of Dùn Dearg'.

Giants once lived on Dùn Dearg. They were often fighting with each other. They were pulling trees out and breaking rocks when they were fighting. They were also eating a lot – a cow, a deer and a sheep at one dinner. Or more.

They had, however, only one milking cow between them. She was called Glas Ghoillean. Perhaps that means 'the grey cow which has a large ugly face'. Anyway, she was the last of the gigantic cattle that once lived on Skye. When she lay down, the old people said, her horns reached the heavens.

When the giants were together, they didn't have enough room in the Dùn. And there weren't other houses on Skye that were big enough for them. Thus, they were often living out of doors.

There were two young giants on Dùn Dearg – Eachain and Achan. One day, they left on a

Faisg air Bhaltos, ann an Tròndairnis san Eilean Sgitheanach, tha seann dùn ann air a bheil an 'Dùn Dearg'. Tha stòiridh ann a tha a' buntainn ris – stòiridh ris an canar 'Famhairean an Dùn Deirg'.

Bha famhairean a' fuireach anns an Dùn Dearg uaireigin. Bha iad gu tric a' sabaid le chèile. Bha iad a' tarraing chraobhan a-mach agus a' briseadh chlachan nuair a bha iad a' sabaid. Bha iad ag ithe tòrr cuideachd – mairt is fiadh is caora aig aon dinnear. No barrachd.

Cha robh aca, ge-tà, ach aon bhò-bhainne eatarra. Bha Glas Ghoillean oirre mar ainm. 'S dòcha gu bheil sin a' ciallachadh 'a' bhò ghlas air a bheil aghaidh mhòr ghrànda'. Co-dhiù, b' ise an tè mu dheireadh dhen chrodh iongantach mòr a bha uaireigin a' fuireach anns an Eilean Sgitheanach. Nuair a bha i na laighe, chanadh na seann daoine, bha a h-adhaircean a' ruigsinn nan speuran.

Nuair a bha na famhairean cruinn còmhla, cha robh rùm gu leòr dhaibh anns an Dùn. Agus cha robh taighean eile anns an Eilean Sgitheanach a bha mòr gu leòr dhaibh. Mar sin, bha iad gu tric a' fuireach air a' bhlàr a-muigh.

Bha dithis fhamhairean òga anns an Dùn Dearg – Eachain agus Achan. Latha a bha seo, dh'fhalbh iad a-mach air

walk. They stayed out of doors.

They were cooking outdoors. There are stone pillars in Snizort where they put their cauldron, with a fire under it. The pillars are known as 'Sorchain Coire Fhinn'. That means the pillars that were keeping Fionn's cauldron over the fire.

The local people were unhappy with the giants. They were catching too many fish and hunting too many deer. The population decided to kill the giants. Because of that, Eachain and Achan flad. They reached narrows between the island and the mainland where the water was deeper than they had expected. Rather than jumping over the narrows, they stood in them. They were drowned and they gave their name to that kyle – Kyleakin.

chuart. Dh'fhuirich iad air a' bhlàr a-muigh.

Bha iad a' còcaireachd a-muigh. Tha colbhan cloiche ann an Sniothasort far an do chuir iad an coire, le teine fodha. Tha na colbhan seo aithnichte mar 'Sorchain Coire Fhinn'. Tha sin a' ciallachadh nan colbhan a bha a' cumail a' choire aig Fionn os cionn an teine.

Bha muinntir an àite mì-thoilichte leis na famhairean. Bha iad a' glacadh cus èisg agus a' sealg cus fhiadh. Chuir an sluagh romhpa na famhairean a mharbhadh. Air sgàth sin, theich Eachain agus Achan. Ràinig iad caolas eadar an t-eilean agus tìr-mòr far an robh a' mhuir na bu doimhne na bha iad an dùil. An àite a bhith a' leum thar a' chaolais, sheas iad ann. Bha iad air am bàthadh agus thug iad na h-ainmean aca don chaolas sin – Caol Acain.