

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 466 (which corresponds to Litir 770). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk.

Do you know the story of The Crafty Lad and the Drover? People were fed up of the Crafty Lad. They put him in a barrel. They were going to throw it down a steep slope. But there was a pub on the way. They went in for a dram.

A drover with cattle appeared. The drover struck the barrel with a stick. 'Who's that?' said the Crafty Lad.

'A drover with cattle,' replied the other man. 'What are you doing in the barrel?'

'I'm here,' said the Crafty lad, 'in a beautiful place where there is gold and silver.'

'Will you let me in?' asked the drover.

'Yes,' said the Crafty Lad. 'But you must let me out. I'll put the lid of the barrel back in its place, and yourself inside it.'

The drover agreed to that. He opened the barrel. He let the Crafty Lad out, and he jumped inside himself. The Crafty Lad replaced the lid of the barrel. And he left with the cattle.

Shortly after that, the people came out of the pub. They got hold of the

A bheil sibh eòlach air an sgeulachd An Gille Carach agus an Dròbhair? Bha daoine sgìth dhen Ghille Charach. Chuir iad ann am baraille e. Bha iad a' dol ga thilgeil sìos leathad cas. Ach air an rathad bha taigh-seinnse. Chaidh iad a-steach airson dram.

Nochd dròbhair le crodh. Bhuail an dròbhair am baraille le a bhata. 'Cò th' ann a sin?' thuirt an Gille Carach.

'Dròbhair le crodh,' fhreagair am fear eile. 'Dè tha thu a' dèanamh anns a' bharaille?'

'Tha mi an seo,' thuirt an Gille Carach, 'ann an àite brèagha far a bheil òr agus airgead.'

'An leig thu a-steach mi?' dh'fhaighnich an dròbhair.

'Leigidh,' thuirt an Gille Carach. 'Ach feumaidh tusa mo leigeil a-mach. Cuiridh mise ceann a' bharaille air ais na àite, agus tu fhèin na bhroinn.'

Dh'aontaich an dròbhair ri sin. Dh'fhosgail e am baraille. Leig e an Gille Carach a-mach, agus leum e fhèin a-steach ann. Chuir an Gille Carach ceann a' bharaille air ais na àite. Agus dh'fhalbh e leis a' chrodh.

Goirid às dèidh sin, thàinig na daoine a-mach às an taigh-seinnse.

barrel and they rolled it down the slope.

The Rev Donald MacCallum would tell that story when he was campaigning on behalf of the Highland people. That was at the time of the land struggle, and Donald was praised by Màiri Mhòr nan Òran [Mary MacPherson, the Skye poetess].

'As the Crafty Lad did to the drover,' he would say, 'so the landlords will do to us. They say that we'll get plenty of gold and silver in the barrel of emigration. But, when they get a lid back on the barrel, with us inside it, they'll escape with everything that belongs to us.'

Donald MacCallum was famous and controversial. He was born in Argyll in 1849. A sense of social justice preyed on his conscience. One of his favourite proverbs was Is fheàrr tuiteam anns a' cheartas na seasamh anns an eucoir 'it's better to fall in the service of justice than to remain standing in the cause of injustice. I'll tell you more about him next week.

Ghabh iad grèim air a' bharaille agus roilig iad sìos an leathad e.

Bhiodh an t-Urramach Dòmhnall MacCaluim ag aithris an stòiridh sin nuair a bha e a' coiteachadh as leth muinntir na Gàidhealtachd. Bha sin aig àm strì an fhearainn, agus chaidh Dòmhnall a mholadh le Màiri Mhòr nan Òran.

'Mar a rinn an Gille Carach air an dròbhair,' chanadh e, 's ann a nì na h-uachdarain oirnne. Tha iad ag ràdh gum faigh sinn òr is airgead gu leòr ann am baraille na h-eilthreachd. Ach, nuair a gheibh iad ceann air ais air a' bharaille, agus sinn fhèin na bhroinn, bidh iad a' falbh le ar cuid air fad.'

Bha Dòmhnall MacCaluim ainmeil agus connspaideach. Rugadh e ann an Earra-Ghàidheal ann an ochd ceud deug, ceathrad 's a naoi (1849). Bha ceartas sòisealta gu mòr air a chogais. B' e fear de na seanfhaclan a b' fheàrr leis: *Is fheàrr tuiteam anns a' cheartas na seasamh anns an eucoir.* Innsidh mi tuilleadh mu dheidhinn an-ath-sheachdain.