

## **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 492 (which corresponds to Litir 796). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk).

It's the bigger of that, it's the bigger of that, as the wren said when he urinated in the great sea. *Have you ever heard that proverb? It concerns people who think they are more important than they are.* It's the bigger of that, it's the bigger of that, as the wren said when he urinated in the great sea.

*They say that the wren is as cunning as any other bird. But is it more cunning than a fox? Who would win in a competition between a wren and a fox?*

*Well, according to oral tradition, there was a competition between them. And here's what happened.*

*One day, in Spring, the wren was looking for stuff to make a nest. It was difficult to pull out the material with its beak. It wasn't strong enough.*

*Who came past but a fox. The wren told him that he wasn't capable of pulling out the nesting material. 'What will I get from you if I help you?' said the fox.*

*'Oh, when the work with the corn is finished in the autumn, I'll give you something.'*

*Is mòid i sin, is mòid i sin, mar a thuir an dreathan-donn nuair a rinn e dileag sa mhuir mhòir. An cuala sibh an seanfhacal sin? Tha e a-mach air daoine a tha a' smaoinichadh gu bheil iad nas cudromaiche na tha iad. Is mòid i sin, is mòid i sin, mar a thuir an dreathan-donn nuair a rinn e dileag sa mhuir mhòir.*

Tha iad ag ràdh gu bheil an dreathan-donn cho seòlta ri eun sam bith eile. Ach a bheil e nas seòlta na sionnach? Cò dhèanadh a' chùis ann am farpais eadar dreathan-donn agus sionnach?

Uill, a rèir beul-aithris, bha farpais ann eatarra. Agus seo mar a thachair.

Latha a bha seo, san Earrach, bha dreathan-donn a' lorg stuth airson nead a thogail. Bha e doirbh an stuth a tharraing a-mach le a ghob. Cha robh e làidir gu leòr.

Cò thàinig seachad ach sionnach. Dh'inns an dreathan dha nach robh e comasach an stuth-neadachaidh a thoirt a-mach. 'Dè gheibh mi bhuaht ma bheir mi taic dhut?' thuir an sionnach.

'O, nuair a tha obair an arbhair seachad as t-fhoghar, bheir mi rudeigin dhut.'

*'What will you give me?' the fox asked again.*

*The bird considered the matter. Then he said, 'Peic and ceannan. That's what you'll get – peic and ceannan.' Now, a peic and ceannan were two measures of grain that were being used in olden times. A peck and two pecks, in English.*

*The fox agreed to the bargain. He assisted the wren and he left.*

*When the autumn came, the fox went to visit the wren. The bird was busy in the barn with his sons. The fox reminded him how they made a bargain in the Spring.*

*'I remember,' the wren said. 'I said to you that I'd give you a peic and a ceannan.'*

*'That's correct,' agreed the fox.*

*The wren shouted, 'Peic and Ceannan, Peic and Ceannan!' Two large dogs ran out. Their names were Peic and Ceannan! The fox fled. And that's how the wren tricked the fox.*

*'Dè na bheir thu dhomh?' dh'fhaighnich am madadh a-rithist.*

*Mheòraich an t-eun. An uair sin thuir e, 'Peic is ceannan. 'S e sin a gheibh thu – peic is ceannan.' Nise b' e peic agus ceannan dà thomhas de ghràin a bhathar a' cleachdadh anns an t-seann aimsir. A peck and two pecks, ann am Beurla.*

*Dh'aontaich an sionnach ris a' bhargan. Thug e taic don dreathan agus dh'fhalbh e.*

*Nuair a thàinig am foghar, chaidh an sionnach a thadhal air an dreathan-donn. Bha an t-eun trang anns an t-sabhal le a mhic. Chuir an sionnach na chuimhne mar a rinn iad bargan as t-Earrach.*

*'Tha cuimhne agam,' thuir an dreathan-donn. 'Thuir mi riut gun toirinn peic is ceannan dhut.'*

*'Tha sin ceart,' dh'aontaich am madadh-ruadh.*

*Dh'èigh an dreathan-donn, 'Peic is Ceannan, Peic is Ceannan!' Ruith dà chù mhòr a-mach. 'S iad na h-ainmean a bha orra Peic agus Ceannan! Theich an sionnach. Agus sin mar a thug an dreathan-donn an car às an t-sionnach.*