

## **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 505 (which corresponds to Litir 809). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk).

Sharp is the tooth from [the] heather. Have you ever heard that proverb? Sharp is the tooth from [the] heather. After a person has been on the hill – or on the heather – he will be hungry. His teeth will be sharp. Food will not last long on the plate. It's true, isn't it?

*My mind is on teeth. What did you do yourselves when you were young, and you lost a tooth? In some countries, parents tell their children that there is the 'tooth fairy'. The child puts an old tooth under a pillow, or in a glass of water. The fairy comes during the night. In the morning, there will be no sign of the tooth. There will be a coin in its place.*

*Traditionally, in the world of the Gaels, the children were believing that it was a mouse that was coming, rather than a fairy. The child was putting a tooth in a chink in the wall of the house. After a while, the mouse was coming. The mouse was putting a 'golden tooth' or 'silver tooth' in place of the old one. I imagine that meant [was] money.*

*The children were looking in*

*Is geur fiacail à fraoch. An cuala sibh an seanfhacal sin riamh? Is geur fiacail à fraoch. Bidh an t-acras air duine às dèidh dha a bhith sa mhonadh – no air an fhraoch. Tha fhiacalan geur. Cha mhair am biadh fada air an truinnsear. Tha e fìor, nach eil?*

Tha m' inntinn air fiacalan. Dè rinn sibh fhèin nuair a bha sibh òg, agus sibh a' call fiacail? Ann an cuid de dhùthchannan, bidh pàrantan ag innse do chloinn gu bheil 'sithiche nam fiacalan' ann. Bidh am pàiste a' cur seann fhiacail fo chluasag, no ann an gloinne uisge. Bidh an sìthiche a' tighinn air an oidhche. Anns a' mhadainn, cha bhi sgeul air an fhiacail. Bidh bonn airgid ann na h-àite.

Gu traidiseanta, ann an saoghal nan Gàidheal, bha a' chlann a' creidsinn gur e luch a bha a' tighinn, seach sìthiche. Bha am pàiste a' cur fiacail ann am fròg ann am balla an taighe. An ceann greis, bha an luch a' tighinn. Bha an luch a' cur 'fiacail òirghil' no 'fiacail airgid' an àite na seann tè. Tha mi a' dèanamh dheth gur e airgead a bha sin.

Bha a' chlann a' coimhead anns

*the chink several times. They were wanting to see if the mouse had been. Here is a verse they would say:*

Little mouse, little mouse, little kindly mouse,

Little mouse, little mouse, little beloved mouse,

Give to me a little bright gold tooth,

Give to me a little silver tooth.

*Do you have children yourself? Why don't you teach them the verse? Here it is again:*

Little mouse, little mouse, little kindly mouse,

Little mouse, little mouse, little beloved mouse,

Give to me a little bright gold tooth,

Give to me a little silver tooth.

*As I am talking about mice, here is a proverb connected to those little creatures. They deal with the diminutive size of the mouse. A mouse is strong under a haystack. It is out of sight under the stack. Nobody can get hold of it. Thus it is strong – and perhaps impudent as well. The proverb cannot be contradicted [this is itself a proverb!]*

an fhròig grunn tursan. Bha iad airson faicinn an robh an luch air a bhith ann. Seo rann a chanadh iad:

*A luchag, a luchag, a luchag bheag bhàidh,*

*A luchag, a luchag, a luchag bheag ghràidh,*

*Thoir thusa dhòmhsa fiacail bheag òirghil,*

*Thoir thusa dhòmhsa fiacail bheag airgid.*

A bheil clann òg agaibh fhèin? Carson nach ionnsaich sibh an rann dhaibh? Seo e a-rithist:

*A luchag, a luchag, a luchag bheag bhàidh,*

*A luchag, a luchag, a luchag bheag ghràidh,*

*Thoir thusa dhòmhsa fiacail bheag òirghil,*

*Thoir thusa dhòmhsa fiacail bheag airgid.*

Leis gu bheil mi a-mach air luchan, no luchagan, seo agaibh seanfhacal co-cheangailte ris na creutairean beaga sin. Tha iad a-mach air cho beag 's a tha an luchag. *Is làidir luchag fo chruach fheadir.* Tha i a-mach à sealladh fon chruaich. Chan fhaigh duine grèim oirre. Mar sin tha i làidir – agus 's dòcha ladarna cuideachd. *Cha bhreugnaichear an seanfhacal.*