

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 512 (which corresponds to Litir 816). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I'm going to tell you about Hugh from Dingwall. When he was young, he became keen on tobacco.

When he was twenty years old, an uncle of his died. Hugh got his croft. It was ten miles out of town. This was in the old days. He married a woman from Contin. Hugh promised himself he would be a good husband to her.

But he couldn't stop his smoking. He had a great craving for tobacco.

His house was ten miles from the one shop that sold tobacco. When there was none left in the house, Hugh was in a bad frame of mind.

Hugh had a puppy. It was a collie. He was called Sandy. One day, Hugh was in a really bad mood. He had gone a week without smoking. His wife never saw [had never seen] him so crabbit. 'Do you know what's wrong with you, darling?' she said. 'You need tobacco. Go to Dingwall and buy enough for a month.'

'May I, love?' replied Hugh. He was as happy as the king.

'And another thing,' said his

Tha mi a' dol a dh'innse dhuibh mu Ùisdean à Inbhir Pheofharain. Nuair a bha e òg, dh'fhàs e dèidheil air tombaca.

Nuair a bha e fichead bliadhna a dh'aois, chaochail uncail dha. Fhuair Ùisdean a' chroit aige. Bha i deich mìle a-mach às a' bhaile. Bha seo anns an t-seann aimsir. Phòs e tè à Cunndainn. Gheall Ùisdean dha fhèin gum biodh e na dheagh chèile dhi.

Ach cha b' urrainn dha stad a chur air a chuid smocaidh. Bha miann mhòr aige air ceò an tombaca.

Bha an taigh aige deich mìle bhon aon bhùth a bha a' reic tombaca. Nuair nach robh gin air fhàgail san taigh, bha Ùisdean ann am fìor dhroch shunnd.

Bha cuilean aig Ùisdean. 'S e cù-coilidh a bh' ann. Bha Sandaidh air mar ainm. Latha a bha seo, bha Ùisdean ann am fìor dhroch shunnd. Bha e air a dhol seachdain gun smocadh. Chan fhaca a bhean cho greannach e. 'A bheil fios agad dè tha ceàrr ort, a ghràidh?' thuirt i. 'Tha thu feumach air tombaca. Thalla a dh'Inbhir Pheofharain agus ceannaich gu leòr airson mìos.'

'Am faod mi, a ghràidh?' fhreagair Ùisdean. Bha e cho sona ris an rìgh.

'Agus aon rud eile,' thuirt a bhean.

wife. *'Take Sandy with you. The excursion will be good for him.'*

The man and the dog left together on the road to Dingwall. They reached the tobacconist. Hugh bought enough for a month. The shopkeeper gave Sandy a biscuit.

'Why don't you buy tobacco from me every week?' he said to Hugh.

'Oh, I'm too busy to come here every week,' replied Hugh. 'It's too far.'

'However,' said the shopkeeper, 'the dog could come for you.'

'The dog?' said Hugh.

'Indeed,' said the shopkeeper. 'Put a half-crown in a kerchief around his neck. Ask him to come to the shop. I'll put tobacco to the value of half a crown in the kerchief and he'll go home with it.'

'Mmm. I wonder if that would work,' said Hugh. 'Why don't we try it?'

And they did try [it] – the next time tobacco became scarce in the house. And I'll tell you how Sandy got on next week.

'Thoir Sandaidh leat. Bidh a' chuairt math dha.'

Dh'fhalbh an duine 's an cù còmhla air an rathad a dh'Inbhir Pheofharain. Ràinig iad bùth an tombaca. Cheannaich Ùisdean gu leòr airson mìos. Thug fear na bùtha briosgaid do Shandaidh.

'Carson nach ceannaich thu tombaca bhuam a h-uile seachdain?' thuir e ri Ùisdean.

'O, tha mi ro thrang airson tighinn an seo a h-uile seachdain,' fhreagair Ùisdean. 'Tha e ro fhada.'

'Ge-tà,' thuir fear na bùtha. 'Dh'fhaodadh an cù a thighinn air do shon.'

'An cù?' ars Ùisdean.

'Gu dearbh,' thuir fear na bùtha. 'Cuir leth-chrùn ann an nèapraigear timcheall amhaich. Iarr air thighinn don bhùth. Cuiridh mise tombaca luach leth-chrùn san nèapraigear agus thèid e dhachaigh leis.'

'Mmm. Saoil an obraicheadh sin?' thuir Ùisdean. 'Carson nach fheuch sinn e?'

Agus dh'fheuch – an ath thuras a bha tombaca gann san taigh. Agus innsidh mi dhuibh mar a chaidh do Shandaidh an-ath-sheachdain.