

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 516 (which corresponds to Litir 820). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

Have you heard about 'the fox's oath to the grey goat'? It means a false oath. It comes from the old story 'The Grey Goat'.

One day, the fox found two kid goats. They were in thick grass. Their mother had left them there, hidden. The fox ate the kids. They were still bleating inside it when the goat returned.

She heard her kids. She asked the fox where they were. And here's what the fox said:

On the blackthorn, on the
bramble bush,
On the water which runs in the
waterfall,
On the air above you,
On the ground beneath you,
On the sun which is in the
west,
On the moon passed down in
the west,
On the stars in the gloom,
I've never seen your kids.

*Aye, right, like the other guy
said.*

I have another little story for

An cuala sibh mu 'mhionnan a' mhadaidh ruaidh don ghobhair ghlais'? Tha e a' ciallachadh mionnan a tha breugach. Tha e a' tighinn bhon t-seann stòiridh 'A' Ghobhar Ghlas'.

Latha a bha seo, lorg am madadh ruadh dà mheann. Bha iad ann am feur tiugh. Bha am màthair air am fàgail an sin, falaichte. Dh'ith an sionnach na minn. Bha iad fhathast a' meigeadaich na bhroinn nuair a thill a' ghobhar.

Chuala i na minn aice. Dh'fhaighnich i dhen mhadadh cà' robh iad. Agus seo na thuirt am madadh:

Air an droighinn, air an dris,

Air an uisge 'ruith san eas,

Air an adhar os do chionn,

Air an talamh fo do bhonn,

Air a' ghrèin a tha san iar,

Air a' ghealaich seachad siar,

Air na reultan anns a' chiar,

*Chan fhac' mi riamh do chuid
mheann.*

Aidh, ceart, mar a thuirt am fear eile!

Tha stòiridh beag eile agam

you – ‘The Mull [of Kintyre] Fox’. It happened on a large cliff at the Mull of Kintyre.

Farmers had foxhounds. Those are dogs that hunt foxes. But this particular fox was too cunning for them. He would go over the cliff with the dogs following him. The dogs would be dead at the bottom. But the fox would survive. Nobody knew how he was doing it.

The farmers asked a foxhunter to kill the fox. He was let on a rope down the cliff-face. He found a young rowan tree. The top of the tree was bending so far that it was touching a narrow ledge. The ledge led to other ledges and down to the bottom. The foxhunter cut the tree’s trunk. But he put the tree back in place.

Next time the fox caused mayhem, foxhounds ran after him. The fox went over the cliff. But, this time, it was found dead at the bottom of the crag. It had a piece of the rowan tree in its mouth. It’s from this event that we get the simile: as cunning as the Mull [of Kintyre] fox. Cheerio just now.

dhuibh – ‘Sionnach na Maoile’. Thachair e air creag mhòr air Maol Chinn Tìre.

Bha tollairean aig tuathanaich. ’S e sin coin a bhios a’ sealg nan sionnach. Ach bha an sionnach seo ro sheòlta dhaibh. Bhiodh e a’ dol leis a’ chreig agus na coin a’ dol às a dhèidh. Bhiodh na coin marbh aig a’ bhonn. Ach bhiodh an sionnach fhathast beò. Cha robh fios aig duine mar a bha e ga dhèanamh.

Dh’iarr na tuathanaich air brocair an sionnach a mharbhadh. Chaidh a leigeil air ròp sìos aghaidh na creige. Lorg e craobh-chaorainn òg. Bha bàrr na craoibhe a’ lùbadh cho fada ’s gun robh e a’ buntainn ri leac chumhang. Bha an leac a’ leantainn gu leacan eile agus sìos don bhonn. Gheàrr am brocair stoc na craoibhe. Ach chuir e a’ chraobh air ais ri chèile.

An ath thuras a rinn an sionnach sgrios, ruith tollairean às a dhèidh. Chaidh am madadh leis a’ chreig. Ach, an turas seo, bha e air a lorg marbh aig bonn na creige. Bha pìos dhen chraoibh-chaorainn na bheul. ’S ann bhon tachartas seo a tha sinn a’ faighinn an t-samhlaidh: *cho seòlta ri sionnach na Maoile*. Mar sin leibh an-dràsta