

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 529 (which corresponds to Litir 833). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you about the old Welsh story, 'Math, Son of Mathonwy'. Arianrhod gave birth to two babies – Dylan (man of the ocean) and another that had no name.

One day, Arianrhod's brother, Gwydion, was making for his sister's castle, Caer Arianrhod. The fort was next to the seashore.

The unnamed lad was with him. When they reached the castle, Arianrhod said, 'Who is this lad?'

'Your own son,' replied Gwydion. Arianrhod was displeased that he said that. 'What is his name?' she said.

'He doesn't have a name yet,' admitted Gwydion.

'And he won't get a name,' said Arianrhod, 'if I don't give him a name myself.'

Gwydion was angry. He left with the lad. They made a magic boat with seaweed. They made themselves look like shoemakers. They made for Caer Arianrhod.

Arianrhod sent messengers to the boat. They told her that it was shoemakers that were on board.

'Give them my foot measurements,' said Arianrhod. 'Ask

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mun t-seann sgeulachd Chuimrich, 'Math Mac Mhathonwy'. Rugadh dithis leanabh do dh'Arianrhod – Dylan (fear a' chuain) agus fear eile a bha gun ainm.

Latha a bha seo, bha bràthair Arianrhod, Gwydion, a' dèanamh air caisteal a pheathar, Caer Arianrhod. Bha an dùn ri taobh a' chladaich.

Bha an gille gun ainm cuide ris. Nuair a ràinig iad an caisteal, thuir Arianrhod, 'Cò e an gille seo?'

'Do mhac fhèin,' fhreagair Gwydion. Bha Arianrhod mì-thoilichte gun tuirt e sin. 'Dè an t-ainm a tha air?' ars ise.

'Chan eil ainm air fhathast,' dh'aidich Gwydion.

'Agus chan fhaigh e ainm,' thuir Arianrhod, 'mura toir mi fhìn ainm dha.'

Bha fearg air Gwydion. Dh'fhalbh e leis a' ghille. Rinn iad bàta draoidheil le feamainn. Ghabh iad riochd ghreusaichean orra fhèin. Rinn iad air Caer Arianrhod.

Chuir Arianrhod teachdairean chun a' bhàta. Dh'inns iad dhì gur e greusaichean a bha air bòrd.

'Thoiribh tomhas meud mo chasan dhaibh,' ars Arianrhod. 'Iarraibh

them to make me shoes.'

Gwydion made the shoes. But he made them too big.

'They're too big,' said Arianrhod. 'Ask the shoemakers to make smaller shoes.'

Gwydion made her another pair. They were too small. The messengers returned to tell him that they were too small.

'I won't make another pair for her until I see her feet,' said Gwydion.

Arianrhod came to the boat. A wren appeared. The young lad threw a stone at it. The stone struck the wren between tendon and bone.

'Lleu, that fair-haired lad, has a skilful hand,' said Arianrhod.

'Yes,' agreed Gwydion, 'and you've given him a name, despite yourself. He is Lleu Llaw Gyffes, "the fair-haired lad with skilful hand".'

Within four kilometres of Welsh coastline, there are places that name Dylan, Lleu agus Arianrhod. Dylan is remembered in a large rock called Maen Dylan. There is an old fort above the beach called Dinas Dinlle – that's the fort of Lleu.

And at sea, one can see a skerry at low-tide called Caer Arianrhod. In the last thousand years, the sea has swallowed up Arianrhod's old fort.

orra brògan a dhèanamh dhomh.'

Rinn Gwydion na brògan. Ach rinn e ro mhòr iad.

'Tha iad ro mhòr,' thuirt Arianrhod. 'Iarraibh air na greusaichean brògan nas lugha a dhèanamh.'

Rinn Gwydion paidhir eile dhi. Bha iad ro bheag. Thill na teachdairean a dh'innse dha gun robh iad ro bheag.

'Cha dèan mi paidhir eile dhi gus am faic mi a casan,' thuirt Gwydion.

Thàinig Arianrhod chun a' bhàta. Nochd dreathan-donn. Thilg an gille òg clach air. Bhuail a' chlach an dreathan-donn eadar fèith-lùthaidh agus cnàimh.

'S ann aig Lleu, an gille bàn sin, a tha làmh sgileil,' ars Arianrhod.

'S ann,' dh'aontaich Gwydion, 'agus tha thu air ainm a thoirt dha ge b' oil leat. Is esan Lleu Llaw Gyffes, an "gille bàn le làmh sgileil".'

Taobh a-staigh ceithir cilemeatair de chladach na Cuimrigh, tha àiteachan ann a tha ag ainmeachadh Dylan, Lleu agus Arianrhod. Tha Dylan air a chuimhneachadh ann an carraig mhòr air a bheil Maen Dylan. Tha seann dùn os cionn na tràghad air a bheil Dinas Dinlle – 's e sin Dùn Lleu.

Agus aig muir, chithear sgeir aig ìsle-mhara air a bheil Caer Arianrhod. Anns na mìle bliadhna mu dheireadh, tha a' mhuir air an seann dùn aig Arianrhod a shlugadh.