

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 555 (which corresponds to Litir 859). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you the old traditional story – The Children of Lear. The children were under a spell. They were in the form of swans. They were on Lough Derravaragh in the middle of Ireland for three hundred years. They were then on the waters of the Straits of Moyle, between Scotland and Ireland, for three hundred years. Now they would have three hundred years in Inis Glora off the west coast of Ireland.

An old man came to the sea loch where the swans were swimming. He was a holy man. His name was Mochua. He saw the swans. He knew the old story about the Children of Lear.

The Children of Lear could still speak and sing. When they saw the old man, they told him that they were the Children of Lear. They asked him which God he had [ie worshipped]. 'The new God,' he said. He meant the God of the Christians.

Mochua told them about their new merciful God. The children were pleased. It was the noise of a Christian bell that would break the spell that was on them. They told the old man that.

Tha mi ag innse dhuibh na seann sgeulachd thraidiseanta – Clann Lir. Bha a' chlann fo gheasaibh. Bha cruth ealachan orra. Bha iad air Loch Dairbhreach ann am meadhan na h-Èireann airson trì cheud bliadhna. Bha iad an uair sin air uisgeachan Sruth na Maoile, eadar Alba is Èirinn, airson trì cheud bliadhna. A-nise bha trì cheud bliadhna gu bhith aca ann an Innis Gluaire far costa taobh an iar na h-Èireann.

Thàinig seann duine chun an loch-mhara far an robh na h-ealachan a' snàmh. 'S e duine naomh a bha ann. 'S e Mochua an t-ainm a bha air. Chunnaic e na h-ealachan. Bha e eòlach air an t-seann sgeulachd mu Chlann Lir.

Bha comas labhairt agus comas seinn aig Clann Lir fhathast. Nuair a chunnaic iad an seann duine, dh'inns iad dha gum b' iad Clann Lir. Dh'fhaighnich iad dheth gu dè an Dia a bha aige. 'An Dia ùr,' thuirt e. Bha e a' ciallachadh Dia nan Crìosdaidhean.

Dh'inns Mochua dhaibh mun Dia ùr thròcaireach aca. Bha a' chlann toilichte. 'S e fuaim clag Crìosdail a bhriseadh an geas a bha orra. Dh'inns iad sin don t-seann duine.

Mochua collected old swords for their iron. He melted the iron and made a bell with in. He was about to ring the bell, when a hero appeared. 'I am Liargren, the King of Connaught,' he said. 'My wife wants those beautiful swans to be hers. Give them to me!' If he didn't get the swans, he told Mochua that he would burn his chapel to the ground.

The swans were put in a carriage. Before they left, the bell in the chapel rang. The spell was broken. After nine hundred years, the Children of Lear were again in the form of people. Liargren fled. Age began to lie upon the children, however, and they began to look like old men and women. Mochua baptized them all before they died.

That's the story of the Children of Lear. When you hear the note of the swan, perhaps you'll remember the four swans that lived under a spell for nine hundred years.

Chruinnich Mochua seann chhlaidheamhan airson an iarainn. Leagh e an t-iarann agus rinn e clag leis. Bha e an impis an clag a sheinn, nuair a nochd gaisgeach. 'Is mise Liargren, Rìgh Chonnacht,' thuir e. 'Tha mo bhean ag iarraidh gum bi na h-ealachan brèagha sin aice. Thoir dhòmhsa iad!' Mura faigheadh e na h-ealachan, thuir e ri Mochua gun losgadh e an caibeal aige gu làr.

Bha na h-ealachan air an cur ann an carbad. Mus do dh'fhalbh iad, sheinn an clag anns a' chaibeal. Bha an geas briste. An dèidh naoi ceud bliadhna, bha Clann Lir ann an cruth dhaoine a-rithist. Theich Liargren. Thòisich aois air laighe air a' chloinn, ge-tà, agus thàinig coltas bhodach is chailleachan orra. Bhaistich Mochua iad uile mus tigeadh bàs orra.

'S e sin sgeulachd Clann Lir. Nuair a chluinneas sibh guileag na h-eala, 's dòcha gum bi sibh a' cuimhneachadh air na ceithir ealachan a bha beò fo gheasaibh airson naoi ceud bliadhna.