

## **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 558 (which corresponds to Litir 862). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk).*

*When I was living on the Isle of Skye at the start of the nineties, I became interested in the place-names of Strath. Thus I was very pleased when a booklet came out on that subject last year. It's bilingual. It was written by Dr Jacob King and Eilidh Scammell who both work for the organisation Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba. It was published by Scottish Natural Heritage.*

*I'd like to tell you about one name in the booklet. West of Loch Slapin, on the hill above the road, there is a well. On the map it's called Tobar Ceann. But locally people call it Tobar a' Chinn 'the well of the head'. Here's how it got its name.*

*In the old days, when a man died, his family or widow had to give the landlord a cow. This particular woman's husband died. She was a widow with one son and she was very poor. She only had one cow. The bailiff came. The widow asked him not to take away the animal. But the bailiff was indifferent. He left with the cow.*

*Donald, the widow's son, was away from home when this happened. He returned. He saw what had*

*Nuair a bha mi a' fuireach anns an Eilean Sgitheanach aig toiseach nan naochadan, ghabh mi ùidh ann an ainmean-àite sgìre an t-Sratha. Mar sin, bha mi gu math toilichte nuair a thàinig leabhran a-mach air a' chuspair sin an-uiridh. Tha e dà-chànanach. Bha e air a sgrìobhadh leis an Oll. Iacob King agus Eilidh Sgaimeal a tha le chèile ag obair don bhuidhinn Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba. Bha e air fhoillseachadh le Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba.*

*Bu mhath leam innse dhuibh mu aon ainm anns an leabhran. Gu siar air Loch Slaopan, anns a' mhonadh os cionn an rathaid, tha tobar. Air a' mhapa 's e Tobar Ceann a tha air. Ach gu h-ionadail, 's e Tobar a' Chinn a chanas daoine ris. Seo mar a fhuair e ainm.*

*Anns an t-seann aimsir, nuair a bha fear a' faighinn bàs, bha aig an teaghlach no bantrach aige ri mart a thoirt seachad don uachdaran. Chaochail an duine aig tè a bha seo. Bha i na bantraich le aon ghille agus bha i gu math bochd. Cha robh aice ach aon mhart. Thàinig am bàillidh. Dh'iarr a' bhantrach air gun am beathach a thoirt air falbh. Ach bha am bàillidh coma. Dh'fhalbh e leis a' mhart.*

*Bha Dòmhnall, mac na bantraich, air falbh bhon taigh nuair a thachair seo. Thill e. Chunnaic e mar a dh'èirich do a*

*happened to his mother. And he was furious. He went in pursuit of the bailiff. He caught him at Druim an Fhuarain above Loch Slapin – where Tobar a' Chinn is. He killed the bailiff and cut his head off. He cleaned the head in the well, and that's what gave it its name – Tobar a' Chinn.*

*Donald went to see the clan chief. He told him what had happened. To begin with, the clan chief was going to put him to death. But he considered the matter. He said to the lad, 'Well, you killed the bailiff. You must become a bailiff in his stead.' And Donald got work as a bailiff. But I wonder if he was willing to take a cow from another widow, on the landlord's behalf?!*

mhàthair. Agus ghabh e an cuthach. Chaidh e an tòir air a' bhàillidh. Ghlac e e air Druim an Fhuarain os cionn Loch Slaopan – far a bheil Tobar a' Chinn. Mharbh e am bàillidh agus gheàrr e a cheann dheth. Ghlan e an ceann anns an tobar, agus 's e sin a thug ainm dha – Tobar a' Chinn.

Chaidh Dòmhnall far an robh an ceann-feadhna. Dh'inns e dha mar a thachair. An toiseach, bha an ceann-feadhna a' dol ga chur bu bàs. Ach mheòraich e air a' chùis. Thuir e ris a' ghille, 'Uill, mharbh thu am bàillidh. Feumaidh tusa a bhith nad bhàillidh na àite'. Agus fhuair Dòmhnall obair mar bhàillidh. Ach saoil an robh e deònach mart a thoirt air falbh bho bhantrach eile, às leth an uachdarain?!