

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 562 (which corresponds to Litir 866). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

Near the old burial ground in Gairloch, there is a hollow. It's called 'the bed of the white cow'. They say that it was Fionn MacCumhail (Fingal) himself that made the hollow. He had a white cow. He wanted a place where it would give birth to a calf.

The people of the area were telling Fingalian legends for hundreds of years. And here is an old story from Gairloch. It's called 'MacMillan the Harpist'. 'Cruit' means a harp.

There was a man living in Inverasdale. He was a MacDonald. He was keen on the Fingalian stories.

One winter's night, he was sitting indoors. A poor man came to the house. He asked him if he could stay the night. MacDonald said he could. The stranger sat down. The two men told each other Fingalian stories all night long.

MacMillan stayed for the whole winter along with MacDonald. He told a new story about the Fingalians every night. The Spring came. When he was ploughing, at the end of every furrow, MacMillan the Harpist had a new story

Faisg air an t-seann chladh ann an Geàrrloch, tha lag ann. 'S e an t-ainm air – Leabaidh na Bà Bàine. Tha iad ag ràdh gur e Fionn MacCumhail fhèin a rinn an lag. Bha bò bhàn aige, Bha e ag iarraidh àite far am biodh i a' breith laogh.

Bha muinntir na sgìre ag innse sgeulachdan na Fèinne airson ceudan bhliadhnaichean. Agus seo agaibh seann stòiridh à Geàrrloch. 'S e an t-ainm oirre 'Mac Gille Mhaoil na Cruit'. Tha 'cruit' a' ciallachadh clàrsach.

Bha fear a' fuireach ann an Inbhir Àsdail. Bha e na Dhòmhnallach. Bha e measail air sgeulachdan na Fèinne.

Oidhche gheamhraidh a bha seo, bha e na shuidhe a-staigh. Thàinig duine bochd don taigh. Dh'fheòraich e am faigheadh e cead fuireach airson na h-oidhche. Thuir an Dòmhnallach gum faigheadh. Shuidh an coigreach sìos. Dh'inns an dithis stòiridhean na Fèinne do chèile fad na h-oidhche.

Dh'fhuirich Mac Gille Mhaoil fad a' gheamhraidh còmhla ris an Dòmhnallach. Dh'aithris e sgeulachd ùr mun Fhèinn a h-uile oidhche. Thàinig an t-Earrach. Nuair a bha e ri treabhadh, aig ceann gach sgrìob, bha sgeul ùr aig Mac

about the Fingalians. MacDonald would say, 'It's a pity I wasn't alive at the time of the Fingalians.'

MacDonald would be working all day. He would be exhausted by night time. Thus, it's MacMillan that would be driving the horses to the hill every evening. He would be going with them as far as the big runnel near Loch Dring – that was famous as a dwelling-place of the Fingalians.

Every second night, MacMillan would be staying out with the horses. When he'd return home, he would have a new story about the Fingalians. MacDonald would say, 'It's a pity I wasn't alive at the time of the Fingalians.'

Eventually, MacMillan invited MacDonald to come with him so that he could see the Fingalians [for himself]. And we'll see what happened next week.

Gille Mhaoil mun Fhèinn. Chanadh an Dòmhnallach, 'Is truagh nach robh mi beò ri linn na Fèinne.'

Bhiodh an Dòmhnallach ag obair fad an latha. Bhiodh e claidhte air an oidhche. Mar sin, 's e Mac Gille Mhaoil a bhiodh a' saodachadh nan each chun a' mhonaidh gach feasgar. Bhiodh e a' dol leotha cho fada ri Feadan Mòr Locha Dring – a bha ainmeil mar àite-còmhnaidh na Fèinne.

Gach dàrnacha oidhche, bhiodh Mac Gille Mhaoil a' fuireach a-muigh cuide ris na h-eich. Nuair a thilleadh e dhachaigh, bhiodh sgeul ùr aige mun Fhèinn. Chanadh an Dòmhnallach, 'Is truagh nach robh mi beò ri linn na Fèinne.'

Mu dheireadh, thug Mac Gille Mhaoil cuireadh don Dòmhnallach thighinn còmhla ris, gus gum faigheadh e sealladh air an Fhèinn. Agus chì sinn dè thachair an-ath-sheachdain.