

# **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 588 (which corresponds to Litir 892). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk).*

*I heard a good story in Gairloch last year. It's extremely old. It's connected to a cave near Loch Maree. The cave is called 'the cave of the king's son'. The story has two titles – 'the king's son' and 'Ewen the son of the goat'.*

*I said to the man who told me the story that I'd like to see the cave for myself. This year he took me there. Without him, I'd never have found it. It's among big rocks that broke from the cliff-face above it. Trees are growing from them. One must climb to a ledge to get inside it.*

*I'd like to tell you a shortened account of the story. A young man and his mother were living in Ardlair on the side of Loch Maree. I have a personal connection to that place. The husband of my grandmother's sister was a gamekeeper there. My Aunt Dolly, as I called her, liked the place.*

*Anyway, back to the story. A young man – Kenneth – and his mother – Effie – were living there. They were poor. They lived on what they could get from hunting and fishing. But they had goats. One of*

Chuala mi sgeulachd mhath ann an Geàrrloch an-uiridh. Tha i air leth sean. Tha i co-cheangailte ri uamh faisg air Loch Ma-ruibhe. 'S e Uamh Mac an Rìgh ainm na h-uamha. Tha dà thiotal air an sgeulachd – 'Mac an Rìgh' no 'Eòghann Mac a' Ghobhair'.

Thuirt mi ris an duine a dh'inns an stòiridh dhomh gum bu mhath leam an uamh fhaicinn dhomh fhìn. Am-bliadhna thug e ann mi. Às aonais, cha robh mi air a lorg. Tha i am measg chreagan mòra a bhris às a' bhearradh os a cionn. Tha craobhan a' fàs asta. Feumar sreap gu leac airson faighinn a-steach innte.

Bu mhath leam geàrr-chunntas dhen sgeulachd aithris dhuibh. Bha fear òg agus a mhàthair a' fuireach ann an Àird Làir, taobh Loch Ma-ruibhe. Tha ceangal pearsanta agam don àite sin. Bha an duine aig piuthar mo sheanmhar na gheamair ann. Chòrd an t-àite ri m' Antaidh Dolaidh, mar a bha agam oirre.

Co-dhiù, air ais don sgeulachd. Bha fear òg – Coinneach – agus a mhàthair – Oighrig – a' fuireach ann. Bha iad bochd. Bha iad beò air na gheibheadh iad le sealg is iasgach. Ach bha gobhair aca. Bha tè dhiubh cianail

*them was excellent at giving them milk. She was called 'Roe Deer'.*

*Earba stopped giving so much milk. Effie was milking her every day. But she didn't get much milk. She reckoned the fairies were milking her. Or that a motherless red deer calf was sucking her.*

*'You follow her,' she said to Kenneth. 'Find out where she is going.'*

*Earba was cunning but finally Kenneth saw her among the rocks about a mile from their house. She was going into a break in the rocks. There was a cave there! Kenneth went to the mouth of the cave. But Earba came out. She stopped him from going in. She looked wild. She was protecting something in the cave.*

*Kenneth went home. He and his mother decided to return next morning. They would put Earba under control. They would look inside the cave. The story will continue next week.*

math air bainne a thoirt dhaibh. 'S e Earba an t-ainm a bha oirre.

Sguir Earba uiread sin de bhainne a thoirt seachad. Bha Oighrig ga bleoghan gach latha. Ach cha d' fhuair i mòran bainne. Bha i dhen bheachd gun robh na sìthichean ga bleoghan. No gun robh laogh fèidh gun mhàthair ga deoghal.

'Lean thusa oirre,' thuirt i ri Coinneach. 'Faigh a-mach cà'li a' dol.'

Bha Earba seòlta ach mu dheireadh chunnaic Coinnich i am measg nan creag mu mhìle bhon taigh aca. Bha i a' dol a-steach a bhriseadh anns na creagan. Bha uamh ann! Chaidh Coinneach gu beul na h-uamha. Ach thàinig Earba a-mach. Chuir i stad air bho bhith a' dol a-steach. Bha coltas fiadhaich oirre. Bha i a' dìon rudeigin anns an uaimh.

Chaidh Coinneach dhachaigh. Cho-dhùin e fhèin 's a mhàthair tilleadh an ath mhadainn. Bhiodh iad a' smachdachadh Earba. Bhiodh iad a' toirt sùil am broinn na h-uamha. Leanaidh an sgeulachd an-ath-sheachdain.