

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 639 (which corresponds to Litir 943). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you about how guirmean or woad [perhaps actually guirmean Innseanach, indigo] came to Scotland. There was an orphaned Barra lad on board a boat. The captain was going to throw him overboard.

'Don't do that,' said the mate. 'I'll keep him. I'll get him a place at our destination.' The captain accepted that.

They reached India [the Indies]. The mate knew a farmer there. He took the lad to the farmer's house. 'Will you take this lad?' he said to the farmer. 'Will you keep him until I come on the next voyage?'

'Very good,' said the farmer.

The mate left to sail the oceans. The farmer was good to the lad. One day, the farmer said to him, 'I'll give you a barrow today. You'll go to fetch fuel from the forest. Take your dinner with you.'

'Very good,' said the lad. He took an axe and barrow with him and he started to cut fuel [wood]. He wasn't there long when a man came. He was hungry. The lad shared the dinner between the two of them. The man filled the barrow and sent the lad on his way.

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu mar a fhuair an guirmean gu ruige Alba. Bha dilleachdan Barrach air bòrd bàta. Bha an sgiobair a' dol ga chur thar a' chliathaich.

'Na dèan sin,' thuirt am meat. 'Cumaidh mise e. Gheibh mi àite dha aig ar ceann-uidhe.' Ghabh an sgiobair ris a sin.

Ràinig iad na h-Innseachan. Bha am meat eòlach air tuathanach ann. Thug e an gille gu taigh an tuathanaich. 'An gabh thu an gille seo?' thuirt e ris an tuathanach. 'An cùm thu e gus an tig mise air an ath bhòidse?'

'Glè mhath,' ars an tuathanach.

Dh'fhalbh am meat a sheòladh nan cuantan. Bha an tuathanach math don ghille. Latha de na làithean, thuirt an tuathanach ris, 'Bheir mi dhut bara an-diugh. Thèid thu a dh'iarraidh connadh bhon choille. Thoir leat do dhinnear.'

'Glè mhath,' ars an gille. Thug e leis tuagh is bara agus thòisich e air connadh a ghearradh. Cha robh e ann fada nuair a thàinig duine. Bha an t-acras air. Riarraich an gille an dinneair air an dithis aca. Lìon an duine am bara agus chuir e an gille air an rathad.

The lad went home. He was asked to go out again the next day to fetch more fuel. He said to the farmer's wife that his dinner the previous day had not been large enough.

'Very good,' she said. 'Your dinner this time will be large.' The lad left. This time two men came. The lad divided the food amongst the three of them. The two others filled his barrow and they put him on the road.

In the morning, he saw the farmer's wife. 'Will you,' he said, 'make the dinner bigger today?'

'Very good,' said she.

The lad left again. Three men came to see him. He divided his food amongst the four. This time, the men didn't send the lad home. They took him with them. He was gone for some days. The men were pleased with the lad and they filled his barrow with rods of gold. And the story will continue in the next Litir.

Chaidh an gille dhachaigh. Chaidh iarraidh air a dhol a-mach air an làrna-mhàireach a-rithist airson tuilleadh connaidh fhaighinn. Thuir e ri bean an tuathanaich nach robh an dinnear aige an latha roimhe pailt gu leòr.

'Glè mhath,' ars ise. 'Bidh an dinnear agad pailt an turas seo.' Dh'fhalbh an gille. An turas seo thàinig dithis fhear. Riarraich an gille am biadh air an triùir aca. Lìon an dithis eile am bara aige agus chuir iad air an rathad e.

Anns a' mhadainn, chunnaic e bean an tuathanaich. 'An dèan thu,' ars esan, 'an dinnear dhomh nas pailte an-diugh.'

'Glè mhath,' ars ise.

Dh'fhalbh an gille a-rithist. Thàinig triùir a choimhead air. Riarraich e a chuid bìdh air a' cheathrar. An turas seo, cha do chuir na fir an gille dhachaigh. Thug iad leotha e. Bha e air falbh beagan làithean. Bha na fir toilichte leis a' ghille agus lìon iad a bhara le slatan òir. Agus leanaidh an sgeulachd san ath Litir.