

# **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 646 (which corresponds to Litir 950). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk).*

*I was telling you about Dòmhnall mac Fhionnla' nan Dàn – the poet and hunter from Lochaber. He was buried in the Cille Choirill graveyard. I want to tell you about his death, according to oral tradition.*

*Donald was 88 years of age. His wife died before him. He was living with his daughter. One day, he was high above Loch Treig in a bothy, looking out of the window. His daughter was making bread. Donald let out a sigh.*

*'What's wrong with you, man?' she said.*

*'I am seeing a stag coming down. And I can't shoot at it.'*

*'Och, don't be looking at things like that, man,' she said.*

*'You get an arrow down for me,' said Donald. 'Get the one with the best shaft.'*

*The daughter did that. Donald supported himself on the window. He drew the bow. He let the arrow go. The deer fell. And the old man almost fell beside the fire with the aftershock it gave him.*

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Dhòmhnall mac Fhionnla' nan Dàn – am bàrd agus sealgair Abrach. Chaidh a thiodhlacadh ann an Cladh Cille Choirill. Tha mi airson innse dhuibh mu a bhàs, a rèir beul-aithris.

Bha Dòmhnall ochdad 's a h-ochd bliadhna a dh'aois. Chaochail a bhean air thoiseach air. Bha e a' fuireach cuide ri a nighinn. Latha a bha seo, bha e gu h-àrd taobh Loch Trèig ann am bothan, a' coimhead a-mach air an uinneig. Bha a nighean ag obair air aran a dhèanamh. Leig Dòmhnall osna.

'Dè th' ort, a dhuine?' thuirt i.

'Tha mi a' faicinn ùdlaiche a' tighinn a-nuas. Agus chan urrainn dhomh a thilgeil leis an t-saighead.'

'Och, na bithibh a' coimhead air rudan mar sin, a dhuine,' thuirt i.

'Thoir thusa saighead a-nuas dhomh,' thuirt Dòmhnall. 'Faigh an tè as fhèrr smèidir.'

Rinn an nighean sin. Leag Dòmhnall a thaic ris an uinneig. Tharraing e an t-saighead. Leig e air falbh i. Thuit am fiadh. Agus cha mhòr nach do thuit am bodach taobh an teine leis a' bhriosgadh a thug e air.

*'That's the last stag I'll shoot,' he said. 'Skin it and I'll be buried in its hide at Cille Choirill. Don't put me on my back at all. Face me towards Loch Treig and the hills on which my mind travels every day.*

*I want to farewell Cille Choirill graveyard. But I'd like just to give a short account of the church in the graveyard. It's very old. According to oral tradition, it was built – or perhaps rebuilt – in 1484 by the clan chief of the Camerons, Ailean nan Creach [Allan of the Forays].*

*Allan was involved in plundering on seven occasions. But, afterwards, he regretted it. He decided to build seven churches in order to display his regret. One of them was Cille Choirill. The church was already in the graveyard when Dòmhnall mac Fhionnla' nan Dàn was buried there, with a stag's pelt around him and his face towards Loch Treig and the hills.*

'Sin agad an damh mu dheireadh a thilgeas mi,' thuirt e. 'Feann e agus thèid mo thiodhlacadh na sheiche ann an Cille Choirill. Na cuir air mo dhruim idir mi. Cuir m' aghaidh air Loch Trèig is air na monaidhean air a bheil m' inntinn a' siubhal a h-uile latha.'

Tha mi airson soraidh a leigeil le Cladh Cille Choirill. Ach bu mhath leam dìreach geàrr-aithris a dhèanamh air an eaglais anns a' chladh. Tha i gu math sean. A rèir beul-aithris, chaidh a togail – no 's dòcha ath-thogail – ann an ceithir deug, ochdad 's a ceithir (1484) le ceann-cinnidh nan Camshronach, Ailean nan Creach.

Thog Ailean seachd creachan. Ach, an dèidh làimhe, ghabh e aithreachas às. Chuir e roimhe seachd eaglaisean a thogail airson a chuid aithreachais a dhearbhadh. B' e tè dhiubh Cille Choirill. Bha an eaglais anns a' chladh mu thràth nuair a chaidh Dòmhnall mac Fhionnla' nan Dàn a thiodhlacadh ann, le seiche daimh timcheall air agus aghaidh air Loch Trèig 's na monaidhean.