

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 648 (which corresponds to Litir 952). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

Near Blair Atholl, there is a small hill called 'gibbet hill'. I'd like to tell you about the last man who was hanged there. He was the Laird of Auchgobhal in Glen Tilt, north of Blair [Atholl]. He was in prison for murder. While he was there, the Earl of Atholl's chief forester, MacIntosh of Tirinie, said that the deer would now get a rest. That made the Laird of Auchgobhal furious.

When he was out of [the] prison, the Laird of Auchgobhal and his servant were hunting deer. They went for the night to a mountain bothy. Who was there before them but MacIntosh and his assistant. In the middle of the night, the Laird of Auchgobhal arose. He thrust his dirk in MacIntosh. His servant murdered the assistant. After the murder, the Laird of Auchgobhal fled to the north.

There was an Atholl man in the prison. He was the Tough Hen Thief. He said – if they released him – that he would imprison the Laird of Auchgobhal.

They released him and he and sixty other men went to the north. He heard that there was to be a wedding

Faisg air Blàr Athall, tha cnoc beag ann air a bheil Tom na Croiche. Bu mhath leam innse dhuibh mun fhear mu dheireadh a chaidh a chrochadh air. B' esan Fear Ach' a' Ghobhail ann an Gleann Teilt, tuath air a' Bhlàr. Bha e sa phrìosan airson murt. Fhad 's a bha e ann, thuirt àrd-fhorsair Iarl' Athall, Mac an Tòisich Tìr Ìngnidh, gum faigheadh na fèidh anail a-nise. Chuir sin an dearg chaothach air Fear Ach' a' Ghobhail.

Nuair a bha e a-mach às a' phrìosan, chaidh Fear Ach' a' Ghobhail agus a shearbhant a shealg nam fiadh. Chaidh iad airson na h-oidhche gu bothan monaidh. Cò bha ann romhpa ach Mac an Tòisich agus fhear-taice. Ann am meadhan na h-oidhche, dh'èirich Fear Ach' a' Ghobhail. Shàth e a bhiodag ann am Mac an Tòisich. Mhuirt a shearbhant am fear-taice. An dèidh a' mhuirt, theich Fear Ach' a' Ghobhail don cheann a tuath.

Bha fear às Athall anns a' phrìosan. B' esan Rag Mhèirleach nan Cearc. Thuirt e – nan leigeadh iad às e, gun cuireadh e Fear Ach' a' Ghobhail fo ghlas.

Leigeadh iad às e agus chaidh e fhèin is seasgad duine eile chun a chinn a tuath. Chuala e gun robh banais gu bhith

and that the Laird of Auchgobhal would be present. The Tough Hen Thief went there himself in the guise of a beggar.

He got a dram and he drank the health of the Laird of Auchgobhal. The Laird of Auchgobhal knew what that meant and he attempted to flee. But the Atholl men captured him.

When they were close to Dalnacardoch, a herd of deer came past. The Laird of Auchgobhal said to the others, 'If you untied my hands, I'd shoot one [deer] of them.'

The Tough Hen Thief said to them, 'Don't untie his hands because I'm the deer.'

'Upon my honour,' said the Laird of Auchgobhal, 'if I got a gun you would be the deer!'

They took the Laird of Auchgobhal to Blair Atholl. And he was hanged on Tom na Croiche, the last man who lost his life in that way.

ann agus gum biodh Fear Ach a' Ghobhail an làthair. Chaidh an Rag Mhèirleach ann e fhèin, ann an riochd dìol-dèirce.

Fhuair e dram agus dh'òl e deoch-slàinte Fear Ach a' Ghobhail. Bha fios aig Fear Ach a' Ghobhail dè bha sin a' ciallachadh agus dh'fheuch e ri teicheadh. Ach fhuair na h-Athallaich grèim air.

Nuair a bha iad faisg air Dail na Ceàrdaich, thàinig greigh fhiadh seachad. Thuirt Fear Ach a' Ghobhail ri càch, 'Nam fuasgladh sibh mo làmhan, thilginn fiadh dhiubh.'

Thuirt Rag Mhèirleach nan Cearc riutha, 'Na fuasglaidh a làmhan oir 's e mise am fiadh.'

'Mo làmh dhut,' thuirt Fear Ach a' Ghobhail, 'nam faighinn gunna bu tusa am fiadh!'

Thug iad Fear Ach a' Ghobhail a Bhlàr Athall. Agus chaidh a chrochadh air Tom na Croiche, am fear mu dheireadh a chaill a bheatha anns an dòigh sin.