

# **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 650 (which corresponds to Litir 954). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodny.maclea@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.maclea@bbc.co.uk).*

*Have you ever noticed the clumps of small twigs that are often in the foliage of the birch tree? They are like brooms, aren't they? That's what they are – witches' brooms. And how did they get there? Well, here's how it happened.*

*There were at one time two brothers – Alex and Archie – who were crofters in Argyll. Alex was the elder of them. He owned the croft and he was the leader. He was paying wages to Archie of sixpence a week when he thought it was appropriate.*

*One day Alex and Archie were building a dyke. A travelling man appeared. 'Does this land belong to you?' he asked.*

*'No,' replied Alex. 'Why?'*

*'I'd like to get permission to get a little of that heather,' said the traveller. There was long heather growing on the far side of the dyke.*

*'You can pull heather without asking permission,' said Alex. 'What will you make with it?'*

An do mhothaich sibh riamh do na badain de mhion-mheanglan a tha gu tric ann an duilleach na craoibhe-beithe? Tha iad coltach ri sguaban, nach eil? 'S e sin a th' anna – sguaban bhana-bhuidseach. Agus ciamar a fhuair iad ann? Uill, seo mar a thachair e.

Bha uaireigin dithis bhràithrean – Ailig agus Eairdsidh – a bha nan croitearan ann an Earra-Ghàidheal. B' e Ailig a bu shine dhiubh. 'S ann leis-san a bha a' chroit agus 's ann aigesan a bha ceannas. Bha e a' pàigheadh tuarastal do dh'Eairdsidh de bhonn-a-sia san t-seachdain nuair a bha e a' smaoineachadh gun robh e iomchaidh.

Latha a bha seo, bha Ailig is Eairdsidh a' togail gàrradh. Nochd fear-siubhail. 'An ann leibh fhèin a tha am fearann seo?' dh'fhaighnich e.

'Chan ann,' fhreagair Ailig. 'Carson?'

'Bu mhath leam cead fhaighinn beagan dhen fhraoch sin fhaighinn,' thuirt am fear-siubhail. Bha fraoch fada a' fàs air taobh thall a' ghàrraidh.

'Faodaidh tu fraoch a tharraing gun chead iarraidh,' thuirt Ailig. 'Dè nì thu leis?'

*'Brooms for selling,' said the other man.*

*'What do you get for each broom?' asked Archie.*

*'Sixpence usually.'*

*'And how long does it take to make a broom?' said Archie.*

*'Two hours,' said the travelling man.*

*'Two hours?!' said Archie.*

*'It takes me a week to make sixpence! When my brother is in a good mood.'*

*Alex said that the travelling man could take a load of heather with him. The traveller leaped over the dyke. He pulled heather until he had a shoulder-load. 'Thanks,' he said, and he started on the road.*

*Archie followed him. He stopped him. 'Is it easy to make a broom?' he asked. 'Easy enough,' replied the traveller. He explained to him how he would make one for himself. Archie thanked him and he returned.*

*'There you go, Archie,' said his brother. 'We have work to do.'*

*'No,' replied Archie. 'I'll no longer work for you. I'm going to make brooms.' That's how Archie started a new trade as a maker of brooms. And I'll tell you about the birch trees next week.*

*'Sguaban airson reic,' thuir am fear eile.*

*'Dè gheibh thu air gach sguab?' dh'fhaighnich Eairdsidh.*

*'Gheibh bonn-a-sia mar as trice.'*

*'Agus dè cho fad 's a bheir e dhut sguab a dhèanamh?' thuir Eairdsidh.*

*'Dà uair a thide,' ars am fear-siubhail.*

*'Dà uair a thide?!' thuir Eairdsidh.*

*'Cosgaidh e seachdain dhomh bonn-a-sia a chosnadh! Nuair a tha mo bhràthair ann an sunnd mhath.'*

*Thuir Ailig gum faodadh am fear-siubhail eallach de fhraoch a thoirt leis. Leum am fear-siubhail thar a' ghàrraidh. Tharraing e fraoch gus an robh gad aige. 'Taing dhuibh,' thuir e, agus thòisich e air an rathad.*

*Lean Eairdsidh air. Chuir e stad air. 'A bheil e furasta sguab a dhèanamh?' dh'fhaighnich e. 'Furasta gu leòr,' fhreagair am fear-siubhail. Mhìnich e dha ciamar a dhèanadh e tè dha fhèin. Thug Eairdsidh taing dha, agus thill e.*

*'Siuthad a-nis, Eairdsidh,' thuir a bhràthair. 'Tha obair againn ri dhèanamh.'*

*'Chan eil,' fhreagair Eairdsidh. 'Cha dèan mi obair dhut tuilleadh. Tha mi a' dol a dhèanamh sguaban.' 'S ann mar sin a thòisich Eairdsidh air ceàird ùr mar fhear-dèanaimh sguaban. Agus innsidh mi dhuibh mu na craobhan-beithe an-ath-sheachdain.*