

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 657 (which corresponds to Litir 961). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I want to tell you about a fiddle called The Yellow London Lady. It is connected to the story that I was telling you about the scientific experiment on Schiehallion in 1774.

When they were finished, the scientists held a party in a bothy on the mountain. One of the locals – Duncan Robertson – was present. He was a fiddler. He took his fiddle with him.

The bothy went up in flames and the fiddle disappeared in the fire. That left Duncan bereft. How was he going to buy a new fiddle?

When he returned to London, the head of the scientific experiment, Nevil Maskelyne – the Astronomer Royal – found a new fiddle. He sent it to Duncan. Duncan was really happy. He called the fiddle 'The Yellow London Lady'. It must have been somewhat yellow. It doesn't look so yellow today. But it's two hundred and fifty years old – or more.

When Duncan was old, he gave a friend of his the Yellow

Tha mi airson innse dhuibh mu fhidheall air a bheil A' Bhan-Lunnainneach Bhuidhe. Tha i co-cheangailte ris an eachdraidh a bha mi ag innse dhuibh mun deuchainn saidheansail air Sìth Chailleann ann an seachd ceud deug, seachdad 's a ceithir (1774).

Nuair a bha iad deiseil, chùm an luchd-saidheans pàrtaidh ann am bothan air a' bheinn. Bha fear de mhuinntir an àite – Donnchadh MacDhonnchaidh – an làthair. Bha e na fhidhlear. Thug e an fhidheall aige leis.

Chaidh am bothan na smàl agus dh'fhalbh an fhidheall anns an teine. Dh'fhàg sin Donnchadh troimhe-chèile. Ciamar a bha e a' dol a cheannach fidheall ùr?

Nuair a thill e a Lunnainn, lorg ceannard na deuchainne saidheansail, Nevil Maskelyne – an Reultair Rìoghail – fidheall ùr. Chuir e gu Donnchadh i. Bha Donnchadh cho sona ris an rìgh. Chuir e an t-ainm air an fhidhill 'A' Bhan-Lunnainneach Bhuidhe'. Feumaidh gun robh i car buidhe. Chan eil i a' coimhead cho buidhe an-diugh. Ach tha i dà cheud gu leth bliadhna a dh'aois – no barrachd.

Nuair a bha Donnchadh sean, thug e a' Bhan-Lunnainneach Bhuidhe do charaid

London Lady. But he made a condition – that his friend would have to leave the fiddle to another man called Duncan Robertson. From that time, it has gone between men called Duncan Robertson.

One of those men went to Australia. He left the Yellow London Lady with his mother in Rannoch. She loaned it to a man called Alasdair a' Phìobaire who was famous as a musician. Alasdair was taking part in a music competition in Liverpool.

He won the competition. But he drank too much afterwards. He spent all his money. He had nothing to get home. He took the fiddle to a pawnbroker in order to get money. The Rannoch people were angry. They sent Alasdair back to Liverpool to get the Yellow London Lady.

He went there. But again he drank too much and he fell, breaking the neck of the fiddle. It was mended and today it is in good condition in the Clan Donnachaidh Museum in Perthshire.

dha. Ach chuir e cùmhnant air – gu feumadh a charaid an fhidheall fhàgail aig fear eile air an robh Donnchadh MacDhonnchaidh mar ainm. Bhon uair sin, tha i air a dhol eadar fir air an robh Donnchadh MacDhonnchaidh.

Chaidh fear de na daoine sin gu Astràilia. Dh'fhàg e a' Bhan-Lunnainneach Bhuidhe aig a mhàthair ann an Raineach. Thug ise air iasad i gu fear Alasdair a' Phìobaire a bha ainmeil mar neach-ciùil. Bha Alasdair a' gabhail pàirt ann an fharpais-chiùil ann an Liverpool.

Bhuannaich e an fharpais. Ach dh'òl e cus an dèidh làimhe. Chosg e an t-airgead gu lèir aige. Cha robh càil aige airson faighinn dhachaigh. Thug e an fhidheall gu geall-cheannaiche no *pawnbroker* airson airgead fhaighinn. Bha muinntir Raineach feargach. Chuir iad Alasdair air ais a Liverpool airson a' Bhan-Lunnainneach Bhuidhe fhaighinn.

Chaidh e ann. Ach a-rithist dh'òl e cus agus thuit e, a' briseadh amhaich na fìdhle. Chaidh obair càraidh a dhèanamh oirre agus an-diugh tha i ann an staid mhath ann an Taigh-tasgaidh Clann Donnchaidh ann an Siorrachd Pheairt.