

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 728 (which corresponds to Litir 1,032). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

An angel of God came to visit St Columba. The saint died a week later, at the end of the Sabbath and the beginning of the Lord's Day. The Sabbath Day was the day before Sunday in the Celtic Church.

Columba and his servant, Diarmad, went to bless a barn. 'I want to tell you a secret,' said the saint, 'if you promise me that you won't say anything about it to another person while I live.' Diarmad promised to keep the secret to himself.

In the middle of the night tonight,' said Columba, 'I'll leave by the invitation of the Lord.' The servant started to cry, and Columba comforted him.

The saint returned to the monastery. Halfway, he stopped to take a rest. A white horse came to him. The horse put its head on Columba's lap. Adomnan in his account Vita Sancti Columbae, wrote that God told the horse that the saint was going to die. The horse started to sob uncontrollably.

Diarmad tried to drive it away. But Columba stopped him. He blessed the horse.

Thàinig aingeal Dhè a thadhail air Calum Cille. Chaochail an naomh seachdain an dèidh sin, aig deireadh na Sàbaid agus toiseach Latha an Tighearna. B' e Latha na Sàbaid an latha ro Dhidòmhnaich anns an Eaglais Cheiltich.

Chaidh Calum Cille agus am fear-frithealaidh aige, Diarmad, a bheannachadh sabhal. 'Tha mi airson rùn-dìomhair innse dhut,' thuirt an naomh, 'ma gheallas tu dhomh nach can thu càil mu dheidhinn ri duine eile fhad 's as beò mi.' Gheall Diarmad an rùn-dìomhair a chumail dha fhèin.

'Ann am meadhan na h-oidhche seo,' thuirt Calum Cille, 'falbhaidh mi, air cuireadh an Tighearna.' Thòisich am fear-frithealaidh air gul, agus chofhurtaich Calum Cille e.

Thill an naomh don mhanachainn. Letheach-slighe air an rathad, stad e airson fois a ghabhail. Thàinig each bàna thuige. Chuir an t-each a cheann air uchd Chalum Cille. Sgrìobh Adomnan anns a' chunntas aige Vita Sancti Columbae, gun do dh'inns Dia don each gun robh bàs a' tighinn air an naomh. Thòisich an t-each air caoineadh gu goirt.

Dh'fheuch Diarmad ri iomain air falbh. Ach chuir Calum Cille stad air. Bheannaich e an t-each.

The saint went to the summit of the hill above the monastery. He put his hands up and he blessed the monastery. 'Small and mean though it is,' he said, 'yet it shall be held in great honour by the kings and people of Scotland.'

Columba went to his hut. He was transcribing the psalms. He was working on the tenth verse of the 34th psalm: the young lions do lack and they suffer hunger; but those who seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.

'Here,' he said, 'I must stop. Let Baithéne write what follows.' He was naming the man who would follow himself as the Abbot of Iona.

At midnight, Columba went to the church. Diarmad followed him. At a distance, Diarmad saw that the church was full of light. But, when he came close to the door, the light disappeared. Columba was lying in front of the altar. The monks came, and the saint blessed the monks with his hand. Shortly after, his soul left his body.

Chaidh an naomh gu mullach a' chnuic os cionn na manachainn. Chuir e a làmh an-àirde agus bheannaich e a' mhanachainn. 'Ged as beag is suarach an t-àite seo,' thuirt e, 'gidheadh, bidh rìghrean is sluagh na h-Alba a' toirt mòr-urram dha.'

Chaidh Calum Cille don bhothan aige. Bha e a' dèanamh tàr-sgrìobhadh air na sailm. Bha e ag obair air an deiceamh rann dhen cheathramh Salm air fhichead: *Bidh easbhaidh air na leòmhanaibh òga, agus bidh acras orra; ach orrasan a dh'iarra an Tighearna, cha bhi maith air bith a dhìth.*

'An seo,' thuirt e, 'feumaidh mi sguir. Sgrìobhadh Baithéne na leanas air.' Bha e ag ainmeachadh an duine a leanadh air fhèin mar Aba Ì.

Aig meadhan-oidhche, chaidh Calum Cille don eaglais. Lean Diarmad air. Aig astar, chunnaic Diarmad gun robh an eaglais làn solais. Ach, nuair a thàinig e faisg air an doras, dh'fhalbh an solas. Bha Calum Cille na laighe air beulaibh na h-altair. Thàinig na manaich, agus bheannaich an naomh iad le a làimh. Goirid an dèidh sin, dh'fhàg anam a chorp.