

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 752 (which corresponds to Litir 1,056). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you about the Fairy Flag of Clan MacLeod. It's in Dunvegan Castle on the Isle of Skye. There are three other stories about the flag.

There was a man, a MacDiarmad, who was a ploughman. A fairy gave him a box for the clan chief. The ploughman took the box to Dunvegan Castle. The lady [clan chief's wife] was expecting a baby. But, when she looked at the flag, the labour started immediately. And the baby appeared shortly after.

There is another story about the flag. One particular night, there was a great celebration in Dunvegan Castle. A nurse was keeping an eye on the chief's young son. She put the baby in his cradle in his room. That was in the tower called the Fairy Tower. The nurse left to take part in the celebration.

While she was away, the lad awoke and became restless. He kicked his blanket off. A fairy came and put a silk shawl around the lad. When the girl returned, she picked up the lad, still with the shawl around him. She went to the celebration with him. When she joined the others, the room was filled with fairy voices, singing a special lullaby.

And there is another story. One time, a MacLeod chief married a fairy

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mun Bhrataich Shìth no Fairy Flag aig Clann 'ic Leòid. Tha i ann an Caisteal Dhùn Bheagain anns an Eilean Sgitheanach. Tha trì stòiridhean eile ann mun bhrataich.

Bha fear MacDhiarmaid, a bha na threabhaiche. Thug sìthiche bogsa dha airson a' chinn-chinnidh. Thug an treabhaiche am bogsa a Chaisteal Dhùn Bheagain. Bha a' bhean-ualas an dùil leanabh a bhith aice. Ach, nuair a thug i sùil air a' bhrataich, thòisich an spàirn-bhreith sa mhionaid! Agus nochd an leanabh goirid an dèidh sin.

Tha stòiridh eile ann mun bhrataich. Oidhche a bha seo, bha cuirm mhòr a' dol ann an Caisteal Dhùn Bheagain. Bha tè-altraim a' cumail sùil air mac òg a' chinn-chinnidh. Chuir i an leanabh na chreathail anns an t-seòmar aige. Bha sin anns an tùr ris an canar Fairy Tower. Dh'fhalbh an tè-altraim a ghabhail pàirt anns a' chuir.

Fhad 's a bha i air falbh, dhùisg an gille is dh'fhàs e an-fhoiseil. Bhreab e a phlaide dheth. Thàinig sìthiche agus chuir e seàla shìoda timcheall a' ghille. Nuair a thill an nighean, thog i an gille, fhathast leis an t-seàla timcheall air. Dh'fhalbh i don chuir leis. Nuair a chaidh i far an robh càch, lìonadh an seòmar le guthan shìthichean, a' seinn tàladh sònraichte.

Agus tha stòiridh eile ann. Uair a bha seo, phòs ceann-cinnidh nan Leòdach bean-

woman. They were living together for years in the land of the fairies. MacLeod wanted to return to his own people. They farewelled each other at the bridge at Beul-atha nan Trì Allt. People call it the Fairy Bridge in English.

The fairy woman gave the chief the Fairy Flag. She said to him, if he were in an emergency at time of war, that he'd only have to bring out the flag and wave it. And he would be victorious. But she warned him that it would only work three times. According to the folk of the Castle, the chief waved the Fairy Flag twice in battle when the MacLeods were in dire straits. They won each time.

shìth. Bha iad a' fuireach còmhla fad bhliadhnaichean ann an tìr nan sìthichean. Bha an Leòdach ag iarraidh tilleadh do a mhuinntir fhèin. Leig iad soraidh le chèile aig an drochaid aig Beul-atha nan Trì Allt. Canaidh daoine *Fairy Bridge* rithe ann am Beurla.

Thug a' bhean-shìth a' Bhratach Shìth don cheann-chinnidh. Thuir i ris, nam biodh e ann an èiginn aig àm catha, nach leigeadh e leas ach a' bhratach a thoirt a-mach agus a crathadh. Agus bhiodh buaidh aige. Ach thug i rabhadh dha nach obraicheadh i ach trì tursan. A rèir muinntir a' Chaisteil, chrath an ceann-cinnidh a' Bhratach Shìth dà thuras ann an cath nuair a bha na Leòdaich ann an èiginn. Gach turas bha buaidh aca.