

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 783 (which corresponds to Litir 1,087). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you about Lady Lindsay. She was the grand-daughter of King James I. She was locked in a castle above the River Ericht in Perthshire – because she [had] murdered her husband.

Every day, she had to spin a thread. The thread would reach the river three hundred feet below her. She wouldn't get food until the thread was done.

After her death, her ghost returned. And she continued to spin her thread every day, year after year. The Battle of Culloden took place. Some from Glen Ericht were in the Jacobite army. Afterwards, they were fugitives. Among them was 'big Neil of the trout'.

Neil was a top angler. It was natural for him to go into hiding next to the river. He found a crevice between the rocks, just below the crag where the castle was. He caught plenty of trout in the river.

However, one day, there was heavy rain in Strath Ardle. A flood came down the River Ardle and into the Ericht. Neil didn't know it was coming. Without warning, he was swept out of his crevice.

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mun Bhaintighearna Liondsaidh. Bha i na ban-ogha aig Rìgh Seumas I. Bha i glaiste ann an caisteal os cionn Uisge Eireachd ann an Siorrachd Pheairt – a chionn 's gun do mhurt i an duine aice.

Gach latha, bha aice ri snàithlean a shnìomh. Ruigeadh an snàithlean an abhainn trì cheud troigh fòidhpe. Chan fhaigheadh i biadh gus an robh an snàithlean deiseil.

An dèidh a bàis, thill an taibhs aice. Agus lean i oirre le bhith a' snìomh a snàithlein gach latha, bliadhna an dèidh bliadhna. Bha Blàr Chùil Lodair ann. Bha cuid à Gleann Eireachd ann an arm nan Seumasach. An dèidh làimhe, bha iad nan ruagalaichean. Nam measg, bha Niall Mòr nam Breac.

Bha Niall fìor mhath mar iasgair-slait. Bha e nàdarrach dha gum biodh e a' dol am falach ri taobh na h-aibhne. Lorg e còs eadar na creagan, dìreach os cionn bonn na creige far an robh an caisteal. Ghlac e bric gu leòr anns an abhainn.

Ge-tà, latha a bha seo, bha uisge mòr ann an Srath Àrdail. Thàinig tuil sìos Uisge Àrdail agus a-steach don Eireachd. Cha robh fios aig Niall gun robh e a' tighinn. Gun rabhadh, chaidh a sguabadh a-mach às a' chòs aige.

He was in danger of his life. When he was under the crag, he saw a thread hanging from the precipice above. He grabbed hold of it. Although it was thin, it was strong enough. Neil reached the bank of the stream. He grabbed hold of an alder bush, and he pulled himself out of the water.

He looked up. He saw the ghost of Lady Lindsay with a distaff in her hand. He took fright and threw his end of the thread into the water. She threw the distaff and the rest of the thread into the river, and she disappeared.

She hasn't been seen since then. Her work was finished. Her punishment was over. Lady Lindsay, murderer, had saved a life. And he was a follower of her grandfather's line, the Stuarts. She could now be dead in peace.

Bha e ann an cunnart a bheatha. Nuair a bha e fon chreig, chunnaic e snàithlean crochte bhon bhearradh gu h-àrd. Ghabh e grèim air. Ged a bha e tana, bha e làidir gu leòr. Ràinig Niall bruach na h-aibhne. Ghabh e grèim air preas feàrna, agus tharraing e e fhèin a-mach às an uisge.

Thug e sùil an-àirde. Chunnaic e taibhs na Baintighearna Liondsaidh le cuigeal na làimh. Ghabh e eagal agus thilg e an ceann aigesan dhen t-snàithlean don uisge. Thilg ise a' chuigeal agus an còrr dhen t-snàithlean don abhainn, agus dh'fhalbh i à fianais.

Chan fhacas bhon uair sin i. Bha a h-obair deiseil. Bha a peanas seachad. Bha a' Bhaintighearna Liondsaidh, murtair, air beatha a shàbhaladh. Agus bha esan na fhear-leantainn aig cinneadh a seanar, na Stiùbhartaich. Dh'fhaodadh i a bhith marbh a-nise ann an sìth.