

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 799 (which corresponds to Litir 1,103). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you about St. Merchard. In olden times, when a man died, his best horse was given to the landlord. That was the 'heriot'. If he didn't have a horse, the landlord was getting the same value in cattle or sheep.

Twelve hundred years after Merchard's death, a man died in Glenmoriston. He left a widow after him. He didn't have a horse, and the estate factor took away sheep.

That night, the factor was lying in bed, when he heard a voice. The voice said it was Merchard that was speaking, and that he must return the sheep to the widow.

The man was scared out of his wits. The sheep were immediately returned to the widow. From that day on, Glenmoriston landlords were never seeking a heriot.

There is an account of Merchard in the old book called the Aberdeen Breviary. It tells us about the saint's death. He went to Rome. The Pope, Gregory, blessed him.

Merchard went home. He reached Kincardine, his own country. He knew that his death was

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Naomh Meirheard. Anns an t-seann aimsir, nuair a fhuair fear bàs, bha an t-each a b' fheàrr aige air a thoirt seachad don uachdaran. B' e sin 'an t-each-ursainn'. Mura robh each aige, bha an t-uachdaran a' faighinn an aon luach ann an crodh no caoraich.

Dusan ceud bliadhna an dèidh bàs Meirheard, chaochail fear ann an Gleann Moireasdan. Dh'fhàg e bantrach às a dhèidh. Cha robh each aige, agus thug bàillidh na h-oighreachd caoraich leis.

Air an oidhche sin, bha am bàillidh na laighe san leabaidh, nuair a chuala e guth. Thuirt an guth gur e Meirheard a bha a' bruidhinn, agus gun fheumadh e na caoraich a thilleadh don bhantraich.

Bha egal a bheatha air an duine. Chaidh na caoraich a thilleadh don bhantraich sa bhad. Bhon latha sin a-mach, cha robh uachdarain Ghleann Moireasdan ag iarraidh each-ursainn.

Tha cunntas mu Mheirheard anns an t-seann leabhar ris an canar Leabhar Ùrnaighean Obar Dheathain. Tha e ag innse dhuinn mu bhàs an naoimh. Chaidh e don Ròimh. Bheannaich am Pàp, Griogair, e.

Chaidh Meirheard dhachaigh. Ràinig e Cinn Chàrdainn, an dùthaich aige fhèin. Bha fios aige nach robh a bhàs fad-

not far off. He told his servants to put his body on a cart. The cart would move by itself. Where it stopped – that was the place to bury him. All of that happened, and the cart stopped where the old church in Kincardine [O’Neil] is now.

For hundreds of years after Merchard’s death, his bell was still in Glenmoriston – at Clachan Meircheard. People who were sick, they were handling it, and they were getting better.

When the church became a ruin [fell apart], the bell was kept in the ruin. When a funeral was due, the bell was ringing by itself, saying, ‘Home, home, to your everlasting bed!’

Unfortunately, around the year 1870, a man threw the bell into the river. It sank and was never seen again. What a great pity.

às. Thug e òrdugh do a shearbhantan a chorp a chur air cairt. Bhiodh a’ chairt a’ gluasad leatha fhèin. Far an stadadh i – b’ e sin an t-àite airson a thiodhlacadh. Thachair a h-uile càil sin, agus stad a’ chairt far a bheil a-nise an t-seann eaglais ann an Cinn Chàrdainn.

Airson ceudan bhliadhnaichean an dèidh bàs Meircheard, bha an clag aige fhathast ann an Gleann Moireasdan – aig Clachan Meircheard. Daoine a bha tinn – bha iad ga làimhseachadh, agus bha piseach a’ tighinn orra.

Nuair a thuit an eaglais às a chèile, bha an clag air a chumail anns an tobhta. Nuair a bha tiodhlacadh gu bhith ann, bha an clag a’ seirm leis fhèin, ag ràdh, ‘Dhachaigh, dhachaigh, gu do leabaidh bhuan!’

Gu mì-fhortanach, timcheall na bliadhna ochd ceud deug is seachdad (1870), thilg fear an clag don abhainn. Chaidh e fodha agus chan fhacas a-rithist e. Is mòr am beud.