

# **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 849 (which corresponds to Litir 1,153). Ruairidh can be contacted at [roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk).

*The word neapaigin came from the English napkin. Neapaigin in Gaelic means napkin or handkerchief. Neapaigin-pòca or neapaigin-pòcaid particularly mean handkerchief. Be aware that some people say neapagear or neapraigear or neapraigin, rather than neapaigin.*

*I want to tell you about an old game that the Gaels had in olden times called 'Leave, leave the Handkerchief'. It was played by girls. Here's how it goes.*

*Except for one girl, the company sits a small distance apart from each other. The one who stands, she is the Queen. She walks around. In her hand there is a handkerchief. The handkerchief should be clean! The Queen says this:*

*Leave, leave the handkerchief,  
The hen is sitting on her eggs,  
And the pot is boiling,  
Bread and butter and  
barley bannocks,  
Who has the  
Handkerchief?*

*Then the Queen says to everybody,  
Close your eye(s) and  
raise your head. The others close their eyes and they raise their heads.*

*The Queen leaves the handkerchief on the face of one of the girls. She then runs away. The girl*

*Thàinig am facal neapaigin bhon Bheurla napkin. Tha neapaigin ann an Gàidhlig a' ciallachadh napkin no handkerchief. Tha neapaigin-pòca no neapaigin-pòcaid gu sònraichte a' ciallachadh handkerchief. Bithibh mothachail gum bi cuid ag ràdh neapagear, no neapraigear no neapraigin, an àite neapaigin.*

*Tha mi airson innse dhuibh mu sheann chleas a bha aig na Gàidheil o shean air an robh 'Fàg, fàg an Neapaigin-pòca'. Bha e air a chluich le clann-nighean. Seo mar a tha e a' dol.*

*Ach a-mhàin aon tè, bidh a' chuideachd nan suidhe astar beag o chèile. An tè a sheasas an-àirde, is ise a' Bhanrigh. Bidh i a' coiseachd mun cuairt. Na làimh bidh neapaigin-pòca. Bu chòir don neapaigin a bhith glan! Bidh a' Bhanrigh ag ràdh seo:*

*Fàg, fàg an neapaigin-pòca, Tha a' chearc a' gur, 'S tha a' phoit a' goil, Aran is im is breacagan eòrna, Cò aig' a bhios an neapaigin-pòca?*

*An uair sin, bidh a' Bhàn-righ ag ràdh ris a h-uile duine, Dùin do shùil is tog do cheann. Dùinidh càch an sùilean agus togaidh iad an cinn.*

*Fàgaidh a' Bhanrigh an neapaigin air gnùis tè de na caileagan. Bidh i a' ruith air falbh an uair sin. Feumaidh a' chaileag*

*who got the handkerchief must follow the Queen – in order to catch her. It's not only that she follows her, but that she does everything the Queen does. Every twist and turn that the Queen makes, the handkerchief girl must do the same thing.*

*If the handkerchief girl makes any mistake, the others say, You burned a hole in your porridge. And that girl is put out of the game. But if she catches the Queen, she now becomes the Queen. And the game starts again.*

*It's good that games like that are preserved for us in print, along with a Gaelic vocabulary. It would be good to play them anew! I got this one from the old book Aithris is Oideas – a good store of games and oral tradition.*

a fhuair an neapaign leum gu a casan agus a' Bhanrigh a leantainn – airson a glacadh. Chan e a-mhàin gum bi i ga leantainn, ach gum bi i a' dèanamh a h-uile rud a bhios a' Bhanrigh a' dèanamh. A h-uile car a chuireas a' Bhanrigh dhith, feumaidh caileag na neapaign an aon rud a dhèanamh.

Ma nì caileag na neapaign mearachd sam bith, canaidh càch, *Loisg thu toll nad bhrochan*. Agus thèid an nighean sin a chur a-mach às a' ghèam. Ach ma bheireas i air a' Bhanrigh, bidh ise a-nise na Banrigh. Agus tòisichidh an cleas às ùr.

Tha e math gu bheil cleasan mar sin air an gleidheadh againn ann an clò, agus briathrachas Gàidhlig nan cois. Bhiodh e math an cluich as ùr! Fhuair mi am fear seo às an t-seann leabhar Aithris is Oideas – stòras math de chleasan is beul-aithris.