

## **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 931 (which corresponds to Litir 1,235). Ruairidh can be contacted at [fios@learngaelic.scot](mailto:fios@learngaelic.scot).*

*We've been in the company of the former minister of Callander, the Rev. Dr James Robertson. In 1791, he wrote a letter to James Drummond, the Earl of Perth. The subject of the letter was Highland superstitions.*

*I told you about the way that young people had for finding out whom they were going to marry. They were riddling silver in a barn. Here is another way.*

*On Halloween, they were going to a fank. They were getting wool from a black sheep. They were spinning the wool without speaking. They were going with the ball of spun wool to a kiln where people were drying grain.*

*They were throwing the ball of thread into the kiln in the name of the Devil. They were keeping hold of one end of the thread. They were pulling the thread in until it came to a stop. They were then asking, 'Who is holding the ball of thread?' And there was an answer from below, telling who the man's spouse would be.*

*The Rev. Robertson gives an account of a strange happening as it*

Tha sinn air a bhith ann an cuideachd seann mhinistear Chalasraid, an t-Ollamh Urramach Seumas MacDhonnchaidh. Ann an seachd ceud deug, naochad 's a h-aon (1791) sgrìobh e litir gu Seumas Druimeanach, Iarla Pheairt. B' e cuspair na litreach saobh-chràbhaidhean Gàidhealach.

Dh'inns mi dhuibh mu dhòigh aig daoine òga faighinn a-mach cò bha iad a' dol a phòsadh. Bha iad a' criathradh airgead ann an sabhal. Seo agaibh dòigh eile.

Air Oidhche Shamhna, bha iad a' dol gu faing. Bha iad a' faighinn clòimh o chaora dhubh. Bha iad a' snìomh na clòimhe gun a bhith a' bruidhinn. Bha iad a' falbh leis a' cheirsle gu àth far an robh daoine a' tiormachadh gràn.

Bha iad a' tilgeil na ceirsle don àth ann an ainm an Droch Fhir. Bha iad a' cumail grèim air aon cheann dhen t-snàth. Bha iad a' tarraing an t-snàtha a-steach gus an tàinig stad air. Bha iad an uair sin a' faighneachd, 'Cò tha a' cumail grèim air mo cheirsle?' Agus bha freagairt ann bho gu h-ìosal, ag innse cò an cèile a bhiodh aig an duine.

Tha an t-Urramach MacDhonnchaidh a' toirt cunntas de

*was told to him. There was a man living in the house of his grand-uncle. The old man had a servant. The servant was not married. On one particular Halloween night, the servant went to a barn to riddle silver. He wanted to find out whom he would have as a wife.*

*An apparition of a woman came in. She took hold of the riddle. But [she had only] a light hold. An apparition of another woman came in. She did the same thing. After that, four people came in. They were carrying a coffin.*

*An apparition of a third woman came in. She took a strong grip on the riddle. She pulled it from him. The man fled. He was full of fear. He went to the big house. He told them what had happened. And the old man said to him, 'You'll be married three times. Your first two wives will die. You saw their funerals tonight.' And, according to the account, everything happened as the old man said.*

thachartas annasach mar a chaidh innse dhàsan. Bha fear a' fuireach ann an taigh bràthair a sheanmhar no a sheanar. Bha searbhant aig a' bhodach. Cha robh an searbhant pòsta. Oidhche Shamhna a bha seo, chaidh an searbhant gu sabhal airson airgead a chriathradh. Bha e airson faighinn a-mach cò a' bhean a bhiodh aige.

Thàinig samhla de bhoireannach a-steach. Ghabh i grèim air a' chriathar. Ach grèim aotrom. Thàinig samhla boireannaich eile a-steach. Rinn i an aon rud. An dèidh sin, thàinig ceathrar a-steach. Bha iad a' giùlan ciste-laighe.

Thàinig samhla de threas boireannach a-steach. Ghabh ise grèim làidir air a' chriathar. Tharraing i bhuaith e. Theich an duine. Bha e làn eagail. Chaidh e don taigh mhòr. Dh'inns e dhaibh mar a thachair. Agus thuirt am bodach ris, 'Bidh thu pòsta trì tursan. Gheibh a' chiad dithis bhan agad bàs. Chunnaic thu an tiodhlacaidhean a-nochd.' Agus, a rèir a' chunntais, thachair a h-uile càil mar a thuirt am bodach.