

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 938 (which corresponds to Litir 1,242). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

<p><i>I was telling you about the Melbost Bard, Murdo MacFarlane, and his song 'S Fhada Leam an Oidhche Gheamhraidh. What was the bard most missing when he was on the Manitoba prairie? I'd say that it was the ceilidh-house. In the third verse, he writes that he'd prefer to be in a 'thatched bothy [with] a peat fire on the floor'.</i></p> <p><i>In the fourth verse, he describes characters in the ceilidh-house:</i></p> <p><i>The bodachs would be content and happy; With a clay pipe and a smoke; Lads twisting the horsehair for the fishhooks; And my loved ones ceilidhing together.</i></p> <p><i>In the final verse, there is the famous iconic phrase 'there is no cèilidh on the prairie'.</i></p> <p><i>But where, where can I go tonight?; There is no cèilidh on the prairie; And, oh, I shall not see when I rise [in the morning]; The peat smoke rising.</i></p> <p><i>The Melbost Bard had many subjects in his poetry, in addition to homesickness. He was working with a music group that became really famous in the world of the Gaels – Na</i></p>	<p><i>Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Bhàrd Mhealaboist, Murchadh MacPhàrlain, agus an dàn aige 'S Fhada Leam an Oidhche Gheamhraidh. Dè an rud a bu mhotha a bha am bàrd ag ionndrainn, agus e air prèiridh Mhanitòba? Chanainn gur e an taigh-cèilidh a bha ann. Anns an treas rann, tha e a' sgrìobhadh gum b' fheàrr leis a bhith ann am 'bothan-tughaidh [le] teine-mònach air an ùrlar'.</i></p> <p><i>Anns a' cheathramh rann, tha e a' dèanamh tuairisgeul de charactaran anns an taigh-chèilidh:</i></p> <p><i>Bhiodh na bodaich rianail, dòigheil Nam biodh bunag chrèadh 's ceò ac', Gilleann 's iad a' snìomh nan snòta 'S luchd mo rùin-sa cruinn a' cèilidh.</i></p> <p><i>Anns an rann mu dheireadh, tha an abairt shuaicheanta ainmeil 'chan eil cèilidh air a' phrèiridh'.</i></p> <p><i>Ach càite, càite nochd an tèid mi? Chan eil cèilidh air a' phrèiridh, 'S ò, chan fhaic mi 'n àm dhomh èirigh 'N-àirde 'g èirigh ceò na mònach.</i></p> <p><i>Bha iomadach cuspair, a bharrachd air cianalas, aig Bàrd Mhealaboist na bhàrdachd. Bha e ag obair le còmhlan-ciùil a dh'fhàs fìor ainmeil ann an saoghal nan Gàidheal – Na h-Òganaich. Am measg</i></p>
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<p><i>h-Òganaich. Among Murdo's songs that the group sang on stage, there was the love song 'Mòrag I would go with you'. Here is the first verse and the refrain:</i></p> <p><i>My love doesn't need false eyelashes; Or to put shop-bought colours on her cheeks; Or to buy dye to colour her hair; which is like bog cotton at the base of the cold mountains.</i></p> <p><i>Morag, I would go with you, without a thought, to the far side of the moon; Your kisses are far sweeter to me than honeycombs; To have you as my young bride; My hope is in your promise.</i></p> <p><i>There is a reason for naming 'the far side of the moon'. This song was written in 1969. That was the year that people put their feet on the moon for the first time. Two years after that, Na h-Òganaich won the folk group competition at the National Mod. They sang two songs by Murdo MacFarlane, and Mhòrag, Leat Shiùbhlainn was one of them.</i></p>	<p>òrain Mhurchaidh a sheinn an còmhlan air an àrd-ùrlar, bha an t-òran-gaoil <i>Mhòrag, Leat Shiùbhlainn</i>. Seo agaibh a' chiad rann agus an t-sèist:</p> <p><i>Cha leig mo luaidh-sa leas rosgan fuadain No snuadh na bùtha 'chur air a gruidhean, No dath a cheannach gu dath a cuailein, 'S e mar an canach aig sàil nam fuar-bheann.</i></p> <p><i>'Mhòrag, leat shiùbhlainn gun chùram gu cùl na gealaich, 'S mìlse leam do phògan gu mòr na na cìrean-meala. D' fhaighinn dhomh mar òg-bhean Mo dhòchas tha na do ghealladh.</i></p> <p>Tha adhbhar ann airson a bhith ag ainmeachadh <i>cùl na gealaich 'the far side of the moon'</i>. Chaidh an t-òran seo a sgrìobhadh ann an naoi ceud deug, seasgad 's a naoi (1969). B' e sin a' bhliadhna a chuir daoine an casan air a' ghealaich airson a' chiad turais. Dà bhliadhna an dèidh sin, bhuannaich na h-Òganaich farpais nan còmhlan aig a' Mhòd Nàiseanta. Bha dà òran le Murchadh MacPhàrlain aca, agus b' e <i>Mhòrag, Leat Shiùbhlainn</i> fear dhiubh.</p>
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