

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 1,066 (which corresponds to Litir 1,370). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

I was telling you about the murderer William Hare. I wrote about Burke and Hare for the book 'Mort Mhòr!' When I was researching the matter, I was going into Inverness Library. A man from Applecross was coming out.

I told him that I was researching the matter of Burke and Hare. He said to me, 'Well, you know that Hare went to live in Applecross ...?' I had not heard that story ever before that.

Here is the tale, according to oral tradition. Hare fled to Dumfries with the approval of the authorities. Sometime after that, a stranger appeared in Applecross under the name of William Maxwell. He obtained permission to live in an empty house owned by the Church. That was in Camusteel, the wee village where the Applecross Shop is today. The ruins of the house can still be seen.

Some people reckon that Maxwell was Hare. He had a wife, and he was a weaver. People knew him as the Breabadair Teine ('fire-weaver'). That was his frìth-ainm (nickname) or – as the people of Applecross say – his aithnìs. His nickname.

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mun mhurtair Uilleam Hare. Sgrìobh mi mu Bhurke is Hare airson an leabhair 'Mort Mhòr!' Nuair a bha mi a' rannsachadh a' ghnothaich, bha mi a' dol a-steach a Leabharlann Inbhir Nis. Bha fear às a' Chomraich a' tighinn a-mach.

Dh'innis mi dha gun robh mi a' rannsachadh cùis Bhurke is Hare. Thuit e rium, 'Uill, tha fios agad gun deach Hare a dh'fhuireach air a' Chomraich ...?' Cha robh mi air an sgeul sin a chluinntinn riamh roimhe.

Seo agaibh an sgeul, a rèir beul-aithris. Theich Hare a Dhùn Phris le cead na rioghachd. Uaireigin an dèidh sin, nochd coigreach air a' Chomraich fon ainm Uilleam Maxwell. Fhuair e cead fuireach ann an taigh falamh a bha leis an Eaglais. Bha sin ann an Camas Teile, am baile beag far a bheil bùth na Comraich an-diugh. Tha tobhta an taighe ri fhaicinn fhathast.

Bha cuid a' cumail a-mach gur e Hare a bha ann am Maxwell. Bha bean aige agus bha e na bhreabadair. Bha daoine eòlach air mar Am Breabadair Teine. B' e sin am frìth-ainm aige no – mar a chanas muinntir na Comraich – an aithnìs aige. *His nickname.*

<i>Why was he named the Breabadair Teine? There was a story that he was burned by lime or in an explosion. That fits a tale that Hare fell into a lime pit in London.</i> <i>There is a story that Maxwell was excellent as a weaver and that he had a new and fast way of weaving. They say that that is the reason he was called 'breabadair teine'. Fiery weaver, as it were.</i> <i>It was said that mariners from Applecross were in Edinburgh at the time of Burke's trial, and that they saw Hare. When Maxwell appeared in Applecross, they reckoned he was Hare.</i> <i>But is that true? A historian has been examining the matter recently. I'll tell you his opinion in the next Litir!</i>	Carson as e am Breabadair Teine a bha air? Bha stòiridh ann gun robh e air a losgadh le aol no ann an spreadhadh. Bha làrach na tubaist air aodann. Tha sin a' tighinn ri sgeul gun do thuit Hare a-steach a shloc-aoil ann an Lunnainn. Tha stòiridh ann gun robh Maxwell fìor mhath mar bhreabadair agus gun robh dòigh-fhighe luath ùr aige. Tha iad ag ràdh gur e sin as coireach gur e 'breabadair teine' a bha air. <i>Fiery weaver</i>, mar gum biodh. Bhathar ag ràdh gun robh maraichean às a' Chomraich ann an Dùn Èideann aig àm cùis-chùirte Bhurke, agus gum fac' iad Hare. Nuair a nochd Maxwell air a' Chomraich, bha iad a' dèanamh dheth gur e Hare a bha ann. Ach a bheil sin fìor? Tha eachdraiche air a bhith a' toirt sùil gheur air a' chùis o chionn ghoirid. Innsidh mi dhuibh a bheachd-san anns an ath Litir!
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