

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 1,081 (which corresponds to Litir 1,385). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

Some people in the old Highlands were named for goats. Most often his given name was Murdo. There was more than one man called 'Murdo of the Goats'. They appear in historical accounts and in oral tradition.

A story about one of them was collected by Calum Iain Maclean from John MacDonald in Brae Lochaber. Here is a summary of it: Many Irishmen would be coming to Scotland, selling goats. Murdo would buy some from them and sell them here and there.

He heard that a particular man – Captain MacDonald – wanted to buy some. 'What do you want for them?' he asked of Murdo.

'Two shillings for the first one,' said Murdo, and double them all the way through.'

'Och, you'll get that,' said the Captain. 'Be here with them tomorrow at one o' clock in the afternoon.'

The Captain told a neighbour that he [had] bought goats at a reasonable price. 'Two shillings for the first one and double them

Bha cuid de dhaoine air an t-seann Ghàidhealtachd air an ainmeachadh air gobhair. Mar bu trice, 's e 'Murchadh' a bha air an duine mar ainm-baistidh. Bha barrachd air aon duine air an robh 'Murchadh nan Gobhar'. Tha iad a' nochdadh ann an cunntasan eachdraidheil agus ann am beul-aithris.

Chaidh sgeul mu fhear dhiubh a chruinneachadh le Calum Iain MacGill-Eain bho Iain Dòmhnallach ann am Bràigh Loch Abar. Seo agaibh geàrr-chunntas dheth: Bhiodh mòran Èireannach a' tighinn a dh'Alba, agus iad a' reic ghobhar. Bhiodh Murchadh a' ceannach feadhainn bhuapa agus gan reic thall 's a-bhos.

Chuala e gun robh fear a bha seo – an Caipitean Dòmhnallach – ag iarraidh feadhainn a cheannach. 'Dè tha thu ag iarraidh orra?' dh'fhaighnich e de Mhurchadh.

'Dà thastan air a' chiad tè,' fhreagair Murchadh, 'agus an dùblachadh dhan deireadh.'

'Och, gheibh thu sin,' thuirt an Caipitean. 'Bi an seo leotha a-màireach aig uair feasgar.'

Dh'inns an Caipitean do choimhearsnach gun do cheannaich e gobhair aig prìs reusanta. 'Dà thastan air a' chiad tè agus an dùblachadh dhan

<p><i>all the way through.'</i></p> <p><i>'They are expensive at that price,' said the other man to him. Double a shilling yourself. It's not long until it's past a pound and then two pounds. And so on.</i></p> <p><i>The Captain understood he [had] made a mistake. There was only one way of getting out of the bad bargain. That was by scattering Murdo's goats. Murdo wouldn't be capable of coming at one o' clock in the afternoon.</i></p> <p><i>Murdo's goats were scattered. He didn't get them together until late at night. When Murdo and the goats appeared at the Captain's house, the Captain said he wasn't going to accept them.</i></p> <p><i>'A man was going to buy them from me. They were for somebody else,' he said. 'But when he came for them at one o' clock in the afternoon they weren't here. We couldn't, thus, conclude the bargain.' The Captain got out of the bad bargain he had made and Murdo of the Goats had to think again!</i></p>	<p><i>deireadh.'</i></p> <p><i>'Tha iad daor aig a' phrìs sin,' thuirt am fear eile ris. 'Dùblaich thusa tasan. Chan fhada gus am bi e seachad air not, agus an uair sin dà not. Agus mar sin air adhart.</i></p> <p><i>Thuig an Caipitean gun do rinn e mearachd. Bha dìreach aon dòigh faighinn a-mach às an droch bhargan. B' e sin na gobhair aig Murchadh a chur iomarla. Cha bhiodh comas aig Murchadh tighinn aig uair feasgar.</i></p> <p><i>Chaidh na gobhair a chur iomarla air Murchadh. Cha d' fhuair e na gobhair còmhla gu anmoch air an oidhche. Nuair a nochd Murchadh agus na gobhair aig taigh a' Chaipitein, thuirt an Caipitean nach robh e a' dol a ghabhail riutha.</i></p> <p><i>'Bha duine a' dol gan ceannach bhuam. 'S ann do dhuine eile a bha iad,' thuirt e. 'Ach nuair a thàinig e gan iarraidh aig uair feasgar, cha robh iad ann. Cha b' urrainn dhuinn, mar sin, am bargan a choileanadh.' Fhuair an Caipitean a-mach às an droch bhargan a rinn e, agus b' fheudar do Mhurchadh nan Gobhar smaoineachadh a-rithist!</i></p>
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