

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 1,083 (which corresponds to Litir 1,387). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learnagaelic.scot.

I was telling you about 'Murdo of the Goats' in Kintail. One day – New Year's Day – there was a big shinty match to be held on a field near his house. Now, Murdo's house had a thatched roof – thatched with heather, as was common in the Highlands.

Murdo and a friend of his wanted to poach deer that day. They went to the hunting mountain. That was four miles from Murdo's house. They killed a deer. They gralloched it. They cut the deer carcase into four pieces. They took the haunches with them. They were going to return next day to take the front quarters home.

But how would they get past the large body of people at the shinty pitch? In those days, on New Year's Day, the shinty games would go all day!

Murdo was very inventive. He took off his shoulder plaid. He put that around the meat. He covered everything with stems of heather, and he put that on his back. When they were close to his house, a man came to speak to Murdo. 'What do you have there, Murdo?' he said.

'Heather for the roof of the

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Mhurchadh nan Gobhar ann an Cinn t-Sàile. Latha a bha seo – Latha na Bliadhna' Ùire – bha geama mòr iomain gu bhith ann air pàirc faisg air an taigh aige. Nise, bha mullach-tughaidh air taigh Mhurchaidh – tughadh fraoich, mar a bha cumanta air a' Ghàidhealtachd.

Bha Murchadh agus caraid dha airson a bhith ri poidseadh feidh an latha sin. Chaidh iad don mhonadh-sheilg. Bha sin ceithir mìle bho thaigh Mhurchaidh. Mharbh iad fiadh. Rinn iad greallachadh air. Gheàrr iad closach an fhèidh ann an ceithir pìosan. Thug iad leotha na ceathramhan-deiridh. Bha iad a' dol a thilleadh an ath latha airson na ceathramhan-toisich a thoirt dhachaigh.

Ach ciamar a gheibheadh iad seachad air an t-sluagh mhòr aig pàirc na h-iomain? Anns na làithean ud, air Latha na Bliadhna' Ùire, bhiodh na geamannan iomain a' dol fad an latha!

Bha Murchadh gu math innleachdail. Thug e dheth a bhreacan-guailne. Chuir e sin timcheall na feòla. Chòmhdaich e a h-uile càil le gasan fraoich agus chuir e sin air a dhruim. Nuair a bha iad faisg air an taigh aige, thàinig fear a bhruidhinn ri Murchadh. 'Dè th' agad an sin, a Mhurchaidh?' thuirt e.

house,’ replied Murdo. The venison reached his house safely!

Murdo was keen on knitting [with knitting needles]. He made thousands of pairs of stockings. He would be knitting while keeping an eye on his goats.

The man who wrote the article about Murdo in ‘Scotland’s Magazine’, Alexander Campbell, did a lot of research on the man. After twenty years of research, he obtained a photograph of Murdo when he [the latter] was an old man.

When he was young, Alexander spoke to people who knew Murdo. They told him that the goatherd had extraordinary powers. For example, when he had sold a goat or kid, he was pointing to the animal with his shepherd’s crook. The goat was then walking slowly to him.

That was Murdo of the Goats. An old Gael of a type that will not be seen again.

‘Fraoch airson mullach an taighe,’
fhreagair Murchadh. Ràinig an t-sitheann an taigh aige gu sàbhailte!

Bha Murchadh measail air fighe le biorain. Rinn e na míltean de phaidhrichean stocainnean. Bhiodh e ri fighe fhad ’s a bha e a’ cumail sùil air na gobhair aige.

Rinn am fear a sgrìobh an t-alt mu Mhurchadh ann an *Scotland’s Magazine*, Alasdair Caimbeul, rannsachadh mòr air an duine. An dèidh fichead bliadhna de rannsachadh, fhuair e grèim air dealbh-camara de Mhurchadh, agus e na bhodach.

Nuair a bha e òg, bhruidhinn Alasdair ri daoine a bha eòlach air Murchadh. Dh’innse iad dha gun robh cumhachdan iongantach aig a’ bhuachaille-ghobhar. Mar eisimpleir, nuair a bha e air gobhar no meann a reic, bha e a’ comharrachadh a’ bheathaich le a bhachall. Bha a’ ghobhair an uair sin a’ coiseachd thuige gu socrach.

B’ e sin Murchadh nan Gobhar. Seann Ghàidheal dhen t-seòrsa nach fhaicear tuilleadh.