

## Literary Tour (#6)

### More Peig and An Bhab

#### FIRST COMES MARRIAGE, THEN COMES LOVE . . .

Arranged marriages and formal matchmaking were very much the norm in the lives of the writers of our memoirs. Ó Criomhthain covers this in some detail about others, although he doesn't say that much about his own situation.

Young men and women flirted and danced and had all the usual feelings, but that was all separate from marriage, it seems. It wasn't the least bit unusual to meet your future spouse a very short time before the wedding. And forget about long engagements: weddings popped up quickly in those times, pulled together quite rapidly after the match was agreed to.

Ó Súilleabháin only got married *after* the time he covers in his narrative, although when he drowned at the age of 46, he left a widow and two children behind.

But both Peig and "The Islandman" give brief descriptions of how they acquired spouses. One could suggest that the brevity and style of their accounts just go to show how much of a business matter, rather than a romantic one, marriage was in their lives.

#### Peig Dictation: Welcome to Her New Home

Peig and Pádraig were married on a Saturday, and on Tuesday they headed for their home on the Blasket. They made the crossing in four *naomhóg*, another word for a *currach*. Dineen tells us that this was a small boat (or "canoe"), and that this Irish word was particularly applied to the type of boat used along the coast of Kerry.

We'll fill in some blanks in the narration of Peig's transit to the island, and her welcome there. In the book, the next section after the brief excerpt below is taken up with all the warm welcomes and greetings she received when she arrived, making it almost like another wedding feast all over again!

B'é sin an \_\_\_\_\_ riamh ar an \_\_\_\_\_ agamsa. Is mé a bhí go \_\_\_\_\_. Bhí an \_\_\_\_\_ go \_\_\_\_\_ is an \_\_\_\_\_ go \_\_\_\_\_, is iad ag bosaíl leo \_\_\_\_\_ nó gur shroicheamar caladh an \_\_\_\_\_. Bhí \_\_\_\_\_ ionadh ormsa an \_\_\_\_\_ úd, is dá mba ag dul go \_\_\_\_\_ Londain \_\_\_\_\_ a \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_ a dhruideamar \_\_\_\_\_, bhí \_\_\_\_\_ ar an \_\_\_\_\_ ag daoine, beag agus mór, ag \_\_\_\_\_ romhainn. \_\_\_\_\_ mo shlí tríothu \_\_\_\_\_ is ab \_\_\_\_\_ liom.

**Answers at end of handout, translate for next time.**

## BAB FEIRITÉAR

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We lost one of the last great artists of a whole generation of Munster storytellers several years ago, in 2005. Born in 1916 in Dún Chaoin, she was universally known as "An Bhab", or simply "Bab."

Bab's more formal name was Cáit Feiritéar, but her maiden name was Cáit Ní Ghuithín -- in her little self-introduction in the wonderful collection *Ó Bhéal an Bhab* (from which the story below is taken), she describes herself as, "Guithíneach ó dhúchas."

### **Prominent Families in the Region**



Peig Sayers married a fellow named Pádraig Ó Guithín (known as "Peats"). That doesn't mean that she and An Bhab were closely related, as the Guithíns were quite common in the Blaskets. There were at least *five* Guithín families listed in some of the earliest records from the Blasket Islands, in the very early 1800's.

It can get confusing. For example, there was a Seán Mhaidhc Léan Ó Guithín there at the time of these memoirists. But Bab's father was Seán Ó Guithín, and her grandfather was Mícheál Ó Guithín, known as Maidhc. These are different people we are dealing with, however. Her father Seán was widely known simply as Johnny.

As it happens, the Blaskets were at one time known as "Ferriter's Islands", and Ferriter was the name given to a particular parish around Dún Chaoin, so we can assume that the Ferriters were at least common, if not prominent, at one time in the region.

### **Bab's Storytelling Heritage**

It is little wonder that Bab soaked up a fine repertoire of stories, about 150 in all. She started to be recognized for her talents as she reached her 50's, and was quite pleased to work with collectors, and with modern technology. In fact, she appeared fairly often on RnaG to share her tales. She would have encountered the idea of recording stories very early on: in the early 1930's, the famed collector and translator Robin Flower played a tape of Peig's narratives for An Bhab. And she was known to read stories collected by folklorists and to adapt them to her own purposes.

(Bab met Peig later in the 1930's, but had relatively little contact with her. Peig's father, Tomás, however, was quite a well-known scéalaí in the Dún Chaoin region, another source of the tradition in Bab's environment.)

She came from story tellers on both sides, not to mention regional influences. On the Guithín side, her father, Seán, her uncle, Tadhg, and her grandfather, Maidhc, were all great storytellers. And Maidhc, being blind, lived with them, and had plenty of time to sit about the fire and share his lore.

Her mother, Éibhlín Ní Shé, died within weeks of Bab's birth -- and Cáit was referred to simply as "The Baby", or An Bhab, a nickname that stuck.. Her grandmother, Cáit Ruiséal, and Cáit's sister, Máire Ruiséal (also known as Máire an Tobair or Cú an Tobair), were also great story tellers, and An Bhab picked up many, many stories from these ladies.



## AN LUCH A BHÍ DÉANACH DON AIFREANN

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Máire and Cáit Ruiséal

Remember, this is scanned and processed, so typos are not unlikely.

An rud is annamh is iontach! Maidean Domhnaigh bhí cat agus luch ag damhas agus ag súgradh le chéile ar fuaid an tinteáin. Insa ghráscar dóibh sciob an cat an t-eireaball den luch.

'Ó, faire mo náire é,' arsa an luch, 'tabhair dom m'eireabailín go raghaidh mé go dtí an Aifreann!'  
'Tabharfaidh mé,' arsa an cat, 'má thugann tú braon bainne ón mbó chugam.'

Chuaigh an luch go dtí an mbó agus loirg sí braon bainne uirthi.

'A bhó, tabhair doró braon bainne, go dtabharfaidh mé braon bainne go dtí an gcat, go dtabharfaidh an cat m'eireabailín dom, is go raghaidh mé go dtí an Aifreann.' 'Tabharfaidh mé,' arsa an bhó, 'má thugann tú sop féir ón scioból chugam.'

Chuaigh an luch go dtí an scioból agus loirg sí sop féir don mbó.

'A sciobóil, tabhair dom sop féir, go dtabharfaidh mé sop féir don mbó, go dtabharfaidh an bhó braon bainne dom, go dtabharfaidh mé braon bainne go dtí an gcat, go dtabharfaidh an cat m'eireabailín dom, agus go raghaidh mé go dtí an Aifreann.'

'Tabharfaidh mé,' arsa an scioból, 'má thugann tú eochair ón ngabha chugam.'

Chuaigh an luch go dtí an ngabha agus loirg sí eochair don scioból.

'A ghabha, tabhair dom eochair, go dtabharfaidh mé an eochair go dtí an scioból, go dtabharfaidh an scioból sop féir dom, go dtabharfaidh mé sop féir don mbó, go dtabharfaidh an bhó braon bainne dom, go dtabharfaidh mé braon bainne don gcat, go dtabharfaidh an cat m'eireabailín dom, is go raghaidh mé go dtí an Aifreann.'

'Tabharfaidh mé,' arsa an gabha, 'má thugann tú criathar uisce ón dtobar chugam.'

Chuaigh an luch go dtí an dtobar leis an gcriathar. Sháigh sí síos an criathar san uisce, agus de réir mar a thógadh sí aníos an criathar d'imíodh an t-uisce tríd síos arís.

Lean sí uirthi mar sin, á shá síos agus á tharrac aníos, ar feadh i bhfad. Bhí sí tugtha traochta, an créatúir, nuair a labhair an sprideoigín de mhuintir Shúilleabháin agus dúirt, 'Cré bhuí is bualtach, a chailín! Cré bhuí is bualtach!'

Thuig an luch go maith í. Chuimil sí cré bhuí agus bualtach don gcriathar. Ní raibh an criathar ag ligint aon bhraon uaidh ansan, is bhí ardáthas ar an luch.

Líon sí an criathar le huisce an tobair agus thug don ngabha é, thug an gabha eochair di, thug sí an eochair don scioból, thug an scioból sop féir di, thug sí an sop féir don mbó, thug an bhó braon bainne di, thug sí an braon bainne don gcat, thug an cat a heireabailín di, agus chuaigh sí go dtí an Aifreann.

Ach, cén mhaith é? Bhí sí déanach don Aifreann.

Tháinig náire agus ceann fé ar an gcat nuair a chuala sé go raibh an luch déanach don Aifreann, agus ar seisean: 'Ní bhéarfaidh mé ar eireaball luiche go deo arís.'

Agus níor dhein leis, mar - riamh ó shin, is ar cheann na luiche a bheireann an cat.

## PEIG DICTATION (WELCOME): ANSWERS

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B'é sin an **chéad uair** riamh ar an **bhfarraige** agamsa. Is mé a bhí go **scanraithe**. Bhí an **tráthnóna** go **hálainn** is an **fharraige** go **ciúin**, is iad ag bosaíl leo **isteach** nó gur shroicheadar caladh an **Oileáin**. Bhí **oiread** ionadh ormsa an **tráthnóna** úd, is dá mba ag dul go **cathair** Londain **isteach** a **bheinn**.

**Nuair** a dhruideamar **isteach**, bhí **dath dubh** ar an **áit** ag daoine, beag agus mór, ag **fáiltiú** romhainn. **Dheineas** mo shlí tríothu **chomh maith** is ab **fhéidir** liom.