

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 156 (which corresponds to Litir 460). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

Sergeant Arthur Davies was murdered in Braemar. That was in seventeen hundred and forty nine (1749). His ghost appeared to a shepherd, Alasdair MacPherson. That was nine months after his death.

Alasdair found the body. But he didn't bury the body. He spoke to the landlord. The landlord gave him advice not to say [be telling] anything to the army. He asked Alasdair to bury the body on the hill.

Alasdair didn't return to the body. But the ghost returned to the bothy. The ghost asked Alasdair to bury the body. Alasdair asked who murdered him. The ghost gave two names – Duncan Clark and Alasdair MacDonald. The next day Alasdair and a friend of his went to the body. They buried it.

But they didn't see the soldier's gun or hat. In time, those things were found. Duncan Clark and Alasdair MacDonald were arrested. That was in September seventeen hundred and fifty three (1753), four years after the

Bha an Sairdseant Artair Davies air a mhurt ann am Bràigh Mhàrr. Bha sin ann an seachd ceud deug, ceathrad 's a naoi (1749). Nochd a thaibhse do chìobair, Alasdair Mac a' Phearsain. Bha sin naoi mìosan às dèidh a bhàis.

Lorg Alasdair an corp. Ach cha do thiodhlaic e an corp. Bhruidhinn e ris an uachdaran. Thug an t-uachdaran comhairle dha gun a bhith ag innse dad don arm. Dh'iarr e air Alasdair an corp a thiodhlacadh anns a' mhonadh.

Cha do thill Alasdair don chorp. Ach thill an taibhse don bhothan. Dh'iarr an taibhse air Alasdair an corp a thiodhlacadh. Dh'fhaighnich Alasdair cò mhuirt e. Thug an taibhse dà ainm seachad – Donnchadh Mac a' Chlèirich agus Alasdair Dòmhnallach. An ath latha chaidh Alasdair agus caraid aige don chorp. Thiodhlaic iad e.

Ach chan fhaca iad an gunna no an ad aig an t-saighdear. Tro thìde, bha na rudan sin air an lorg. Chaidh Donnchadh Mac a' Chlèirich agus Alasdair Dòmhnallach a chur an grèim. Bha sin as t-Sultain seachd ceud deug,

murder. The pair were accused of murdering Sergeant Davies.

The local people knew they were the murderers. Even their own lawyers thought they were guilty. But, strangely, the jury made the decision that they were not guilty. How did they do that? Well, it was connected to the Gaelic language.

Alasdair MacPherson, the shepherd, told the court what the ghost [had] said. The ghost said that Sinclair and MacDonald were the murderers. And what language was the ghost speaking? Gaelic, said the shepherd. But did Sergeant Davies speak Gaelic when he was alive? No, said the shepherd. Thus, the jury did not believe the shepherd's evidence.

But was the shepherd himself innocent? Did he "create" the ghost himself? We don't know. But it was strange hearing evidence from a ghost in a court of law in Scotland!

leth-cheud 's a trì (1753), ceithir bliadhna às dèidh a' mhuirt. Bha casaidean air an dithis gun do mhuirt iad an Sàirdseant Davies.

Bha fios aig muinntir an àite gum b' iad na murtairean. Bha eadhon an luchd-lagha aca fhèin a' smaoinachadh gun robh iad ciontach. Ach gu h-annasach, rinn an diùraidh an co-dhùnadh gun robh iad neo-chiontach. Ciamar a rinn iad sin? Uill, bha e co-cheangailte ris a' Ghàidhlig.

Dh'innis Alasdair Mac a' Phearsain, an cìobair, don chùirt dè thuirt an taibhse. Thuirt an taibhse gum b' iad Mac a' Chlèirich agus Dòmhnallach na murtairean. Agus dè an cànan a bha an taibhse a' bruidhinn? A' Ghàidhlig, thuirt an cìobair. Ach an robh Gàidhlig aig an t-Sairdseant Davies nuair a bha e beò? Cha robh, thuirt an cìobair. Mar sin, cha do chreid an diùraidh an fhianais aig a' chìobair.

Ach an robh an cìobair fhèin neo-chiontach? An do "chruthaich" e fhèin an taibhse? Chan eil fios againn. Ach bha e annasach fianais a chluinntinn bho thaibhse ann an cùirt-lagha ann an Alba!