

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 179 (which corresponds to Litir 483). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

Two years ago I was in New Zealand. I was doing a television programme for the BBC. The subject of the programme was the politician Sir John McKenzie.

John McKenzie was born near Alness in Easter Ross. That was in 1839. He spoke Gaelic as his first language. When he was five years of age, he was with his father in Croick (in East Sutherland). There is a famous church there. The people of Glencalvie were living in the graveyard next to the church. Why? Well, there was nowhere else for them. They had been cleared from their houses. They scratched their names in the church windows. The scratches are still there.

John McKenzie witnessed that affair when it happened. He and his father were walking past the church. The people were in the cemetery. His father told him what was happening. The matter had a great effect on John. When he was in politics, he made sure there were no clearances in New Zealand.

O chionn dà bhliadhna bha mi ann an New Zealand, no Sealan Nuadh. Bha mi a' dèanamh prògram telebhisein airson a' BhBC. B' e cuspair a' phrògram am fear-poilitigs Sir Iain MacCoinnich.

Rugadh Iain MacCoinnich faisg air Alanais ann an Ros an Ear. Bha sin ann an ochd ceud deug, trithead 's a naoi (1839). Bha Gàidhlig aige mar chiad chànan. Nuair a bha e còig bliadhna a dh'aois, bha e còmhla ri athair anns a' Chròic. Tha eaglais ainmeil an sin. Bha muinntir Ghleann Chailbhidh a' fuireach anns a' chladh ri taobh na h-eaglaise. Carson? Uill cha robh àite eile ann dhaibh. Chaidh am fuadachadh bhon dachannan. Sgrìob iad an ainmean air uinneagan na h-eaglaise. Tha na sgrìoban ann fhathast.

Chunnaic Iain MacCoinnich an gnothach sin nuair a thachair e. Bha e fhèin is athair a' coiseachd seachad air an eaglais. Bha na daoine anns a' chladh. Dh'innis athair dha dè bha a' tachairt. Thug an gnothach buaidh mhòr air Iain. Nuair a bha e ann am poilitigs, rinn e cinnteach nach robh fuadaichean ann an Sealan Nuadh.

John's father was a farmer. They were living in Baldoon. The house is still standing. John lost his mother when he was young. And he had a child with a young woman when he was nineteen years of age. John asked the woman to go to New Zealand with him. She refused.

But John admitted publicly that the girl was his. She was called Johan. John married another woman from the area. She was Ann Munro. They married in 1860. Ann was six years older than John. But she was much smaller. He was six feet and four inches in height. She was less than five feet in height!

But they had a good marriage. In 1860 they left together for New Zealand. And I'll tell you next week how things went for them over there.

Bha athair Iain na thuathanach. Bha iad a' fuireach ann am Baile an Dùin. Tha an taigh na sheasamh fhathast. Chaill Iain a mhàthair nuair a bha e òg. Agus bha leanabh aige le boireannach òg nuair a bha e naoi bliadhna deug a dh'aois. Dh'iarr Iain air a' bhoireannach a dhol a Shealan Nuadh còmhla ris. Dhiùlt i.

Ach dh'aidich Iain gu poblach gun robh an nighean leis-san. B' e Johan a bha oirre. Phòs Iain boireannach eile às an sgìre. B' ise Anna Rothach. Phòs iad ann an ochd ceud deug is seasgad (1860). Bha Anna sia bliadhna na bu shine na Iain. Ach bha i mòran na bu lugha. Bha esan sia troighean is ceithir òirlich a dh'àirde. Bha ise na bu lugha na còig troighean a dh'àirde!

Ach bha deagh phòsadh aca. Ann an ochd ceud deug is seasgad (1860) dh'fhalbh iad còmhla a Shealan Nuadh. Agus innsidh mi dhuibh an ath-sheachdain mar a dh'èirich dhaibh thall an sin.