

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 180 (which corresponds to Litir 484). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you last week about the famous politician Sir John McKenzie. He was born and raised in Easter Ross. He went to live in New Zealand. That was in 1860. John and his wife went to the South Island. They were living near Dunedin.

John got work as a shepherd. He worked hard. Within two years, he had enough money. He bought a farm.

John got involved in politics. In 1881 he was elected as a member of parliament. He was a member of the Liberals. They were strong on the South Island. John was wanting to help the small farmers. He saw [had seen] the damage that landlords did [had done] in Scotland.

John was wanting to be certain that the same thing was not going to happen in New Zealand. He was Minister for Land[s] in the Liberal Government. That was between 1891 and 1900.

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh an t-seachdain sa chaidh mun fhear-phoilitigs ainmeil Sir Iain MacCoinnich. Rugadh is thogadh e ann an taobh sear Rois. Chaidh e a dh'fhuireach ann an New Zealand, no Sealán Nuadh. Bha sin ann an ochd ceud deug is seasgad (1860). Chaidh Iain agus a' bhean aige don Eilean mu Dheas. Bha iad a' fuireach faisg air Dùn Èideann.

Fhuair Iain obair mar chìobair. Dh'obraich e gu cruaidh. Taobh a-staigh dà bhliadhna, bha airgead gu leòr aige. Cheannaich e tuathanas.

Chaidh Iain an sàs ann am poilitigs. Ann an ochd ceud deug, ochdad 's a h-aon (1881) chaidh a thaghadh mar bhall pàrlamaid. Bha e na bhall de na Libearalaich. Bha iadsan làidir anns an Eilean mu Dheas. Bha Iain ag iarraidh taic a thoirt do thuathanaich bheaga. Chunnaic e an sgrìobhadair a rinn uachdarain ann an Alba.

Bha Iain ag iarraidh a bhith cinnteach nach robh an aon rud a' dol a thachairt ann an Sealán Nuadh. Bha e na Mhinistear airson an Fhearainn anns an Riaghaltas Libearalach. Bha sin eadar ochd ceud deug, naochad 's a h-aon (1891) agus a' bhliadhna naoi ceud deug (1900).

He did three major things as Minister. He introduced a land tax. He gave people an opportunity to get land on a perpetual lease. That's a thing called a "999-year lease" in English. The Government bought a large estate. They broke up the estate in order to make small farms. And John established in law permission for the government to buy any land. That was even if the man who owned the land didn't want to sell it.

When McKenzie was Minister, more than a million acres were opened to make small farms. Seven thousand families got their own farm.

But there was one group that was not pleased. They had a lot of land on the North Island. The Maori. We'll see how McKenzie's policies affected the Maori next week.

Rinn e ceithir rudan mòra mar Mhinistear. Thug e a-steach cìs fearainn. Thug e cothrom do dhaoine fearann a bhith aca air mhàl gu sìorraidh. 'S e sin rud ris an canar an "999-year lease" ann am Beurla. Cheannaich an Riaghaltas oighreachd mhòr. Bhris iad an oighreachd airson tuathanasan beaga a chruthachadh. Agus stèidhich Iain ann an lagh cead a bhith aig an riaghaltas fearann sam bith a cheannach. Bha sin eadhon mura robh an duine leis an robh am fearann ag iarraidh a reic.

Nuair a bha MacCoinnich na Mhinistear, chaidh còrr is millean acaire fhosgladh airson tuathanasan beaga a chruth-achadh. Fhuair seachd mìle teaghlach tuathanas dhaibh fhèin.

Ach bha aon bhuidheann nach robh toilichte. Bha fearann mòr aca anns an Eilean mu Thuath. Na Maori. Chì sinn mar a thug poileasaidhean MhicCoinnich buaidh air na Maori an ath-sheachdain.