

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 181 (which corresponds to Litir 485). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodgy.macleam@bbc.co.uk.

Sir John McKenzie was the Minister for Land[s] in New Zealand. That was in the final decade of the nineteenth century. He was wanting small farmers, rather than big landlords, to have land. But, on the North Island, much of the land was owned by the Maori.

The Government bought a lot of land from the Maori. The Maori lost three million acres. The Government sold the land to small farmers.

John McKenzie saw the effect of the clearances in Scotland. But, despite that, he took land away from the Maori. He was thinking that the white people were better as farmers.

McKenzie was radical on the land question. But he was conservative in other ways. He was against women voting. He was honest. But he was argumentative. When he was angry in [the] parliament, he was speaking Gaelic. The Hansard folk [parliamentary recorders] didn't know what he was saying!

The Prime Minister went to

Bha Sir Iain MacCoinnich na Mhinistear airson an Fhearainn ann an Sealan Nuadh. Bha sin anns an deichead mu dheireadh dhen naoidheamh linn deug. Bha e ag iarraidh fearann a bhith aig tuathanaich bheaga, seach uachdarain mhòra. Ach, anns an Eilean mu Thuath, bha tòrr dhen fhearann leis na Maori.

Cheannaich an Riaghaltas fearann mòr bho na Maori. Chaill na Maori trì millean acaire. Reic an Riaghaltas am fearann do thuathanaich bheaga.

Chunnaic Iain MacCoinnich buaidh nam fuadaichean ann an Alba. Ach, a dh'aindeoin sin, thug e fearann air falbh bho na Maori. Bha e a' smaoinichadh gun robh na daoine geala na b' fheàrr mar thuathanaich.

Bha MacCoinnich radaigeach air ceist an fhearainn. Ach bha e caomhnach ann an dòighean eile. Bha e an aghaidh boireannaich a bhith a' bhòtadh. Bha e onarach. Ach bha e connsachail. Nuair a bha e feargach anns a' phàrlamaid, bha e a' bruidhinn Gàidhlig. Cha robh fios aig muinntir Hansard dè bha e ag ràdh!

Chaidh am Prìomhaire a

London. McKenzie was at that time in charge of the Government. But he wasn't keeping well. He himself went to London in 1899. He had an operation [went under a scalpel]. After that, he returned to his old home in Baldoon. He met relations there.

He returned to New Zealand but he was suffering from cancer. He resigned as a member of parliament in 1900. A year later, the Duke of Cornwall and York was in New Zealand. The train stopped near McKenzie's home. The Duke knighted McKenzie. "Sir John" died a few weeks after that.

He had a very big funeral. There was a pipe band present. Today, there is a monument to McKenzie. It's on the top of a hill called Puketapu. That's next to the main road between Christchurch and Dunedin. While it stands, people in New Zealand will remember Sir John McKenzie.

Lunnainn. Bha MacCoinnich an uair sin os cionn an Riaghaltais. Ach cha robh e a' cumail gu math. Chaidh e fhèin a Lunnainn ann an ochd ceud deug, naochad 's a naoi (1899). Chaidh e fo lannsa. Às dèidh sin, thill e don t-seann dachaigh aige ann am Baile an Dùin. Thachair e ri càirdean an sin.

Thill e a Shealan Nuadh ach bha e a' fulang le aillse. Leig e dheth a dhreuchd mar bhall pàrlamaid ann an naoi ceud deug (1900). Bliadhna às dèidh sin, bha Diùc na Cùirn is Iorc ann an Sealan Nuadh. Stad an trèana aige faisg air dachaigh MhicCoinnich. Rinn an Diùc ridire de MhacCoinnich. Chaochail "Sir Iain" beagan seachdainean às dèidh sin.

Bha tiodhlacadh mòr mòr aige. Bha còmhlán pìoba ann. An-diugh, tha carragh-cuimhe ann do MhacCoinnich. Tha e air mullach cnuic ris an canar Puketapu. Tha sin ri taobh an rathaid mhòir eadar Christchurch agus Dùn Èideann. Fhad 's a sheasas e, bidh daoine ann an Sealan Nuadh a' cuimhneachadh Sir Iain MhicCoinnich.