

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 282 (which corresponds to Litir 586). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.macleam@bbc.co.uk.

The Scot Gregor MacGregor was in France. He had been involved in fraud. Many people went to Poyais in Central America. MacGregor was praising Poyais. But the country didn't exist. The people lost a lot of money.

In France MacGregor set up a scheme. That was to attract French people to Poyais. For the people of France, he said Poyais wasn't a kingdom. He said it was a republic. And he was the President!

Matters didn't go so well in France. The government put his vessel in custody in Le Havre. They also put MacGregor in custody. The court case lasted four days. MacGregor got off with it. He was not guilty.

He returned to London. He was arrested in London. He spent a week in [the] prison. But he was freed. And did he cease selling things in Poyais? No! He was still selling schemes. He told the British that Poyais was now a republic. He told them he was the President.

But it wasn't so easy now. He

Bha an t-Albannach, Griogair Mac-Griogair, anns an Fhraing. Bha e air a bhith ri foill. Chaidh mòran a Phoyais ann am meadhan Ameireagaidh. Bha MacGriogair a' moladh Phoyais. Ach cha robh an dùthaich ann. Chaill na daoine airgead mòr.

Anns an Fhraing chuir Mac-Griogair sgeama air dòigh. Bha sin airson Frangaich a thàladh a Phoyais. Airson muinntir na Frainge, thuirt e nach e rìoghachd a bha ann am Poyais. Thuirt e gur e poblachd a bha innte. Agus b' esan an Ceann-suidhe!

Cha deach cùisean cho math anns an Fhraing. Chuir an riaghaltas an soitheach aige ann an grèim ann an Le Havre. Chuir iad MacGriogair ann an grèim cuideachd. Mhair a' chùis-chùirte aige ceithir latha. Fhuair MacGriogair dheth leis. Bha e neoichiontach.

Thill e a Lunnainn. Bha e air a chur an grèim ann an Sasainn. Chuir e seachad seachdain anns a' phrìosan. Ach chaidh a shaoradh. Agus an do sguir e a bhith a' reic rudan ann am Poyais? Cha do sguir! Bha e fhathast a' reic sgeamaichean. Dh'inns e do na Breatannaich gun robh Poyais a-nise na poblachd. Dh'inns e dhaibh gum b' esan an Ceann-suidhe.

had competition. Others opened offices in London. They were also “selling” land in “Poyais”. MacGregor moved to Scotland. But he was still involved in Poyaisian matters.

Finally, in 1839, he moved to Venezuela. He had fought for independence in Venezuela. That was years before. Thus, he received an army pension. And he got a nice house. He died in Venezuela in 1845.

I wonder if MacGregor smiled from time to time. Perhaps he was contemplating the fraud he perpetrated and how he got away with it. But might there have been something on his conscience also? He damaged some people who believed his story – that there was a rich country in Central America. He talked the talk [“he had a beautiful mouth”], that’s for sure.

Ach cha robh e cho furasta a-nise. Bha farpais aige. Dh’fhosgail feadhainn eile oifisean ann an Lunnainn. Bha iad cuideachd a’ “reic” fearann ann am “Poyais”. Ghluais MacGriogair a dh’Alba. Ach bha e fhathast an sàs ann an gnothaichean Phoyais.

Mu dheireadh, ann an ochd ceud deug, trithead ’s a naoi (1839), ghluais e a Bhenesuèla. Bha e air sabaid airson neo-eisimeileachd ann am Bhenesuèla. Bha sin bliadhnaichean roimhe. Mar sin, fhuair e peinnsean airm. Agus fhuair e taigh snog. Chaochail e ann am Bhenesuèla ann an ochd ceud deug, ceathrad ’s a còig (1845).

Saoil an do rinn MacGriogair gàire bho àm gu àm? ’S dòcha gun robh e a’ mèdachadh air an fhoill a rinn e agus mar a fhuair e dheth leis. Ach saoil an robh càil air a chogais cuideachd? Rinn e cron mòr air feadhainn a chreid an stòiridh aige – gun robh dùthaich bheartach ann am Meadhan Ameireagaidh. Bha beul brèagha aige, gu dearbh.