

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 290 (which corresponds to Litir 594). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.maclea@bbc.co.uk.

Calum Maclean met John MacDonald, the "Lochaber Bard", in January 1951. Calum was famous for collecting Gaelic oral tradition. John was famous, at least locally, as a poet and storyteller.

John was on the way home from church. That was the Catholic Church in Roybridge. Calum stopped him. He spoke to him in Gaelic. John came off his bicycle.

Calum said to him that he was wanting to collect [some of] John's oral tradition for the School of Scottish Studies. John agreed to meet him. They came together one day per week for five months. Calum got a lot of oral tradition.

When he met Calum on that Sunday, John had just written a song. It was about the Scots who stole the Stone of Destiny from Westminster Abbey. That had just happened. The stone had still not appeared. And John was delighted!

He and Calum went behind a wall. And John sang the song. The song was full of vigour and fire, said Calum. So was the man!

Choinnich Calum MacGhilleathain ri Iain Dòmhnallach, "Bàrd Loch Abar", anns an Fhaoilleach naoi ceud deug, caogad 's a h-aon (1951). Bha Calum ainmeil airson a bhith a' cruinneachadh beul-aithris na Gàidhlig. Bha Iain ainmeil, co-dhiù gu h-ionadail, mar bhàrd is seanchaidh.

Bha Iain air an rathad dhach-aigh bhon eaglais. Sin an Eaglais Chaitlig-each ann an Drochaid Ruaidh. Chuir Calum stad air. Bhruidhinn e ris ann an Gàidhlig. Thàinig Iain far a bhaidhsagail.

Thuir Calum ris gun robh e ag iarraidh beul-aithris aig Iain a chlàradh airson Sgoil Eòlais na h-Alba. Dh'aont-aich Iain coinneachadh ris. Thàinig iad còmhla aon latha gach seachdain airson còig mìosan. Fhuair Calum beul-aithris gu leòr.

Nuair a thachair e ri Calum air an Didòmhnaich sin, bha Iain dìreach air òran a sgrìobhadh. Bha e mu dheidhinn nan Albannach a ghoid an Lia-fàil à Abaid Westminster. Bha sin dìreach air tachairt. Cha robh sgeul air a' chloich fhathast. Agus bha Iain gu math toilichte!

Chaidh e fhèin is Calum air cùl balla. Agus sheinn Iain an t-òran. Bha an t-òran làn lùiths agus smior, thuir

John was from Highbridge near Spean Bridge. His father, red-haired James, was a stonemason and crofter. As a mason, he was travelling around Lochaber. He collected a lot of oral tradition. John learned stories from his father.

John himself was working on the roads and the railway. He became famous for his knowledge of the history of Lochaber.

John MacDonald had stories about people like Columba, Robert Bruce, Donald Balloch, the son of the Lord of the Isles, Alasdair MacColla, Bonnie Prince Charlie and many others. And much of the material that Calum Maclean recorded with him is to appear on a new website next week. That's the site of Tobar an Dualchais. That project digitized much oral material. The site will be excellent.

We'll look again that the legacy the Lochaber Bard left next week. The website can be located at www.tobarandualchais.go.uk

Calum. Bha, agus an duine!

Bha Iain às an Drochaid Àrd faisg air Drochaid an Aonachain. Bha athair, Seumas Ruadh, na chlachair agus na chroitear. Mar chlachair, bha e a' siubhal air feadh Loch Abar. Chruinnich e tòrr beul-aithris. Thog Iain sgeulachdan bho athair.

Bha Iain fhèin ag obair air na rathaidean agus air an rathad-iarainn. Dh'fhàs e ainmeil airson a chuid eòlais air eachdraidh Loch Abar.

Bha stòiridhean aig Iain Dòmhnallach mu dhaoine mar Chalum Cille, Raibeart Brus, Dòmhnall Ballach mac Tighearna nan Eilean, Alasdair Mac Colla, Teàrlach Òg Stiùbhart agus mòran eile. Agus tha mòran dhen stuth a chlàr Calum MacGilleathain leis gu bhith air làrach-lìn ùr an-ath-sheachdain. 'S e sin an làrach aig Tobar an Dualchais. Chuir am pròiseact sin mòran stuth à beul-aithris ann an cruth didseatach. Bidh an làrach math dha-rìribh.

Bheir sinn sùil a bharrachd air an dìleib a dh'fhàg Bàrd Loch Abar an ath-sheachdain. Gheibhear grèim air an làraich-lìn far a bheil an stuth aige aig www.tobarandualchais.co.uk