

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 291 (which corresponds to Litir 595). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

The Lochaber Bard, John MacDonald, was recorded by the School of Scottish Studies. He has stories and anecdotes on the Tobar an Dualchais website. It's a new website. It's at www.tobaran-dualchais.co.uk/johnthebard. You will hear John's voice. But the stories are not in written format.

I'm going to tell you one of his anecdotes. You can then go on the website. You can listen to John himself telling the same anecdote. And you can read it at the same time. You'll hear his Lochaber dialect. Here is the anecdote. It is about Robert Bruce, King of Scotland.

Bruce was being pursued and was wandering without abode as he often was. That's King Robert. And he was only a young man when he died. And it was a sad affair that he died so early.

Bruce was born in the year 1274. And he died in 1329. Thus he was fifty five [when he died]. And he was wandering in difficult circumstances and they were closing on him.

Chaidh Bàrd Loch Abar, Iain Dòmhnallach, a chlàradh le Sgoil Eòlais na h-Alba. Tha sgeulachdan is naidheachdan aige air làrach-lìn Thobar an Dualchais. 'S e làrach-lìn ùr a tha innte. Tha i aig www.tobaran-dualchais.co.uk/johnthebard.

Cluinnidh sibh guth Iain. Ach chan eil na stòiridhean ann an cruth sgrìobhte.

Tha mi a' dol a dh'innse dhuibh tè de na naidheachdan aige. Faodaidh sibh a dhol air an làrach-lìn an uair sin. Faodaidh sibh èisteachd ris an aon naidheachd aig Iain Dòmhnallach fhèin. Agus faodaidh sibh a leughadh aig an aon àm. Cluinnidh sibh an dualchainnt Abrach aige. Seo an naidheachd. Tha i mu dheidhinn Raibeart Brus, Rìgh na h-Alba:

Bha am Brusach air a ruaigeadh agus air an allaban mar bu tric a bha e. 'S e sin Rìgh Raibeart. Agus cha robh e ach na dhuine òg nuair a chaochail e. Agus 's e gnothach duilich a bh' ann gun do chaochail e cho luath.

Rugadh Brus anns a' bhliadhna dhà-dheug agus ceithir-deug thar nan trì fichead (1274). Agus chaochail e anns an trì cheud deug agus naoi thar an fhichead (1329). Bha e mar sin leth-cheud bliadhn' agus a còig. Agus bha e air an allaban glè chruaidh agus bha

And he came to a farmer's house. And he asked the farmer for the horse. "You'll get that," he said, "you certainly will. And I'll go to the smiddy as fast as I ever did," he said, "and I'll put the horseshoes on the wrong way round." That's what he did.

And when the host came [looking for him], and they saw the hoofprints on the road and on the ground they were following the hoofprints and after that it's the other direction that Bruce was going now, with the horseshoes turned back-to-front and he made his escape like that. And when he got far enough away from them, he put the horseshoes as they should have been on the animal that took him away immediately and swiftly from the hands of the enemies.

iad a' cur teann air.

Agus thàinig e gu taigh tuathanaich. Agus dh'iarr e an t-each air an tuathanach. "Gheibh thu sin," thuir e, "'s tu a gheibh. Agus thèid mi don cheàrdaich leis cho luath 's a rinn mi riamh," thuir e, "agus cuiridh mi na cruidhean an rathad eile." 'S e sin a rinn e.

Agus nuair a thàinig an t-sluagh agus iad a' faicinn nan luirg air an rathad agus air an talamh bha iad a' leanadh nan luirg agus an dèidh sin 's e an rathad eile a bha am Brus a' dol nist gu robh na cruidhean air an tionndainn an cùl ris a' bheul agus fhuair e teicheadh mar sin. Agus nuair a fhuair e astar fada gu leòr air falbh bhuapa, chuir e na cruidhean mar bu chòir dhaibh air an ainmhidh a thug air falbh gu grad agus gu luath e à làmhan nan nàmhaidean.