

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 305 (which corresponds to Litir 609). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.macleon@bbc.co.uk.

The painting The Death of the Stag is in the National Gallery of Scotland. It shows Colin Fitzgerald. Colin is saving the life of King Alexander III. Colin was the progenitor, according to oral tradition, of the MacKenzie clan.

The MacKenzies were loyal to the Kings of Scotland. But the fifth Earl of Seaforth, William MacKenzie, supported the Jacobites. That was in their rebellion in 1715. He lost his title. And he lost his land.

Fifteen years after that, William bought some of his land back. When the third Jacobite rebellion came in 'The Year of Charlie' (1745-6), William's son, Kenneth, supported King George.

In 1771 Kenneth said to the government that he was willing to raise a Highland regiment. And he got the old title back – Earl of Seaforth. Seven years after that, his regiment was raised – The Seaforth Highlanders.

Kenneth died without a male heir. In the end, his cousin, Francis Humberston MacKenzie, got the

Tha an dealbh *Bàs an Daimh* ann an Gailearaidh Nàiseanta na h-Alba. Tha e a' sealltainn Cailean Fitzgerald. Tha Cailean a' sàbhaladh beatha Rìgh Alasdair III. B' e Cailean an tùsair, a rèir beul-aithris, aig Clann 'ic Coinnich.

Bha Clann 'ic Coinnich dìleas do rìghrean na h-Alba. Ach thug an còigeamh Iarla Shìophort, Uilleam MacCoinnich, taic do na Seumasaich. Bha sin anns a' chiad ar-a-mach aca ann an seachd ceud deug is còig-deug (1715). Chaill e an tiotal aige. Agus chaill e am fearann aige.

Còig bliadhn' deug às dèidh sin, cheannaich Uilleam cuid dhen fhearann aige air ais. Nuair a thàinig treas ar-a-mach nan Seumasach ann am Bliadhna Theàrlaich, thug mac Uilleim, Coinneach, taic do Rìgh Deòrsa.

Ann an seachd ceud deug, seachdad 's a h-aon (1771) thuir Coinneach ris an riaghaltas gun robh e deònach rèisimeid Ghàidhealach a thogail. Agus fhuair e an seann tiotal air ais – Iarla Shìophort. Seachd bliadhna às dèidh sin, chaidh an rèisimeid aige a thogail – na Sìophortaich.

Chaochail Coinneach gun oighre fireann. Aig a' cheann thall, fhuair a cho-ogha, Francis Humberston Mac-

chieftainship of the clan. Francis was very interested in the arts. He asked the American painter, Benjamin West, to paint the great picture The Death of the Stag.

MacKenzie was wanting a picture that would show that the MacKenzies were bold and loyal. The King liked the painting. If it was propaganda, it worked.

Next week, I'll finish this history of The Death of the Stag. But I'll tell you just now what happened to Francis Humberston MacKenzie. When he was young, he took a fever. That left him deaf. He had poor speech because of that.

He had four sons. But they all died before he died. When Francis himself died, 'The Seaforths' [the name] died with him.

And his death brought a prophecy to fruition. That was the prophecy of Coinneach Odhar ('The Brahan Seer'). Coinneach said that the Seaforths would end with the death of a clan chief that was deaf and dumb.

Coinnich, ceannas na fine. Bha ùidh mhòr aig Francis anns na h-ealain. Dh'iarr e air a' pheantair Ameireaganach, Benjamin West, an dealbh mòr, Bàs an Daimh, a dhèanamh.

Bha MacCoinnich ag iarraidh dealbh a shealladh gun robh Clann 'ic Coinnich treun agus dìleas. Chòrd an dealbh ris an Rìgh. Mas e propaganda a bha ann, dh'obraich e.

An-ath-sheachdain, cuiridh mi crìoch air an eachdraidh seo de Bhàs an Daimh. Ach innsidh mi dhuibh an-dràsta dè thachair do Francis Humberston MacCoinnich. Nuair a bha e òg, ghabh e fiabhras. Dh'fhàg sin bodhar e. Cha robh cainnt mhath aige air sgàth sin.

Bha ceathrar mhac aige. Ach chaochail iad uile mus do chaochail esan. Nuair a chaochail Francis fhèin, bhàsaich "Na Sìophortaich" leis.

Agus thug a bhàs faidheadair-eachd gu buil. B' e sin an fhaidheadaireachd aig Coinneach Odhar. Thuirt Coinneach gun tigeadh na Sìophortaich gu ceann le bàs cinn-chinnidh a bha bodhar agus balbh.