

## 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 342 (which corresponds to Litir 646). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk).

*When I was in Caithness, I walked to a famous site. It's a bit over two miles outside Wick. It's on the bank of the river. The name commemorates an event in 1680. It's in Gaelic. I'm speaking about Altimarlach or Allt nam Mèirleach. The burn of the robbers.*

*There is a memorial stone there. I walked there on a wet afternoon. To begin with it was easy. There was a path. But, halfway to the memorial, the path disappeared. It was very rough then. And wet. My boots were saturated. But I didn't care. Dry shoes won't get you fishing [a Gaelic proverb meaning you have to put up with discomfort to achieve something].*

*Perhaps it was like that at the Battle of Altimarlach. But why did the battle take place?*

*Well, in the middle of the 17th Century, George Sinclair of Keiss was the Earl of Caithness. He had enormous debts. And he had troubles with two lairds in Caithness. He asked the Privy Council in Edinburgh to help him. They sent Iain Glas Campbell to Caithness to sort matters out.*

Nuair a bha mi ann an Gallaibh, choisich mi gu làrach ainmeil. Tha i beagan is dà mhìle a-mach à Inbhir Ùige. Tha i air bruach na h-aibhne. Tha an t-ainm a' comharrachadh tachartas anns a' bhliadhna sia ceud deug is ochdad (1680). Tha e ann an Gàidhlig. Tha mi a' bruidhinn air Altimarlach no Allt nam Mèirleach. The burn of the robbers.

Tha carragh-cuimhne ann. Choisich mi ann air feasgar fliuch. An toiseach, bha e furasta. Bha ceum ann. Ach, letheach-slighe don charragh-cuimhne, dh'fhalbh an ceum. Bha e gu math garbh an uair sin. Agus fliuch. Bha mo bhrògan bog fliuch. Ach bu choma leam. Cha dèan brògan tioram iasgach.

'S dòcha gun robh e mar sin aig batail Allt nam Mèirleach. Ach carson a bha am batail ann?

Uill, ann am meadhan an t-seachdamh linn deug, bha Seòras Mac na Ceàrdaich Chèis na Iarla Ghallaibh. Bha fiachan mòra air. Agus bha trioblaidean aige le dithis uachdaran ann an Gallaibh. Dh'iarr e air a' Chomhairle Dhiomhair ann an Dùn Èideann taic a thoirt dha. Chuir iadsan Iain Glas Caimbeul a Ghallaibh airson gnothaichean a rèiteach.

*Iain Glas heard about Sinclair's debts. The two men came to an agreement. The Caithnessian would get a thousand pounds every year from Campbell. But when he died, Iain Glas would get his title and his inheritance.*

*George died in 1676. Iain Glas got the earldom and the inheritance. And he also married George's widow. There was rejoicing in Breadalbane. The rent money was leaving Caithness and going to Breadalbane.*

*But the Sinclairs were not pleased. The people of Caithness were not pleased. They reckoned the Campbells had not been honest. They thought of the Campbells as enemies. They raised a court case in Edinburgh. Four lawyers examined the matter.*

*Unfortunately for the Caithnessians, the lawyers found in favour of Iain Glas. And next week we'll see how it came to be that there was a battle on the banks of the Wick River at Altimarlach.*

Chuala Iain Glas mu na fiachan aig Mac na Ceàrdaich. Thàinig an dithis gu aonta. Gheibheadh an Gallach mìle not gach bliadhna bhon Chaimbeulach. Ach nuair a gheibheadh e bàs, gheibheadh Iain Glas a thiotal agus oighreachd.

Chaochail Seòras ann an sia ceud deug, seachdad 's a sia (1676). Fhuair Iain Glas an iarlachd agus an oighreachd. Agus phòs e banntnach Sheòrais cuideachd. Bha gàirdeachas ann am Braghad Albann. Bha airgead a' mhàil a' dol a-mach à Gallaibh gu ruige Braghad Albann.

Ach cha robh Clann na Ceàrdaich toilichte. Cha robh muinntir Ghallaibh toilichte. Bha iad dhen bheachd nach robh na Caimbeulaich air a bhith onarach. Bha iad a' coimhead air na Caimbeulaich mar nàimhdean. Thog iad cùis-lagha ann an Dùn Èideann. Thug ceathrar luchd-lagha sùil air a' chùis.

Gu mì-fhortanach do na Gallaich, thug an luchd-lagha breith seachad ann am fàbhar Iain Ghlais. Agus an-ath-sheachdain chì sinn mar a thàinig e gu bhith gun robh batail air bruaichean Abhainn Ùige aig Allt nam Mèirleach.