

**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 343 (which corresponds to Litir 647). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk).

*I was telling you about Altimarlach or Allt nam Mèirleach. That's near Wick in Caithness. There was a battle there in 1680. Iain Glas Campbell got ownership of the inheritance of the Sinclairs of Keiss in Caithness. But the Sinclairs were unhappy. The Caithnessians in general were unhappy. They didn't pay their rents. They destroyed Campbell's buildings. They stole his livestock.*

*The Campbells sent a military force to Caithness. Some people say there were more than a thousand people in it. Perhaps it wasn't quite that big. The Caithnessians established a force as well.*

*The Campbells spent a night at Braemore near Morven. They continued to a hill called Hill of Yarrows today. For a long time the local people called it Torran nan Gael. The Campbells were camping on it. They continued to the north. They were now west of Wick.*

*The Campbells' force was split in two. The Sinclairs reached the battlefield. The Campbells attacked them from two sides. Many of the Sinclairs were pushed back to the river. Many of them were drowned.*

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Altimarlach – no Allt nam Mèirleach. Tha sin faisg air Inbhir Ùige ann an Gallaibh. Bha batail ann ann an sia ceud deug is ochdad (1680). Fhuair Iain Glas Caimbeul sealbh air oighreachd Clann na Ceàrdaich Chèis ann an Gallaibh. Ach bha Clann na Ceàrdaich mì-thoilichte. Bha na Gallaich anns an fharsaingeachd mì-thoilichte. Cha do phàigh iad na màil aca. Rinn iad sgrios air togalaichean a' Chaimbeulaich. Ghoid iad a sprèidh.

Chuir na Caimbeulaich feachd gu ruige Gallaibh. Tha cuid ag ràdh gun robh barrachd air mìle duine ann. 'S dòcha nach robh e buileach cho mòr sin. Chuir na Gallaich feachd air dòigh cuideachd.

Chuir na Caimbeulaich seachad oidhche air a' Bhràigh Mhòr faisg air a' Mhòr-bheinn. Lean iad orra gu cnoc air a bheil Hill of Yarrows an-diugh. Airson ùine mhòr, bha Torran nan Gàidheal aig muinntir an àite air. Bha na Caimbeulaich a' campachadh air. Lean iad orra gu tuath. Bha iad a-nise gu siar air Inbhir Ùige.

Chaidh feachd nan Caimbeulach ann an dà phìos. Ràinig Clann na Ceàrdaich làrach a' bhlàir. Thug na Caimbeulaich ionnsaigh orra bho dhà thaobh. Bha mòran de Chlann na Ceàrdaich air am putadh air ais don

*There was terrible destruction. Perhaps up to three hundred of the Caithnessians were killed. After the battle, the Campbells went round the bodies. They stole things. That is responsible, according to oral tradition, for the name of the place – Altmarlach [the burn of the robbers].*

*Most of the dead were buried on the site. A memorial was raised to them in 1901.*

*It is said, on the way to Caithness, that the Campbells' piper, Finlay Ban MacIver, wrote two famous tunes – Breadalbane Gathering and The Campbells are Coming. Until recently, the people of Wick would be very unhappy to hear those tunes.*

*And what happened afterwards? Well, the Campbells lost the earldom a year after that. The Sinclairs got it back.*

abhainn. Chaidh mòran dhiubh a bhàthadh. Bha sgrìos mhòr ann. 'S dòcha gun robh suas ri trì cheud de na Gallaich air am marbhadh. Às dèidh a' bhatail, chaidh na Caimbeulaich timcheall nan corp. Ghoid iad rudan. 'S e sin as coireach, a rèir beul-aithris, ri ainm an àite – Allt nam Mèirleach.

Bha a' chuid a bu mhotha de na mairbh air an tiodhlacadh air an làraich. Chaidh carragh-cuimhne a thogail dhaibh ann an naoi ceud deug 's a h-aon (1901).

Thathar ag ràdh, air an rathad a Ghallaibh, gun do chruthaich pìobaire nan Caimbeulach, Fionnladh Bàn MacÌomhair, dà phort ainmeil – *Breadalbane Gathering* agus *The Campbells are Coming*. Gu o chionn ghoirid, bhiodh muinntir Inbhir Ùige gu math mì-thoilichte na puirt sin a chluinntinn.

Agus dè thachair às dèidh làimhe? Uill, chaill na Caimbeulaich an iarlachd dìreach bliadhna às dèidh sin. Fhuair Clann na Ceàrdaich air ais i.