

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 413 (which corresponds to Litir 717). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you about Iain Garbh Mac 'Ille Chaluum. He was the chief of the Raasay MacLeods – the seventh one of them. He lived in the seventeenth century. I was telling a story about him from oral tradition. But Iain Garbh was a real man. And he lost his life by being drowned.

He obtained the headship of the Raasay MacLeods in 1648. He was married to Janet, the daughter of Rory Mor of Dunvegan. He was famous. People said that he was the strongest and handsomest man of his day.

He died in 1871. He had been in Lewis. He was at a ceremony connected with the baptism of an infant of the Seaforths. Near the north coast of Skye, his birlinn sank.

Everybody was drowned – Iain Garbh and sixteen others. It was said that the storm was terrible.

But was it the storm on its own that caused the accident? Well, it appears that something else was connected to the matter – alcoholic drink. In the Wardlaw

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Iain Garbh Mac 'Ille Chaluum. B' esan ceann-cinnidh nan Leòdach ann an Ratharsair – an seachdamh fear dhiubh. Bha e beò anns an t-seachdamh linn deug. Bha mi ag innse sgeulachd mu dheidhinn à beul-aithris. Ach 's e fìor dhuine a bha ann an Iain Garbh. Agus chaill e a bheatha le bhith air a bhàthadh.

Fhuair e ceannas air Clann 'ic Leòid Ratharsair ann an sia ceud deug, ceathrad 's a h-ochd (1648). Bha e pòsta aig Seònaid, nighean Ruairidh Mòr Dhùn Bheagain. Bha e ainmeil. Bha daoine ag ràdh gum b' esan am fear a bu làidire agus a b' eireachdaile ri linn.

Fhuair e bàs ann an sia ceud deug, seachdad 's a h-aon (1671). Bha e air a bhith ann an Leòdhas. Bha e aig cuirm co-cheangailte ri baisteadh pàiste aig na Sìophortaich. Faisg air costa a tuath an Eilein Sgitheanaich, chaidh a' bhirlinn aige fodha.

Chaidh a h-uile duine a bhàthadh – Iain Garbh agus sia duine deug eile. Bhathar ag ràdh gun robh an stoirm uabhasach dona.

Ach an e an stoirm leatha fhèin a dh'adhbharaich an tubaist? Uill, tha e coltach gur dòcha gun robh rudeigin eile ceangailte ris a' ghnothach – deoch làidir. Ann an Làmh-sgrìobhainn Chnoc

Manuscript, the Rev. James Fraser gives an account of the matter. He blames alcohol. 'Drunkenness did the mischief,' he wrote.

According to the Rev Fraser, the Raasay folk were drinking on the shore. That was before they sailed. A certain Alexander MacLeod gave Iain Garbh a warning. He said to him that he shouldn't leave that day. Everybody would be drowned. He said that three times.

I don't know who that Alexander MacLeod was. Did he have the second sight? Or was he just assessing the weather?

Anyway, Iain Garbh didn't take his advice. He went on board. And the birlinn sank. No body came to land. Nothing was found except wreckage from the boat and two dead dogs.

Mhoire – am *Wardlaw Manuscript* – tha an t-Urramach Seumas Friseal a' dèanamh aithris air a' chùis. Tha esan a' coireachadh deoch làidir. *'Drunkenness did the mischief,'* sgrìobh e.

A rèir Mhgr Fhriseil, bha na Ratharsaich a' gabhail deoch làidir air a' chladach. Bha sin mus do sheòl iad. Thug fear Alasdair MacLeòid rabhadh do dh'Iain Garbh. Thuirt e ris nach bu chòir dha falbh air an latha sin. Bhiodh a h-uile duine air am bàthadh. Thuirt e sin trì tursan.

Chan eil fhios agam cò Alasdair MacLeòid a bha sin. An robh an dà-shealladh aige? No an robh e dìreach a' tomhas mar a bha an aimsir?

Co-dhiù, cha do ghabh Iain Garbh ri a chomhairle. Chaidh e air bòrd. Agus chaidh a' bhirlinn fodha. Cha tàinig corp sam bith gu tìr. Cha robh dad air a lorg ach sprùilleach bhon bhàta agus dà chù mharbh.