

## 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 429 (which corresponds to Litir 733). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk).

*I received an email from a friend in England. He wrote about a place – Àth nan Damh. I thought for a minute. Àth nan Damh? It came to me – ‘the ford of the oxen’ or Oxford.*

*I have a question. What is the link between Gaelic, a university college in Oxford, an old abbey in the south of Scotland, and a King of Scotland. The answer is – Diorbhail.*

*Diorbhail was the Lady of Galloway in the 13th century. In English, she was known as Devorgilla.*

*Devorgilla was a daughter of Alan, Lord of Galloway. I was speaking to a historian in that area. He said to me that Devorgilla and her father spoke Gaelic.*

*When she was thirteen years of age, she married John, the fifth baron of Balliol. He had large estates in England.*

*In 1263, Balliol was involved in a dispute about land with the Bishop of Durham. The case went against Balliol. He was required, as penance, to found a college at Oxford University for poor people. Five years after that, Balliol died.*

Fhuair mi post-d bho charaid ann an Sasainn. Sgrìobh e mu dheidhinn àite – Àth nan Damh. Smaoinich mi airson mionaid. Àth nan Damh? Thàinig e thugam – ‘the ford of the oxen’ no Oxford.

Tha ceist agam. Dè an ceangal a th’ ann eadar a’ Ghàidhlig, colaiste oilthigh ann an Àth nan Damh, seann abaid ann an ceann a deas na h-Alba, agus Rìgh na h-Alba? ’S e am fuasgladh – Diorbhail.

B’ e Diorbhail Baintighearna Ghall-Ghàidhealaibh anns an treas linn deug. Ann am Beurla, ’s e Devorgilla an t-ainm a bha oirre.

Bha Diorbhail na nighinn aig Ailean, Tighearna Ghall-Ghàidhealaibh. Bha mi a’ bruidhinn ri fear-eachdraidh anns an sgìre sin. Thuirt e rium gun robh Gàidhlig aig Diorbhail agus a h-athair.

Nuair a bha i trì bliadhn’ deug a dh’aois, phòs i Iain, còigeamh baran Bhalliol. Bha fearann mòr aige ann an Sasainn.

Ann an dà cheud deug, seasgad ’s a trì (1263), bha Balliol an sàs ann an connspaid mu fhearann le Easbaig Dhurham. Chaidh a’ chùis an aghaidh Bhalliol. Chaidh iarraidh air, mar pheanas, colaiste a stèidheachadh ann an Oilthigh Àth nan Damh airson daoine

*His widow, Devorgilla, continued [his work] by funding the college. Balliol College is in existence to this day.*

*But what about the old abbey and the Scottish King? Well, in 1273, Devorgilla established an abbey. That was in memory of her husband.*

*She had been carrying his embalmed heart with her all the time. It was in a small ivory kist. When she died in 1290, the kist was buried beside her. As a mark of the love she had for her husband, the monks called the abbey Dulce Cor or Sweetheart. Sweetheart Abbey.*

*After Devorgilla's death, her son, John, was made King. He held the crown for four years.*

bochda. Còig bliadhna an dèidh sin, chaochail Balliol. Lean a bhantrach, Diorbhail, le bhith a' cur airgead ris a' cholaiste. Tha Balliol College ann chun an latha an-diugh.

Ach dè mu dheidhinn na seann abaid agus an Rìgh Albannach? Uill, ann an da cheud deug, seachdad 's a tri (1273), stèidhich Diorbhail abaid. Bha sin mar chuimhneachan air an duine aice.

Bha i air a bhith a' giùlan a chridhe spìosraichte cuide rithe fad na h-ùine. Bha e ann an ciste bheag ìbhri. Nuair a chaochail ise ann an dà cheud deug is naochad (1290), bha a' chiste air a tiodhlacadh ri a taobh. Mar chomharra air a' ghaol a bha aice air an duine aice, ghabh na manaich *Dulce Cor* no 'Sweetheart' air an abaid. *Sweetheart Abbey*.

Às dèidh bàs Diorbhail, chaidh an gille aice, Iain, a dhèanamh na Rìgh. Bha an crùn aige airson ceithir bliadhna.