

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 436 (which corresponds to Litir 740). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclea@bbc.co.uk.

I'm going to tell you a story about a Scottish ship at the end of the nineteenth century. She disappeared and reappeared in Australia. It's an amazing story

The SS Ferret was among the ferries that was going between the islands and Strome at the mouth of Loch Carron. That was when the railway line ended at Strome.

The ferret was built in Glasgow. She weighed more than three hundred tons. A Highland rail company bought her.

In October 1880, she was lying unused in Greenock. Three people approached her owners. They were wanting to charter her for a cruise to the Mediterranean. Well, that's what they said.

Their leader was James Stewart Henderson. He caused the Ferret's owners to believe that he had plenty of money. He said he was related to the First Lord of the Admiralty. But neither of those things was true. And the owners of the Ferret didn't know that Henderson had two aliases –

Tha mi a' dol a dh'innse dhuibh stòiridh mu shoitheach Albannach aig deireadh an naoidheamh linn deug. Chaidh i à fianais agus a nochd a-rithist ann an Astràilia. 'S e stòiridh iongantach a tha ann.

Bha an SS Ferret am measg nam bàtaichean-aiseig a bha a' dol eadar na h-eileanan agus Port an t-Sròim air beul Loch Carrann. Bha sin nuair a stad an loidhne-rèile aig an t-Sròim.

Bha am Ferret air a togail ann an Glaschu. Bha còrr is trì cheud tunna de chuideam innte. Cheannaich companaidh rèile às a' Ghàidhealtachd i.

Anns an Dàmhair ochd ceud deug is ochdad (1880), bha i aig tàmh ann an Grianraig. Chaidh triùir chun na feadhainn leis an robh i. Bha iad ga h-iarraidh air mhàl airson turas-mara don Mhuir Mheadhan-tìrigh. Uill, 's e sin a thuir iad.

B' e Seumas Stiùbhart MacEanraig an ceannard aca. Thug e a' chreidsinn air an fheadhainn leis an robh am Ferret gun robh gu leòr aige de dh'airgead. Thuir e gun robh e càirdeach do Phrìomh Mhorair a' Chabhlaich Rìoghail. Ach cha robh fear seach fear dhiubh sin fìor. Agus cha robh fios aig an fheadhainn leis an robh am Ferret gun

James Smith and James Bernard.

There were two other people working with him. And they also had aliases! They were Joseph Walker or Wallace, and Edward Carlyon or Wright or Leigh.

It was agreed that they would charter the Ferret for six months. They gave a cheque as payment for the first month. It was a 'rubber' one but the three men got away before that became clear. And they were working through a shipping company in London called Henderson & Co. But it wasn't a real company.

You'll understand, after all was said and done, that the Ferret didn't go to the Mediterranean. Eventually, she made her way to Australia. Henderson nearly got away with the crime. But he was finally caught. I'll tell you more of the story next week.

robh dà ainm eile aig MacEanraig – Seumas Mac a' Ghobhainn agus Seumas Bernard.

Bha dithis eile ag obair còmhla ris. Agus bha barrachd air aon ainm orrasan cuideachd! B' iadsan Iòsaph Mac an Fhùcadair no Uallas, agus Eideard Carlyon no Wright no Leigh.

Chaidh aontachadh gum biodh iad a' faighinn a' Ferret air mhàl airson sia mìosan. Thug iad seic seachad mar phàigheadh airson a' chiad mhìos. 'S e tè 'rubair' a bha innte ach fhuair an triùir air falbh mus tàinig sin am follais. Agus bha iad ag obair tro chompanaidh luingeis ann an Lunnainn air an robh Henderson & Co. Ach chan e fìor chompanaidh a bha innte.

Tuigidh sibh, às dèidh a h-uile càil, nach deach am Ferret don Mhuir Mheadhan-tìrich. Mu dheireadh, rinn i a slighe gu Astràilia. Cha mhòr nach d' fhuair MacEanraig air falbh leis an eucoir. Ach bha e air a ghlacadh aig a' cheann thall. Innsidh mi dhuibh tuilleadh dhen stòiridh an-ath-sheachdain.