

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 437 (which corresponds to Litir 741). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you about the SS Ferret. Three fraudsters under the leadership of James Henderson had chartered it. They were on a cruise, if they could be believed, to the Mediterranean. But they were involved in theft.

They took on two others. They bought food and wine and they sailed out of Glasgow. In Cardiff, they bought coal. They took Henderson's wife on board there.

They made for Gibraltar and they sailed through the straits. They did that during the day so that the coastguards would see them. But, that night, they turned around. They sailed back out through the straits again in the dark. There was no light switched on on board. Henderson was hoping that people would think the Ferret went down in the Mediterranean, with the loss of all hands.

When they were out in the Atlantic, Henderson told the others his plan. He said he would kill anybody who was not willing to go along with him.

They changed the name of the vessel. They painted the funnel and they painted the lifeboats. The

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mun SS Ferret. Bha trìuir fhoillearan fo cheannas Sheumais MhicEanraig air a toirt air mhàl. Bha iad air turas-mara, ma b' fhìor, don Mhuir Mheadhan-tìrich. Ach 's e mèirle a bha iad a' dèanamh.

Dh'fhastaich iad dithis eile. Cheannaich iad biadh is fion agus sheòl iad a-mach à Glaschu. Ann an Cardiff, cheannaich iad gual. Thug iad bean MhicEanraig air bòrd an sin.

Rinn iad air Gibraltar, agus sheòl iad tron chaolas. Rinn iad sin air an latha gus am faiceadh na maoir-chladaich iad. Ach, air an oidhche sin, thionndaidh iad. Sheòl iad a-mach tron chaolas a-rithist anns an dorchadas. Cha robh solas sam bith laiste air bòrd. Bha MacEanraig an dòchas gum biodh daoine a' smaoinichadh gun deach am Ferret fodha sa Mhuir Mheadhan-tìrich, le call a h-uile duine.

Nuair a bha iad a-muigh sa Chuan Siar, dh'innis MacEanraig am plana aige do chàch. Thuir e gum marbhadh e duine sam bith nach robh deònach a dhol leis.

Dh'atharraich iad coltas an t-soithich. Pheant iad an luidhear is pheant iad na bàtaichean-teasairginn. Chaidh an

wheelhouse was moved to near the stern of the ship. They threw many things over the side.

She was renamed – the Bantam – and they made for Brazil. They took a cargo of coffee on board which was to go to Marseille. But they didn't go to Marseille. They changed the vessel's name again – to India. They went to Cape Town. Henderson sold the coffee there.

They continued to Australia. They reached Melbourne in April 1881. Henderson told the Australian authorities that he had come from Bermuda.

The owners of the Ferret, the Highland Railway Company, knew that Henderson was a criminal. But they didn't know where the ship was. They couldn't do anything except to broadcast information.

But, fortunately for them, there was a Scotsman working at the port of Melbourne. And he had good eyesight. As soon as he saw the India, he was suspicious. We'll see what happened next week.

taigh-cuibhle a ghluasad gu faisg air deireadh na luinge. Thilg iad tòrr rudan thar a' chliathaich.

Chaidh ainm ùr a chur oirre – am Bantam – agus rinn iad air Brasail. Thug iad luchd air bòrd de chofaidh airson a dhol a Mharseille. Ach cha deach iad a Mharseille. Dh'atharraich iad ainm an t-soithich a-rithist – gu India. Chaidh iad gu Cape Town. Reic MacEanraig an cofaidh an sin.

Lean iad orra gu Astràilia. Ràinig iad Melbourne anns a' Ghiblean ochd ceud deug, ochdad 's a h-aon (1881). Dh'inns MacEanraig do dh'ùghdarrasan Astràilia gur ann à Bermuda a thàinig e.

Bha fios aig an fheadhainn leis an robh am Ferret, Companaidh Rèile na Gàidhealtachd, gun robh MacEanraig na eucoireach. Ach cha robh fios aca ca' robh an long. Cha b' urrainn dhaibh dad a dhèanamh ach fiosrachadh a sgaoileadh.

Agus gu fortanach dhaibh, bha fear Albannach ag obair aig cala Mhelbourne. Agus 's e a bha geur na fhradharc. Cho luath 's a chunnaic e an India bha e amharasach. Chì sinn dè thachair an-ath-sheachdain.