

**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 457 (which corresponds to Litir 761). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk).

*I was telling you about the death of a policeman at the end of the nineteenth century. It was near Abernethy in Strathspey. There were two officers – John MacNiven and Thomas King. They were wanting to collect money from Allan Macallum.*

*The police found the house where Macallum was living. They went inside. It was dark. It was winter. There was a report of a gun. MacNiven shouted to King. He did not receive a reply.*

*MacNiven went to the kitchen. He found his companion's body. It was face-down on the floor.*

*The postman, Alasdair Grant, came to the door. He had seen Macallum fleeing down the road. Macallum fled from farm to farm in Strathspey. He went over the hills. The police sent out sixty officers in pursuit of him. Finally, they were looking in the vicinity of Strathdon.*

*Two days before Christmas, a farmer told the police that Macallum was living on his farm. He was hidden in a barn. Next morning, four policemen came. They arrested Macallum. He was*

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu bhàs poilis aig deireadh an naoidheamh linn deug. Bha e faisg air Obar Neithich ann an Srath Spè. Bha dithis oifigearan ann – Iain MacGilleNaoimh agus Tòmas King. Bha iad ag iarraidh airgead fhaighinn bho Ailean MacCaluim.

Lorg na poilis an taigh far an robh MacCaluim a' fuireach. Chaidh iad a-steach. Bha e dorch. 'S e an geamhradh a bha ann. Bha brag gunna ann. Dh'èigh MacGilleNaoimh air King. Cha d' fhuair e freagairt.

Chaidh MacGilleNaoimh don chidsin. Lorg e corp a chompanaich. Bha e air a' bheul fodha air an làr.

Thàinig am post, Alasdair Grannd, don doras. Bha e air MacCaluim fhaicinn, a' teicheadh sìos an rathad. Theich MacCaluim bho bhaile-fearainn gu baile-fearainn ann an Srath Spè. Chaidh e thar a' mhonaidh. Chuir na poilis seasgad oifigear a-mach air a thòir. Mu dheireadh, bha iad a' coimhead taobh Shrath Dheathain.

Dà latha ron Nollaig, dh'inns tuathanach do na poilis gun robh MacCaluim anns a' bhaile-fearainn aige. Bha e am falach ann an sabhal. An ath mhadainn thàinig ceathrar phoileas. Chuir iad MacCaluim an grèim. Chaidh a

*taken to Aviemore and then on the train to Inverness. A large crowd was waiting at Inverness Station. The people of the Highlands were fascinated by the affair.*

*During the court case, the defence said that Macallum had been insane when he fired on Constable King. But three doctors said that was not true.*

*The police were hoping that Macallum would be found guilty of murder. But that wasn't the jury's opinion. The jury agreed by a majority verdict that Macallum was guilty of culpable homicide, rather than murder. He got a sentence of fifteen years in prison.*

*Thomas King was buried in Abernethy Cemetery. The people of the Highlands were horrified at his death. They raised twelve thousand pounds as help to his wife and eight children. And the news about the matter went as far as New Zealand, where it was on the front page[s] of the newspapers.*

thoirt don Aghaidh Mhòir agus an uair sin air an trèana a dh'Inbhir Nis. Bha sluagh mòr a' feitheamh aig Stèisean Inbhir Nis. Bha ùidh mhòr aig muinntir na Gàidhealtachd anns a' ghnothach.

Anns a' chùis-chùirte thuirt an luchd-dìon gun robh MacCaluim air a bhith às a rian nuair a loisg e air a' Chonstabal King. Ach thuirt triùir dhotairean nach robh sin fìor.

Bha na poilis an dòchas gum biodh MacCaluim air fhaighinn ciontach de mhurt. Ach cha b' e sin beachd an diùraidh. Dh'aontaich an diùraidh le mòr-chuid gun robh MacCaluim ciontach de mharbhadh le coire, seach murt. Fhuair e binn de chòig bliadhna' deug anns a' phrìosan.

Chaidh Tòmas King a thiodhlacadh ann an Cladh Obar Neithich. Bha muinntir na Gàidhealtachd air an uabhasachadh le a bhàs. Thog iad dusan mìle not mar thaic do a bhean agus an ochdnar cloinne. Agus chaidh an naidheachd mun chùis cho fada ri Sealan Nuadh, far an robh i air prìomh dhuilleag nam pàipearan-naidheachd.