

# **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 501 (which corresponds to Litir 805). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk).*

*The most northerly whisky distillery in Scotland is in Orkney. They make Highland Park in Kirkwall. The distillery got its name from High Park, the area's name in olden times.*

*High Park is connected to Magnus Eunson or 'Mansie'. Mansie was illegally making whisky on that site at the end of the eighteenth century.*

*But he wasn't alone. Some others in Orkney were involved in the making and smuggling of whisky.*

*Mansie was a butcher and a church officer by day. He was involved in smuggling by night. The excise officers knew that he was involved in illegal affairs. But they never found his whisky.*

*They heard that Mansie was hiding it in the church. And, one day, they raided the church. But Mansie knew they were coming. He moved the barrels to his house. He placed them in the middle of an empty room. He put a coffin lid on top of them. And he put a clean*

*'S ann ann an Arcaibh a tha an taigh-staile uisge-bheatha as fhaide tuath ann an Alba. Tha iad a' dèanamh Highland Park ann am Baile na h-Eaglaise no Kirkwall. Fhuair an taigh-staile ainm bho High Park, an t-ainm a bha air an àite sin anns an t-seann aimsir.*

*Tha High Park co-cheangailte ri fear Magnus Eunson no 'Mansie'. Bha Mansie a' dèanamh uisge-bheatha gu mì-laghail air an làraich sin aig deireadh an ochdamh linn deug.*

*Agus cha robh e leis fhèin. Bha feadhainn eile ann an Arcaibh an sàs ann an dèanamh agus cùl-mhùtaireachd uisge-bheatha.*

*Bha Mansie na bhùidsear agus na oifigear eaglais tron latha. Bha e ri cùl-mhùtaireachd air an oidhche. Bha fios aig na h-oifigearan cusbainn gun robh e an sàs ann an gnothaichean mì-laghail. Ach cha d' fhuair iad lorg air an uisge-bheatha aige.*

*Chuala iad gun robh Mansie ga fhalach anns an eaglais. Agus, latha a bha seo, rinn iad reud air an eaglais. Ach fhuair Mansie fios gu robh iad a' tighinn. Ghluais e na baraillean don taigh aige. Chuir e ann am meadhan seòmar falamh iad. Chuir e ceann ciste-laighe air am muin. Agus chuir e siota bàn glan thairis*

*white sheet over everything. It looked like a funeral bier, with a body in a coffin.*

*When Mansie saw that the officers were on the way to his house, he gathered a few people together in the room. They kneeled – they went on their knees – as if they were worshipping. Mansie had a large Bible. Everybody else had a prayer book. When they heard the officers coming into the house, they began to keen.*

*The first officer entered. When he saw what was happening, he took off his hat. Mansie looked up from his Bible. He wore an expression of sadness. In a whisper, he said one simple thing to the officer – ‘smallpox’. That was a terrible disease, and extremely infectious. The excise officers fled without doing any investigating. And they didn’t go near Mansie for a good time after that!*

air a h-uile nì. Bha e a’ coimhead coltach ri eileatrom, le corp ann an ciste.

Nuair a chunnaic Mansie gun robh na h-oifigearan air an rathad chun an taigh’ aige, chruinnich e grunnan còmhla anns an t-seòmar. Shleuchdaich iad – chaidh iad air an glùinean – mar gun robh iad ag adhradh. Bha Bìoball mòr aig Mansie. Bha leabhar-ùrnaigh aig a h-uile duine eile. Nuair a chuala iad na h-oifigearan a’ tighinn a-steach don taigh, thòisich iad air caoineadh.

Thàinig a’ chiad oifigear a-steach. Nuair a chunnaic e na bha a’ dol, thug e a bhonaid dheth. Choimhead Mansie suas bhon Bhìoball aige. Bha coltas bròin air. Ann an cagair, thuir e aon rud sìmplidh ris an oifigear – ‘a’ Bhreac’. ’S e galair uabhasach a bha sin, agus gu math gabhaltach. Theich na h-oifigearan cusbainn gun rannsachadh sam bith a dhèanamh. Agus cha deach iad faisg air Mansie airson greis mhath an dèidh sin!