

# **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 545 (which corresponds to Litir 849). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk).*

*The poet George Campbell Hay was born in 1915. He was brought up in Tarbert Loch Fyne. He learned Gaelic there.*

*When he was ten years old, he went to John Watson's College and then Fettes College in Edinburgh. In his holidays, he was working on a fishing boat on Loch Fyne. He was speaking Gaelic to the fishermen. He was good at learning languages.*

*In 1934, George went to university in Oxford. But his politics become more nationalistic. He wrote that he was indifferent to England being defeated by the Nazis – as long as Scotland remained free. Because of that, not everybody who is keen on Gaelic poetry will be commemorating his life.*

*He wasn't willing to go into the army. For seven months, he was hiding in the hills of Argyll. Eventually, the authorities captured him. He was sent to prison for a while. He accepted the call-up from the army after that because of his mother.*

*He spent the rest of the war as*

Rugadh am bàrd Deòrsa mac Iain Deòrsa ann an naoi ceud deug is còig-deug (1915). Thogadh e ann an Tairbeart Loch Fìne. Dh'ionnsaich e Gàidhlig an sin.

Nuair a bha e deich bliadhna a dh'aois, chaidh e gu Colaiste John Watson agus an uair sin Colaiste Fettes ann an Dùn Èideann. Anns na làithean-saora aige, bha e ag obair air eathar-iasgaich air Loch Fìne. Bha e a' bruidhinn Gàidhlig ris na h-iasgairean. Bha e math air cànanan ionnsachadh.

Ann an naoi ceud deug, trithead 's a ceithir (1934) chaidh Deòrsa don oilthigh ann an Oxford. Ach chaidh a phoilitigs na bu nàiseantaiche. Sgrìobh e gun robh e coma ged a bheireadh na Natsaich buaidh air Sasainn – fhad 's a bhiodh Alba saor. Air sgàth sin, cha bhi a h-uile duine a tha measail air bàrdachd Ghàidhlig a' comharrachadh a bheatha.

Cha robh e deònach a dhol a-steach don arm. Airson seachd mìosan bha e am falach ann am monaidhean Earra-Ghàidheal. Mu dheireadh thall, fhuair na h-ùghdarrasan grèim air. Chaidh a chur don phrìosan airson greis. Ghabh e ri a ghairm bhon arm an dèidh sin air sgàth a mhàthar.

Chuir e seachad an còrr dhen

*a clerk in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps. He was in Algeria and Tunisia. Then he was in the army in Italy, working as a translator. While he was in those countries, he learned about the culture of the Arabs and the Italians. And he wrote a lot of poetry.*

*At the end of the war, George was sent to Greece. He was involved in a political riot there. He suffered mental illness after that and obtained a pension from the army. He never worked full-time again.*

*He spent years in a mental hospital in Edinburgh. Although he returned for a spell to Tarbert, things didn't work out for him there. The place wasn't as it had been. George died in Edinburgh in 1984. But his poetry – in Gaelic, Scots and English – lives on. It's worth reading.*

chogadh mar chlàrc anns an *Royal Army Ordnance Corps*. Bha e ann an Algeria agus Tunisia. An uair sin bha e san arm anns an Eadailt, ag obair mar eadar-theangair. Fhad 's a bha e anns na dùthchannan sin, dh'ionnsaich e mu chultar nan Arabach agus nan Eadailteach. Agus sgrìobh e tòrr bàrdachd.

Aig deireadh a' chogaidh, chaidh Deòrsa a chur don Ghrèig. Bha e an sàs ann an ùpraid phoilitigeach an sin. Dh'fhuiling e tinneas-inntinn an dèidh sin agus fhuair e peinnsean bhon arm. Cha do dh'obraich e làn-thìde a-rithist.

Chuir e bliadhnaichean seachad ann an ospadal airson tinneas-inntinn ann an Dùn Èideann. Ged a thill e airson greis don Tairbeart, cha deach gu math leis an sin. Cha robh an t-àite mar a bha. Chaochail Deòrsa ann an Dùn Èideann ann an naoi ceud deug, ochdad 's a ceithir (1984). Ach tha a bhàrdachd – ann an Gàidhlig, Albais is Beurla – beò fhathast. 'S fhiach a leughadh.