

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 573 (which corresponds to Litir 877). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you about Bliadhna nan Caorach – the year of the sheep (1792). The people of Ross and Sutherland were driving the sheep from their areas. The landlords started to stand up to them. They got assistance from soldiers from Fort George – three companies of the Black Watch.

The soldiers got hold of the leaders of the insurgency. They put them in gaol in Dingwall. But through the night, a gang appeared outside the gaol. They freed the prisoners. The soldiers did not stop them.

The ruling classes were not going to yield. They were afraid that the Gaels would follow the example of France. The rebellion was successful there, and the guillotine was busy.

But did they understand that they were causing the ordinary people to suffer injustice? Apparently not. The Sheriff of Ross, Donald MacLeod, wrote that flocks of sheep could be brought to the Highlands to the benefit of the poor people. There was mountain country throughout Ross-shire, he

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Bhliadhna nan Caorach – seachd ceud deug, naochad 's a dhà (1792). Bha muinntir Rois is Chataibh a' sgiùrsadh nan caorach bho na sgìrean aca. Thòisich na h-uachdarain air seasamh nan aghaidh. Fhuair iad taic bho shaighdearan à Gearasdan Deòrsa – trì companaidhean dhen Fhreiceadan Dubh.

Fhuair na saighdearan grèim air ceannardan na h-aimhreit. Chuir iad don phrìosan ann an Inbhir Pheofharain iad. Ach tron oidhche, nochd gràisg taobh a-muigh a' phrìosain. Shaoraich iad na prìosanaich. Cha do chuir na saighdearan stad orra.

Cha robh na mòr-uaislean riaghlaidh a' dol a ghèilleadh. Bha an t-eagal orra gun leanadh na Gàidheil eisimpleir na Frainge. Bha an t-ar-a-mach soirbheachail an sin, agus bha an guillotine trang.

Ach an do thuig iad gun robh iad a' sparradh ana-ceartas air na daoine àbhaisteach? A rèir choltais, cha do thuig. Sgrìobh Siorram Rois, Dòmhnall MacLeòid, gum b' urrainn treudan chaorach a thoirt a-steach don Ghàidhealtachd gu maith nan daoine bochda. Bha fearann monaidh air feadh Siorrachd Rios, thuirt e, nach robh gu

said, that was of no use except for sheep. The population could increase and the happiness of the people with it. Perhaps he was deluding himself.

Three men from Strath Rusdale were in prison in Inverness. They made their escape. They were John Aird, Hugh Breac Mackenzie and Allan MacDonald. John hid out in the hills near Strath Rusdale. But before the winter commenced, he left for Moray. He stayed there for the rest of his life. Hugh hid in a dungeon under his house. He left for Moray as well and he did not return home. And Allan went to live in Fort Augustus.

If the authorities had got hold of John and Hugh, they would have sent them overseas for seven years. But they didn't get hold of them. The unrest proves that some of our ancestors stood up to injustice. But, in the end, it's the landlords that won. In Strath Rusdale today, the sheep are plentiful and the people are scarce.

feum ach do chaoraich. Dh'fhaodadh an sluagh a dhol am meud agus toileachas nan daoine cho math. 'S dòcha gun robh e ga mhealladh fhèin.

Bha triùir à Srath Rùsdail anns a' phrìosan ann an Inbhir Nis. Rinn iad an dol-às. B' iad sin Iain Aird, Ùisdean Breac MacCoinnich agus Ailean Dòmhnallach. Chaidh Iain am falach sa mhonadh faisg air Srath Rùsdail. Ach mus do thòisich an geamhradh, dh'fhalbh e gu Moireibh. Dh'fhuirich e an sin airson a' chòrr de a bheatha. Chaidh Ùisdean am falach ann an toll fon taigh aige. Dh'fhalbh esan a Mhoireibh cuideachd agus cha do thill e dhachaigh. Agus chaidh Ailean a dh'fhuireach ann an Cille Chuimein.

Nam biodh na h-ùghdarrasan air grèim fhaighinn air Iain is Ùisdean bha iad air an cur a-null thairis airson seachd bliadhna. Ach cha d' fhuair iad grèim orra. Tha an aimhreit a' dearbhadh gun do sheas cuid de ar sinnsirean an aghaidh ana-ceartas. Ach, aig a' cheann thall, 's iad na h-uachdarain a bhuannaich. Ann an Srath Rùsdail an-diugh, tha na caoraich pailt agus tha na daoine gann.