

# **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 576 (which corresponds to Litir 880). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk).

*What plant is named in Scotland's national anthem, Flower of Scotland? The late Roy Williamson didn't name a plant when he wrote the song around fifty years ago. He was referring to people, rather than plants, when he use the word 'flower'.*

*But there is a plant named in it. Heather. There is a Gaelic version of the song – and heather appears in it! Here is its first verse:*

*O Flower of Scotland, when will we see the type of heroes, who stood to the death, for their wee blade of grass and heather, who stood against, Edward's haughty army, and sent him home, to think again.*

*The translation is good, isn't it? I've changed one word. At the end I changed smaoin to smuain. Both are correct but I reckon smuain is more common. Most people would say 'na h-Alba' today, rather than 'na h-Albann'. But I left that as it was.*

*The translator did a brilliant job. The Gaelic version is just as*

Dè an lus a tha air ainmeachadh ann an laoidh nàiseanta na h-Alba, *Flower of Scotland*? Cha do dh'ainmich Roy Williamson nach maireann lus nuair a sgrìobh e an t-òran o chionn timcheall air leth-cheud bliadhna. Bha e a-mach air na daoine, seach lusan, nuair a chleachd e am facal 'flower'.

Ach tha lus air ainmeachadh ann. *Fraoch*. Tha dreach Gàidhlig air an òran – agus tha 'fraoch' a' nochdadh ann! Seo a' chiad rann dheth:

*O Fhlùir na h-Albann, Cuin a chì sinn an seòrsa laoich, A sheas gu bàs 'son, Am bileag feòir is fraoich, A sheas an aghaidh, Feachd uailleil Iomhair, 'S a ruaig e dhachaigh, Air chaoclhadh smuain.*

Tha an t-eadar-theangachadh math, nach eil? Tha mi air aon fhacal atharrachadh. Aig an deireadh, dh'atharraich mi 'smaoin' gu 'smuain'. Tha an dà chuid 'ceart' ach chanainn gu bheil 'smuain' nas cumanta. Canaidh a' mhòr-chuid 'na h-Alba' an-diugh, seach 'na h-Albann'. Ach dh'fhàg mi sin mar a bha e.

Rinn an t-eadar-theangair obair mhath dha-rìreabh. Tha an dreach

*good as the English original. And who did the translation? Well, the story of the matter is rather interesting. The Harrisman, the late John Angus MacLeod, who was living in Largs, was at a ceilidh in Dundee. Anna Maclean had just sung Flower of Scotland. She said to John Angus that it was a pity that the song did not have a Gaelic version.*

*Our man [hero] accepted the challenge. Within twenty minutes he had made a translation! Anna rose and sang it – in Gaelic. John Angus was extremely skilful as a poet – and translator.*

*Now the third verse. Here is how it starts in English: Those days are past now, And in the past they must remain ...*

*And here it is in Gaelic: The story is past, but forgotten, it need not be, and we can arise, to be the nation again, that stood against, Edward's haughty army, and sent him home, to think again.*

Gàidhlig a cheart cho math 's a tha an dreach tùsail ann am Beurla. Agus cò e a rinn an t-eadar-theangachadh? Uill, tha eachdraidh a' ghnòthaich gu math inntinneach. Bha an Hearach, Iain Aonghas MacLeòid nach maireann, a bha a' fuireach anns an Leargaidh Ghallta, aig cèilidh ann an Dùn Dè. Bha tè Anna NicGillEathain dìreach air *Flower of Scotland* a sheinn. Thuirt i ri Iain Aonghas gun robh e truagh nach robh dreach Gàidhlig air an òran.

Ghabh ar laoch ris an dùbhlán. Taobh a-staigh fichead mionaid bha e air eadar-theangachadh a dhèanamh! Dh'èirich Anna ga a casan agus ghabh i e – ann an Gàidhlig. Bha Iain Aonghas air leth sgileil mar bhàrd – agus eadar-theangair.

A-nise an treas rann. Seo mar a tha e a' tòiseachadh ann am Beurla: *Those days are past now, And in the past they must remain ...*

Agus seo e ann an Gàidhlig: *Tha 'n eachdraidh dùinte, Ach air dìochuimhne, Chan fheum i bhith, Is faodaidh sinn èirigh, Gu bhith nar Rìoghachd a-ris, A sheas an aghaidh, Feachd uailleil Iomhair, 'S a ruaig e dhachaigh, Air chaochladh smuain.*