

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 585 (which corresponds to Litir 889). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I finished the Litir last week with the proverb 'it doesn't harm to tell a good story twice'. The proverb is just as suitable this week because I'm returning to speaking about a man of whom I gave an account in Litrichean 200 and 201. That's the big Litir, rather than the Litir Bheag. He was the philosopher and historian, Adam Ferguson. He was part of the Scottish Enlightenment. He is recognised as 'The Father of Sociology'.

Ferguson was born in 1723 in Logierait in Perthshire. He was a native speaker of Gaelic. He went to St Andrews University. He was the librarian for the Faculty of Advocates in Edinburgh. He was a private teacher to sons of gentry. And he was the Professor of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh University.

Why I am speaking about Adam Ferguson today? Well, he died in 1816, two hundred years ago.

Ferguson was famous. He was a friend of David Hume and

*Chuir mi crìoch air an Litir an t-seachdain sa chaidh leis an t-seanfhalach *cha mhiste sgeul math aithris dà uair*. Tha an seanfhalach a cheart cho freagarrach an t-seachdain seo oir tha mi a' tilleadh gu bhith a' bruidhinn mu fhear air an do rinn mi cunntas ann an Litrichean dà cheud (200) agus dà cheud 's a h-aon (201). Sin an Litir mhòr, seach an Litir Bheag. B' esan am feallsanaiche agus eachdraiche Adhamh MacFhearghais. Bha e mar phàirt de Shoillseachadh na h-Alba – *The Scottish Enlightenment*. Thathar ga aithneachadh mar 'Athair an Eòlais Shòisealta'.*

*Rugadh MacFhearghais ann an seachd ceud deug, fichead 's a trì (1723) ann an Lag an Ràith ann an Siorrachd Pheairt. Bha Gàidhlig aige bhon ghlùn. Chaidh e a dh'Oilthigh Chill Rìmhinn. Bha e na leabharlannaiche do Roinn an Luchd-tagraidh, no *Faculty of Advocates*, ann an Dùn Èideann. Bha e na fhear-teagaisg prìobhaideach do mhic uaislean. Agus bha e na Phroifeasair de Fheallsanachd Mhoralta aig Oilthigh Dhùn Èideann.*

Carson a tha mi a' bruidhinn air Adhamh MacFhearghais an-diugh? Uill, chaochail e ann an ochd ceud deug is sia-deug (1816), dà cheud bliadhna air ais.

Bha MacFhearghais ainmeil. Bha e na charaid aig Daibhidh Hume agus

Adam Smith. He knew Voltaire. he wrote the section on 'History' in the second edition of Encyclopaedia Britannica. And it was in his house that Walter Scott and Robert Burns met each other.

Among the things he wrote was an essay – 'An Essay on the History of Civil Society'. It's easy to find on the internet.

Ferguson was a Christian and a Presbyterian. He believed in the advancement of humanity to perfection – driven by personal self-interest. But he was of the opinion – since God gave Man free will – that there will be times when human society goes backwards. The collapse of the Roman Empire was an example of that. I wish Adam Ferguson were still alive and able to express his opinions on Radio nan Gàidheal!

Adhamh Mac a' Ghobhainn. Bha e eòlach air Voltaire. Sgrìobh e an earrann air 'Eachdraidh' anns an dàrna eagraan de Encyclopaedia Britannica. Agus 's ann san dachaigh aige a thachair Bhaltair Scott agus Raibeart Burns ri chèile.

Am measg nan rudan a sgrìobh e, bha aiste – *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*. Tha e furasta a lorg air an eadar-lìon.

Bha MacFhearghais na Chrìosdaidh agus na Chlàireach. Bha e a' creidsinn ann an adhartas a' chinne-daonna gu ruige foirfeachd – air a phiobrachadh le fèin-bhuannachd gach duine. Ach bha e dhen bheachd – leis gun tug Dia saor-thoil do mhac an duine – gum bi amannan ann nuair a tha comann mhic an duine a' dol an deireadh. Bha bàs Ìmpireachd na Ròimhe na eisimpleir dheth sin. B' fheàrr leam gun robh Adhamh MacFhearghais fhathast beò, agus cothrom aige a bheachdan a chur an cèill air Radio nan Gàidheal!