

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 595 (which corresponds to Litir 899). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

The old buildings of the University of Aberdeen are very beautiful. I was at the university during the summer. I was reading from a book I wrote. Among the students who were listening to me was a woman from Bulgaria, another from France and a guy from Germany. I like the internationalism of Gaelic today!

I took time to walk around the old buildings. Outside the King's College Chapel, I saw a bronze monument. It was representing a bishop.

It is an old Bishop of Aberdeen – William Elphinstone who was born in 1431. He established the University of Aberdeen.

But there is a strange thing on the monument. There is writing around it. It is carved in bronze. It's old Gaelic.

Elphinstone belonged to Glasgow. I'm not sure if he himself spoke Gaelic. Why, then, is there Gaelic on his monument? I'll come to that shortly. To begin with, I must say something about

Tha seann togalaichean Oilthigh Obar Dheathain uabhasach brèagha. Bha mi aig an oilthigh as t-samhradh. Bha mi a' leughadh à leabhar a sgrìobh mi. Am measg nan oileanach a bha ag èisteachd rium, bha tè à Bulgairia, tè às an Fhraing agus fear às a' Ghearmailt. 'S toigh leam eadar-nàiseantachd na Gàidhlig anns an latha an-diugh!

Ghabh mi ùine coiseachd timcheall nan seann togalaichean. Taobh a-muigh Caibeal Cholaiste an Rìgh, chunnaic mi carragh-cuimhne umha. Bha e a' riochdachadh easbaig.

'S e seann Easbaig Obar Dheathain a tha ann – Uilleam Elphinstone a rugadh ann an ceithir cheud deug, trithead 's a h-aon (1431). Chuir e Oilthigh Obar Dheathain air bhonn.

Ach tha rud annasach air a' charragh-cuimhne. Tha sgrìobhadh timcheall air. Tha e air a shnaigheadh ann an umha. 'S e seann Ghàidhlig a tha ann.

Bhuineadh Elphinstone do Ghlaschu. Chan eil mi cinnteach an robh Gàidhlig aige fhèin. Carson, ma-thà, a tha Gàidhlig air a' charragh-cuimhne aige? Thig mi gu sin an ceartuir. An toiseach, feumaidh mi rudeigin a ràdh mu

Elphinstone himself.

He went to Glasgow University. There were only four universities in Britain at the time – Oxford and Cambridge in England and St Andrews and Glasgow in Scotland. William was a priest in Glasgow. Then he obtained employment as a lecturer in church law in France, at the University of Paris. He spent years in France.

When he was about forty years old, he returned to Scotland. To begin with, he was in Glasgow. Ten years after that, he was made a bishop – Bishop of Ross. He was also a member of parliament. He moved to Aberdeen to be a Bishop in that town in the year 1483. He also worked as a diplomat for King James III. I'll tell you more about him and about the monument in the next Litir.

dheidhinn Elphinstone fhèin.

Chaidh e gu Oilthigh Ghlaschu. Cha robh ach ceithir oilthighean ann am Breatainn aig an àm – Oxford is Cambridge ann an Sasainn agus Cill Rìmhinn is Glaschu ann an Alba. Bha Uilleam na shagart ann an Glaschu. An uair sin, fhuair e obair mar òraidiche ann an lagh na h-Eaglaise anns an Fhraing, ann an Oilthigh Pharis. Dh'fhuirich e bliadhnaichean anns an Fhraing.

Nuair a bha e mu cheathrad bliadhna a dh'aois, thill e a dh'Alba. An toiseach bha e ann an Glaschu. Deich bliadhna an dèidh sin, bha e air a dhèanamh na easbaig – Easbaig Rois. Bha e cuideachd na bhall-pàrlamaid. Ghluais e a dh'Obar Dheathain airson a bhith na Easbaig sa bhaile sin anns a' bhliadhna ceithir cheud deug, ochdad 's a trì (1483). Bha e cuideachd ag obair mar neach diplomasach do Rìgh Seumas III. Innsidh mi dhuibh tuilleadh mu dheidhinn agus mun charragh-chuimhne anns an ath Litir.