

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 622 (which corresponds to Litir 926). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk.

Have you ever heard of John or Johnny Cattanach? Some people say he was the best shinty player ever. He belonged to Badenoch. He was born in 1885. His father was a merchant in Newtonmore. Iain was educated in Newtonmore School and Kingussie School before he went on to George Watson's College and Edinburgh University. He did a degree in Medicine. He was working as a doctor in England and Wales.

He was an exceptional athlete. In 1909/10 he won the long jump at the University of Edinburgh championships. He was also excellent at hockey. He played for the Scottish national hockey team.

But the first stick he picked up was the shinty stick. His shinty skills were exceptional. When he was on the way to the Eilan, the shinty field in Newtonmore, he would run for half a mile, keeping the ball in the air with his caman.

Newtonmore were successful when John Cattanach played for them. In 1909, they played Furnace in the Camanachd Cup

An cuala sibh riamh air Iain no Seonaidh Catanach? Tha cuid ag ràdh gum b' e an cluicheadair iomain a b' fheàrr a bha ann riamh. Bhuineadh e do Bhàideanach. Rugadh e ann an ochd ceud deug, ochdad 's a còig (1885). Bha athair na mharsanta ann am Bail' Ùr an t-Slèibh. Fhuair Iain foghlam ann an Sgoil Bhail' Ùr an t-Slèibh agus Sgoil Cheann a' Ghiùthsaidh, mus deach e gu Colaiste Sheòrais Watson agus Oilthigh Dhùn Èideann. Rinn e ceum ann an Eòlas-leigheis. Bha e ag obair mar dhotair ann an Sasainn agus sa Chuimrigh.

Bha e na lùth-chleasaiche air leth. Ann an naoi ceud deug 's a naoi agus a deich (1909/1910) bhuannaich e an leum-fhada ann am farpaisean Oilthigh Dhùn Èideann. Bha e cuideachd sònraichte math air hocaidh. Chluich e airson sgioba hocaidh na h-Alba.

Ach 's e a' chiad chaman a thog e fear na h-iomain. Bha na sgilean camanachd aige air leth. Nuair a bha e air an rathad chun an Eilein, pàirc na h-iomain ann am Bail' Ùr an t-Slèibh, bhiodh e a' ruith airson leth-mhìle a' cumail a' bhuill san adhar le a chaman.

Bha sgioba a' Bhail' Ùir soirbheachail nuair a bha Iain Catanach a' cluich dhaibh. Ann an naoi ceud deug 's a naoi (1909), chluich iad an Fhùirneis ann an

Final. They won by eleven goals to three. And John Cattanach scored eight goals! Some people think that will stand forever as the greatest number of goals that one player scored in the Final.

Tragically, John Cattanach lost his life in the First DWorld War. He was in the Royal Army Medical Corps. He was wounded in the Dardanelles in 1915. He never recovered, and he died.

He was inducted into the Scottish Sporting Hall of Fame – the only shinty player that has been granted that accolade. A lecture and prize named for him are given by the University of Edinburgh every year. People still remember him as the ‘Prince of Shinty’.

Cuairt Dheireannach Chupa na Camanachd. Bhuannaich iad aon tadhail deug gu trì. Agus chuir Iain Catanach ochd tadhail! Tha cuid dhen bheachd gun seas sin gu sìorraidh mar an uiread as motha de thadhail a chuir aon chluicheadair anns a’ Chuairt Dheireannach.

Gu mì mì-fhortanach, chaill Iain Catanach a bheatha anns a’ Chiad Chogadh. Bha e ann an Corps Meidigeach Rìoghail an Airm. Chaidh a leòn anns na Dardanelles ann an naoi ceud deug is còig-deug (1915). Cha d’ fhuair e seachad air sin, agus chaochail e.

Chaidh ainmeachadh ann an Talla nàiseanta an Sàr-luchd-spòrs – an aon chluicheadair iomain a fhuair an inbhe sin. Bidh òraid agus duais ainmichte air a shon air an toirt le Oilthigh Dhùn Èideann gach bliadhna. Tha daoine ga chuimhneachadh mar ‘Prionnsa na Camanachd’ fhathast.