

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 624 (which corresponds to Litir 928). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you about 'The Bedford Highlanders'. They were the soldiers from the north of Scotland who were living in Bedford in England at the start of the First [World] War.

Diseases spread among the soldiers. Scarlet fever and measles were particularly bad. Some of the soldiers were placed in quarantine at the edge of the town. 135 soldiers died. The remains of some were taken home to the Highlands. Others were buried in Bedford. But many more of them were to be buried over in Belgium and France on account of the war.

The British soldiers were suffering great loss in the war. Thus, the government sent the Highland soldiers to the front earlier than expected. The King came to inspect them at the end of October. In November soldiers started to cross to France. They were taking a train to ports on the English Channel and then a boat across the Channel. By the end of May 1915, they had all gone.

The Highland soldiers were only in Bedford for eight months. And

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu na 'Bedford Highlanders'. B' iad sin na saighdearan à ceann a tuath na h-Alba a bha a' fuireach ann am Bedford ann an Sasainn aig toiseach a' Chiad Chogaidh.

Sgap galaran am measg nan saighdearan. Bha an teasach sgàrlaid agus a' ghriùthrach gu sònraichte dona. Chaidh cuid de na saighdearan a chur ann an cuarantain air iomall a' bhaile. Chaochail ceud, trithead 's a còig saighdearan. Chaidh an dust aig feadhainn a thoirt dhachaigh chun na Gàidhealtachd. Bha feadhainn eile air an tiodhlacadh ann am Bedford. Ach bha fad' a bharrachd dhiubh gu bhith air an tiodhlacadh thall anns a' Bheilg agus san Fhraing air sgàth a' chogaidh.

Bha na saighdearan Breatannach a' fulang call mòr sa chogadh. Mar sin, chuir an riaghaltas na saighdearan Gàidhealach an sàs na bu thràithe na bha dùil. Thàinig an Rìgh a choimhead orra aig deireadh na Dàmhair. Anns an t-Samhain, thòisich saighdearan air a dhol a-null chun na Frainge. Bha iad a' gabhail trèana gu ruige puirt air Caolas Shasainn agus an uair sin bàta thar a' Chaolais. Aig deireadh a' Chèitein naoi ceud deug is còig-deug (1915), bha iad uile air falbh.

Cha robh na saighdearan Gàidhealach ann am Bedford ach ochd

other soldiers came to live there after them. But, apparently, none of the others had the effect on the town that the Scots had. There were twenty two thousand of them there when they left in May 1915. Less than forty thousand people were living in Bedford at that time.

The one group that was like them, that was the American soldiers that were living in Bedford during the Second War. The Scots and the Americans were well-presented and polite. And they were different in carriage and speech from the local people.

Even today, a service of remembrance is held for the Highland soldiers every year. That is on the Sunday before St Andrew's Day. The people of the town still remember 'The Bedford Highlanders'. Cheerio.

mìosan. Agus thàinig saighdearan eile a dh'fhuireach ann às an dèidh. Ach, a rèir choltais, cha tug gin eile a' bhuidhe air a' bhaile 's a thug na h-Albannaich. Bha fichead 's a dhà mìle dhiubh ann nuair a dh'fhalbh iad anns a' Chèitean naoi ceud deug is còig-deug (1915). Bha na bu lugha na ceathrad mìle duine a' fuireach ann am Bedford aig an àm sin.

An aon fheadhainn a bha coltach riutha, b' iad na saighdearan Ameireaganach a bha a' fuireach ann am Bedford anns an Dàrna Cogadh. Bha na h-Albannaich agus na h-Ameireaganaich spaideil is modhail. Agus bha iad diofraichte ann an giùlan is cainnt bho mhuinntir an àite.

Eadhon an-diugh, bidh seirbheis cuimhneachaidh ann do na saighdearan Gàidhealach a h-uile bliadhna. Bidh sin air an t-Sàbaid ro Latha Fèill Anndra. Tha muinntir a' bhaile fhathast a' cuimhneachadh nam 'Bedford Highlanders'. Beannachd leibh.