

# **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 642 (which corresponds to Litir 946). Ruairidh can be contacted at [roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk).*

*I was speaking about Cladh Cille Choirill in the Braes of Lochaber. Two famous poets are buried there - Dòmhnall mac Fhionnla' nan Dàn and Iain Lom. I want to tell you about Iain Lom this week.*

*He was born around 1624 and he died in 1710 or thereabouts. He was a bard of the MacDonalds of Keppoch and, thus, he is also called 'The Keppoch Bard'.*

*The location of Iain Lom's grave is not known with certainty. But a large memorial stone was erected for him in the graveyard. It's not situated like the other gravestones. According to tradition, John wanted to lie with his face towards Corroul. That's in the mountains to the south. The stone is like that, with its face looking towards Corroul.*

*I took a look at the stone and I found writing at its base. Before I tell you what is written on it, I must give you two place-names. The place is somewhat blessed, apparently. The hill on which the graveyard sits – that's 'the angel's hillock' according to the map. Beside it is [the] Lord's*

*Bha mi a' bruidhinn mu Chladh Cille Choirill ann am Bràigh Loch Abar. Tha dithis bhàrd ainmeil air an tiodhlacadh ann – Dòmhnall mac Fhionnla' nan Dàn agus Iain Lom. Tha mi airson innse dhuibh mu Iain Lom an t-seachdain seo.*

*Rugadh e timcheall air sia ceud deug, fichead 's a ceithir (1624) agus chaochail e ann an seachd ceud deug 's a deich (1710) no mar sin. 'S e bàrd a bha ann aig Dòmhnallaich na Ceapaich agus, mar sin, 's e 'Bàrd na Ceapaich' a tha air cuideachd.*

*Chan eil fios le cinnt càite a bheil uaigh Iain Luim. Ach chaidh carragh-cuimhne mòr a chur suas dha anns a' chladh. Chan eil e suidhichte mar tha na clachan-uaighe eile. A rèir beul-aithris, bha Iain ag iarraidh laighe le aghaidh a dh'ionnsaigh a' Choire Odhair. Tha sin anns na beanntan gu deas. Tha a' chlach mar sin, agus a h-aghaidh a' coimhead a dh'ionnsaigh a' Choire Odhair.*

*Thug mi sùil air a' chloich agus lorg mi sgrìobhadh aig a bonn. Mus inns mi dhuibh dè tha sgrìobhte oirre, feumaidh mi dà ainm-àite a thoirt dhuibh. Tha an t-àite car beannaichte, a rèir choltais. An cnoc air a bheil an cladh – 's e sin Tom an Aingil a rèir a' mhapa. Ri a thaobh tha Druim Dòmhnach. Cha chan*

ridge'. I won't mention the hill north of the graveyard – 'the hangman's hill'!

*It must have been that there was an opinion that Tom an Aingil was not the correct name of that hill, but Dùn Aingeal 'hill of angels'. On the memorial stone, there is this written: here in Dùn Aingeal in the Braes of Lochaber, the Keppoch Bard sleeps deeply. Iain Lom MacDonald was his name. Iain Lom but some would call him Iain Manntach. Do you know the word 'manntach'? Stammering. Iain Manntach – stammering John.*

*And why is that John had the nickname 'Lom' [bare]? According to tradition its because a beard wouldn't grow on him. But Dwelly's dictionary gives us this as a meaning – 'cutting, satirical' – Iain Lom 'cutting John'. He was certainly that, as we'll hear next week.*

mi guth air a' chnoc gu tuath air a' chladh – Tom a' Chrochaire!

Feumaidh gun robh beachd ann nach e Tom an Aingil an t-ainm ceart air a' chnoc ud, ach Dùn Aingeal 'hill of angels'. Air a' charragh-chuimhne, tha seo sgrìobhte: *An so 'n Dùn Aingeal am Bràigh Lochabair, tha Bàrd na Ceapaich gu trom na chadal. 'S e Iain Lom MacDhòmhnaill b' ainm da. Iain Lom ach theireadh cuid Iain Manntach. A bheil sibh eòlach air an fhacal 'manntach'? Stammering. Iain Manntach – stammering John.*

Agus carson as e 'Lom' a bha air Iain mar far-ainm? A rèir beul-aithris, 's e nach fhàsadh feusag air. Ach tha faclair Dwelly a' toirt seo dhuinn mar chiall – 'cutting, satirical' – Iain Lom 'cutting John'. Bha e sin, le cinnt – mar a chluinneas sinn an-ath-sheachdain.