

## **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 662 (which corresponds to Litir 966). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk).

*Perhaps you [have] heard of the Red Book of Clanranald. The Red Book of Clanranald. It's in the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh. I saw it recently. It surprised me how small it was.*

*Small or large, the book is precious. It was written at the beginning of the eighteenth century in classical Gaelic by Niall MacMhuirich. MacMhuirich lived in South Uist. He was one of a line of bards and historians to the MacDonald chiefs.*

*James 'Ossian' MacPherson went to Uist in 1760. He had published Ossian's poetry. But many people maintained that it was James himself that created it. He went to look for manuscripts in which there was old Ossianic poetry. He went to the house of the Clanranald chief.*

*The chief sent him to a Niall MacMhuirich. He was the grandson of the man who wrote the Red Book. James got the book on loan. But he didn't give*

'S docha gun cuala sibh mun Leabhar Dhearg aig Clann Raghnaill. The Red Book of Clanranald. Tha e ann an Taigh-tasgaidh Nàiseanta na h-Alba ann an Dùn Èideann. Chunnaic mi o chionn ghoirid e. Chuir e iongnadh orm cho beag 's a bha e.

Beag no mòr, tha an leabhar prìseil. Bha e air a sgrìobhadh aig toiseach an ochdamh linn deug ann an Gàidhlig chlasaigeach le fear Niall MacMhuirich. Bha MacMhuirich a' fuireach ann an Uibhist a Deas. Bha e na bhall de chinneadh a bha nam bàird is luchd-eachdraidh do chinn-chinnidh nan Dòmhnallach.

Chaidh Seumas 'Oisean' MacMhuirich a dh'Uibhist ann an seachd ceud deug is seasgad (1760). Bha e air bàrdachd Oisein fhoillseachadh. Ach bha gu leòr de dhaoine a' cumail a-mach gur e Seumas fhèin a chruthaich i. Chaidh e a choimhead airson làmh-sgrìobhainnean anns an robh seann bhàrdachd Oiseanach. Chaidh e gu taigh ceann-cinnidh Chlann Raghnaill.

Chuir an ceann-cinnidh e gu fear Niall MacMhuirich. B' esan ogha an duine a sgrìobh an Leabhar Dearg. Fhuair Seumas an leabhar air iasad. Ach cha tug e air ais e. Nuair a chaochail e, bha an

*it back. When he died, the book was among his effects in London. After that, Clanranald got it back.*

*There is another book quite similar – the Black Book of Clanranald. Between the two books, there is a lot of information about the heritage of the Gaels at the end of the middle ages. The Black Book was found in a shop in Dublin in 1840 by the Scottish historian, William Forbes Skene. Shortly before his death, Skene gave the book to the chief of Clanranald. About a hundred years after that, Clanranald gave both books – the red one and the black one – to the National Museum.*

*The Black Book had more than one author. The most important was Christopher Beaton. He was a member of another famous family. He was a tutor to the Antrim branch of the MacDonalDs. If you are ever in the National Museum, I'd recommend that you look at the two Clanranald books.*

leabhar am measg an stuth aige ann an Lunnainn. An dèidh sin fhuair Clann Raghnaill air ais e.

Tha leabhar eile ann a tha car coltach – Leabhar Dubh Chlann Raghnaill. Eadar an dà leabhar, tha tòrr fiosrachaidh ann mu dhualchas nan Gàidheal aig deireadh nam meadhan-aoisean. Chaidh an Leabhar Dubh a lorg ann am bùth ann am Baile Atha Cliath ann an ochd ceud deug is ceathrad (1840) leis an eachdraiche Albannach, Uilleam Foirbeis Skene. Goirid ro a bhàs, thug Skene an leabhar do cheann-cinnidh Chlann Raghnaill. Mu cheud bliadhna an dèidh sin, thug Clann Raghnaill an dà leabhar – am fear dearg agus am fear dubh – don Taigh-tasgaidh Nàiseanta.

Bha barrachd air aon ùghdar aig an Leabhar Dhubh. B' e am fear a bu chudromaiche Crìsdean Peutan. Bha esan na bhall de theaghlach ainmeil eile. Bha e na oide aig meur Aontraim Chlann Dòmhnail. Ma tha sibh anns an Taigh-tasgaidh Nàiseanta uair sam bith, mholainn gun toir sibh sùil air dà leabhar Chlann Raghnaill.