

# **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 699 (which corresponds to Litir 1,003). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk).

*I'm going to give you a verse of a song. There is a connection between the song and the day that the Scotland rugby team won a grand slam for the first time in the Five Nations Championship.*

*The love of my heart, blonde Mary, beautiful Mary, the subject of my song, she is my love, blonde Mary, and I'm going to marry her.*

*Do you recognise the song? That's a verse from 'Màiri Bhàn' or 'Màiri's Wedding'. It was written by a man from South Uist, John Roderick Bannerman. He went to live in Glasgow when he was a young lad. He wrote the song for Mary MacNiven when she won the gold medal at the National Mod in 1934.*

*Nine years before the song was sung, John's son was playing for the Scotland rugby team. He was also called John and he was a Gaelic-speaker. He played for the national team thirty-seven times in the twenties. In 1925, Scotland won the grand slam for the first time ever.*

*Against him that day, in the*

Tha mi a' dol a thoirt dhuibh rann òrain. Tha ceangal ann eadar an t-òran agus an latha a thug sgioba Rugbaidh na h-Alba a-mach an t-sàr-bhuaidh airson a' chiad turais ann am Farpais nan Còig Dùthchannan.

*Gaol mo chridh-sa, Màiri Bhàn, Màiri bhòidheach, sgeul mo dhàin, 'S i mo ghaol-sa Màiri Bhàn, 'S tha mi dol ga pòsadh.*

A bheil sibh ag aithneachadh an òrain? Sin rann à 'Màiri Bhàn' no 'Mairi's Wedding'. Chaidh a sgrìobhadh le fear à Uibhist a Deas, Iain Ruairidh Mac Ille na Brataich. Chaidh e a dh'fhuireach ann an Glaschu nuair a bha e na ghille òg. Sgrìobh e an t-òran do Mhàiri NicNaomhin nuair a bhuannaich i am bonn òir aig a' Mhòd Nàiseanta ann an naoi ceud deug, trithead 's a ceithir (1934).

Naoi bliadhna mus deach an t-òran a sgrìobhadh, bha mac Iain a' cluich airson sgioba Rugbaidh na h-Alba. 'S e Iain a bha airsan cuideachd agus bha Gàidhlig aige. Chluich e airson na sgioba nàiseanta trithead 's a seachd tursan anns na ficheadan. Ann an naoi ceud deug, fichead 's a còig (1925) thug Alba a-mach an t-sàr-bhuaidh airson a' chiad turais riamh.

Na aghaidh an latha sin, ann an sgioba Shasainn, bha fear Ruairidh

*England team, there was Roderick MacLennan, Roderick Ross Forrest MacLennan. Although he was playing for England, he was born in Glasgow. His father belonged to Croy near Inverness. And Roderick was a Gaelic-speaker.*

*There was another man in the England team that day who had connections to Scotland. That was Duncan Cumming. After the game there was a banquet for the players. Cumming and MacLennan spent time in the company of Bannerman, learning Gaelic songs from him!*

*And what happened to the two Gaels? MacLennan was a businessman in Northern Ireland for a time. He spent his final years in Croy.*

*Bannerman got involved in politics. He was a Liberal member in the House of Lords. His son, John, was a famous Gaelic scholar. And his grandson, Shade Munro, played seven times for the Scotland rugby team.*

*MacIllInnein – Roderick Ross Forrest MacLennan. Ged a bha e a’ cluich airson Sasainn, rugadh e ann an Glaschu. Bhuineadh athair do Chrothaigh faisg air Inbhir Nis. Agus bha Gàidhlig aig Ruairidh.*

*Bha fear eile ann an sgioba Shasainn an latha sin aig an robh ceanglaichean do dh’Alba. B’ esan Donnchadh Cuimeanach. An dèidh a’ ghèam bha cuirm ann airson nan cluicheadairean. Chuir an Cuimeanach agus MacIllInnein seachad ùine ann an cuideachd Mhic Ille na Brataich, ag ionnsachadh òrain Ghàidhlig bhuaithe!*

*Agus dè thachair don dithis Ghàidheal? Bha MacIllInnein na fhear-ghnothaich ann an Èirinn a Tuath fad ùine. Chuir e seachad na bliadhnaichean mu dheireadh aige ann an Crothaigh.*

*Chaidh Mac Ille na Brataich an sàs ann am poilitigs. Bha e na bhall Libearalach ann an Taigh nam Morairean. Bha gille aige, Iain, na sgoilear Gàidhlig ainmeil. Agus chluich ogha, Shade Munro, seachd tursan do sgioba rugbaidh na h-Alba.*