

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 711 (which corresponds to Litir 1,015). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk.

I want to tell you about a famous criminal in Australia who was born, apparently, in Ross-shire. He was Frank Gardiner. He was alive at around the same time as Ned Kelly.

The biographies tell us that Gardiner was born in 1830 in Ross-shire. But they don't tell us where. At a young age, he emigrated to Australia with his parents. And Gardiner wasn't his true name, but Christie.

When he was still young, he was working with cattle in the middle of Victoria. Along with some others, he stole a herd of horses. But he was caught, and he spent time in prison.

When he got out, he was perpetually involved in crime. In 1862, he got involved with other famous robbers ('bushrangers'). They stopped a team who were moving gold and money in New South Wales. They stole treasure that would be worth fifteen million dollars today. This made Gardiner famous, even in Britain and the United States.

Tha mi airson innse dhuibh mu eucoireach ainmeil ann an Astràilia, a rugadh, a rèir choltais, ann an Siorrachd Rois. B' esan Frank Gardiner. Bha e beò mun aon àm 's a bha Ned Kelly.

Tha na cunntasan-beatha ag innse dhuinn gun do rugadh Gardiner ann an ochd ceud deug is trithead (1830) ann an Siorrachd Rois. Ach chan eil iad ag innse dhuinn càite. Aig aois òg, rinn e eilthreachd gu Astràilia cuide ri a phàrantan. Agus cha b' e Gardiner an t-ainm ceart aige, ach Christie.

Nuair a bha e fhathast òg, bha e ag obair le crodh ann am meadhan Bhictoria. Còmhla ri feadhainn eile, ghoid e treud each. Ach chaidh a ghlacadh, agus chuir e seachad ùine sa phrìosan.

Nuair a fhuair e a-mach, bha e ri eucoir fad na h-ùine. Ann an ochd ceud deug, seasgad 's a dhà (1862), chaidh e an sàs le sàr-mhèirlich eile. Chuir iad stad air sgioba a bha a' gluasad òir is airgid ann an Cuimrigh Nuadh a Deas. Ghoid iad ulaidh air am biodh luach an-diugh de chòig-deug millean doilear. Rinn seo Gardiner ainmeil, eadhon ann am Breatainn is na Stàitean Aonaichte.

He fled north, to Queensland. He was running a shop in the town of Rockhampton but he was recognised by somebody. He was caught, and he received a sentence of more than thirty years in prison, with hard labour. However, after ten years he was pardoned, based on the condition that he would leave Australia.

In 1874, Gardiner went to Hong Kong and then to California. He settled in San Francisco. He bought a pub near the harbour.

It's not clear how he died. San Francisco lost many of its city records in the earthquake in 1906. Anyway, sometime between 1882 and 1904, Gardiner died. Did he return to the land of his birth in Ross-shire? I'm afraid I don't know.

Theich e gu tuath, gu Tìr na Banrigh. Bha e a' ruith bùth ann am baile Rockhampton ach chaidh aithneachadh le cuideigin. Chaidh a ghlacadh, agus fhuair e binn de chòrr is deich bliadhna fichead sa phrìosan, agus obair chruaidh na cois. Ge-tà, an dèidh deich bliadhna fhuair e maitheanas, stèidhichte air a' chumha gum fàgadh e Astràilia.

Ann an ochd ceud deug, seachdad 's a ceithir (1874), chaidh Gardiner gu Hong Kong agus an uair sin gu Calafòirnia. Sheatlaig e ann an San Francisco. Cheannaich e taigh-seinnse faisg air a' chala.

Chan eil e soilleir mar a fhuair e bàs. Chaill San Francisco mòran de na clàraidhean baile aca anns a' chrith-thalmhainn ann an naoi ceud deug is sia (1906). Co-dhiù, uaireigin eadar ochd ceud deug, ochdad 's a dhà (1882) agus naoi ceud deug is ceithir (1904), fhuair Gardiner bàs. An do thill e gu dùthaich a bhreith ann an Siorrachd Rois? Tha eagal orm nach eil fhios a'm.