

# **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 718 (which corresponds to Litir 1,022). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk).*

*I was telling you, last week, about the Argyll Voiturette. That was the petrol vehicle that was made in Glasgow at the start of the twentieth century. For a while, the company was making more cars than any other company in Britain – up to thirty vehicles every week.*

*The company's executive officer, Alex Govan, put forward a plan for a new big factory in Alexandria near Helensburgh. One thousand, six hundred people worked there. The company's name changed to Argyll Motor Works.*

*Alex Govan made the working situation of his workers reasonable and comfortable. There were even sporting facilities for them. And, to begin with, things went well. The Argyll Motor Works were making up to sixty cars every week.*

*Although the company was going well, there was bad news ahead. In May 1907, Alex Govan took some other folk to lunch in Glasgow. He grew sick. A few days later, he died from a cerebral haemorrhage.*

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh, an t-seachdain sa chaidh, mun Argyll Voiturette. B' e sin carbad-ola a chaidh a dhèanamh ann an Glaschu aig toiseach an fhicheadamh linn. Airson greis, bha a' chompanaidh a' togail barrachd chàraichean na companaidh sam bith eile ann am Breatainn – suas ri trithead carbad gach seachdain.

Chuir àrd-oifigear na companaidh, Ailig Govan, air adhart plana airson factaraidh mhòr ùr ann an Alexandria faisg air Bail' Eilidh. Bha mìle is sia ceud duine ag obair ann. Chaidh ainm na companaidh atharrachadh gu Argyll Motor Works.

Rinn Ailig Govan suidheachadh obrach a luchd-obrach reusanta is cofhurtail. Bha eadhon goireasan spòrs ann dhaibh. Agus an toiseach, chaidh cùisean gu math. Bha an Argyll Motor Works a' togail suas ri seasgad carbad gach seachdain.

Ged a bha a' chompanaidh a' dol gu math, bha droch naidheachd air thoiseach orra. Anns a' Chèitean naoi ceud deug 's a seachd (1907), thug Ailig Govan feadhainn eile a-mach gu lòn ann an Glaschu. Dh'fhàs e tinn. Beagan làithean an dèidh sin, chaochail e air sgàth fuil-dhòrtadh na eanchainn.

*Things went badly for the company then. It was dissolved in 1908. But the matter wasn't over. A new company Argyll Limited was created in 1910. They began to build vehicles again. But the company wasn't run as well as it should have been.*

*Finally, in June 1914, Argyll Limited went out of existence. Some historians were of the opinion, if they had kept going for two more months, that they would have obtained big contracts. Why? Well, the First [World] War started then. There was a great demand for petrol vehicles over the four years after that.*

*The factory in Alexandria was bought by the Royal Navy. Torpedoes were made there for the war effort. The building is now a well-appointed shopping centre called Lomond Galleries. It doesn't look at all like a vehicle factory!*

Chaidh cùisean bhuaithe airson na companaidh an uair sin. Chaidh a cur às a chèile ann an naoi ceud deug 's a h-ochd (1908). Ach cha robh an gnothach seachad. Chaidh companaidh ùr *Argyll Earranta* a chruthachadh ann an naoi ceud deug 's a deich (1910). Thòisich iad air carbadan a thogail a-rithist. Ach cha robh a' chompanaidh air a ruith cho math 's a bu chòir.

Mu dheireadh, anns an Ògmhios naoi ceud deug is ceithir-deug (1914), chaidh *Argyll Earranta* à bith. Tha cuid de luchd-eachdraidh dhen bheachd, nan robh iad air cumail a' dol airson dà mhìos eile, gun robh iad air cùmhnantan mòra fhaighinn. Carson? Uill, thòisich a' Chiad Chogadh an uair sin. Bha iarrtas mòr ann airson charbadan-ola thairis air na ceithir bliadhna an dèidh sin.

Chaidh an fhactaraidh ann an Alexandria a cheannach leis a' Chabhlach Rìoghail. Chaidh toirpìodohan a dhèanamh ann airson adhbhar a' Chogaidh. Tha an togalach a-nise na ionad-bhùthan spaideil air a bheil *Lomond Galleries*. Chan eil e idir a' coimhead coltach ri factaraidh charbadan!