

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 734 (which corresponds to Litir 1,038). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you about the famous freebooter, James MacPherson from Badenoch. He was in prison in Aberdeen. But a group was trying to free him. A butcher was stopping them. He was fighting with James's cousin, Donald MacPherson.

The butcher was growing weak. He asked his dog for help. Donald took an item of his clothing off and he put it around the butcher. The dog attacked his master. And the fighting between the two men ceased. James got out of prison and made for Badenoch on horseback.

One day in the year 1700, James and some others were in Keith. Duff of Braco had a team in pursuit of them. They saw their opportunity. They attacked James. James took out his sword. But a woman threw a blanket over him from a window up high, and he was captured.

James was put in prison in Banff. In the court case, there was evidence from twenty-one witnesses. As we saw last week, some people were accusing James of being an 'Egyptian'. They were meaning 'traveller'. It was reported that those

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mun cheatharnach ainmeil, Seumas Mac a' Phearsain à Bàideanach. Bha e sa phrìosan ann an Obar Dheathain. Ach bha buidheann a' feuchainn ri a shaoradh. Bha bùidsear a' cur stad orra. Bha e a' sabaid le co-ogha Sheumais, Dòmhnall Mac a' Phearsain.

Bha am bùidsear a' fàs lag. Dh'iarr e taic air a chù aige. Thug Dòmhnall ball-aodaich aige dheth, agus chuir e timcheall a' bhùidseir e. Thug an cù ionnsaigh air a mhaighstir. Agus sguir an t-sabaid eadar an dithis fhear. Fhuair Seumas a-mach às a' phrìosan agus rinn e air Bàideanach air muin eich.

Latha a bha seo anns a' bhliadhna seachd ceud deug (1700) bha Seumas agus feadhainn eile ann am Baile Chè. Bha sgioba aig MacDuibh à Braco air a thòir. Chunnaic iad an cothrom. Thug iad ionnsaigh air Seumas. Thug Seumas a chlaidheamh a-mach. Ach thilg boireannach plaide thairis air bho uinneag gu h-àrd, agus chaidh a chur an grèim.

Chaidh Seumas a chur don phrìosan ann am Banbh. Anns a' chùis-chùirte, bha fianais ann bho aon neach-fianais air fhichead. Mar a chunnaic sinn an t-seachdain sa chaidh, bha feadhainn a' cur às leth Sheumais gur e 'Egyptian' a bha ann. Bha iad a' ciallachadh 'neach-siubhail'.

people spoke another language in addition to Gaelic.

James and another man, James Gordon, were found guilty. They were sentenced to death. The judge said James was an ‘Egyptian and vagabond’ and that he would lose his life on the gibbet. A day was chosen when there would be a large population in the town. The gibbet was built next to the mercat cross in the middle of Banff.

A different verdict was handed down on three others – ‘three young rogues’. Their ears were cut off, they were burned on their cheeks and they were scourged through the streets of Banff. That was ‘justice’ at that time.

The hanging day came. And a weird thing happened, as we’ll see next week.

Bhathar ag aithris gun robh cànan eile aig an fheadhainn sin a bharrachd air a’ Ghàidhlig.

Bha Seumas agus fear eile, Seumas Gòrdan, air am faighinn ciontach. Chaidh binn-bhàis a chur orra. Thuir am briteamh gur e ‘*Egyptian and vagabond*’ a bha ann an Seumas agus gun cailleadh e a bheatha air a’ chroich. Chaidh latha a thaghadh nuair a bhiodh sluagh mòr anns a’ bhaile. Bha a’ chroich air a togail ri taobh crois na margaidh ann am meadhan Bhanbh.

Thugadh binn eadar-dhealaichte air trì eile – ‘*three young rogues*’. Bha an cluasan air an gearradh dhiubh, bha iad air an losgadh air an gruaidhean agus bha iad air an cuipeadh tro shràidean Bhanbh. B’ e sin ‘ceartas’ aig an àm sin.

Thàinig latha a’ chrochaidh. Agus thachair rud iongantach, mar a chì sinn an-ath-sheachdain.