

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 742 (which corresponds to Litir 1,046). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk.

*Sitting tired beside a stream
Is the poor Christian, John Roy,
A fighting man, still without peace
His foot having just stumbled badly.*

Before we leave Badenoch and Strathspey, I want to tell you about one of the most famous people ever that came from that area – John Roy Stuart. It was he that wrote the passage with which I started the Litir – the first verse of John Roy's Prayer.

John Roy was a poet and a soldier of repute among other things. He was also a famous Jacobite, and an adviser to the Young Prince, Charles [Edward] Stuart.

He was born in the Knock of Kincardine in the year 1700. He was well educated and spent time on the European continent. He was for a while there fighting on behalf of France. He came up against his nemesis – the Duke of Cumberland – at the Battle of Fontenoy in May 1745.

Three months after that, he heard that the Prince had raised his banner in the Highlands. He went home and met the Jacobites at Blair Atholl. He put together a regiment in Edinburgh – the

*Aig taobh sruthain na shuidhe, 's e sgìth
Tha an Crìosdaidh bochd, Iain Ruadh,
Na cheatharnach, fhathast gun sìth
'S a chas air tuisleadh san tìm gu truagh.*

Mus fhàg sinn Bàideanach is Srath Spè, tha mi airson innse dhuibh mu fhear de na daoine as ainmeile riamh a thàinig às an sgìre sin – Iain Ruadh Stiùbhart. 'S e a sgrìobh an earrann leis an do thòisich mi an Litir – a' chiad rann de dh'Ùrnaigh Iain Ruaidh.

Bha Iain Ruadh na bhàrd agus na shaighdear cliùiteach am measg eile. Bha e cuideachd na Sheumasach ainmeil, agus na chomhairliche don Phrionnsa Òg, Teàrlach Stiùbhart.

Rugadh e ann an Cnoc Chinn Chàrdainn anns a' bhliadhna seachd ceud deug (1700). Fhuair e foghlam math, agus chuir e seachad ùine air tìr-mòr na Roinn-Eòrpa. Bha e greis an sin a' sabaid às leth na Frainge. Thàinig e an aghaidh a shàr nàmhaid – Diùc Chumberland – aig Blàr Fontenoy anns a' Chèitean seachd ceud deug, ceathrad 's a còig (1745).

Trì mìosan an dèidh sin, chuala e gun robh am Prionnsa air a bhratach a thogail air a' Ghàidhealtachd. Chaidh e dhachaigh, agus choinnich e ris na Seumasaich ann am Blàr Athall. Chuir e rèisimeid ri chèile ann an Dùn

'Edinburgh Regiment'. But many that were in it were from the Highlands.

John was involved in a number of battles between the Jacobites and the army of the Crown during the 1745-6 Rising. At Culloden he was in charge of his regiment – which was part of the front line that suffered so badly. According to oral tradition, Cumberland saw him. He was killing a lot of redcoat soldiers. 'Who is he?' he asked.

'John Roy Stuart,' replied one of his officers.

'God,' said Cumberland, 'the man who left me in Flanders, doing the work of ten heroes?! Has he followed me here?'

But, as we know, the day went with Cumberland. John Roy fled through Gorthleck. He met the rest of the Jacobite army at Ruthven near Kingussie. We'll see in the next Litir what happened then.

Èideann – The Edinburgh Regiment. Ach bha mòran de na bh' innte às a' Ghàidhealtachd.

Bha Iain an sàs ann an grunn chathan eadar na Seumasaich agus armailt a' Chrùin ann am Bliadhna a' Phrionnsa. Aig Blàr Chùil Lodair, bha e os cionn a rèisimeid – a bha mar phàirt dhen chiad loidhne a dh'fhuiling gu dubh. A rèir beul-aithris, chunnaic Cumberland e. Bha e a' marbhadh shaighdearan dearga gu leòr. 'Cò esan?' dh'fhaighnich e.

'Iain Ruadh Stiùbhart,' fhreagair oifigear aige.

'A Thighearna,' thuirt Cumberland, 'am fear a dh'fhàg mi ann am Flànras, a' dèanamh obair deichnear ghaisgeach?! A bheil e air tighinn air mo thòir an seo?'

Ach, mar a tha fios againn, chaidh an latha le Cumberland. Theich Iain Ruadh tro Ghortlaig. Choinnich e ris a' chòrr de dh'arm nan Seumasach ann an Ruadhainn faisg air Ceann a' Ghiùthsaidh. Chì sinn anns an ath Litir dè thachair dha an uair sin.