

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 743 (which corresponds to Litir 1,047). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclea@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you about John Roy Stuart. He wrote a famous poem 'The Day of Culloden'. He explained in the poem how the government army defeated the Jacobites:

*Although they won a battle,
It wasn't through their hardiness
or cleverness,
But the west wind and showers
Coming up on us out of the
Lowlands.*

After Culloden, John met the rest of the Jacobite army at Ruthven near Kingussie. The decision was made not to continue with the war. Many of the Jacobite leaders fled to France or other countries. But John Roy remained to begin with in his own country. He was a fugitive, however. He was living in caves.

One day, a young guy, Peter Bell, was going to John with milk. He met a troop of redcoat soldiers who were looking for John. One of them had a drum.

'Where are you going?' asked the soldiers.

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Iain Ruadh Stiùbhart. Sgrìobh e dàn ainmeil *Latha Chùil Lodair*. Mhìnich e anns an dàn mar a thug armailt an riaghaltais buaidh air na Seumasaich:

*Ged a bhuannaich iad batail,
Cha b' ann da 'n cruadal no 'n tapadh
a bha,
Ach gaoth an iar agus frasan,
Thigh 'n a-nìos oirnn bhàrr machair
nan Gall.*

An dèidh Chùil Lodair, choinnich Iain ris a' chòrr de dh'arm nan Seumasach aig Ruadhainn faisg air Ceann a' Ghiùthsaidh. Chaidh an co-dhùnadh a dhèanamh gun a bhith a' leantainn leis a' chogadh. Theich gu leòr de na ceannardan Seumasach don Fhraing no dùthchannan eile. Ach dh'fhuirich Iain Ruadh an toiseach na dhùthaich fhèin. Bha e na ruagalaiche, ge-tà. Bha e a' fuireach ann an uamhan.

Aon latha, bha fear òg, Peadar Bell, a' dol a dh'ionnsaigh Iain le bainne. Thachair e ri feachd de shaighdearan dearga a bha a' coimhead airson Iain. Bha drum aig fear dhiubh.

'Cà'l thu a' dol?' dh'fhaighnich na saighdearan.

'To my father who is working in the wood,' replied Peter. The lad saw the drum. He made conversation as if he were wanting to buy it. He took hold of the drum. He sang a song:

Be gone and don't stay, be gone, be gone!

Don't come anymore tonight, the posse is coming for you,

Be gone and don't stay, be gone, be gone!

John Roy heard him and fled.

Although it was mostly in Gaelic that John Roy wrote his poetry, he wrote at least one poem in English – John Roy Stuart's Psalm. In that song, he said that the forces of the Crown would not get hold of him:

Though they mow down both corn and grass

And seek me underground,

Though hundreds guard each road and pass,

John Roy will not be found.

And he was correct. The redcoats didn't find him. But, before he could get an opportunity to flee to safety in France, he had one more meeting with his Prince, Young Charles, who was also a fugitive. That was over Ben Alder way in Badenoch – as we shall hear next week.

'Gu m' athair, a tha ag obair sa choille,' fhreagair Peadar. Chunnaic an gille an druma. Rinn e còmhradh mar gun robh e ag iarraidh a cheannach. Ghabh e grèim air an druma. Sheinn e òran:

Bi falbh 's na fuirich, bi falbh, bi falbh!

Na tig a-nochd tuillidh, tha 'n tòir a' tighinn thugad

Na tig a-nochd tuillidh, bi falbh, bi falbh!'

Chuala Iain Ruadh e agus theich e.

Ged as ann an Gàidhlig a bu mhotha a sgrìobh Iain Ruadh a bhàrdachd, sgrìobh e co-dhiù aon dàn ann am Beurla – John Roy Stuart's Psalm. Anns an òran sin, thuirt e nach fhaigheadh feachdan a' Chrùin grèim air:

Though they mow down both corn and grass

And seek me underground,

Though hundreds guard each road and pass,

John Roy will not be found.

Agus bha e ceart. Cha d' fhuair na saighdearan dearga lorg air. Ach mus fhaigheadh e cothrom teicheadh gu sàbhailteachd anns an Fhraing, bha aon choinneamh eile aige le a Phrionnsa, Teàrlach Òg, a bha e fhèin na ruagalaiche. Bha sin taobh Beinn Eallair ann am Bàideanach – mar a chluinneas sinn an-ath-sheachdain.