

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 748 (which corresponds to Litir 1,052). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

Have you ever heard of the Battle of Glen Fruin? Glen Fruin is to the west of the southern end of Loch Lomond. The battle took place in the year 1603.

A MacGregor widow was living in Glen Strae north of Loch Lomond. She had two sons. They were young lads. They were buying goods in the Lowland towns and selling it in the Highlands.

They went to Dumbarton to buy goods. On the way home, they faced snow and blizzards. They reached Luss. They chose to cross Loch Lomond to be among their own people. The MacGregors were plentiful on the eastern side of the loch.

Some of them asked, 'What clan do you belong to?' The lads didn't know that the people of Luss bore ill will to the MacGregors. And they admitted they were MacGregors. Then they couldn't get a ferry, food or a place to stay. They continued to a village north of Luss.

They reached a goat house where there was dry wood. They made a fire. They broke up a plough to put on the fire.

They were starving. They killed a black wether that had a white tail. They roasted part of the meat and ate it.

An cuala sibh riamh mu Chath Ghlinn Freòin? Tha Gleann Freòin – Glen Fruin – siar air ceann a deas Loch Laomainn. Thachair an cath anns a' bhliadhna sia ceud deug 's a trì (1603).

Bha bantrach Ghriogarach a' fuireach ann an Gleann Sratha tuath air Loch Laomainn. Bha dithis mhac aice. Bha iad nan giullain òga. Bha iad a' ceannach bathar anns na bailtean Gallta agus ga reic air a' Ghàidhealtachd.

Chaidh iad a Dhùn Bhreatann a cheannach bathar. Air an rathad dhachaigh thàinig cur is cathadh orra. Ràinig iad Lus. Roghnaich iad a dhol tarsainn Loch Laomainn airson a bhith am measg am muinntir fhèin. Bha na Griogaraich pailt air taobh sear an locha.

Dh'fhaighnich cuid dhiubh, 'Cò an cinneadh dham buin sibh?' Cha robh fios aig na gillean gun robh gamhlas aig muinntir Luis ris na Griogaraich. Agus dh'aidich iad gur e Griogaraich a bha annta. An uair sin, chan fhaigheadh iad aiseag, biadh no àite-fuirich. Lean iad orra gu baile beag tuath air Lus.

Ràinig iad taigh-ghobhar far an robh fiodh tioram. Thog iad teine. Bhris iad crann-treabhaidh airson cur air an teine.

Bha an t-acras mòr orra. Mharbh iad molt dubh aig an robh earball geal. Ròist iad earrann dhen fheòil agus dh'ith iad i.

Some people were keeping an eye on them. They saw how the lads killed the wether. Information was sent to their clan chief, Sir Humphrey Colquhoun. A gang of men came during the night. They put the lads under lock and key.

The day of the hanging came. There was a host of people at the hanging hill south of Luss. A group of MacGregors also appeared. The lads were strung from a pine tree with ropes around their necks. Something went wrong, however. The two MacGregors fell to the ground. They were still alive.

One of the MacGregors shouted that the prisoners should be released. But Sir Humphrey Colquhoun put his own men between the MacGregors and the gibbet. They put up the ropes again. The two merchants were hanged to death.

That was bad enough, but matters deteriorated, as we'll see next week.

Bha feadhainn a' cumail sùil orra. Chunnaic iad mar a mharbh na gillean am molt. Chaidh fios a chur don ceann-cinnidh, Sir Umfra Mac a' Chombaich. Thàinig gràisg air an oidhche. Chuir iad na gillean fo ghlas.

Thàinig latha a' chrochaidh. Bha sluagh aig Tom na Croiche deas air Lus. Nochd gràisg de Ghriogaraich cuideachd. Chaidh na gillean a chur air craobh-ghiuthais le ròpan timcheall an amhaichean. Chaidh rudeigin ceàrr, ge-tà. Thuit an dithis Ghriogarach don làr. Bha iad fhathast beò.

Dh'èigh fear de na Griogaraich gum bu chòir do na prìosanaich a bhith air an leigeil mu sgaoil. Ach chuir Sir Umfra Mac a' Chombaich a dhaoine fhèin eadar na Griogaraich agus a' chroich. Chuir iad na ròpan suas a-rithist. Chaidh an dithis mharsantach a chrochadh gu bàs.

Bha sin dona gu leòr, ach dh'fhàs cùisean na bu mhiosa, mar a chì sinn an-ath-sheachdain.