

# 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 755 (which corresponds to Litir 1,059). Ruairidh can be contacted at [roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk).

*I made mention of Donald Ban MacCrimmon last week. He was the one person, according to tradition, that was killed in the Rout of Moy.*

*Donald belonged to a famous lineage. The MacCrimmons were pipers to the clan chiefs of the MacLeods of Dunvegan. During 1745-6, Donald Ban was piper to the chief of the MacLeods. His leader was on the government side. Thus, Donald was often on a battlefield in opposition to the Jacobites.*

*Two days before Christmas in 1745, the Jacobites won the Battle of Inverurie. Donald Ban was captured. He was released, however. The Gaels were respectful of piping and pipers. It's said that the Jacobite pipers were refusing to play the pipes while Donald was a prisoner of theirs.*

*In the middle of February, Donald was in Moy. A bullet was fired in the darkness by one of the five men who were defending Moy. The piper fell dead.*

*According to oral tradition, it's Donald Ban that created the pipe music – and the song – MacCrimmon's Lament. It's said that he was*

Dh'ainmich mi Dòmhnall Bàn MacCruimein an t-seachdain sa chaidh. B' esan an aon duine, a rèir aithris, a chaidh a mharbhadh ann an Ruaig na Mòighe.

Bhuineadh Dòmhnall do chinneadh ainmeil. Bha Clann 'ic Cruimein nam pìobairean do chinn-chinnidh Clann 'ic Leòid Dhùn Bheagain. Ann am Bliadhna a' Phrionnsa, bha Dòmhnall Bàn na pìobaire do cheann-cinnidh nan Leòdach. Bha a cheannard air taobh an riaghaltais. Mar sin, bha Dòmhnall gu tric air blàr catha an aghaidh nan Seumasach.

Dà latha ron Nollaig ann an seachd ceud deug, ceathrad 's a còig (1745), bhuannaich na Seumasaich Blàr Inbhir Uaraidh. Chaidh Dòmhnall Bàn a chur an grèim. Chaidh a leigeil mu sgaoil, ge-tà. Bha spèis aig na Gàidheil air pìobaireachd agus pìobairean. Thathar ag ràdh gun robh na pìobairean Seumasach a' diùltadh a bhith a' seinn na pìoba, fhad 's a bha Dòmhnall ann an grèim aca.

Ann am meadhan a' Ghearrain, bha Dòmhnall anns a' Mhòigh. Chaidh peilear a losgadh anns an dorchadas le fear dhen chòignear a bha a' dìon na Mòighe. Thuit am pìobaire marbh.

A rèir beul-aithris, 's e Dòmhnall Bàn a chruthaich a' phìobaireachd – agus an t-òran – *Cumha MhicCruimein*. Thathar ag

*predicting his own death. Here's the chorus:*

*MacCrimmon will never, never return; in war or peace, he'll never return; with money or possessions, MacCrimmon will not return; he'll never return until Judgment Day.*

*Here is one modern form of the first verse: The mist of the peaks is on the face of the Cuillin; and the fairy woman sang her song of sadness; placid blue eyes cry in Dunvegan Castle; since you left us and will never return.*

*And here is the third verse: Your music will not be heard in Dunvegan Castle in the evening; and the echo from the ramparts being replied to with joy; every young man and young woman, without music, without playfulness; since you left us and will never return.*

*Whether or not it was Donald Ban who wrote the song, it stands in memory of the man and of the MacCrimmon pipers who were so famous.*

*ràdh gun robh e a' dèanamh ro-aithris air a bhàs fhèin. Seo an t-sèist:*

*Cha till, cha till, cha till MacCruimein; An cogadh no sìth, cha till e tuilleadh; Le airgead no nì cha till MacCruimein; Cha till e gu bràth gu Latha na Cruinne.*

*Seo aon dreach anns an latha an-diugh air a' chiad rann: Tha ceò nan stùc mu aodann a' Chuilthinn; Is sheinn a' bhean-shìth a torman mulaid; Gorm-shùilean ciùin san Dùn a' sìleadh; On thriall thu bhuainn 's nach till thu tuilleadh.*

*Agus seo an treas rann: Cha chluinnear do cheòl san Dùn mu fheasgar; 'S mac-talla nam mùr le mùirn ga fhreagairt; Gach fleasgach is òigh, gun cheòl, gun bheadradh; On thriall thu bhuainn, 's nach till thu tuilleadh.*

*Co-dhiù 's e Dòmhnall Bàn a sgrìobh an t-òran gus nach e, tha e a' seasamh mar chuimhneachan air an duine, agus air pìobairean Clann 'ic Cruimein a bha cho ainmeil.*