

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 801 (which corresponds to Litir 1,105). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

The year was 1603. Ailean Dubh Mac Raghnaill had fled from the Mackenzies. He went into hiding on an island in Loch Lundie in Glengarry. He was among his own people there. The island is called Eilean Mhic Raghnaill.

The Mackenzies found out where Ailean was. They wanted to kill him. He had ravaged their people on the Black Isle. They took a small boat – a coit – with them, in order to cross to the island. They carried the boat up Glen Urquhart, and across the hills. They reached the River Moriston.

They crossed the river. They rested at a crag called 'the crag of the small boat'. Then they crossed the hills to Loch Lundie.

However, there was no sign of Ailean Dubh. He received a warning that he was in danger, and he hid in the hills. Halfway between Loch Lundie and Glenmoriston, there is a summit called Càrn Mhic Raghnaill.

South of that there is Meall nan Gearran. On the east side of it, 'Ailean Mac Raghnaill's cave' is

B' e a' bhliadhna sia ceud deug 's a trì (1603). Bha Ailean Dubh Mac Raghnaill air teicheadh bho Chloinn 'ic Coinnich. Chaidh e am falach air eilean ann an Loch Lunndaidh ann an Gleanna Garadh. Bha e am measg a mhuinntir fhèin an sin. 'S e Eilean Mhic Raghnaill an t-ainm air an eilean.

Fhuair Clann 'ic Coinnich a-mach cà' robh Ailean. Bha iad ag iarraidh a mharbhadh. Bha e air sgrios a dhèanamh air na daoine aca anns an Eilean Dubh. Thug iad bàta beag – coit – leotha, airson faighinn a-null don eilean. Ghiùlain iad a' choit suas Gleann Urchardain, agus tarsainn a' mhonaidh. Ràinig iad Abhainn Mhoireasdan.

Chaidh iad tarsainn na h-aibhne. Ghabh iad fois aig creag ris an canar Creag a' Choit. An uair sin, chaidh iad tarsainn a' mhonaidh gu ruige Loch Lunndaidh.

Ge-tà, cha robh sgeul air Ailean Dubh. Fhuair e rabhadh gun robh e ann an cunnart, agus chaidh e am falach sa mhonadh. Letheach-slighe eadar Loch Lunndaidh agus Gleann Moireasdan, tha mullach air a bheil Càrn Mhic Raghnaill.

Deas air sin, tha Meall nan Gearran. Air an taobh an ear dheth, tha Uamh Ailein Mhic Raghnaill fhathast

still marked on maps. That's where Ailean hid.

He received help from a mason to build the cave with stones. Ailean feared that the mason would not keep his mouth closed, and he killed him. Ailean Dubh was a bad man.

The minister at Killearnan on the Black Isle took Ailean to court. He was accused of killing many people, and destroying 27 houses, among other things. The matter went to court in 1622. Ailean Dubh did not appear. He was declared an outlaw.

However, he was protected by the Grant laird in Glenmoriston. It appears he did not suffer a great penalty, and that he died [naturally] when he was an old man. He is remembered in several place-names in that area still.

clàraichte air mapaichean. Sin far an deach Ailean am falach.

Fhuair e taic bho chlachair an uamh a thogail le clachan. Bha an t-eagal air Ailean nach cumadh an clachair a bheul dùinte, agus mharbh e e. 'S e droch dhuine a bha ann an Ailean Dubh.

Thug am ministear ann an Cill Iùrnain anns an Eilean Dubh Ailean gu cùirt. Bha e fo chasaid gun robh e air grunn dhaoine a mharbhadh agus gun robh e air seachd taighean fichead a sgrios, am measg eile. Chaidh a' chuis don chùirt ann an sia ceud deug, fichead 's a dhà (1622). Cha do nochd Ailean Dubh. Chaidh a ghairm na eucoireach.

Ge-tà, bha e air a dhìon le ceann-cinnidh nan Granndach ann an Gleann Moireasdan. Tha e coltach nach do dh'fhuiling e peanas mòr, agus gun do chaochail e nuair a bha e na bhodach. Tha e air a chuimhneachadh ann an grunn ainmean-àite anns an sgìre sin fhathast.