

n 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 805 (which corresponds to Litir 1,109). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleane@bbc.co.uk.

A piece of 'poetry' for you first today.

God prosper long our noble Queen,
And long may she reign,
Maclean, he tried to shoot her,
But 'twas all in vain.

For God, he turned the ball aside,
Maclean aimed at her head,
And he felt very angry, Because
he didn't shoot her dead.

The words were written by William McGonagall – an Irish weaver who was living in Dundee. He wasn't a great poet!

The poem was about how Roderick Edward Maclean tried to murder Queen Victoria. That was in 1882. Here are two other verses from the poem:

*Maclean must be a madman,
Which is obvious to be seen,
Or else he wouldn't have tried to
shoot, Our most beloved Queen ...
Long may she be spared to roam,
Among the bonnie Highland
floral,
And spend many a happy day, In
the palace of Balmoral.*

Pios 'bàrdachd' dhuibh an toiseach an-diugh.

*God prosper long our noble Queen,
And long may she reign,
Maclean, he tried to shoot her, But
'twas all in vain.*

*For God, he turned the ball aside,
Maclean aimed at her head,
And he felt very angry, Because he
didn't shoot her dead.*

Chaidh na faclan a sgrìobhadh le Uilleam MacGonagail – breabadair Èireannach a bha a' fuireach ann an Dùn Dè. Chan e bàrd math a bha ann!

Bha an dàn mu dheidhinn mar a dh'fheuch Ruairidh Eideard MacIlleathain ris a' Bhanrigh Bhictoria a mhurt. Bha sin ann an ochd ceud deug, ochdad 'sa a dhà (1882). Seo dà rann eile on dàn:

*Maclean must be a madman, Which
is obvious to be seen,
Or else he wouldn't have tried to
shoot, Our most beloved Queen ...
Long may she be spared to roam,
Among the bonnie Highland floral,
And spend many a happy day, In
the palace of Balmoral.*

I'll leave that with you! I want to finish my account of Roderick Maclean.

Roderick was maintaining that he was sane. He was just angry about the situation he was in. But he had spent time in a psychiatric hospital.

He was accused, however, of being involved in high treason. That would mean he was fully sane. But the decision of the jury was that he was not sane and that he was therefore not guilty of high treason. He was sent to Broadmoor Prison, where dangerous people are kept who are suffering mental illness.

The Queen wasn't happy, however. A new law was put through the parliament that changed the verdict – 'not guilty on the grounds on insanity' - to 'guilty, but suffering from insanity'. Many people were of the opinion that it was right that somebody who attempted murder would be found guilty, rather than not guilty.

And Maclean himself? He spent 39 years in Broadmoor. He died there in 1921.

Fàgaidh mi sin agaibh fhèin! Tha mi airson crìoch a chur air mo chunntas air Ruairidh MacIlleathain.

Bha Ruairidh a' cumail a-mach gun robh e slàn na inntinn. Bha e dìreach feargach mun t-suidheachadh anns an robh e. Ach bha e air ùine a chur seachad ann an ospadal-inntinn.

Chaidh casaid a chur às a leth, ge-tà, gun robh e ri àrd-cheannairc. Bhiodh sin a' ciallachadh gun robh e slàn na inntinn. Ach b' e co-dhùnadh an diùraidh gun robh e às a' chiall agus mar sin neo-chiontach de dh'àrd-cheannairc. Chaidh a chur do Phrìosan Broadmoor, far a bheilear a' cumail daoine cunnartach a tha a' fulang le tinneas-inntinn.

Cha robh a' Bhanrigh air a dòigh, ge-tà. Chaidh lagh ùr a chur tron phàrlamaid a dh'atharraich a' bhinn – 'neo-chiontach air sgàth dìth na cèille' – gu 'ciontach ach a' fulang le dìth na cèille'. Bha mòran daoine dhen bheachd gun robh e ceart gum biodh cuideigin a rinn oidhirp air murt air fhaighinn ciontach, seach neo-chiontach.

Agus MacIlleathain fhèin? Chuir e seachad trithead 's a naoi bliadhna ann am Broadmoor. Chaochail e an sin ann an naoi ceud deug, fichead 's a h-aon (1921).