

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 815 (which corresponds to Litir 1,119). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk.

In the last fortnight, I was telling you about the website 'The Gaelic Story at the University of Glasgow'. I was reporting how the Argyll Synod of the Church of Scotland was wanting to translate the Old Testament into Gaelic. However, it didn't happen.

Why? Well, there was a struggle taking place between the Presbyterians and the Episcopalians in Scotland. For a while, the Episcopalians had the upper hand. Archibald Campbell, the Marquis of Argyll, was put to death. He was a committed Presbyterian. The 'Presbyterian' projects – such as the translation of the Bible – were put aside. A century and a half would elapse before the Old Testament appeared in Gaelic.

The linguistic situation was difficult for those who wanted to become ministers in Argyll. They had to have Gaelic. The Synod was giving them a language test. But it appears that there was not much Gaelic in the local schools in Argyll. And the language was not taught at the University of Glasgow.

Anns a' cheala-deug a dh'fhalbh, bha mi ag innse dhuibh mun làraich-lìn 'Sgeul na Gàidhlig aig Oilthigh Ghlaschu'. Bha mi ag aithris mu mar a bha Seanadh Earra-Ghàidheal de dh'Eaglais na h-Alba ag iarraidh eadar-theangachadh dhen t-Seann Tiomnadh gu Gàidhlig. Ge-tà, cha do thachair e.

Carson? Uill, bha strì a' dol eadar na Clèirich agus na h-Easbaigich ann an Alba. Airson greis bha làmh-an-uachdar aig na h-Easbaigich. Chaidh Gilleasbuig Caimbeul, Marcas Earra-Ghàidheal, a chur gu bàs. Bha esan na Chlèireach gu a smior. Chaidh na pròiseactan 'Clèireach' – leithid eadar-theangachadh a' Bhìobaill – far an rathaid. Bhiodh ceud gu leth bliadhna ann mus nochdadh an Seann Tiomnadh ann an Gàidhlig.

Bha an suidheachadh cànan doirbh dhaibhsan a bha ag iarraidh a bhith nam ministearan ann an Earra-Ghàidheal. Dh'fheumadh Gàidhlig a bhith aca. Bha an Seanadh a' cur deuchainn cànan orra. Ach tha e coltach nach robh mòran Gàidhlig anns na sgoiltean sgìreil ann an Earra-

In the 19th century, an Ossianic Society was established at the university. The meetings and minutes were in Gaelic. At the beginning, the students were aiming to hold formal debates. Here are some of their subjects: should the black slaves in the British Indies be freed immediately?; should the guilty be executed?; should [the] Gaelic spelling [system] be changed?; and, was the link with England to Scotland's benefit?

The Society campaigned to establish a Gaelic professorship in the university. At that time, Gaelic was not taught at any university in Scotland. The Society began its campaign in 1839. They sent a petition to the Home Secretary, Lord John Russell. The students said that it was poor that Gaelic ministers were getting no instruction in the language in which they would be preaching. How did that request fare when it reached the government? I'll tell you next week.

Ghàidheal. Agus cha robh an cànan air a theagasg ann an Oilthigh Ghlaschu.

Anns an naoidheamh linn deug, chaidh Comunn Oiseanach a chur air dòigh anns an oilthigh. Bha na coinneamhan agus geàrr-chunntasan aca ann an Gàidhlig. An toiseach bha na h-oileanaich ag amas air deasbadan foirmeil a chumail. Seo agaibh cuid de na cuspairean a bha aca: am bu chòir do na tràillean dubha anns na h-Innseachan Breatannach a bhith air an saoradh sa bhad?; am bu chòir daoine ciontach a chur gu bàs?; am bu chòir litreachadh na Gàidhlig atharrachadh?; agus, an robh an ceangal ri Sasainn gu buannachd na h-Alba?

Rinn an Comunn strì gus ollamhachd Ghàidhlig a stèidheachadh san oilthigh. Aig an àm sin, cha robh Gàidhlig air a teagasg ann an oilthigh sam bith ann an Alba. Thòisich an Comunn an iomairt ann an ochd ceud deug, trithead 's a naoi (1839). Chuir iad athchuinge gu Rùnaire na Dùthcha, am Morair Iain Ruiseal. Thuirt na h-oileanaich gun robh e truagh nach robh ministearan Gàidhealach a' faighinn oideachadh sam bith anns a' chànan anns am biodh iad a' searmonachadh. Ciamar a chaidh don iarrtas sin nuair a ràinig e an riaghaltas? Innsidh mi dhuibh an-ath-sheachdain.