

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 820 (which corresponds to Litir 1,124). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclea@bbc.co.uk.

In 1590, there were infamous court cases in North Berwick. They were connected to witchcraft. The King, James VI, was believing that some people were trying to sink his ship. Some were put to death in a fire.

In that decade, there were many court cases throughout Scotland, with people being accused of witchcraft. It's thought that about two hundred people were put to death.

Matters settled down after that. But there was more oppression of 'wizards' or 'witches' in the 17th century. And that brings me back to Isobel Gowdie from Auldearn. She appeared in front of interrogators in 1662. She was kept in solitary confinement for six weeks.

In that time, Isobel admitted that she had met with the Devil. She wasn't alone. There was a group of 'witches'. They had the ability to fly on magic horses.

She said that she went to visit the Queen of the Fairies. She was involved in shapeshifting as well. She could put herself in the form of

Ann an còig ceud deug is naochad (1590), bha cùisean-cùirte mì-chliùiteach ann am Bearaig a Tuath. Bha iad co-cheangailte ri buidseachd. Bha an Rìgh, Seumas VI, a' creidsinn gun robh feadhainn a' feuchainn ris an long aige a chur fodha. Chaidh feadhainn a chur gu bàs ann an teine.

Anns an deichead sin, bha grunn chùisean-cùirte air feadh Alba, agus daoine fo chasaid de bhuidseachd. Thathar a' smaoinneachadh gun robh mu dhà cheud neach air an cur gu bàs.

Shocraich cùisean an dèidh sin. Ach bha tuilleadh ainneirt an aghaidh 'buidsichean' no 'ban-bhuidsichean' anns an t-seachdamh linn deug. Agus tha sin gam thoirt air ais gu Iseabail Gowdie à Allt Èireann. Chaidh i air beulaibh luchd-ceasnachaidh ann an sia ceud deug, seasgad 's a dhà (1662). Bha i air a cumail fo ghlas na h-aonar fad sia seachdainean.

Anns an ùine sin, dh'aidich Iseabail gun robh i air coinneachadh ris an Donas. Cha robh i leatha fhèin. Bha buidheann de 'bhana-bhuidsichean' ann. Bha comas aca sgiathadh air eich dhraoidheil.

Thuirt i gun deach i a chèilidh air Banrigh nan Sìthichean. Bha i an sàs ann an cruth-atharrachadh cuideachd. Dh'fhaodadh i a cur fhèin ann an cruth

a jackdaw. She admitted that she made clay images of the landlord's sons. It was her aim that the lads would suffer illness or death.

Isobel recounted chants that she would say to change her form. The interrogators recorded more witchcraft verses from Isobel than was ever recorded from any other person in Britain.

She gave names of people that were killed by witchcraft. She gave an account of a time she went to Auldearn on the Devil's business. She was in the shape of a hare. When she was a hare, she said, a pack of dogs went after her. She got away from them by running from house to house. Eventually, she saved herself by putting her[self] back in human form.

If that were not enough, Isobel had more to admit, some of it particularly unpleasant. You'll hear more next week.

cathaig. Dh'aidich i gun do rinn i ìomhaighean crèadha de mhic an uachdarain. B' e an t-amas aice gum biodh na gillean a' fulang tinneas no bàs.

Dh'inns Iseabail rannan a chanadh i airson a cruth atharrachadh. Chlàir an luchd-ceasnachaidh barrachd rannan-buidseachd bho Iseabail na chaidh a chlàradh riamh bho neach sam bith eile ann am Breatainn.

Thug i seachad ainmean de dhaoine a chaidh a mharbhadh le buidseachd. Rinn i cunntas de thuras a chaidh i a dh'Allt Èireann air adhbhar an Donais. Bha i ann an riochd maighich. Nuair a bha i na maighich, thuirt i, chaidh prasgan chon às a dèidh. Fhuair i air falbh bhuapa le bhith a' ruith bho thaigh gu taigh. Mu dheireadh, shàbhail i i fhèin le bhith ga cur air ais ann an riochd daonna.

Mura robh sin gu leòr, bha tuilleadh aig Iseabail ri aideachadh, cuid dheth gu math mì-thaitneach. Cluinnidh sibh tuilleadh an-ath-sheachdain.