

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 831 (which corresponds to Litir 1,135). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you about the song 'Griogal Cridhe'. It's Marion Campbell that wrote it, around the year 1570. She married Gregor MacGregor – red-haired Gregor. But the MacGregors and the Campbells were enemies of each other. In August 1569, Gregor was arrested by a group of Campbells. Among those who captured him was his father-in-law, Duncan Campbell of Glenlyon. Here is a verse from one version of the song about what happened.

*Early on the morning of the first of August, I was sporting with my love,
But before midday came, My heart
was broken.*

Gregor was kept in captivity in grey-haired Colin's castle (the leader of the Campbells). Its name was Balloch Castle. It was where Taymouth Castle is today. Gregor was a prisoner for eight months. The Campbells were trying to obtain permission from the authorities of the Crown to put Gregor to death.

Finally, they obtained permission. Gregor's head was cut off in April 1570. In the song, his widow says this:

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mun òran 'Griogal Cridhe'. 'S i Mòr Chaimbeul a sgrìobh e, timcheall na bliadhna còig ceud deug is seachdad (1570). Phòs i fear Griogair MacGhriogair – Griogair Ruadh. Ach bha na Griogaraich agus na Caimbeulaich nàimhdeil do chèile. Anns an Lùnastal, còig ceud deug, seasgad 's a naoi (1569), chaidh Griogair a chur an grèim le buidheann de Chaimbeulaich. Am measg na ghlac e, bha athair-chèile, Donnchadh Caimbeul à Gleann Lìomhann. Seo rann à aon dreach dhen òran mu dheidhinn na thachair.

*Moch madainn air latha Lùnast', Bha mi sùgradh mar ri m' ghràdh,
Ach mun tàinig meadhan-latha, Bha mo chridhe air a chràdh.*

Bha Griogair air a chumail an grèim anns a' chaisteal aig Cailean Liath, ceannard nan Caimbeulach. B' e ainm Caisteal Bhealaich. Bha e far a bheil Taymouth Castle an-diugh. Bha Griogair mar phrìosanach fad ochd mìosan. Bha na Caimbeulach a' feuchainn ri cead fhaighinn bho ùghdarrasan a' Chrùin Griogair a chur gu bàs.

Mu dheireadh, fhuair iad cead. Chaidh ceann Ghriogair a ghearradh dheth anns a' Ghiblean còig ceud deug is

Great love of the people of the world,
They shed your blood yesterday,
They put your head on a lump of oak,
A small distance from your body.

Marion had a baby – red-haired Alasdair. When her husband was put to death, she was pregnant with a second child. Because Gregor was in prison for eight months, the new baby must have been born shortly after his father's death. It was another boy – black-haired John.

Marion was furious about what happened. She had a bad opinion about her own clan – the Campbells. But the Campbells wanted to maintain control of her. They made sure that she would be married anew to somebody who would be loyal to them. The historian, Martin MacGregor, is of the opinion that Robert Menzies was her second husband. Marion was in a comfortable situation. Money was in plentiful supply. But she was greatly missing Gregor, as we'll hear next week.

seachdad (1570). Anns an òran, tha a bhantrach ag ràdh seo:

*Eudail mhòir de shluagh an domhain, Dhòirt iad d' fhuil an-dè,
'S chuir iad do cheann air ploc daraich, Tacan beag bhod chrè.*

Bha leanabh aig Mòr – Alasdair Ruadh. Nuair a chaidh an duine aice a chur gu bàs, bha i trom le dàrna leanabh. Leis gun robh Griogair sa phrìosan airson ochd mìosan, feumaidh gun do rugadh an leanabh ùr goirid an dèidh bàs athar. 'S e gille eile a bh' ann – 'Iain Dubh'.

Bha Mòr fiadhaich mu na thachair. Bha droch bheachd aice air a cinneadh fhèin – na Caimbeulaich. Ach bha na Caimbeulaich airson smachd a chumail oirre. Rinn iad cinnteach gum biodh i pòsta às ùr aig cuideigin a bha dìleas dhaibh. Tha an t-eachdraiche, Màrtainn MacGhriogair, dhen bheachd gum b' e fear Raibeart Mèinnearach an dàrna cèile aice. Bha Mòr ann an suidheachadh cofhurtail. Bha gu leòr anns an sporan. Ach bha i ag ionndrainn Ghriogair gu mòr, mar a chluinneas sinn an-ath-sheachdain.