

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 835 (which corresponds to Litir 1,139). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

Here's a question for you. Do you reckon that the first black man who played football for Scotland's national team had any Gaelic? He was Anndra MacBhàtair, Andrew Watson, who played for Scotland in the 1880s. Why am I posing the question? Because his family, on his father's side, were from the Highlands.

Andrew was born in Guyana in the West Indies in 1856. His mother belonged to Guyana. It's thought she had African ancestry. Her name was Anna or Hannah Rose.

Andrew's father belonged to Scotland. He was Pàdraig MacBhàtair – Peter Miller Watson. He was born in Kiltarn in Easter Ross in 1805. He was a landlord connected to the sugar industry in Guyana.

Kiltarn is near Evanton. At the end of the eighteenth century, the Old Statistical Account tells us that it was Gaelic that the people were mostly speaking.

It was the minister of Kiltarn, the Rev. Harry Robertson, who wrote the account. He was Andrew

Seo ceist dhuibh. Saoil an robh Gàidhlig sam bith aig a' chiad fhear dhubh a chluich ball-coise airson sgioba nàiseanta na h-Alba? B' esan Anndra MacBhàtair, Andrew Watson, a chluich airson Alba anns na h-ochdadan dhen naoidheamh linn deug. Carson a tha mi a' cur na ceist? A chionn 's gun robh a theaghlach, air taobh athar, às a' Ghàidhealtachd.

Rugadh Anndra ann an Guiana anns na h-Innseachan an Iar ann an ochd ceud deug, caogad 's a sia (1856). Bhuineadh a mhàthair do Ghuiana. Tha dùil gun robh sinnsireachd Afraganach aice. B' e a h-ainm Anna no Hannah Rose.

Bhuineadh athair Anndra do dh'Alba. B' esan Pàdraig MacBhàtair – Peter Miller Watson. Rugadh e ann an Cill Tighearn ann an Ros an Ear ann an ochd ceud deug 's a còig (1805). Bha e na uachdaran co-cheangailte ri gnìomhachas an t-siùcair ann an Guiana.

Tha Cill Tighearn faisg air Bail' Eòghainn. Aig deireadh an ochdamh linn deug, tha an Seann Chunntas Staitistigeach ag innse dhuinn gur i a' Ghàidhlig a bu mhotha a bha an slugh a' bruidhinn.

B' e ministear Chill Tighearn, an t-Urramach Eanraig Robasdan, a sgrìobh an cunntas. B' esan sinn-seanair Anndra

Watson's great-grandfather. The Robertsons belonged to Ross-shire. It's likely that Harry and his daughter, Andrew's grandmother, spoke Gaelic.

But did the language continue to Peter's generation? I suspect it did not. The Watsons themselves belonged to the Borders, rather than the Highlands.

When Andrew was young, he went with his father to Britain. His mother remained in Guyana. Andrew went to private schools in England. He was an extremely good footballer. He went to live in Glasgow. He started to play for Queen's Park. He was called up to the national team.

Then he moved to England. He was no longer able to play for the national side. He played for Scotland on just three occasions. But he was successful. Here are the results of the games in which he was involved: England 1 – Scotland 6; Wales 1 – Scotland 5; and Scotland 5 – England 1. Those were the days!

Mhic Bhàtair. Bhuineadh na Robasdanaich do Shiorrachd Rois. Is iongantach mura robh Gàidhlig aig Eanraig agus a nighean, seanmhair Anndra.

Ach an do lean an cànan gu ginealach Phàdraig? Tha amharas agam nach do lean. Bhuineadh Clann 'ic Bhàtair fhèin do na Crìochan, seach don Ghàidhealtachd.

Nuair a bha Anndra òg, chaidh e cuide ri athair a Bhreatainn. Dh'fhuirich a mhàthair ann an Guiana. Chaidh Anndra gu sgoiltean prìobhaideach ann an Sasainn. Bha e fìor mhath mar chluicheadair ball-coise. Chaidh e a dh'fhuireach ann an Glaschu. Thòisich e air cluich airson Queen's Park. Chaidh a ghairm don sgioba nàiseanta.

An uair sin, ghluais e a Shasainn. Cha robh comas aige tuilleadh a bhith san sgioba nàiseanta. Chluich e do dh'Alba dìreach trì tursan. Ach bha e soirbheachail. Seo toraidhean nan geamannan anns an robh e an sàs: Sasainn 1 – Alba 6; A' Chuimrigh 1 – Alba 5; agus Alba 5 – Sasainn 1. B' iad sin na làithean!