

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 844 (which corresponds to Litir 1,148). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

A statue was erected a few months ago in a village in Perthshire. I mean by that [ìomhaigh] 'a statue'. The statue is a memorial to a Scot who belonged to the 18th century. That man was famous as a musician.

Do you know whom I mean? He was an excellent fiddler. His name was Neil Gow.

Neil was born near Dunkeld in the year 1727. He was brought up in a village called An t-Inbhir. Or Inver in English.

Although Neil was working as a weaver for a while, he was extremely skilful as a musician. He obtained sponsorship from the area's prime landlord, the Duke of Atholl. He then started as a musician full-time. He was receiving invitations to play at the gentry's balls. It was reckoned that there was no fiddler as good as him in Perthshire. And that county was famous for its fiddlers.

He grew famous throughout Scotland. When the poet Robert Burns was in Perthshire, he went to visit Neil. Neil was good at playing the fiddle but he was also good at composing tunes. Apparently, he

Chaidh ìomhaigh a chur suas o chionn beagan mhìosan ann am baile beag ann an Siorrachd Pheairt. Tha mi a' ciallachadh le sin – 'statue'. Tha an ìomhaigh mar chuimhneachan air Albannach a bhuineadh don ochdamh linn deug. Bha am fear sin ainmeil mar neach-ciùil.

A bheil fios agaibh cò tha mi a' ciallachadh? 'S e fìdhlear air leth a bha ann. 'S e an t-ainm a bha air Niall Gobha.

Rugadh Niall faisg air Dùn Chailleann anns a' bhliadhna seachd ceud deug, fichead 's a seachd (1727). Thogadh e ann am baile beag ris an canar An t-Inbhir. No *Inver* ann am Beurla.

Ged a bha Niall ag obair mar bhreabadair airson greis, bha e fìor sgileil mar neach-ciùil. Fhuair e cùl-taic bho phrìomh uachdaran na sgìre, Diùc Athall. Thòisich e an uair sin mar neach-ciùil làn-thìde. Bha e a' faighinn chuiridhean airson cluich aig bàlaichean nan uaislean. Bhathar a' dèanamh dheth nach robh fìdhlear cho math ris ann an Siorrachd Pheairt. Agus bha an t-siorrachd sin ainmeil airson a fìdhlearan.

Dh'fhàs e ainmeil air feadh Alba. Nuair a bha am bàrd Raibeart Burns ann an Siorrachd Pheairt, chaidh e a chèilidh air Niall. Bha Niall math air seinn na fìdhle ach bha e cuideachd math air puirt a sgrìobhadh. A rèir aithris, sgrìobh e còrr

wrote more than eighty tunes. Some are famous to this day – for example Farewell to Whisky, The Duke of Gordon's Favourite and Miss Drummond of Perth.

Neil married twice because his first wife died. He had eight children. His second son – Nathaniel – was also very famous as a musician.

People remembered places where Neil was playing the fiddle – particularly an old oak tree next to the river. But there was never a statue of the man himself in Dunkeld or any other place.

The annual Neil Gow fiddle festival started a few years ago in Dunkeld. The festival folk collected money. A statue of the man was made in bronze by the artist, David Annand. It is now in a park near the place where Neil Gow spent his life.

is ochdad port. Tha feadhainn ainmeil chun an latha an-diugh – mar eisimpleir *Farewell to Whisky, The Duke of Gordon's Favourite* agus *Miss Drummond of Perth*.

Phòs Niall dà thuras oir chaochail a chiad bhean. Bha ochdnar cloinne aige. Bha an dàrna mac aige – Nathaniel – cuideachd air leth ainmeil mar neach-ciùil.

Bha cuimhne aig daoine air àiteachan far an robh Niall ri fìdhlearachd – gu h-àraidh seann chraobh-dharaich ri taobh na h-aibhne. Ach cha robh riamh ìomhaigh ann dhen duine fhèin ann an Dùn Chailleann no àite sam bith eile.

Thòisich fèill-fhìdhle bhliadhnail Nèill Ghobha beagan bhliadhnaichean air ais ann an Dùn Chailleann. Chuir muinntir na fèille airgead ri chèile. Chaidh ìomhaigh dhen duine a dhèanamh ann an umha leis an dealbhadair, Daibhidh Annand. Tha i a-nise ann am pàirc faisg air an àite far an do chuir Niall Gobha seachad a bheatha.