

# **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 863 (which corresponds to Litir 1,167). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk).*

*In the last few Litrichean, I was telling you about Fearchar Lighiche. The late Mary Beith looked at his history/story. Mary was an expert on the healing customs of the Gaels. She wrote the excellent book 'Healing Threads'.*

*King Robert II [published] a royal charter in 1379. It grants land in Melness and Hope in the Mackay Country [North Sutherland]. And to whom? To 'Ffercado medico nostro'.*

*Seven years later, another charter grants several islands between Stoer Point in Assynt and Armadale on the North Coast. And who received the land? 'Our esteemed and faithful leech Fearchar'. Leech means 'healer, physician'.*

*It's clear that the Fearchar in oral tradition is based on a man who lived in the fourteenth century. He was in the service of the King for a period because he received the land 'for his service done and to be done to us'. The King with the sore leg in the story represents King Robert II.*

*Mary tells us about a letter that was sent to Register House in*

*Annas na Litrichean mu dheireadh, bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Fhearchar Lighiche. Thug Màiri Beith nach maireann sùil air an eachdraidh aige. Bha Màiri mion-eòlach air gnàthasan-leighis nan Gàidheal. Sgrìobh i an leabhar sgoinneil 'Healing Threads'.*

*Tha cairt-rìoghail aig Rìgh Raibeart II, a chaidh fhoillseachadh ann an trì cheud deug, seachdad 's a naoi (1379). Tha i a' toirt seachad fearann ann an Taobh Mhealanais agus Hòb ann an Dùthaich MhicAoidh. Agus cò dha? Dha 'Ffercado medico nostro'.*

*Seachd bliadhna an dèidh sin, tha cairt eile a' toirt seachad grunn eileanan eadar Rubha an Stòir ann an Asainte agus Armadal air a' chosta mu thuath. Agus cò fhuair am fearann? Fhuair 'our esteemed and faithful leech Fearchar'. Tha leech a' ciallachadh 'lighiche'.*

*Tha e soilleir gu bheil am Fearchar ann am beul-aithris stèidhichte air fear a bha beò anns a' cheathramh linn deug. Bha e ann an seirbheis an Rìgh fad ùine oir fhuair e am fearann 'for his service done and to be done to us'. Bha an Rìgh le cas ghoirt anns an sgeulachd a' riochdachadh Rìgh Raibeart II.*

*Tha Màiri ag innse dhuinn mu litir a chaidh a chur gu Register House ann an*

<p><i>Edinburgh by an estate factor in the nineteenth century. It reports on the land that King Robert gave to 'Farquhar his Physician'. In 1511, the Mackays got the old estates from a certain Donald Mac Dhonnchaidh. It was reported that Donald was among Fearchar Lighiche's descendants.</i></p> <p><i>The Old Statistical Account tells us how Fearchar got land on the mainland. He was a physician to the landlords, the Mackays of Farr. They did a swap with him. They gave him land on the mainland. They themselves took control of the islands.</i></p> <p><i>Do you remember that I was comparing Fearchar and the white snake with the Beatons – famous physicians/healers in Islay? Well, the Old Statistical Account tells us that Fearchar's surname was Beaton – and that he belonged to Islay!</i></p>	<p>Dùn Èideann le bàillidh oighreachd anns an naoidheamh linn deug. Tha i ag aithris mun fhearann a thug Rìgh Raibeart gu 'Farquhar his Physician'. Ann an còig ceud deug 's a h-aon-deug (1511) fhuair Clann 'ic Aoidh na seann oighreachdan bho fhear, Dòmhnall Mac Dhonnchaidh. Bhathar ag aithris gun robh Dòmhnall am measg sliochd Fhearchair Lighiche.</p> <p>Tha an Seann Chunntas Staitistigeach ag innse dhuinn mar a fhuair Fearchar fearann air tìr-mòr. Bha e na lighiche aig na h-uachdarain, Clann 'ic Aoidh Fàrr. Rinn iadsan suaip leis. Thug iad fearann dha air tìr-mòr. Ghabh iad fhèin smachd air na h-eileanan.</p> <p>A bheil cuimhne agaibh gun robh mi a' dèanamh coimeas eadar Fhearchair 's an nathair gheal agus Clann 'ic Bheatha – na Peutanaich – lighichean ainmeil ann an Ìle? Uill, tha an Seann Chunntas Staitistigeach ag innse dhuinn gum b' e an cinneadh aig Fearchar – Putan – agus gum buineadh e a dh'Ìle!</p>
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