

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 32 (which corresponds to Litir 336). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

Ann an a' Mhàrt ochd ceud deug, ceathrad 's a h-ochd (1848), bha cùisean duilich ann an Ceap Breatainn. Bha gort anns an amharc. Bha na daoine gann de bhiadh agus gann de shìol. Dh'iarr iad air an riaghaltas taic a thoirt dhaibh.

Seo pàirt de litir a bha anns a' *Chape Breton Spectator*: "Chan eil sìol de sheòrsa sam bith aig barrachd na aon duine às gach còig ceud. Mura faighear grèim air sìol ... bidh ... gort mhòr ann san ath gheamhradh... Tha mòran ... a' beachdachadh air falbh do na Stàitean [Aonaichte] ..."

Bha a' chùis èiginneach. An do mhothaich sibh dè a' bhliadhna a bh' ann? Ochd ceud deug, ceathrad 's a h-ochd (1848). Bha gaiseadh a' bhuntàta ann. Bha sin a' dèanamh cron air a' bhuntàta, mar a bha ann an Alba is Èirinn.

Bha feadhainn dòchasach, ge-tà. Bha gnìomhachas math aig fear, Iain Rothach. Bha e a' reic fiodha bho na coilltean. Bha e a' pàigheadh airgead math. Bha e deònach fiodh a cheannach bho na daoine. Bhiodh airgead aig na daoine an uair sin.

Ach chuir Tormod MacLeòid stad orra. Dh'iarr Tormod orra gun a bhith a' dèiligeadh ri Iain Rothach. Carson? Uill, bha Tormod ag ràdh gu robh an Rothach ri cùl-mhùtaireachd. Sin *smuggling*. Cùl-mhùtaireachd. Bha e, a rèir Thormoid, a' toirt branndaidh a-steach gu mì-laghail. 'S e peacadh a bha sin. Ged a bha acras air na daoine, dh'iarr Tormod orra gun a dhol faisg air bùth an Rothach.

Mun àm sin, fhuair Tormod litir agus parsail à Astràilia. Bha iad bho a mhac, Dòmhnall. Bha Dòmhnall a' fuireach ann an Astràilia. Bha e na dheasaiche air pàipear-naidheachd. Chuir e grunn lethbhreacan dhen phàipear anns a' pharsail. Leugh Tormod iad. Leugh e mu thalamh math agus aimsir mhath. Leugh feadhainn eile na pàipearan-naidheachd cuideachd. Thòisich feadhainn air beachdachadh air a dhol a dh'Astràilia.

Ach bha Tormod seasgad 's a h-ochd bliadhna a dh'aois. Bha a' bhean, Màiri, còrr is seasgad. Cha robh ise a' cumail gu math. An robh iadsan deiseil airson falbh gu dùthaich eile? Chì sinn de rinn iad an ath-sheachdain.

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Faclan is abairtean: bha cùisean duilich: *things were difficult*; bha gort anns an amharc: *a famine was in prospect*; gann de bhiadh agus gann de shìol: *short of food and short of seed*; barrachd na aon duine às gach còig ceud: *more than one*

person in five hundred; mura faighear grèim air sìol: if seed is not obtained; a' beachdachadh air falbh: considering leaving; èiginneach: desperate; an do mhothaich sibh dè a' bhliadhna a bh' ann?: did you notice what year it was?; gaiseadh a' bhuntàta: the potato blight; a' dèanamh cron air a' bhuntàta: damaging the potato [crop]; bha feadhainn dòchasach, ge-tà: some were hopeful, however; bha gnìomhachas math aig Iain Rothach: John Munro had a good business; Bha e deònach fiodh a cheannach: he was willing to buy wood; bhiodh airgead aig na daoine an uair sin: the people would then have money; chuir Tormod MacLeòid stad orra: Norman MacLeod stopped them; dh'iarr Tormod orra gun a bhith a' dèiligeadh ri Iain Rothach: Norman asked them not to have dealings with John Munro; gu robh an Rothach ri cùl-mhùtaireachd: that Munro was involved in smuggling; a' toirt branndaidh a-steach gu mì-laghail: importing brandy illegally; peacadh: sin; gun a dhol faisg air bùth an Rothach: not to go near Munro's shop; litir agus parsail à Astràilia: a letter and parcel from Australia; bha e na dheasaiche air pàipear-naidheachd: he was the editor of a newspaper; grunn lethbhreacan: several copies; leugh e mu thalamh math agus aimsir mhath: he read about good land and good weather; thòisich feadhainn air beachdachadh air a dhol a dh'Astràilia: some start to consider going to Australia; bha a' bhean còrr is seasgad: his wife was more than sixty [years old]; cha robh ise a' cumail gu math: she didn't keep well; an robh iadsan deiseil airson falbh gu dùthaich eile?: were they (emphatic) ready to leave for another country?; chì sinn de rinn iad: we shall see what they did.

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