

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 188 (which corresponds to Litir 492). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclea@bbc.co.uk.

The police went to Strathan on Cape Wrath in April 2001. They asked Robbie Northway to leave the bothy. He was living there without permission. The police had an order from the court. Robbie knew they were coming. He agreed to leave. They took out the furniture. The house was locked..

Robbie left with the police. But his livestock was still there. After a few days, he returned. He didn't get into the house. He didn't want to get into the house. But he was wanting to live in Strathan.

So he built a small bothy, or hovel, next to the bothy. And he stayed there. The hovel was tiny. It wasn't at all comfortable. But Robbie was wanting to stay there.

He did ploughing [work]. He had a garron [pony]. The garron pulled the plough. Robbie built a big wall. He was skilful with stones. He cut peat[s]. He planted potatoes. He flattened a bit of land. He was going to build a house there.

Chaidh na poilis don t-Srathan air a' Pharbh anns a' Ghiblean dà mhìle 's a h-aon (2001). Dh'iarr iad air Robbie Northway am bothan fhàgail. Bha e a' fuireach ann gun chead. Bha òrdugh aig na poilis bhon chùirt. Bha fios aig Robbie gun robh iad a' tighinn. Dh'aontaich e falbh. Thug iad an àirneis a-mach. Chaidh an taigh a ghlasadh.

Dh'fhalbh Robbie còmhla ris na poilis. Ach bha an stoc aige fhathast anns an àite. An ceann beagan làithean, thill e. Cha d' fhuair e a-steach don taigh. Cha robh e ag iarraidh faighinn a-steach don taigh. Ach bha e ag iarraidh fuireach anns an t-Srathan.

Mar sin, thog e bothag bheag, no bruchlag, ri taobh a' bhothain. Agus dh'fhuirich e an sin. Bha a' bhruclag beag bìodach. Cha robh i cofhurtail idir. Ach bha Robbie ag iarraidh fuireach an sin.

Rinn e obair treabhaidh. Bha gearran aige. Tharraing an gearran aige an crann. Thog Robbie balla mòr fada. Bha e sgileil le clachan. Bhuain e mòine. Chuir e buntàta. Rinn e pìos talmhainn rèidh. Bha e a' dol a thogail taigh ann.

Members of the Mountain Bothies Association appeared. They wanted to work on the bothy. They were displeased that Robbie was still there. But they got on well with him.

But it appears not everybody was happy. One day, in August, according to Robbie, two young men appeared. They were well-built. They spoke English with an English accent. They beat up Northway. They hit him. They kicked him. They said to him that he had to leave.

And he left. His dream was over. Robbie was from England. He wasn't Gaidhealach. But his life in Strathan came to an end in the same way as many Gaels in olden times – with eviction and violence.

Nochd buill Chomann Bothain nam Beann. Bha iad airson obair a dhèanamh air a' bhothan. Bha iad mì-thoilichte gun robh Robbie fhathast ann. Ach fhuair iad air adhart glè mhath leis.

Ge-tà, tha e coltach nach robh a h-uile duine toilichte. Latha a bha seo, anns an Lùnastal, a rèir Robbie, nochd dithis fhear òg. Bha iad tapaidh. Bhruidhinn iad Beurla le blas Sasannach. Rinn iad dochann air Northway. Bhuail iad e. Bhreab iad e. Thuirt iad ris gun robh aige ri teicheadh.

Agus theich e. Bha an aisling aige seachad. 'S ann à Sasainn a bha Robbie. Cha robh e Gaidhealach. Ach thàinig a bheatha anns an t-Srath-an gu crìch anns an aon dòigh ri mòran Ghaidheal anns an t-seann aimsir – le fuadachadh is fòirneart.