

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 304 (which corresponds to Litir 608). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.macleon@bbc.co.uk.

The painting The Death of the Stag is in the National Gallery of Scotland. It's a large painting. It shows Colin Fitzgerald saving the life of a Scottish King. That was Alexander III. The King was in danger from an angry stag. But who was Colin Fitzgerald?

He was an ancestor, according to oral tradition, of the man who ordered the painting – Francis Humberston MacKenzie. Francis was one of the gentry. Years after the painting appeared, he received the title Lord Seaforth.

People were thinking that the MacKenzie clan had a Gaelic heritage/origin. But, in the 18th Century, the people of the clan themselves tried to show that wasn't true. They were wanting to show that they had an Anglo-Norman-Irish ancestry.

They said that the progenitor of the clan was Colin Fitzgerald. He was living in the 13th Century. He was a son of an Irish earl. Colin left Ireland. The King of Scotland gave him sanctuary. That King was Alexander III.

Some people say that Colin assisted the King. That was against

*Tha an dealbh *Bàs an Daimh* ann an Gailearaidh Nàiseanta na h-Alba. 'S e dealbh mòr a tha ann. Tha e a' sealltainn Cailean – no Colin – Fitzgerald a' sàbhaladh beatha Rìgh Albannach. B' esan Alasdair III. Bha an Rìgh ann an cunnart bho dhamh fiadhaich. Ach cò bha ann an Cailean Fitzgerald?*

Bha e na shinnsear, a rèir beul-aithris, don fhear a dh'iarr an dealbh – Francis Humberston MacCoinnich. 'S e fear de na h-uaislean a bha ann am Francis. Bliadhnaichean às dèidh gun do nochd an dealbh, fhuair e an tiotal Mòrair Shiophort.

Bha daoine a' smaoinichadh gun robh dualchas Gàidhealach aig Clann 'ic Coinnich. Ach, anns an ochdamh linn deug, dh'fheuch muinntir na fine fhèin ri sealltainn nach robh sin fìor. Bha iad ag iarraidh sealltainn gun robh dualchas Anglo-Normanach-Èireannach aca.

Thuir iad gum b' e tùsair na fine Cailean Fitzgerald. Bha e beò anns an treas linn deug. 'S e mac aig iarla Èireannach a bha ann. Dh'fhàg Cailean Èirinn. Thug Rìgh na h-Alba comraich dha. B' e an Rìgh sin Alasdair III.

Tha cuid ag ràdh gun tug Cailean taic don Rìgh. Bha sin an

the Norse. And the King gave him land in Kintail. Others say that Colin got that land because he saved the King's life.

According to the story, Colin was hunting with the King. A stag attacked the King. The King was in mortal danger. Colin came between the King and the stag. Colin killed the stag. In the painting, Colin Fitzgerald appears with a spear in his hand. He is going to kill the stag.

But why was it important for Francis Humberston MacKenzie to show this in a picture that was so big and so expensive? Well politics comes in [to it].

Until the end of the 17th Century the MacKenzies were loyal to the Kings of Scotland. They were loyal to the Stuarts. The Stuarts lost the throne. But the MacKenzies still supported the Stuarts – the Jacobites. As we'll see next week, perhaps it was that [fact] that caused Francis Humberston MacKenzie to order the great painting The Death of the Stag.

aghaidh nan Lochlannach. Agus thug an Rìgh fearann dha ann an Cinn Tàile. Tha cuid eile ag ràdh gun d' fhuair Cailean am fearann sin leis gun do shàbhail e beatha an Rìgh.

A rèir an stòiridh, bha Cailean a' sealg leis an Rìgh. Thug damh ionnsaigh air an Rìgh. Bha an Rìgh ann an cunnart a bheatha. Thàinig Cailean eadar an Rìgh agus an damh. Mharbh Cailean an damh. Anns an dealbh, tha Cailean Fitzgerald ann le sleagh na làimh. Tha e a' dol a chur an daimh gu bàs.

Ach carson a bha e cudromach do Francis Humberston MacCoinnich seo a shealltainn ann an dealbh a bha cho mòr is cosgail? Uill, tha poilitigs a' tighinn a-steach.

Bha Clann 'ic Coinnich air a bhith dìleas do rìghrean na h-Alba. Bha iad dìleas do na Stiùbhartaich. Chaill na Stiùbhartaich a' chathair rìoghail. Ach thug Clann 'ic Coinnich taic do na Stiùbhartaich fhathast – do na Seumasaich. Mar a chì sinn an-ath-sheachdain, 's dòcha gur e sin, a thug air Francis Humberston MacCoinnich an dealbh mòr, *Bàs an Daimh*, iarraidh.