

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 370 (which corresponds to Litir 674). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleane@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you about Iain Geal Donn from Lochaber. He was plundering cattle in Ross-shire in the seventeenth century. Alasdair Breac of Gairloch was stopping him. He hired Alasdair Buidhe MacAoidh from Strath Oykeil. Alasdair Buidhe put a bullet in Iain. That was in a shieling bothy in Scardroy in Strathconon.

The Lochaber men ran out of the bothy. Alasdair and his lackey were waiting. They killed everybody, except one.

They left the bodies in the bothy. Alasdair Buidhe went to Gairloch. He told Alasdair Breac about the affair. Alasdair Breac was pleased. But the Lochaber people were angry. They retrieved the bodies.

That wasn't the end of the matter. Some people from Lochaber were going to plunder cattle in Gairloch. That was in revenge for the death of the Lochaber men in Scardroy.

Alasdair Breac heard about the plan. He set up a [task] force. There were eighty men in the force. They were expecting that the Lochaber men were going to come through Torrison. They themselves went to Torrison. Here's how the matter was reported in the Celtic Magazine in 1877: When the

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Iain Geal Donn à Loch Abar. Bha e a' togail creach ann an Siorrachd Rois anns an t-seachdamh linn deug. Bha Alasdair Breac Gheàrrloch a' cur stad air. Dh'fhastaich e Alasdair Buidhe MacAoidh à Srath Òiceall. Chuir Alasdair Buidhe peilear ann an Iain. Bha sin ann am bothan-àirigh aig Sgàrd Ruaidh ann an Srath Chonainn.

Ruith na h-Abraich a-mach às a' bhothan. Bha Alasdair agus a sgalag a' feitheamh. Mharbh iad a h-uile duine, ach aonan.

Dh'fhàg iad na cuirp anns a' bhothan. Chaidh Alasdair Buidhe gu ruige Geàrrloch. Dh'innis e mun chùis do dh'Alasdair Breac. Bha Alasdair Breac toilichte. Ach bha muinntir Loch Abar feargach. Fhuair iad na cuirp air ais.

Cha b' e sin deireadh a' ghnòth-aich. Bha feadhainn à Loch Abar a' dol a thogail creach ann an Geàrrloch. Bha sin mar dhioghaltas air bàs nan Abrach ann an Sgàrd Ruaidh.

Chuala Alasdair Breac mun phlana. Chuir e feachd ri chèile. Bha ochdad duine san fheachd. Bha iad an dùil gun robh na h-Abraich a' dol a thighinn tro Thoirbheartan. Chaidh iad fhèin a Thoirbheartan. Seo mar a chaidh an gnothach aithris anns a' Cheltic Magazine ann an ochd ceud deug, seachdad 's a seachd (1877): Nuair

morning came, the men left ... they were stout and fearless. It wasn't long until they reached the great black corrie of Liathach [mountain] ... there were shieling bothies at the base of the corrie, and the Gairloch men didn't know that the Lochaber men weren't lying in the bothies, in ambush.

One of the Gairloch men was brave. He went towards the bothies. In a loud voice, he challenged the Lochaber men to come out. But he didn't get a response. The Lochaber men had heard about the force. They had gone home.

The Gairloch men went home through Kinlochewe. They met Ruairidh Breac, a famous poet at Cromasag. They told Ruairidh about the matter. Ruairidh wrote a song. The song is called The Guard of the Black Corrie.

a thàinig a' mhadainn, dh'fhalbh na fir ... bha iad calma, neo-sgàthach. Cha b' fhada gus an d' ràinig iad Coire Dubh Liathaich ... bha bothannan-àirigh air ùrlar a' choire, agus cha robh fios aig na Geàrrlaich nach robh na h-Abraich nan laighe anns na bothannan, ri foill falaich.

Bha fear de na Geàrrlaich treun. Chaidh esan a dh'ionnsaigh nam bothan. Ann an guth mòr, thug e dùbhlán do na h-Abraich thighinn a-mach. Ach cha d' fhuair e freagairt. Bha na h-Abraich air cluinntinn mun fheachd. Bha iad air a dhol dhachaigh.

Chaidh na Geàrrlaich dhachaigh tro Cheann Loch Iù. Thachair iad ri Ruairidh Breac, bàrd ainmeil aig a' Chromfhasadh. Dh'inns iad do Ruairidh mun ghnòthach. Sgrìobh Ruairidh òran. 'S e an t-ainm a tha air an òran Freiceadan a' Choire Dhuibh.