

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 438 (which corresponds to Litir 742). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclea@bbc.co.uk.

In April 1881, Constable James Davidson was working in the port of Melbourne in Australia. He saw the vessel India entering the harbour. Davidson was a Scot. He had only just moved to Australia. He was reading the Scotsman while the India was sailing past. There was an article in the newspaper about the Ferret, and how it disappeared in Scotland.

James saw that the India was like the Ferret. Customs officers went on board. They saw another name under the name 'India' on the side of the vessel.

Henderson and his companions went to court in July. They had many charges against them – deceit, conspiracy, changing the name of a vessel and other things.

The three accused – Henderson, Wallace and Wright – had hired two other people in Glasgow. One of them – Griffin, the chief engineer – gave evidence against them. The other one, Watkins, the sailing master, had left the vessel in Cape Town.

The three made up a story

Annas a' Ghiblean ochd ceud deug, ochdad 's a h-aon (1881), bha an Constabal Seumas MacDhaibhidh ag obair aig Cala Mhelbourne ann an Astràilia. Chunnaic e an soitheach India a' dol a-steach don chala. 'S e Albannach a bha ann an MacDhaibhidh. Bha e air ùr-ghluasad gu Astràilia. Bha e a' leughadh a' Scotsman fhad 's a bha an India a' seòladh seachad. Bha alt sa phàipear-naireidheachd mun Ferret, agus mar a chaidh i à fianais ann an Alba.

Chunnaic Seumas gun robh an India coltach ris a' Ferret. Chaidh oifigearan cusbainn air bòrd. Chunnaic iad ainm eile fon ainm 'India' air cliathaich an t-soithich.

Chaidh MacEanraig agus a chompanaich don chùirt anns an Iuchar. Bha grunn chasaidean orra – foill, cofheall, atharrachadh ainm soithich is eile.

Bha an triùir a bha fo chasaid – MacEanraig, Uallas agus Wright – air dithis eile fhastadh ann an Glaschu. Thug fear dhiubh – Griffin, an t-àrd-einnseanair – fianais nan aghaidh. Bha am fear eile, Watkins, am prìomh-oifigear seòlaidh, air an soitheach fhàgail ann an Cape Town.

Rinn an triùir stòiridh mu Watkins.

about Watkins. They said that they were working for Watkins. Watkins was working for the Government of Peru. Peru and Chile were at war with each other. The Ferret was chartered to carry armaments to Peru.

Everything that happened afterwards, they said, that was simply to hide the truth from the Chilean government. Henderson wasn't a fraudster. He was going to take the Ferret back to Scotland. Or he was going to buy her.

The jury didn't accept that. Henderson got seven years in prison. Wallace also got seven years, and Wright got three and a half years.

The Ferret did not return to Scotland. A man in Adelaide bought her. He gave her back her old name. She was working around the coast of South Australia.

In 1920 the Ferret went aground in a storm. Fortunately the crew got off her safely. And that was it for the Ferret. Her amazing life came to an end there. She never sailed again.

Thuir iad gun robh iad ag obair airson Watkins. Bha Watkins ag obair airson Riaghaltas Pheru. Bha Peru agus Chile ri cogadh an aghaidh a chèile. Chaidh am Ferret fhastadh airson armachd a thoirt a Pheru.

A h-uile rud a thachair às dèidh làimh, thuir iad, bha sin dìreach airson an fhìrinn a chleith bho Riaghaltas Chile. Cha robh MacEanraig ri foill. Bha e a' dol a thoirt a' Ferret air ais a dh'Alba. Air neo bha e a' dol ga ceannach.

Cha do ghabh an diùraidh ri sin. Fhuair MacEanraig seachd bliadhna sa phrìosan. Fhuair Uallas seachd bliadhna cuideachd, agus Wright trì bliadhna gu leth.

Cha do thill am Ferret a dh'Alba. Cheannaich fear ann an Adelaide i. Chuir e a seann ainm air ais oirre. Bha i ag obair timcheall costa Astràilia a Deas.

Ann an naoi ceud deug is fichead (1920), chaidh am Ferret air na creagan ann an stoirm. Gu fortanach, fhuair an criutha aiste gu sàbhailte. Agus b' e sin e airson a' Ferret. Thàinig a beatha iongantach gu ceann an sin. Cha do sheòl i a-rithist.