

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 444 (which corresponds to Litir 748). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

John Gunn was a robber. He was alive in the 18th Century. He operated on travellers on the road between Inverness and Badenoch. He lived somewhere near the Cairngorms.

Although he was a robber, John had a reputation as an honourable man. Here's a wee story about him.

There was a messenger travelling between Inverness and the Lowlands. He had a lot of money in his purse. He was going to give the money to somebody in the south.

I'm not absolutely sure where he was, but he was on the road anyway. Night came. He went to a hostelry. He was comfortable there. Another man came into the hostelry. This man was a Gael. He was dressed smartly.

The two men took supper together. The conversation between them was going well. The messenger told the other man that he was scared of John Gunn.

'Why is that?' the other man asked. The messenger told him that he was carrying money. And the smart man said to him, 'Don't be afraid, I'll act as your guide tomorrow. You'll have no problems.'

Bha Iain Gunne na mhèirleach. Bha e beò anns an ochdamh linn deug. Bha e ag obair air luchd-siubhail air an rathad eadar Inbhir Nis agus Bàideanach. Bha e a' fuireach taobh a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh ann am badeigin.

Ged a bha e na mhèirleach, bha cliù aig Iain mar dhuine onarach. Seo stòiridh beag mu dheidhinn.

Bha teachdaire a' dol eadar Inbhir Nis agus a' Ghalltachd. Bha airgead mòr aige na sporan. Bha e a' dol a thoirt an airgid do chuideigin aig deas.

Chan eil mi buileach cinnteach cà' robh e, ach bha e air an rathad co-dhiù. Thàinig an oidhche. Chaidh e gu taigh-òsta. Bha e cofhurtail an sin. Thàinig fear eile a-steach don taigh-òsta. Bha am fear seo na Ghàidheal. Bha èideadh spaideil air.

Ghabh an dithis suipear còmhla. Bha an còmhradh a' dol gu math eatarra. Thuir an teachdaire ris an fhear eile gun robh an t-eagal air ro Iain Gunne.

'Carson a tha sin?' dh'fhaighnich am fear eile. Dh'inns an teachdaire dha gun robh e a' giùlan airgead. Agus thuir am fear spaideil ris, 'Na gabh eagal, bidh mise nam fhear-iùil dhut a-màireach. Cha tig trioblaid nad rathad.'

Next morning, the two men left together. They were on the road for a while when the smartly dressed Gael turned to the messenger. 'Would you like to get a view of John Gunn?' he said.

'No,' replied the other man. But he looked at the Highlander and he understood the situation.

'I'm John Gunn,' said the smart man. He was smiling. He whistled. A group of men appeared suddenly – his supporters. The messenger was scared. He was thinking he was going to lose his money.

'Don't be afraid,' Gunn said. 'I was going to relieve you of your money. I went to the hostelry to find out if you had money. But you confided in me. And, so, I'll let you go.'

John showed the messenger the road ahead. He and his men left for the hills. That's the 'honourable robber' – John Gunn.

An ath mhadainn, dh'fhalbh an dithis còmhla. Bha iad air an rathad greis nuair a thionndaidh an Gàidheal spaideil air an teachdaire. 'Am bu toigh leat sealladh fhaighinn de dh'Iain Guinne?' thuirt e.

'Cha bu toigh'l,' fhreagair am fear eile. Ach choimhead e air a' Ghàidheal agus thuig e an suidheachadh.

'Is mise Iain Guinne,' thuirt am fear spaideil. Bha gàire air. Rinn e fead. Nochd buidheann de dhaoine sa bhad – an luchd-taice aige. Bha an t-eagal air an teachdaire. Bha e a' smaoinachadh gun robh e a' dol a chall a chuid airgid.

'Na gabh eagal,' thuirt an Guinneach. 'Bha mi a' dol a thoirt do chuid airgid bhua. Chaidh mi don taigh-òsta airson faighinn a-mach an robh airgead agad. Ach chuir thu earbsa annam. Agus, mar sin, leigidh mi leat falbh.'

Sheall Iain an t-slighe air adhart don teachdaire. Dh'fhalbh e fhèin 's na daoine aige don mhonadh. Sin agaibh am 'mèirleach onarach' – Iain Guinne.