

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 469 (which corresponds to Litir 773). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleane@bbc.co.uk.

Donald MacRae was a schoolmaster in Balallan School in Lochs Parish in Lewis. He was involved in the Park Deer Raid. That was the famous raid on the Park Deer Forest in 1887.

Donald was born in Plockton in 1851. He was a Gaelic scholar. He was teaching in Inverness. Then he got a position as a schoolmaster in Alness in Easter Ross.

But he made enemies among landlords and establishment figures in the Highlands. He sided strongly with the crofters who were struggling for land rights. The school board fired him. They reckoned he was bringing politics into the school. Donald said he wasn't. People were angry that he lost his job.

He wasn't long without work, however. He got the position in Balallan. And there the people were wanting back the land of their ancestors. Their ancestors were cleared. Much of the land – Park Deer Forest – was used for the landlord's deer. Donald MacRae continued with

Bha Dòmhnall MacRath na mhaighstir-sgoile ann an Sgoil Bhail' Ailein ann an Sgìre nan Loch ann an Leòdhas. Bha e an sàs ann an 'Creach Mhòr nam Fiadh'. B' e sin a' chreach ainmeil air Frìth na Pàirce ann an ochd ceud deug, ochdad 's a seachd (1887).

Rugadh Dòmhnall ann am Ploc Loch Aillse ann an ochd ceud deug, caogad 's a h-aon (1851). 'S e sgoilear Gàidhlig a bha ann. Bha e a' teagasg ann an Inbhir Nis. An uair sin, fhuair e dreuchd mar cheannard-sgoile ann an Alanais ann an Ros an Ear.

Ach rinn e nàimhdean am measg uachdarain agus àrd-urrachan na Gàidhealtachd. Bha e a' taobhadh gu mòr ris na croitearan a bha a' strì airson còraichean fearainn. Chuir bòrd na sgoile às a dhreuchd e. Bha iad a' cumail a-mach gun robh e a' toirt poilitigs a-steach don sgoil. Bha Dòmhnall ag ràdh nach robh. Bha daoine feargach gun do chaill e a dhreuchd.

Cha robh e fada gun obair, ge-tà. Fhuair e an dreuchd ann am Bail' Ailein. Agus an sin, bha na daoine ag iarraidh fearann an sinnsirean fhaighinn air ais. Bha an sinnsirean air am fuadachadh. Bha mòran dhen fhearann fhathast – Frìth na Pàirce – air a chur gu feum airson fèidh an uachdarain. Lean Dòmhnall MacRath air le obair airson ceartas do mhuinntir na

his work for justice for the Highland people.

After a few public meetings – in Balallan School – the crofters chose to go ahead with raiding the deer. They were going to do that obviously. They told the police, the landlord and the newspapers. They were going to work on the conscience of the nation’s people.

When the day came – the twenty second of November – the crofters entered the estate with pipers leading them. A game-keeper came over. ‘Who is your leader (lit. on your head)?’ he said. ‘Our bonnets!’ replied the crofters.

They continued for three days – hundreds of people. They killed hundreds of deer. I’ll tell you more about the matter next week.

Gàidhealtachd.

Às dèidh grunn choinneamhan poblach – ann an Sgoil Bhail’ Ailein – roghnaich na croitearan a dhol air adhart le bhith a’ creach nam fiadh. Bha iad a’ dol a dhèanamh sin gu follaiseach. Chuir iad fios do na poilis, don uachdaran agus do na pàipearan-naidheachd. Bha iad a’ dol a dh’obrachadh air cogais muinntir na rìoghachd.

Nuair a thàinig an latha – an dàrna latha fichead dhen t-Samhain – chaidh na croitearan a-steach don oighreachd, agus pìobairean aig an ceann. Thàinig geamair nan rathad. ‘Cò tha air bhur ceann?’ thuirt e. ‘Tha ar bonaidean!’ fhreagair na croitearan.

Lean iad orra airson trì latha – na ceudan de dhaoine. Mharbh iad ceudan de dh’fhèidh. Innsidh mi dhuibh tuilleadh mu dheidhinn a’ ghnothaich an-ath-sheachdain.