

## 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 473 (which corresponds to Litir 777). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk).

*The Fianna (Fingalians) were at one time living in Glencoe, according to oral tradition. Sgòr nam Fiannaidh 'the peak of the Fianna' is the name of the summit at the western end of Aonach Eagach 'notched mountain'. Bealach Fhionnghail 'Fingal's pass' connects Glencoe to Glen Etive. And on Aonach Dubh 'black mountain' there is Ossian's Cave. Ossian the son of Fionn was writing poetry there.*

*Vikings came in forty galleys to Ballachulish. The King of the Norwegians, Earragan, made camp near the village. He asked Fionn MacCumhail to surrender to him. The Fianna were out hunting. Fionn didn't want to surrender. When his heroes came home, they dug four trenches on the hill between Sgòr nam Fiannaidh and Sgòr na Cìche 'the peak of the breast'. They were ready to fight.*

*The Norse king selected seven score heroes. He asked Fionn to put up the same number against him. Fionn agreed. Seven score of the Fianna came down the slope to Achnacraig in Glencoe. They defeated the Vikings.*

Bha na Fianna uaireigin a' fuireach ann an Gleann Comhann, a rèir beul-aithris. 'S e Sgòr nam Fiannaidh ainm a' mhullaich air ceann an iar an Aonaich Eagach. Tha Bealach Fhionnghail a' ceangal Gleann Comhann ri Gleann Èite. Agus air an Aonach Dhubh, tha Uamh Oisein. Bha Oisean Mac Fhinn a' sgrìobhadh bàrdachd an sin.

Thàinig Lochlannaich ann an ceathrad birlinn gu ruige Baile a' Chaolais. Rinn Rìgh nan Lochlannach, Earragan, campa faisg air a' bhaile. Dh'iarr e air Fionn MacCumhail gèilleadh dha. Bha na Fianna a-muigh a' sealg. Cha robh Fionn ag iarraidh gèilleadh. Nuair a thàinig na gaisgich aige dhachaigh, chladhaich iad ceithir trainnsichean anns a' mhonadh eadar Sgòr nam Fiannaidh agus Sgòr na Cìche. Bha iad deiseil airson sabaid.

Thagh an Rìgh Lochlannach seachd fichead gaisgeach. Dh'iarr e air Fionn an aon àireamh a chur na aghaidh. Dh'aontaich Fionn. Thàinig seachd fichead de na Fianna sìos an leathad gu Ach nan Con ann an Gleann Comhann. Rinn iad a' chùis air na Lochlannaich.

*But the same type of fighting continued every day for a week. On the eighth day, Earragan gathered all his men on the shore of Loch Leven. The Fianna came down upon them. There was bloody combat. Between Meall Mòr 'big hill' and the loch, the place was full of bodies. And Earragan himself was killed.*

*When they saw that their leader was dead, the Vikings fled to their ships. There were very few people left. They only filled two of the forty ships. It's said that the vessels didn't reach Scandinavia. They were lost at sea. And the dead – on both sides – were buried together.*

*When did it happen? Who knows. Some say in the third or fourth centuries after Christ. Some make out that Fionn and his companions never existed. They say that they belong to the imagination of the Gaels. The stories of the Fianna are like mist on Sgòr nam Fiannaidh. They can't be grasped. But, without them, something would be missing from the mountains of the Gaidhealtachd.*

Ach lean sabaid dhen aon seòrsa a h-uile latha airson seachdain. Air an ochdamh latha, thug Earragan a h-uile duine aige còmhla air bruach Loch Lìobhann. Thàinig na Fianna annas orra. Bha strì fhuilteach ann. Eadar am Meall Mòr agus an loch bha an t-àite làn chorp. Agus bha Earragan fhèin air a mharbhadh.

Nuair a chunnaic iad gun robh an ceannard marbh, theich na Lochlannaich do na longan aca. Bha glè bheag de dhaoine air fhàgail. Lìon iad dìreach dà luing dhen cheathrad. Thathar ag ràdh nach do ràinig na soithichean Lochlann. Bha iad air an call aig muir. Agus bha na mairbh – air gach taobh – air an tiodhlacadh còmhla.

Cuin a thachair e? Cò aige tha fios. Bidh cuid ag ràdh anns an treas no ceathramh ceud an dèidh Chrìosd. Bidh cuid a' cumail a-mach nach robh Fionn is a chompanaich riamh ann. Tha iad ag ràdh gum buin iad do mhac-meanmna nan Gàidheal. Tha sgeulachdan na Fèinne mar cheò air Sgòr nam Fiannaidh. Cha ghabh an greimeachadh. Ach, às an aonais, bhiodh rudeigin a dhìth air beanntan na Gaidhealtachd.