

## 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 477 (which corresponds to Litir 781). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk).

*When I was in Nova Scotia recently, I met Effie Rankin. She gave me a copy of her book Às a' Bhràighe. My compliments to her.*

*The book is about a poet in Nova Scotia in the nineteenth century. He was Allan MacDonald or Allan the Ridge. He shows the wealth of Gaelic in Nova Scotia.*

*Allan was born in Lochaber in 1794. He belonged to the MacDonalds of Bohuntin. He received a good education in Gaelic and English – in the ceilidh-house as much as at school.*

*Matters were getting difficult for the MacDonalds of Bohuntin at the start of the nineteenth century. In 1816, the family sailed to Pictou in Nova Scotia. They continued on to Mabou on Cape Breton Island, where they got land on a ridge. That was when they got the nickname Ridge.*

*In Mabou they were among Catholic Gaels. Many of them were from Lochaber. The community was very Gaelic. The*

Nuair a bha mi ann an Alba Nuaidh o chionn ghoirid, thachair mi ri Oighrig NicFhraing. Thug i lethbhreac dhomh dhen leabhar aice *Às a' Bhràighe*. Mo bheannachd oirre.

Tha an leabhar mu dheidhinn bàrd ann an Alba Nuaidh anns an naoidheamh linn deug. B' esan Ailean Dòmhnallach no Ailean an Rids. Tha e a' dearbhadh beartas na Gàidhlig ann an Alba Nuaidh.

Rugadh Ailean ann am Bràigh Loch Abar ann an seachd ceud deug, naochad s a ceithir (1794). Bhuineadh e do Dhòmhnallaich Bhoth Fhionndain. Fhuair e sgoil mhath ann an Gàidhlig is Beurla – anns an taigh-chèilidh, a cheart cho math ris an sgoil.

Bha cùisean a' fàs doirbh do Dhòmhnallaich Bhoth Fhionndain aig toiseach an naoidheamh linn deug. Ann an ochd ceud deug 's sia-deug (1816), sheòl an teaghlach a Phictou ann an Alba Nuaidh. Chùm iad a dol gu ruige Mabu ann an Eilean Cheap Bhreatainn, far an d' fhuair iad fearann air druim no 'rids'. 'S ann an uair sin a fhuair iad am far-ainm Rids.

Ann am Mabu bha iad am measg Ghàidheal Caitligeach. Bha mòran aca à Loch Abar. Bha a' choimhearsnachd gu math Gàidhealach. Tha Gàidhlig air

*Gaelic language is spoken in Mabou to this day.*

*Effie compares Allan's poetry to the writings of the Maclean bard. He, however, was living on the Nova Scotian mainland in a lonely situation. In 'The Gloomy Forest' he wrote:*

Before I cultivate the land,  
before I raise a crop  
And uproot the forest  
With the strength of my  
arms, that I'll be wearied  
And exhausted before the  
children are grown up.

*Allan the Ridge's poetry demonstrates an alternative viewpoint. He was praising Nova Scotia:*

Now that you have come  
overseas To the fine place,  
You will lack for nothing  
all your days As all things  
fare well for us:  
You'll get honey on the  
plant-tops  
Sugar and tea,  
Better for you than the land  
you left  
To the rabble as a deer-  
forest.

*We'll take a further look at Allan the Ridge next week .*

a bruidhinn ann am Màbu chun an latha an-diugh.

Tha Oighrig a' dèanamh coimeas eadar bàrdachd Ailein agus sgrìobhaidhean aig a' Bhàrd MacIlleathain. Bha esan, ge-tà, a' fuireach air tìr-mòr na h-Alba Nuaidhe ann an suidheachadh aonaranach. Anns 'A' Choille Ghruamach', sgrìobh e:

*Mun dèan mi àiteach, 's mun tog mi bàrr ann*

*'S a' choille ghàbhaidh chur às a bonn*

*Le neart mo ghàirdean, gum bi mi sàraicht'*

*Is treis air fàilinn mu 'm fàs a' chlann.*

Tha a' bhàrdachd aig Ailean an Rids a' sealltainn beachd eadar-dhealaichte. Bha e a' moladh na h-Alba Nuaidhe:

*Nis o 'n thàinig thu thar sàile*

*Chum an àite ghrinn,*

*Cha bhi fàilinn ort ri d' latha*

*'S gach aon nì fàs dhuinn fhìn:*

*Gheibh thu mil air bhàrr nan lusan,*

*Siùcar agus tì,*

*'S fheàrr dhut siud na 'n tìr a dh'fhàg thu*

*Aig a' ghràisg na frìth.*

Bheir sinn sùil a bharrachd air Ailean an Rids an-ath-sheachdain.