

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 494 (which corresponds to Litir 798). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk.

The bard, Gilleasbuig MacDonald, was buried in the Kilcummin Cemetery at Fort Augustus. That was in 1815. He was from North Uist. He does not have a headstone in the cemetery. He was on the way to Inverness when he died in Fort Augustus.

Gilleasbuig was good at satirical poetry. One day, he was visiting a friend in Bernisdale on the Isle of Skye. Gilleasbuig's horse got into the grazing field belonging to the Bernisdale tacksman. The tacksman was a miser.

The tacksman wanted money from Gilleasbuig in compensation. The bard started to recite a satirical song about him. The tacksman bade him leave. Gilleasbuig did not have to pay anything.

There is a story that the MacDonald chief, Sir James MacDonald of Sleat, was hunting on North Uist. Gilleasbuig was a lad at the time. Sir James met Gilleasbuig's mother. She was at the shieling.

She told the clan chief that she had two sons being educated at the school. And that one of her sons was unable to use one of his arms. His

Chaidh am bàrd, Gilleasbuig MacDhòmhnail, a thiodhlacadh ann an Cladh Chille Chuimein. Bha sin ann an ochd ceud deug is còig-deug (1815). Bha e à Uibhist a Tuath. Chan eil clach-uaigne aige anns a' chladh. Bha e air an rathad a dh'Inbhir Nis nuair a chaochail e ann an Cille Chuimein.

Bha Gilleasbuig math air bàrdachd aoireil. Latha a bha seo, bha e a' tadhal air caraid ann am Beàrnasdal san Eilean Sgitheanach. Fhuair each Ghilleasbuig a-steach don phàirc ionaltraidh aig fear-taca Bheàrnasdail. Bha am fear-taca na spìocaire.

Dh'iarr am fear-taca airgead-diolaidh air Gilleasbuig. Thòisich am bàrd air òran aoireil aithris mu dheidhinn. Dh' iarr am fear-taca air teicheadh. Cha robh aig Gilleasbuig ri càil a phàigheadh.

Tha stòiridh ann gun robh ceann-cinnidh nan Dòmhnallach, Sir Seumas Dòmhnallach Shlèite, a' sealg ann an Uibhist a Tuath. Bha Gilleasbuig na ghille aig an àm. Thachair Sir Seumas ri màthair Ghilleasbuig. Bha i air an àirigh.

Dh'inns i don cheann-chinnidh gun robh dithis ghillean aice a' faighinn foghlam anns an sgoil. Agus gun robh aon mhac aice gun chomas ann am fear

left arm was shorter than normal. His right arm was okay. It's with his right hand that he would write.

It must be that Sir James understood that there was something wrong with the lad's right hand, and that he was left-handed. The chief said, 'It's a pity he's not called Colla. We'd have another Colla Ciotach in the MacDonald clan.' I imagine that's what gave him the nickname 'Lad of the Left-hand', although he wasn't left-handed.

As I said, Gilleasbuig was on the way to Inverness when he died. He was wanting to publish his poetry in that town. It's thought he visited Alasdair Stewart in Fort Augustus. He was at one time a schoolmaster in North Uist. Perhaps some of Gilleasbuig's songs were included in the collection called Stewart's Collection. But many of the songs were lost. What a pity.

de na gàirdeanan aige. Bha a ghàirdean clì na bu ghiorra na 'n àbhaist. Bha a ghàirdean deas ceart gu leòr. 'S ann le a làimh dheis a bha e a' sgrìobhadh

Feumaidh gun do thuig Sir Seumas gun robh rudeigin ceàrr air làmh dheas a' ghille, agus gun robh a' chearrag air. Thuir an ceann-cinnidh, 'Is bochd nach e Colla a tha air mar ainm. Bhiodh Colla Ciotach eile againn ann an cinneadh nan Dòmhnallach.' Tha mi an dùil gun tug sin am far-ainm 'Gille na Ciotraig' dha, ged nach robh e leis a' chearraig.

Mar a thuir mi, bha Gilleasbuig air an rathad a dh'Inbhir Nis nuair a chaochail e. Bha e ag iarraidh a bhàrdachd fhoillseachadh anns a' bhaile sin. Thathar a' smaoin eachadh gun do thadhail e air Alasdair Stiùbhart ann an Cille Chuimein. Bha esan uaireigin na mhaighstir-sgoile ann an Uibhist a Tuath. 'S dòcha gun deach feadhainn de dhàin Ghilleasbuig don chruinneachadh air an robh Stewart's Collection. Ach chaidh mòran de na dàin a chall. Is mòr am beud.