

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 496 (which corresponds to Litir 800). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

There was an American businessman in Edinburgh. He was in a close next to the Royal Mile. A man came to him. He was wearing a long black coat.

'I have something here for you,' the coat man said. His coat was unbuttoned. He took out a skull. 'This is the skull of Robert Bruce, the old King of Scotland,' he said. 'I'll sell it to you for a thousand pounds.'

'Robert Bruce?' asked the American. 'The man who was victorious at Bannockburn?'

'The very man,' said the coat man.

'I don't believe you,' said the businessman. 'You could show me any old skull, and say that it belonged to Robert Bruce.'

'But,' said the other man, 'if you put the mouth of this skull to your ear, it will speak to you in French and Gaelic.'

'Aye, aye, and what does it say?' asked the businessman.

'Vive l'Ecosse and Scotland Forever!' replied the other man.

'Get lost! I don't believe a word of it.' The American walked away.

Bha fear-gnothaich Ameireaganach ann an Dùn Èideann. Bha e ann an clobhsa ri taobh na Mìle Rìoghail. Thàinig fear thuige. Bha còta fada dubh air.

'Tha rudeigin agam an seo dhuibh,' thuirt fear a' chòta. Bha a chòta fuasgailte. Thug e claigeann a-mach. 'Seo an claigeann aig Raibeart Brus, seann Rìgh na h-Alba,' thuirt e. 'Reicidh mi dhuibh e air mìle not.'

'Raibeart Brus?' dh'fhaighnich am fear Ameireaganach. 'Am fear a bhuannaich aig Allt a' Bhonnaich?'

'An dearbh dhuine,' thuirt fear a' chòta.

'Chan eil mi gad chreidsinn,' thuirt am fear-gnothaich. 'Dh'fhaodadh tu claigeann sam bith a shealltainn dhomh, agus ag ràdh gur ann le Raibeart Brus a bha e.'

'Ach,' thuirt am fear eile, 'ma chuireas tu beul a' chlaiginn seo ri do chluais, bruidhnidh e riut ann am Fraingis is Gàidhlig.'

'Aidh, aidh, agus dè chanas e?' dh'fhaighnich am fear-gnothaich.

'Vive l'Ecosse agus Alba gu Bràth!' fhreagair am fear eile.

'Thalla! Chan eil mi a' creidsinn facal dheth.' Thug am fear Ameireaganach a chasan leis sìos an clobhsa.

Two years after that, the businessman was back in Edinburgh. He was in a different close but the same thing happened again. The coat man came towards him. But he didn't recognise the American.

'I have something here for you,' he said. He undid his coat. Inside it there was a skull. But this skull was smaller than the previous one. 'This is the skull of Robert Bruce, the old King of Scotland,' said the coat man. 'I'll sell it to you for a thousand pounds.'

'You tried this on me two years ago,' said the businessman, 'and this skull is smaller than the skull you showed to me then.'

'Ah, well,' said the other man, 'ah, well, there is a reason for that.'

'And what is the reason?' said the American.

'Well,' said the coat man, 'this is the skull that Robert Bruce had when he was a lad.' And I won't tell you what the other man said!

Dà bhliadhna an dèidh sin, bha am fear-gnothaich air ais ann an Dùn Èideann. Bha e ann an clobhsa eadar-dhealaichte ach thachair an aon rud arithist. Thàinig fear a' chòta dha ionnsaigh. Ach cha do dh'aithnich e am fear Ameireaganach.

'Tha rudeigin agam an seo dhuibh,' thuirt e. Dh'fhuasgail e a chòta. Na bhroinn bha claigeann. Ach bha an claigeann seo na bu lugha na 'm fear a bh' ann an turas roimhe. 'Seo an claigeann aig Raibeart Brus, seann Rìgh na h-Alba,' thuirt fear a' chòta. 'Reicidh mi dhuibh e air mìle not.'

'Dh'fheuch thu seo orm o chionn dà bhliadhna,' thuirt am fear-gnothaich, 'agus tha an claigeann seo nas lugha na 'n claigeann a sheall thu dhomh an uair sin.'

'A, uill,' thuirt am fear eile, 'a, uill, tha adhbhar airson sin.'

'Agus dè an t-adhbhar?' thuirt an t-Ameireaganach.

'Uill,' thuirt fear a' chòta, 'seo an claigeann a bh' aig Raibeart Brus nuair a bha e na ghille.' Agus chan inns mi dhuibh dè thuirt am fear eile!