

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 601 (which corresponds to Litir 905). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk.

Stories are told in the Gairloch area about French money. The money went missing at time of the Jacobite rebellion. It appears that there is some truth in the stories.

There is an account of the matter in the book 'Spanish John'. It's an autobiography. It was written by Col. John McDonell from Scottas in Knoydart. He says that a thousand pounds were stolen from him in Gairloch in 1745-6. That was a fortune at the time.

Before I come to the money, I'd like to tell you about John McDonell's life. He was born in Knoydart in 1728. He was one of the nobles of the MacDonells of Glengarry.

They were Catholics. When he was twelve years old, his father sent him to the Scotch College in Rome. He was to be a priest. But he preferred to be a soldier.

He met King James VIII of Scotland, The Old Pretender. He received encouragement to enter the Spanish army. The Spanish were at war with Austria in Italy. John went into the Irish Brigade, in which

Thathar ag innse sgeulachdan ann an sgìre Gheàrrloch mu airgead Frangach. Chaidh an t-airgead a dhìth aig àm ar-a-mach nan Seumasach. Tha e coltach gu bheil tomhas dhen fhìrinn anns na sgeulachdan.

Tha cunntas mun ghnòthach anns an leabhar 'Spanish John'. 'S e fèin-eachdraidh a tha ann. Chaidh a sgrìobhadh leis a' Choirneal Iain MacDhòmhnaill à Sgotas ann an Cnòideart. Tha esan ag ràdh gun deach mìle not a ghoid bhuaithe ann an Gearrloch ann am Bliadhna a' Phrionnsa. 'S e fortan a bha sin aig an àm.

Mus tig mi chun an airgid, bu mhath leam innse dhuibh mu bheatha Iain MhicDhòmhnaill. Rugadh e ann an Cnòideart ann an seachd ceud deug, fichead 's a h-ochd (1728). B' e fear de dh'uaislean Clann 'ic Dhòmhnaill Ghleanna Gharadh a bha ann.

'S e Caitligich a bha annta. Nuair a bha e dusan bliadhna a dh'aois, chuir athair e don Cholaiste Albannach anns an Ròimh. Bha e gu bhith na shagart. Ach b' fheàrr leis a bhith na shaighdear.

Thachair e ri Rìgh Seumas VIII na h-Alba, The Old Pretender. Fhuair e brosnachadh a dhol do dh'arm na Spàinnteach. Bha na Spàinnteach ri cath an aghaidh na h-Ostaire anns an Eadailt. Chaidh Iain don Bhragàd Èireannach, anns

there were Irish and Scottish officers.

That is why he had the nickname 'Spanish John'. It wasn't long until he was in a battle. The Spanish were defending Naples. John was wounded. He was in hospital. But he had one ear to what was happening at home. The son of the King – Bonnie Prince Charlie – was in Britain. He was trying to put the Stuarts back on the throne.

John got permission to be in a force that would go to Britain on the Prince's behalf. But when he reached Paris, he got bad news. The Jacobite army had stopped at Derby. The sea was full of British ships. But John wanted to return to Scotland. I'll tell you what happened then next week.

an robh oifigearan Èireannach agus Albannach.

'S e sin as coireach gur e 'Spanish John' a bha air mar fhar-ainm. Cha b' fhada gus an robh e ann am batail. Bha na Spàinntich a' dìon Naples. Chaidh Iain a leòn. Bha e san ospadal. Ach bha aon chluas aige air na bha a' dol aig an taigh. Bha mac an Rìgh – Teàrlach Òg Stiùbhart – ann am Breatainn. Bha e a' feuchainn ris na Stiùbhartaich a chur air ais air a' chathair rìoghail.

Fhuair Iain cead a bhith ann am feachd a rachadh a Bhreatainn às leth a' Phrionnsa. Ach nuair a ràinig e Paris, fhuair e droch naidheachd. Bha arm nan Seumasach air stad aig Derby. Bha an cuan làn shoithichean Breatannach. Ach bha Iain ag iarraidh thilleadh a dh'Alba. Innsidh mi dhuibh mu na thachair an uair sin an-ath-sheachdain.