

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 603 (which corresponds to Litir 907). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you about Spanish John, John McDonell from Knoydart. He met a man who was present when a thousand pounds was stolen from him. John put the man on his back and left.

He put together a group of five men. They returned to Red Colin's house in the MacKenzie country. But Colin had forty armed men. 'The money is spent,' he said to John.

'If so,' said John, 'those who spent it will get a reward.'

'What reward?' asked Colin.

'The gibbet,' replied John.

Colin's men rose to their feet. John drew his gun and dirk. He and his companions got away without bloodshed.

A famous physician came to visit John in Knoydart. They were fishing. A warship came. The physician asked John to take him to the ship. He wanted to buy medical supplies from them. John was pretending to be a servant.

The vessel was the Porcupine, under the command of Captain Ferguson. He was famous for his

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Iain Spàinnteach, Iain MacDhòmhnail à Cnòideart. Thachair e ri fear a bha an làthair nuair a chaidh mìle not a ghoid bhuaithe. Chuir Iain an duine air a dhruim dìreach agus theich e.

Chuir e ri chèile buidheann de chòignear. Thill iad do thaigh Chailein Deirg ann an dùthaich 'ic Coinnich. Ach bha ceathrad fear armaichte aig Cailean. 'Tha an t-airgead air a chaitheamh,' thuirt e ri Iain.

'Ma tha,' ars Iain, 'tha duais ann dhaibhsan a chaith e.'

'Dè an duais?' dh'fhaighnich Cailean.

'A' chroich,' fhreagair Iain.

Dh'èirich sluagh Chailein. Tharraing Iain a ghunna agus a bhiodag. Fhuair e fhèin 's a chompanaich air falbh gun dòrtadh-fala.

Thàinig lighiche ainmeil a thadhail air Iain ann an Cnòideart. Bha iad ag iasgach. Thàinig soitheach cogaidh. Dh'iarr an lighiche air Iain a thoirt don t-soitheach. Bha e airson bathar medigeach a cheannach bhuaipa. Bha Iain a' toirt a' chreidsinn gur e sgalag a bh' ann.

B' e an soitheach am Porcupine, fo stiùir a' Chaiptein Fheargasdain. Bha esan ainmeil airson a bhrùidealachd an aghaidh

brutality to Jacobites. He was certain that John was a Jacobite. He arrested him.

They reached the Sound of Mull. John was transferred to another warship, and then to Fort William.

The crew were Irish. They told John in Irish Gaelic that the man who had betrayed him was Captain Allan MacDonald, Allan of Knock, from Skye.

John was in prison for nine months. Shortly after that, he was in Glenelg. He met Allan of Knock. John threatened him.

Allan thought John was going to murder him. He fled to the barracks in Glenelg. He didn't leave the barracks after that without two soldiers accompanying him.

But Spanish John didn't murder him. He married and went to live in Knoydart. In 1773, he went to North America, where he spent the rest of his life.

nan Seumasach. Bha e cinnteach gun robh Iain na Sheumasach. Chuir e an grèim e.

Ràinig iad Caol Mhuile. Chaidh Iain a chur gu soitheach cogaidh eile, an uair sin chun a' Ghearasdain.

Bha an criutha Èireannach. Dh'inns iad do Iain ann an Gàidhlig na h-Èireann gum b' e am fear a bhrath e an Caiptean Ailean Dòmhnallach, Ailean a' Chnuic, às an Eilean Sgitheanach.

Bha Iain sa phrìosan airson naoi mìosan. Goirid an dèidh sin, bha e ann an Gleann Eilg. Thachair e ri Ailean a' Chnuic. Mhaoidh Iain air.

Bha Ailean dhen bheachd gun robh Iain a' dol ga mhurt. Theich e don ghearasdan ann an Gleann Eilg. Cha do dh'fhàg e an gearasdan an dèidh sin gun dithis shaighdearan a bhith na chois.

Ach cha do mhuirt Iain Spàinnteach e. Phòs e agus chaidh e a dh'fhuireach ann an Cnòideart. Ann an seachd ceud deug, seachdad 's a trì (1773), chaidh e a dh'Ameireagaidh a Tuath, far an do chuir e seachad an còrr de a bheatha.