

An Litir Bheag

le Ruairidh MacIleathain

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 694 (which corresponds to Litir 998). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you in the last Litir about the Nigg [old] church on the pilgrimage route to Tain. King James IV was often on that route. I want to tell you about James. He was the last Gaelic-speaking king.

James was the son of King James III and his wife Margaret of Denmark. It's thought that young James was born in Stirling Castle in 1473.

When James was only fifteen years old, he took over from his father. He and his father had fallen out with each other. Many of the nobles, who were against the old king, were supporting young James as [the] new king.

Matters came to a head at the Battle of Sauchieburn. That's near Stirling. The old king was killed. The young prince was installed on the throne as James IV.

James was very capable. He knew the Bible well. He read many books. He was multilingual. It's thought he learned Danish from his mother. Whether or not that is true,

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh anns an Litir mu dheireadh mu Eaglais an Eig air an t-slighe thaisteachd gu Baile Dhubhthaich. Bha Rìgh Seumas IV air an t-slighe sin gu tric. Tha mi airson innse dhuibh mu Sheumas. B' esan an rìgh mu dheireadh aig an robh Gàidhlig.

B' e Seumas mac Rìgh Sheumais III agus a' bhean Mairead na Danmhairg. Thathar a' smaoinichadh gun do rugadh Seumas òg ann an Caisteal Shruighlea – ann an ceithir cheud deug, seachdad 's a trì (1473).

Nuair a bha Seumas dìreach còig bliadhna deug, ghabh e thairis bho athair. Bha e fhèin is athair air a dhol a-mach air a chèile. Bha mòran de na h-uaislean, a bha an aghaidh an t-seann rìgh, a' cur taic ri Seumas òg mar rìgh ùr.

Thàinig gnothaichean gu ceann aig Blàr Allt an t-Seilich – *the Battle of Sauchieburn*. Tha sin faisg air Sruighlea. Chaidh an seann rìgh a mharbhadh. Bha am prionnsa òg air a chur air an rìgh-chathair mar Rìgh Seumas IV.

Bha Seumas gu math comasach. Bha e tuilleadh is eòlach air a' Bhìoball. Leugh e tòrr leabhraichean. Bha e ioma-chànanach. Thathar a' smaoinichadh gun do dh'ionnsaich e Dànais bho a mhàthair. Co-

he spoke the following languages: Latin, French, German, Flemish, Italian, Spanish, Scots and ... yup ... Gaelic.

There is one thing about him I'm not sure about. A picture of him shows a man with a small moustache but no beard. But there is a written report that he had a large beard and long hair.

Although he spoke Gaelic, that doesn't mean that James was well disposed towards the Gaels that were running the Lordship of the Isles. He attempted to extend the king's writ across the Highlands.

His relationship with England was very difficult. He tried to keep Scotland and England at peace with each other. But matters changed when Henry VIII took over the English throne in 1509. More on that next week.

dhiù tha sin ceart no nach eil, bha na cànanan a leanas aige: Laideann, Fraingis, Gearmailtis, Flànrais, Eadailtis, Spàinntis, Albais agus ... seadh ... Gàidhlig.

Tha aon rud mu dheidhinn air nach eil mi cinnteach. Tha dealbh dheth a' sealltainn duine le stais bheag ach gun fheusag. Ach tha aithris sgrìobhte ann gun robh feusag mhòr agus falt fada aige.

Ged a bha Gàidhlig aige, chan eil sin a' ciallachadh gun robh Seumas bàigheil ris na Gàidheil a bha a' stiùireadh Tighearnas nan Eilean. Rinn e oidhirp gus a' Ghàidhealtachd a chur fo smachd làidir an rìgh.

Bha a chàirdeas le Sasainn gu math doirbh. Dh'fheuch e ri Alba agus Sasainn a chumail ann an sìth le chèile. Ach dh'atharraich cùisean nuair a ghabh Eanraig VIII thairis rìgh-chathair Shasainn ann an còig ceud deug 's a naoi (1509). Tuilleadh air sin an-ath-sheachdain.