

# **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 714 (which corresponds to Litir 1,018). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk).

*This week I'm in Gaick in Badenoch. There's a strange place-name there. Near Loch an Dùin, there is a slope called Vinegar Hill. The Gaelic scholar, Alexander MacBain, wrote that the name of the slope in Gaelic is A' Mhin-choiseachd 'the easy walking'. 'The English,' he wrote, 'is a fancy name founded on the Gaelic.'*

*Gaick had a bad reputation among the people of Badenoch and Atholl. There is a phrase: 'S mòr a b' fheàrr leam a bhith an Druim Uachdair na bhith ann an Gàdhaig nan creagan gruamach 'I'd much rather be in Drumochter than in Gaick of the gloomy crags'. I'd much rather be in Drumochter than in Gaick of the gloomy crags'.*

*There was a local curse – Dìol Bhaltair an Gàdhaig ort! That means 'Walter's fate in Gaick to you'. Dìol Bhaltair an Gàdhaig ort. It is connected to the terrible death that Walter Comyn, the Lord of Badenoch, suffered in the 13th Century.*

*His home was in Ruthven, near Kingussie. He was wanting there to be a proper road between Badenoch*

An t-seachdain seo tha mi ann an Gàdhaig ann am Bàideanach. Tha ainm-àite annasach ann. Faisg air Loch an Dùin, tha leathad ann air a bheil Vinegar Hill. Sgrìobh an sgoilear Gàidhlig, Alasdair MacBheathain, gur e ainm an leathaid ann an Gàidhlig A' Mhin-choiseachd 'the easy walking'. 'The English,' sgrìobh e, 'is a fancy name founded on the Gaelic.'

Bha droch chliù aig Gàdhaig am measg muinntir Bhàideanach is Athall. Tha abairt ann: 'S mòr a b' fheàrr leam a bhith an Druim Uachdair na bhith ann an Gàdhaig nan creagan gruamach 'I'd much rather be in Drumochter than in Gaick of the gloomy crags'. 'S mòr a b' fheàrr leam a bhith an Druim Uachdair na bhith ann an Gàdhaig nan creagan gruamach.

Bha mallachd ionadail ann – Dìol Bhaltair an Gàdhaig ort! Tha sin a' ciallachadh 'Walter's fate in Gaick to you'. Dìol Bhaltair an Gàdhaig ort. Tha e a' buntainn ris a' bhàs uabhasach a dh'fhuiling Bhaltair Cuimeanach, Triath Bhàideanach, anns an treas linn deug.

Bha a dhachaigh ann an Ruadhainn, faisg air Ceann a' Ghiùthsaidh. Bha e ag iarraidh gum

*and Atholl. He was out looking at the route on the hills in 1258.*

*On the way out, Walter gave an order. When he returned [would return], every woman between the age of fifteen and thirty who was working the land in Ruthven must be stark-naked.*

*On the high country east of Loch an Dùin, there is a burn called Allt a' Chaoirnich. There is famous place called Leum nam Fiann, where people would jump across the burn. Walter fell off his horse there. But his foot got caught in the stirrup. His horse must have been under a spell – or fear, and it made for Ruthven in a hurry. When he reached Ruthven, there was only Walter's leg left – still in the stirrup. When some people went to look for the rest of his body, they found it. Two eagles were ripping it apart.*

biodh rathad ceart ann eadar Bàideanach agus Athall. Bha e a-muigh a' coimhead air an t-slighe sa mhonadh ann an dà cheud dheug, caogad 's a h-ochd (1258).

Air an rathad a-mach, thug Bhaltair òrdugh seachad. Nuair a thilleadh e, dh'fheumadh a h-uile boireannach – eadar còig-deug agus trithead bliadhna a' dh'aois – a bha ag obrachadh na talmhainn ann an Ruadhainn – a bhith dearg-rùisgte.

Anns an àrd-mhonadh sear air Loch an Dùin, tha allt ann air a bheil Allt a' Chaoirnich. Tha àite ainmeil an sin ris an canar *Leum nam Fiann*, far am biodh daoine a' leum thar an uillt. Thuit Bhaltair far each an sin. Ach chaidh a chas an sàs san stiorap. Feumaidh gun robh geas – no eagal – air an each, agus chaidh e a Ruadhainn na dheann. Nuair a ràinig e Ruadhainn, cha robh air fhàgail de Bhaltair ach aon chas – fhathast san stiorap. Nuair a chaidh feadhainn a choimhead airson a chòrr de a chorp, lorg iad e. Bha dà iolaire ga reubadh às a chèile.