

# **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 736 (which corresponds to Litir 1,040). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk).

*Over the last three weeks, I told the story of James MacPherson, the freebooter. He was hanged in Banff in the year 1700. You'll remember that the sheriff in Banff put the clock forward a quarter of an hour because a reprieve was on the way to save James.*

*This matter started a rivalry between Banff and the town on the other side of the River Deveron – An Dùn or MacDuff. I got the story about it from the Tobar an Dualchais website and one Charles Simpson, who belonged to MacDuff. Charles was of the opinion that MacPherson was a good man.*

*When Charles was young, a guy from Banff wouldn't go out with a girl from MacDuff. The lads from Banff would shout at the lads from MacDuff, 'Fa shot the loon?' (who shot the lad?). That was recalling an occurrence when a lad was killed by mistake, when soldiers were firing at targets. The lads from MacDuff would then say to the Banff boys, 'Fa hanged the man afore his time?'*

*When a church was built in MacDuff in the 19th century – it was*

Thairis air na trì seachdainean a dh'fhalbh, dh'inns mi eachdraidh Sheumais Mhic a' Phearsain, an ceatharnach. Chaidh a chrochadh gu bàs ann am Banbh anns a' bhliadhna seachd ceud deug (1700). Bidh cuimhne agaibh gun do chuir an siorram ann am Banbh an cloc air adhart cairteal na h-uarach oir bha stad-breith air an rathad airson Seumas a shàbhaladh.

Thòisich an gnothach seo co-spàirn eadar Baile Bhanbh agus am baile air taobh eile Uisge Dubh-Èireann – An Dùn no MacDuff. Fhuair mi an naidheachd mu dheidhinn à làrach-lìn Tobar an Dualchais, agus fear Teàrlach Simpson, a bhuineadh don Dùn. Bha Teàrlach dhen bheachd gur e deagh dhuine a bha ann am Mac a' Phearsain.

Nuair a bha Teàrlach òg, cha bhiodh fear à Banbh a' falbh le tè às an Dùn. Bhiodh na balaich à Banbh ag èigheachd air na gillean às an Dùn, 'Fa shot the loon?' (Cò loisg air a' ghille?) Bha sin a' cuimhneachadh tachartas nuair a chaidh gille a mharbhadh le mearachd, agus saighdearan a' losgadh air targaidean. Bhiodh na balaich às an Dùn an uair sin ag ràdh ris na gillean à Banbh, 'Fa hanged the man afore his time?'

Nuair a thogadh eaglais anns an Dùn anns an naoidheamh linn deug - 's e Doune

*called Doune Church in English – a tower was built on it with a clock in it. But there are not four faces on the clock. There are only three. The one on the west side – the Banff side – is missing. The MacDuff folk did not want to give the time to the Banff people.*

*The clock in Banff itself was moved to a new town that was built early in the 19th century. That is Baile Bhainidh or Dufftown. People were calling it ‘the clock that hanged MacPherson’. It was running quarter of an hour ahead in Banff for some time after the hanging. But I expect today in Dufftown that it gives us the correct time.*

*Church a chanas iad rithe ann am Beurla – chaidh tùr a thogail oirre le cloc ann. Ach chan eil ceithir aghaidhean air a’ chloc. Chan eil ann ach na trì. Tha an tè air an taobh siar – taobh Bhanbh – a dhìth. Cha robh muinntir an Dùin ag iarraidh an uair a thoirt do mhuinntir Bhanbh.*

*Chaidh an cloc ann am Banbh fhèin a ghluasad gu baile ùr a chaidh a thogail tràth anns an naoidheamh linn deug. ’S e sin Baile Bhainidh no Dufftown. Bha daoine ag aithneachadh a’ chloc mar ‘an cloc a chroch Mac a’ Phearsain’. Bha e a’ ruith cairteal na h-uarach air thoiseach ann am Banbh fad ùine an dèidh a’ chrochaidh. Ach tha mi an dùil an-diugh ann am Baile Bhainidh gu bheil e a’ toirt dhuinn an uair cheart.*