

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 785 (which corresponds to Litir 1,089). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk.

Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed. Do you know that phrase? Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed. It's from the Bible. Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed. It's appears in the Old Testament, Book of Genesis, Chapter IX, Verse 6.

Why am I starting with that? Well, I was reading an old account of a murder. The account finished with that passage from the Bible. We'll see why, when my own account reaches its conclusion.

It happened in 1643 in the parish of Kirkhill (Wardlaw) near Beauly. There was a landlord. There was a man called John son of big John who was working for him. He was not an honest man.

John was stealing barley. A lad, Donald son of William, saw what happened. He scolded John. John was fearful that the landlord would hear about the matter. He decided to murder Donald. 'I found a dead seal on the shore,' he said. 'Nobody knows about it except my brother-in-law, John Mackenzie. Why don't you come

Ge b' e a dhòirteas fuil duine, le duine dòirtear fhuil-san. A bheil sibh eòlach air an abairt sin? Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed. Tha e às a' Bhìoball. Ge b' e a dhòirteas fuil duine, le duine dòirtear fhuil-san. Tha e a' nochdadh anns an an t-Seann Tiomnadh, Leabhar Genesis Caibideil IX, Rann 6.

Carson a tha mi a' tòiseachadh le sin? Uill, bha mi a' leughadh seann chunntas de mhurt. Chrìochnaich an cunntas leis an earrainn sin às a' Bhìoball. Chì sinn carson, nuair a thig an cunntas agam fhìn gu crìch.

Thachair e ann an sia ceud deug, ceathrad 's a trì (1643) ann am paraiste Chnoc Mhoire faisg air a' Mhanachainn. Bha uachdaran ann. Bha fear ann ris an canadh iad Iain mac 'an Mhòir a bha ag obair dha. Chan e duine onarach a bha ann.

Bha Iain a' goid an eòrna. Chunnaic gille, Dòmhnall mac Uilleim, na thachair. Rinn e trod ri Iain. Bha an t-eagal air Iain gun cluinneadh an t-uachdaran mun ghnòthach. Chuir e roimhe Dòmhnall a mhurt. 'Lorg mi ròn marbh air a' chladach,' thuirt e. 'Chan eil fios aig duine eile mu dheidhinn, ach mo bhràthair-chèile, Iain MacCoinnich. Carson nach tig thu còmhla rinn? Gheibh sinn uile ar cuid dhen ròn.'

with us? We'll all get our share of the seal.'

Donald didn't appreciate the danger he was in. The two [of them] met John Mackenzie near the shore. Without warning, John son of big John produced a dirk. He stabbed the lad through his heart. John Mackenzie initially didn't understand what was happening.

John son of big John said to him, 'You stab him, John. You'll be just as guilty as I am.' Was John Mackenzie of the opinion that he had no choice? I don't know, but he stabbed the lad as well.

They carried Donald's body to the shore. Nobody saw them. The tide was out. They left the body on the shore. They were expecting that it would be swept away by the tide. But what happened? I'll tell you in the next Litir.

Cha do thuig Dòmhnall an cunnart san robh e. Thachair an dithis ri Iain MacCoinnich faisg air a' chladach. Gun rabhadh, thug Iain mac 'an Mhòir biodag a-mach. Shàth e an gille tro a chridhe. Cha do thuig Iain MacCoinnich an toiseach dè bha dol.

Thuir Iain mac 'an Mhòir ris, 'Sàth thusa e, Iain. Bidh thu fhèin a cheart cho ciontach 's a tha mise.' An robh Iain MacCoinnich dhen bheachd nach robh roghainn aige? Chan eil fhios a'm, ach shàth esan an gille cuideachd.

Ghiùlain iad corp Dhòmhnail don chladach. Chan fhaca duine iad. Bha an làn a-mach. Dh'fhàg iad an corp air a' chladach. Bha iad an dùil gum biodh e air a sguabadh air falbh leis an làn. Ach dè thachair? Innsidh mu dhuibh anns an ath Litir.