

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 804 (which corresponds to Litir 1,108). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclea@bbc.co.uk.

I was trying to find out if there was a connection between Roderick Maclean and the Highlands. I'm not talking about myself! My thoughts are on a man who tried to murder Queen Victoria. He was Roderick Edward Maclean. It is said he was from Scotland, but it is not said where. Anyway, he was living in England.

In March 1882, Roderick fired on the Queen with a handgun. Victoria was in Windsor. She was at the station, and there was a crowd awaiting her. Among them was Roderick. The Queen had walked across the station platform. Roderick fired his gun. The bullet did no damage. The weapon was taken from him. Pupils from Eton College got hold of Maclean. He was then detained by a police officer.

Why was Maclean wanting to kill the Queen? Well, he was saying himself that he wasn't aiming at the Queen, but at the wheels of her carriage. He was just wanting to draw attention to his situation. He was living in poverty. Victoria herself was, however, of the opinion that

Bha mi a' feuchainn ri faighinn a-mach an robh ceangal ann eadar Ruairidh MacIlleathain agus a' Ghàidhealtachd. Chan eil mi a-mach orm fhìn! Tha mo smuaintean air fear a dh'fheuch ris a' Bhanrigh Bhictoria a mhurt. B' esan Ruairidh Eideard MacIlleathain. Thathar ag ràdh gur ann à Alba a bha e, ach chan eilear ag innse càite. Co-dhiù, bha e a' fuireach ann an Sasainn.

Anns a' Mhàrt ochd ceud deug, ochdad 's a dhà (1882), loisg Ruairidh air a' Bhanrigh le gunna-làimhe. Bha Bhictoria ann am Windsor. Bha i aig an stèisean, agus bha sluagh a' feitheamh rithe. Nam measg, bha Ruairidh. Bha a' Bhanrigh air coiseachd thar ùrlar an stèisein. Loisg Ruairidh a ghunna. Cha do rinn am peilear cron. Chaidh am ball-airm a thoirt bhuithe. Thug sgoilearan à Colaiste Eton grèim air MacIlleathain. Bha e an uair sin air a chur an grèim le poileas.

Carson a bha MacIlleathain ag iarraidh a' Bhanrigh a mharbhadh? Uill, bha e fhèin ag ràdh nach robh e ag amas air a' Bhanrigh, ach air cuibhlichean a' charbaid aice. Bha e dìreach airson aire a thoirt don t-suidheachadh anns an robh e. Bha e beò ann am bochdainn. Bha

Roderick was intending to murder her.

Many people reckoned he was insane. He spent more than a year in a home for people who suffer mental illness. He had been speaking to his sister about murdering somebody.

Roderick didn't remain in any occupation for long. His brothers and his sister were sending him money. But he was very poor. He lived like a vagabond in southern England. He was going from town to town.

His court case was famous. In the end, as we shall see, it caused the authorities in England and Wales to change the law. And a poem was written about the effort to kill the Queen by a famous poet (if you reckon him to be such) from Dundee – William McGonagall. More from me next week!

Bhictoria fhèin dhen bheachd, ge-tà, gun robh Ruairidh ag amas air a murt.

Bha gu leòr de dhaoine a' dèanamh dheth gun robh e às a rian. Chuir e seachad còrr is bliadhna ann an dachaigh dhaibhsan a tha a' fulang le tinneas-inntinn. Bha e air a bhith a' bruidhinn ri a phiuthar mu chuideigin a mhurt.

Cha robh Ruairidh a fuireach fada ann an dreuchd sam bith. Bhiodh a bhràithrean agus a phiuthar a' cur airgead thuige. Ach bha e gu math bochd. Dh'fhuirich e mar iomrallaiche ann an ceann a deas Shasainn. Bha e a' falbh bho bhaile gu baile.

Bha a' chùis-chùirte aige ainmeil. Aig a' cheann thall, mar a chì sinn, thug i air na h-ùghdarrasan ann an Sasainn 's a' Chuimrigh an lagh atharrachadh. Agus chaidh dàn a sgrìobhadh mu oidhirp gus a' Bhanrigh a mharbhadh le bàrd ainmeil (mas fhìor) à Dùn Dè – Uilleam MacGonagail. Tuilleadh bhuam an-ath-sheachdain!