

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 811 (which corresponds to Litir 1,115). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk.

<p>We were looking at 'Smeòrach Chlann Dòmhnail' by John MacCodrum. Now I want to look at another poem 'Smeòrach Chlann Raghnaill' by Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair. I want to pose a question – did one influence the other?</p> <p>Here is the chorus for 'Smeòrach Chlann Dòmhnail':</p> <p>Hoilibheag hilibheag hó ail il ó, Hoilibheag hilibheag hó ró i, Hoilibheag hilibheag hó ail il ó, I'm a Clan Donald thrush:</p> <p>Here is the chorus for Smeòrach Chlann Raghnaill:</p> <p>Hoile bho hì riag hò roll il ò, Hoile bho hì riag hò rò ì, Hoile bho hì riag hò roll il ò, I'm a Clanranald thrush.</p> <p>They are alike, aren't they? Here is Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair's second verse:</p> <p>I'm a Clan Donald thrush, People who would die and wound,</p> <p>I was turned into a thrush, to sing and add to their music.</p>	<p>Bha sinn a' toirt sùil air 'Smeòrach Chlann Dòmhnail' le Iain MacCodruim. A-nise, tha mi airson sùil a thoirt air dàn eile – 'Smeòrach Chlann Raghnaill' le Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair. Tha mi airson ceist a chur – an tug an dàrna fear buaidh air an fhear eile?</p> <p>Seo an t-sèist ann an Smeòrach Chlann Dòmhnail:</p> <p>Hoilibheag hilibheag hó ail il ó, Hoilibheag hilibheag hó ró i, Hoilibheag hilibheag hó ail il ó, Smeòrach le Clann Dòmhnail mi.</p> <p>Seo an t-sèist ann an Smeòrach Chlann Raghnaill:</p> <p>Hoile bho hì riag hò roll il ò, Hoile bho hì riag hò rò ì, Hoile bho hì riag hò roll il ò, Smeòrach do Chlann Raghnaill mi.</p> <p>Tha iad coltach ri chèile, nach eil? Seo an dàrna rann aig Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair:</p> <p>Smèorach mise do Chlann Dòmhnail, Dream a dhìtheadh 's a leònadh, 'S chaidh mo chur an riochd na smeòraich, Gu bhith seinn 's a' cur ri ceòl dhaibh.</p>
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<p><i>He names Clan Donald because Clanranald is part of Clan Donald. In the poem, the poet situates us in Clanranald country. Castle Tioram is in Moidart. Isle Finan is on Loch Shiel.</i></p> <p><i>To the descendants of the birds from Castle Tioram, and from Isle Finan of the heroes,</i></p> <p><i>Early and in the evening my clamour arises, singing from my beak, sweet and honeylike.</i></p> <p><i>The poem praises Clanranald, but it also proves support for the Jacobites:</i></p> <p><i>But if my King doesn't come home, I shall depart to a pitted hollow,</i></p> <p><i>I'll be there lamenting and wringing my hands, until I meet a groaning death.</i></p> <p><i>Smeòrach Chlann Raghnaill appeared in print in 1776. That was after the author's death, but three years before MacCodrum's death. MacCodrum's poems were put into print after his own death.</i></p> <p><i>Some people think that Smeòrach Chlann Raghnaill appeared first. Others are of the opinion that MacCodrum wrote his own poem first. I don't know who is correct. And I'll leave the controversy where it is!</i></p>	<p>Tha e ag ainmeachadh Clann Dòmhnail oir tha Clann Raghnaill mar phàirt de Chlann Dòmhnail. Anns an dàn, tha am bàrd gar suidheachadh ann an dùthaich Chlann Raghnaill. Tha an Caisteal Tioram ann am Mùideart. Tha Eilean Fhìanain ann an Loch Seile:</p> <p><i>Do shliochd nan eun on Chaisteal Thioram, 'S o Eilean Fhìanain nan gallan,</i></p> <p><i>Moch is feasgar togar m' iolach, Seinn gu bileach, milis, mealach.</i></p> <p>Tha an dàn a' moladh Clann Raghnaill, ach tha e cuideachd a' dearbhadh taic do na Seumasaich:</p> <p><i>Ach mur tig mo Rìgh-sa dhachaigh, Triallaidh mi do dh' uamhaidh shlocaich',</i></p> <p><i>'S bidh mi 'n sin a' caoidh 's a' basraich, Gus am faigh mi bàs le osnaich.</i></p> <p>Nochd Smeòrach Chlann Raghnaill ann an clò ann an seachd ceud deug, seachdad 's a sia (1776). Bha sin an dèidh bàs an ùghdair, ach trì bliadhna ro bhàs MhicCodruim. Bha na dàin aig MacCodruim air an cur an clò às dèidh a bhàis fhèin.</p> <p>Tha cuid dhen bheachd gun do nochd Smeòrach Chlann Raghnaill an toiseach. Tha cuid eile dhen bheachd gun do sgrìobh MacCodrum a dhàn fhèin an toiseach. Chan eil fhios a'm cò tha ceart. Agus fàgaidh mi a' chonnspaid far a bheil i!</p>
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