

# **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 819 (which corresponds to Litir 1,123). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk).

*I was near Auldearn with a friend recently. Auldearn is near Nairn.*

*We were in different cars because of [the] coronavirus. My friend stopped next to a field. I myself stopped behind him.*

*My friend pointed out a small hillock. 'There is a hillock,' he said, 'where Isobel Gowdie danced with the fairies.'*

*'Isobel who?' I said.*

*'Isobel Gowdie,' he replied. 'And look at yonder hill.' About a mile from us was another hill. 'Yonder is the place,' he said, 'where she was put to death.'*

*'Right,' I said, 'tell me her story!'*

*Isobel Gowdie was living during the 17th century. She belonged to Auldearn. She married a man called John Gilbert. They were living at Loch Loy near Nairn.*

*In the 16th century, matters deteriorated with regard to witchcraft. It was a bad chapter in the history of Scotland. In 1563, the Scottish Witchcraft Act went through parliament. After that, if somebody*

Bha mi faisg air Allt Èireann còmhla ri caraid o chionn ghoirid. Tha Allt Èireann faisg air Inbhir Narann.

Bha sinn ann an càraichean eadar-dhealaichte air sàillibh a' choròna-bhìorais. Stad mo charaid ri taobh achadh. Stad mi fhìn air a chùlaibh.

Chomharraich mo charaid tom beag. 'Sin agad tom,' thuir e, 'far an do dhanns Iseabail Gowdie leis na sìthichean.'

'Iseabail cò?' arsa mise.

'Iseabail Gowdie,' fhreagair e. 'Agus coimhead air a' chnoc ud thall.' Mu mhìle air falbh bhuainn, bha cnoc eile. 'Siud agad an t-àite,' thuir e, 'far an deach a cur gu bàs.'

'Ma-thà,' arsa mise, 'inns dhomh a h-eachdraidh!'

Bha Iseabail Gowdie beò anns an t-seachdamh linn deug. Bhuineadh i a dh'Allt Èireann. Phòs i fear John Gilbert. Bha iad a' fuireach aig Loch Laoigh faisg air Inbhir Narann.

Anns an t-siathamh linn deug, chaidh cùisean bhuaithe a thaobh buidseachd. 'S e droch chaibideil a bha ann ann an eachdraidh na h-Alba. Ann an còig ceud deug, seasgadh 's a trì (1563), chaidh Achd Buidseachd na h-Alba tron phàrlamaid. An dèidh sin, nam biodh

*were guilty of witchcraft, they could be put to death.*

*In the nineties of that century, matters got worse. There were major court cases in North Berwick in Lothian. They were famous because the King – James VI – was involved in them.*

*James had married Princess Ann of Denmark over in Denmark. But he wasn't at the wedding himself! Anna tried to sail to Scotland several times. On every occasion a storm arose. Finally, she stayed in Oslo for the winter.*

*But James was not pleased. He went over to Oslo at the start of winter. He spent the winter there. The King and the new Queen sailed to Scotland in the spring.*

*The Danes and the Scots were unhappy about the delay. They heard reports about witchcraft – in Copenhagen and North Berwick. Many people at the time believed that witches had the power to create storms. We'll see what happened in North Berwick in the next Litir.*

cuideigin ciontach de bhuidseachd, dh'fhaodadh iad a bhith air an cur gu bàs.

Anns na naochadan dhen linn sin, dh'fhàs gnothaichean na bu mhiosa. Bha cùisean cùirte mòra ann am Bearaig a Tuath ann an Lodainn. Bha iad ainmeil oir bha an Rìgh – Seumas VI – an sàs annta.

Bha Seumas air Bana-phrionnsa Anna na Danmhairg a phòsadh thall anns an Danmhairg. Ach cha robh e fhèin aig a' bhanais! Dh'fheuch Anna grunn tursan ri seòladh a dh'Alba. Gach turas dh'èirich stoirm. Mu dheireadh, dh'fhuirich i ann an Oslo airson a' gheamhraidh.

Ach cha robh Seumas toilichte. Chaidh e a-null a dh'Oslo aig toiseach a' gheamhraidh. Chuir e seachad an geamhradh an sin. Sheòl an Rìgh 's a' Bhanrigh ùr a dh'Alba as t-earrach.

Bha na Dànaich agus na h-Albannaich mì-thoilichte mun dàil. Chuala iad aithrisean air buidseachd – ann an Copenhagen agus Bearaig a Tuath. Bha mòran a' creidsinn aig an àm sin gun robh cumhachd aig bana-bhuidseichean stoirmean a chruthachadh. Chì sinn dè thachair ann am Bearaig a Tuath anns an ath Litir.