

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 830 (which corresponds to Litir 1,134). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk.

<p>Great treasure of the world's people, They spilled your blood yesterday; And they put your head on an oaken block; A little way from your body; <i>Those words are from a really old song. Here is the chorus:</i> Òbhan, òbhan, òbhan-iri, òbhan-iri ò, Òbhan, òbhan, òbhan-iri. Great is my grief, great. <i>The song's name is 'Griogal Cridhe'. It is so old that it has more than one version, likewise for the chorus. Some people would sing it as a lullaby to young children. Here is another chorus – that Anne Lorne Gillies gives in her excellent book 'Songs of Gaelic Scotland'.</i> Bà, bà, bà, my baby, bà, my baby, bà, Bà, hù, hó, my baby, You are only bà. <i>The song was created in 1570 by Marion Campbell, Marion daughter of Duncan. She was from Glenlyon in Perthshire. Her father was Duncan Campbell. The Campbells of Glenlyon were related to the Campbells of Glenorchy, a powerful clan.</i></p>	<p><i>Eudail mhòir de shluagh an domhain, Dhòirt iad d' fhuil an-dè, 'S chuir iad do cheann air ploc daraich</i> <i>Tacan beag bhod chrè</i> Tha na faclan sin à fìor sheann òran. Seo an t-sèist: <i>Òbhan, òbhan, òbhan-iri, òbhan-iri ò,</i> <i>Òbhan, òbhan, òbhan-iri. 'S mòr mo mhulad 's mòr.</i> <i>'S e ainm an òrain 'Griogal Cridhe'.</i> Tha e cho sean 's gu bheil barrachd air aon dreach air, agus air an t-sèist. Bhiodh feadhainn ga sheinn mar thàladh do leanaban. Seo agaibh sèist eile – a tha aig Anna Latharna NicIllìosa anns an leabhar sgoinneil aice 'Songs of Gaelic Scotland'. <i>Bà, bà, bà, mo leanaibh, bà, mo leanaibh, bà,</i> <i>Bà, hù, hó, mo leanaibh,</i> <i>Chan eil thu ach bà.</i> Chaidh an t-òran a chruthachadh ann an còig ceud deug is seachdad (1570) le Mòr Chaimbeul, Mòr nighean Dhonnchaidh. 'S ann à Gleann Lìomhann ann an Siorrachd Pheairt a bha i. B' e a h- athair Donnchadh Caimbeul. Bha Caimbeulaich Ghleann Lìomhann</p>
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Marion married a man from Glen Strae close to Glenorchy. He was Gregor MacGregor or red-haired Gregor. He is 'Griogal Cridhe' of the song. The land in Glen Strae was in the hands of the MacGregors. Gregor was their leader. But the Campbells had superiority over them. For a while, the two clans were living together peacefully.

But matters changed. The head of the Campbells of Glenorchy, grey-haired Colin, sent a message to Gregor Ruadh. Gregor would have to accept Campbell's conditions if he wanted to keep his land. Among that, he had to surrender two people who had killed a Campbell.

Gregor Ruadh didn't surrender the people. He himself and some others attacked Campbells in Glenlyon. They killed nine people. Matters deteriorated between the two clans.

Matters settled down for a while. During that period Gregor married Marion Campbell. Her father was related to Cailean Liath. Matters were getting complicated! And they got much worse in 1567, as I'll explain in the next Litir.

càirdeach do Chaimbeulaich Ghleann Urchaidh, cinneadh cumhachdach.

Phòs Mòr fear à Gleann Srèith faisg air Gleann Urchaidh. B' esan Griogair Mac Ghriogair no Griogair Ruadh. Is esan 'Griogal Cridhe' an òrain. Bha am fearann ann an Gleann Srèith aig na Griogairich. B' e Griogair an ceannard aca. Ach bha uachdranas aig na Caimbeulaich orra. Airson ùine, bha an dà chinneadh a' fuireach gu sìtheil còmhla.

Ach dh'atharraich cùisean. Chuir ceannard Caimbeulaich Ghleann Urchaidh, Cailean Liath, brath gu Griogair Ruadh. Dh'fheumadh Griogair gabhail ri cumhachan a' Chaimbeulaich nam biodh e ag iarraidh a chuid fearainn a chumail. Am measg sin, bha gun toireadh e seachad dithis aige a mharbh Caimbeulach.

Cha tug Griogair Ruadh na daoine seachad. Thug e fhèin is feadhainn eile ionnsaigh air Caimbeulaich ann an Gleann Lìomhann. Mharbh iad naoinear. Chaidh cùisean bhuaithe eadar an dà chinneadh.

Shocraich cùisean airson greis. Anns an ùine sin phòs Griogair Mòr Chaimbeul. Bha a h-athair càirdeach do Chailean Liath. Bha gnothaichean a' fàs fillte! Agus chaidh iad bhuaithe buileach ann an còig ceud deug, seasgad 's a seachd (1567), mar a mhìnichas mi anns an ath Litir.