

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 868 (which corresponds to Litir 1,172). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you about James McPherson, 'the Wild Scotsman'. He was taken on a vessel to the town of Rockhampton in Queensland. He was going to appear in a courthouse. He was in the custody of a young police officer. He had handcuffs on, and leg-irons.

James was polite to the policeman. The policeman was of the opinion that he posed no danger. He took his handcuffs off. It was a mistake. When they were on a quay in a town called Mackay, McPherson remained on deck. The policeman had a snooze. Although James wore leg-irons, he went over the vessel's gunwale. He fled into the forest.

Next day, according to oral tradition, the leg-irons were found. There was a file next to them and a written note to the Queensland Government. McPherson called himself the 'Wild Scotsman'. Then he stole two handguns and a horse. He started to attack the postmen who were going between towns on horseback.

In addition to the robbery of mails, McPherson would be going to remote farms and stealing horses. It was easy for him to flee with a horse. He had a spirit stove. Thus, he did not have to

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Sheumas Mac a' Phearsain, 'An t-Albannach Fiadhaich'. Chaidh a thoirt air soitheach gu baile Rockhampton ann an Tìr na Banrigh. Bha e a' dol a nochdadh ann an taigh-cùirte. Bha e fo chùram poileas òg. Bha glas-làmh air, agus iarann-coise.

Bha Seumas modhail ris a' phoileas. Bha am poileas dhen bheachd nach robh cunnart sam bith ann. Thug e a ghlas-làmh dheth. 'S e mearachd a bha ann. Nuair a bha iad aig cidhe ann am baile ris an canar MacAoidh, dh'fhuirich Mac a' Phearsain air deic. Ghabh am poileas norrag. Ged a bha iarann-coise air Seumas, chaidh e thairis air beul-mòr an t-soithich. Dh'fhalbh e don choille.

An ath latha, a rèir beul-aithris, chaidh an t-iarann-coise a lorg. Bha eithe ri a thaobh agus teachdaireachd sgrìobhte gu Riaghaltas Tìr na Banrigh. Ghabh Mac a' Phearsain 'An t-Albannach Fiadhaich' air fhèin. An uair sin, ghoid e dà ghunna-làimhe agus each. Thòisich e air ionnsaigh a thoirt air na puist a bha a' dol eadar bailtean air muin-eich.

A bharrachd air mèirle a' phuist, bhiodh Mac a' Phearsain a' dol gu bailtean-fearainn iomallach agus a' goid eich. Bha e furasta dha teicheadh le each. Bha stòbh spioraid aige. Mar sin, cha robh

light a fire. A fire would be easy to spot, day or night.

To make matters difficult for the police, the Scot was calling himself 'Bauer'. He would speak German and pretend he was a German.

But people knew his appearance. He would have a red scarf around his neck and a red sash around his waist. He did not sport a beard. He always wore a hat that was made from a plant called the 'cabbage tree'. There was a red band around the hat.

The police in Queensland were growing thoroughly sick of him. They put forward £250 as a reward for information that would put the Wild Scotsman behind bars. And they did not have to wait too long, as we shall hear in the next Litir.

aige ri teine a chur thuige. Bhiodh teine furasta fhaicinn a latha 's a dh'oidhche.

Airson cùisean a dhèanamh doirbh do na poilis, bha an t-Albannach a' gabhail 'Bauer' air fhèin. Bhiodh e a' bruidhinn Gearmailtis agus a' toirt a' chreidsinn gur e Gearmailteach a bha ann.

Ach bha daoine eòlach air a choltas. Bhiodh sgarfa dearg timcheall amhaich agus bann dearg timcheall a mheadhain. Cha robh feusag air. Bha an-còmhnaidh ad air, a bha air a dèanamh de lus ris an canar an 'cabbage tree'. Bha bann dearg timcheall na h-aide.

Bha na poilis ann an Tìr na Banrigh a' fàs seachd searbh sgìth dheth. Chuir iad dà cheud gu leth not air adhart mar dhuais airson fiosrachadh a chuireadh an t-Albannach Fiadhaich fo ghlas. Agus cha robh aca ri feitheamh ro fhada, mar a chluinneas sinn anns an ath Litir.