

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 920 (which corresponds to Litir 1,224). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

'Och, young Charles Stuart, it's your cause that destroyed me ...' Some of you will recognise those words. They are at the start of a song called 'my fair young love'. It's said that it was written by Christina Fergusson. It was about her husband, William Chisholm. William was killed at the Battle of Culloden.

But is that correct? Some folk have raised a question about the history/story. It's based on the account by John MacKenzie in his book 'The Beauties of Gaelic Poetry'.

Usually, when the song is sung by a singer, there are four or five verses. But in one version of it, there are eleven verses. In this Litir, I'm going to look at two verses which are rarely heard.

Here is the second verse: who will now lift their sword, who will fill the throne, it is hardly on my mind, since my first love dead; but how could I find it in my nature to deny what I wish, and my desire so strong, to put my fair young love in the stead of my good king.

The woman says she couldn't care about politics. She would prefer that her husband were still alive, even if her king were dead.

'Och, a Theàrlaich òig Stiùbhairt, 's e do chùis rinn mo làireadh ...' Bidh feadhainn agaibh ag aithneachadh nam briathran sin. Tha iad aig toiseach òrain ris an canar 'Mo Rùn Geal Òg.' Thathar ag ràdh gun robh e air a sgrìobhadh le Cairistiona NicFhearghais. Bha e mun duine aice, Uilleam Siosalach. Chaidh Uilleam a mharbhadh aig Blàr Chùil Lodair.

Ach a bheil sin ceart? Tha cuid air ceist a thogail mun eachdraidh. Tha i stèidhichte air a' chunntas aig Iain MacCoinnich anns an leabhar aige 'Sàr-Obair nam Bàrd Gàidhealach'.

Mar as trice, nuair a tha an t-òran air a ghabhail le seinneadair, tha ceithir no còig rannan ann. Ach, ann an aon dreach dheth, tha aon rann deug ann. Anns an Litir seo, tha mi a' dol a thoirt sùil air dà rann nach cluinnear ach ainneamh.

Seo an dàrna rann: Cò nis a thogas an claidheamh, Cò nì a' chathair a lìonadh, 's gann gur e a th' air m' aire, O nach maireann mo chiadghràdh; Ach ciamar gheibhinn o m' nàdar, A bhith ag àicheadh nas miann leam, Is mo thogradh cho làidir, Bhith cur an àite mo rìgh mhaith, Mo rùn geal òg.

Tha a' bhean ag ràdh gu bheil i coma mu phoilitigs. B' fheàrr leatha gun robh an duine aice fhathast beò, eadhon ged a bhiodh an rìgh aice marbh.

<p><i>In the song, Christina (if indeed it was she) is saying that she didn't accept the bad news to begin with. She was waiting for her husband at the house. She expected him to return home. But he didn't.</i></p> <p><i>Here is the seventh verse: I was for a while of the opinion that my husband was still alive, and that you would come home, with a joke and a greeting; but the time has now passed, and I don't/can't see a man of your appearance, and until they put me in the ground, my love will not separate from me, my fair young love.</i></p> <p><i>Whoever wrote it, it's a powerful song. It reminds us that suffering is always part of war.</i></p>	<p>Anns an òran, tha Cairistìona (mas i a bha ann) ag ràdh nach do ghabh i ris an droch naidheachd an toiseach. Bha i a' feitheamh ris an duine aice aig an taigh. Bha i an dùil gun tilleadh e dhachaigh. Ach cha do thill.</p> <p>Seo agaibh an seachdamh rann: <i>Bha mi greis ann am barail, Gum bu mhaireann mo chèile, 'S gun tigeadh tu dhachaigh, Le aighear 's le faoilteachd; Ach tha an t-àm air dol thairis, 'S chan fhaic mi fear d' eugais, 'S gus an cuir iad mi san talamh, Cha dealaich mo ghaol rium, Mo rùn geal òg.</i></p> <p>Ge bith cò sgrìobh e, 's e òran cumhachdach a tha ann. Tha e a' cur nar cuimhne gum bi fulangas an-còmhnaidh an cois cogadh.</p>
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