

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 927 (which corresponds to Litir 1,231). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

I want to tell you about the Rev. James Robertson – James Robertson. He was a minister in Callander, in the Trossachs. He was born in Callander in 1739. He wrote the section about Callander in the Old Statistical Account. That was in 1794.

I want to tell you one or two things that Mr Robertson wrote about Gaelic. I imagine he spoke Gaelic as a native. The Trossachs were at that time a Gaelic area. Even at the end of the nineteenth century, four out of every ten people in country areas around Callander still spoke Gaelic.

James Robertson was familiar with Latin and Ancient Greek. He tells the reader that there is the same word for 'the Supreme Being' in Gaelic and Greek – Dia. He also says that there is the same word in Gaelic and Latin for 'land', 'castle' and 'harbour'. He must have been thinking of tìr, caisteal and port.

He was interested in the religion of the druids. He tells us

Tha mi airson innse dhuibh mun Urramach Seumas MacDhonnchaidh – James Robertson. Bha e na mhinistear ann an Calasraid, anns na Tròisichean. Rugadh e ann an Calasraid ann an seachd ceud deug, trithead 's a naoi (1739). Sgrìobh e an earrann mu Chalasraid anns an t-Seann Chunntas Staitistigeach. Bha sin ann an seachd ceud deug, naochad 's a ceithir (1794).

Tha mi airson rud no dhà innse dhuibh a sgrìobh Mgr MacDhonnchaidh mun Ghàidhlig. Tha mi an dùil gun robh Gàidhlig aige bho dhùthchas. 'S e sgìre Ghàidhealach a bha anns na Tròisichean an uair sin. Eadhon aig deireadh an naoidheamh linn deug, bha Gàidhlig fhathast aig ceathrar às gach deichnear anns an dùthaich timcheall Chalasraid.

Bha Seumas MacDhonnchaidh eòlach air Laidinn agus air an t-Seann Ghreugais. Tha e ag innse don leughadair gu bheil an aon fhacal ann airson 'an Tì as àirde' ann an Gàidhlig agus Greugais – Dia. Tha e cuideachd ag ràdh gu bheil an aon fhacal ann an Gàidhlig agus Laidinn airson 'land', 'castle' agus 'harbour'. Feumaidh gun robh e a' beachdachadh air tìr, caisteal agus port.

Bha ùidh aige ann an creideamh nan draoidhean. Tha e ag innse dhuinn gun

that the druids' standing stones were very important to them – and to the people who were living in their era. He writes this in English: '... the same expression, which the people then used for their place of worship, is still used to this day; as the Highlanders more frequently say, 'Will you go to the stones' or 'Have you been at the stones?' than 'Will you go to, or have you been, at church?'

He was meaning by that, that we use the word clachan for a church or a settlement beside a church. An robh thu aig a' chlachan? Were you at church? Today, that is not as common as it was in James Robertson's day. But, traditionally, it's not Ministear na Comraich that my own ancestors would say but Ministear a' Chlachain for 'the Minister of Applecross. More from the Rev. James Robertson next week.

robh na clachan seasaimh aig na draoidhean fìor chudromach dhaibh – agus do na daoine a bha beò ri an linn. Tha e a' sgrìobhadh seo ann am Beurla: '*... the same expression, which the people then used for their place of worship, is still used to this day; as the Highlanders more frequently say, 'Will you go to the stones' or 'Have you been at the stones?' than 'Will you go to, or have you been, at church?'*

Bha e a' ciallachadh le sin, gum bi sinn a' cleachdadh an fhacail *clachan* airson eaglais no baile ri taobh eaglais. An robh thu aig a' chlachan? *Were you at church?* Anns an latha an-diugh, chan eil sin cho cumanta 's a bha e ri linn Sheumais MhicDhonnchaidh. Ach, gu traidiseanta, chan e 'Ministear na Comraich' a chanadh mo shinnsearan fhèin ach 'Ministear a' Chlachain' airson '*the Minister of Applecross*'. Tuilleadh bhon Urr. Seumas MacDhonnchaidh an-ath-sheachdain.