

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 928 (which corresponds to Litir 1,232). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

I was telling you about the Rev. James Robertson. He wrote the section about Callander in the Old Statistical Account. He loved the Gaelic language. He wrote this about Gaelic-speakers: They know its energy and power; the ease with which it is compounded; its majesty in addressing the Deity; and its tenderness in expressing the finest feelings of the human heart.

But he also says that people in general didn't pay too much attention to the language. Then he tries to rectify this. He writes a grammar lesson about the language!

Mrs Robertson was of the opinion that it was sad that people were abandoning the land and that they were going to live in settlements. He calls these settlements 'villages'. He would have preferred them to remain out in the country like their ancestors who were looking after the cattle on the hill and creating poetry!

He says that a normal man – a labourer – with help from his wife could raise five or six children with very little assistance from the public

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mun Urramach Seumas MacDhonnchaidh. Sgrìobh e an earrann mu Chalasraid anns an t-Seann Chunntas Staitistigeach. Bha gràdh aige air a' Ghàidhlig. Sgrìobh e seo mu dheidhinn luchd-labhairt na Gàidhlig: They know its energy and power; the ease with which it is compounded; its majesty in addressing the Deity; and its tenderness in expressing the finest feelings of the human heart.

Ach tha e cuideachd ag ràdh nach robh daoine anns an fharsaingeachd a' cur cus sùim anns a' chànan. An uair sin, tha e fhèin a' feuchainn ri sin a chur ceart. Tha e a' sgrìobhadh leasan gràmair mun chànan!

Bha Mgr MacDhonnchaidh dhen bheachd gun robh e duilich gun robh daoine a' tràigsinn an fhearainn agus gun robh iad a' dol a dh'fhuireach ann am bailtean. Tha e a' gabhail 'villages' air na bailtean sin. B' fheàrr leis gun robh iad air fuireach a-muigh air an dùthaich mar a bha an sinnsearan a bha a' frithealadh a' chruidh anns a' mhonadh agus a' cruthachadh bàrdachd!

Tha e ag ràdh gun robh comas aig fear àbhaisteach – saothraiche – le taic on bhean aige còignear no sianar de chloinn a thogail le glè bheag de thaic

purse. That was based on wages of up to a shilling and three pence per day.

Their life was different from our way of life, however. When the children reached eight or ten years of age, they were going out to look after the cattle. That was, at least, in summer. In winter they were going to school.

The family was buying meal and growing potatoes on their own plot of land. They had a cow for milk and thus they were fairly comfortable. And they had time to create poetry!

Mr Robertson was condemnatory of things he didn't like. There would be enough food for poor people if it weren't for all the dogs around the villages, he writes. And there were too many inns for the good of the people. Next week, we'll look at the minister's opinions on place-names around Callander.

bhon sporan phoblach. Bha sin stèidhichte air tuarastal suas ri tasan agus trì sgillinn san latha.

Bha am beatha-san eadar-dhealaichte bhon dòigh-beatha againn, ge-tà. Nuair a ràinig a' chlann ochd no deich bliadhna a dh'aois, bha iad a' falbh a-mach airson sùil a thoirt air a' chrodh. Bha sin, co-dhiù, as t-samhradh. Anns a' gheamhradh bha iad a' dol don sgoil.

Bha an teaghlach a' ceannach mine agus a' fàs buntàta air an lot aca fhèin. Bha bò aca airson bainne, agus mar sin bha iad cofhurtail gu leòr. Agus bha ùine aca airson bàrdachd a chruthachadh!

Bha Mgr MacDhonnchaidh trom air rudan nach do chòrd ris. Bhiodh biadh gu leòr ann do na daoine bochda mura b' e an uiread de choin timcheall nam bailtean, tha e a' sgrìobhadh. Agus bha fada cus thaighean-seinnse ann airson maith an t-sluaigh. An-ath-sheachdain bheir sinn sùil air beachdan a' mhinisteir air ainmean-àite timcheall Chalasraid.