

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 953 (which corresponds to Litir 1,257). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

Lisa Storey is a Gaelic heroine. She was the first teacher in the Highlands who had a class that received its education through the medium of Gaelic. That was in Central School in Inverness.

Lisa originally belongs to the island of Vatersay. Vatersay is next to Barra and connected to it today by a Causeway. In her new book 'Bhatarsaigh agus na Raiders', Lisa tells us about the islanders' struggle for their land rights.

To understand the situation, we'll go back to 1838. It's then that MacNeil of Barra – the clan chief – sold his estate. A landlord from Aberdeenshire bought it. He was Colonel Gordon of Cluny. After a while he started to clear people from Barra.

Not only that. People were put out of their villages in Barra itself – to other villages – to release good land to farmers. Vatersay was a farm in its entirety. All that was left to the local people was poor land. And plenty of the people were cottars. They had no land at all.

'S e bana-ghaisgeach na Gàidhlig a th' ann an Lisa Storey. B' ise a' chiad tidsear aig an robh clas de sgoilearan air a' Ghàidhealtachd a fhuair foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig. Bha sin ann am Bun-sgoil a' Mheadhain ann an Inbhir Nis.

Buinidh Lisa o thùs do dh'Eilean Bhatarsaigh. Tha Bhatarsaigh ri taobh Bharraigh, agus ceangailte ris an-diugh le cabhsair. Anns an leabhar ùr aice 'Bhatarsaigh agus na Raiders', tha Lisa ag innse dhuinn mun strì aig eileanaich airson an còraichean fearainn.

Airson an suidheachadh a thuigsinn, thèid sinn air ais gu ochd ceud deug, trithead 's a h-ochd (1838). 'S ann an uair sin a reic MacNèill Bharraigh – an ceann-cinnidh – an oighreachd aige. Cheannaich uachdaran-fearainn à Siorrachd Obar Dheathain i. B' esan an Còirneal Gòrdan à Cluanaidh. An ceann greis, thòisich e air daoine fhuadachadh à Barraigh.

Cha b' e sin a-mhàin. Chaidh daoine a chur a-mach às na bailtean aca ann am Barraigh fhèin – gu bailtean eile – airson fearann math a shaoradh do thuathanaich. Bha Bhatarsaigh air fad na thuathanas. Cha robh air fhàgail aig muinntir an àite ach fearann truagh. Agus bha gu leòr de na daoine nan coitearan. Cha robh fearann aca idir.

Colonel Gordon died. After a while his daughter-in-law – Lady Gordon Cathcart – gained ownership of the estate. She continued with the clearances. Although the estate was in her hands for many years, she only stepped on it on one occasion.

Lisa Storey explains how The Crofters Act helped the crofters in Barra. But the cottars received no benefit. They were still without land.

Inverness-shire County Council were almost as bad as the landlords. Landlords had great power on the council at that time. The council refused to take land for cottars under the Allotments (Scotland) Act. And the Congested Districts Board refused requests for land in Barra as well. In the next Litir, we'll look at how some of the cottars claimed land for themselves on Vatersay, regardless of the landlord.

Chaochail an Còirneal Gòrdan. An ceann greis fhuair a nighean-chèile – a' Bhaintighearna Gòrdan Cathcart – sealbh air an oighreachd. Lean i oirre leis na fuadaichean. Ged a bha an oighreachd na làmhnan fad iomadh bliadhna, cha do chuir i a cas oirre ach aon turas.

Tha Lisa Storey a' mìneachadh mar a chuidich Achd nan Croitearan na croitearan ann am Barraigh. Ach cha d' fhuair na coitearan buannachd sam bith. Bha iadsan fhathast às aonais fearann.

Cha mhòr nach robh Comhairle Siorrachd Inbhir Nis cho dona ris na h-uachdarain. Bha cumhachd mhòr aig uachdarain air a' chomhairle an uair sin. Dhiùlt a' chomhairle fearann a ghabhail airson choitearan fon an *Allotments (Scotland) Act*. Agus dhiùlt an *Congested Districts Board* iarrtasan airson fearann ann am Barraigh cuideachd. Anns an ath Litir bheir sinn sùil air mar ghabh cuid de choitearan fearann dhaibh fhèin ann am Bhatarsaigh, ge b' oil leis an uachdaran!