

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 954 (which corresponds to Litir 1,258). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

I was telling you about the book 'Bhatarsaigh agus na Raiders' by Lisa Storey. Here is how Lisa explains the situation at the turn of the twentieth century: '... the cottars took it upon themselves to take the land for themselves. On the eighth of September 1900, a few cottars took land in Northbay [on Barra]. And on the twenty sixth of September, a few other cottars went over from Barra to the isle of Vatersay, and they marked out parcels of land – crofts – for themselves.'

A few months after that, the Congested Districts Board bought land on Barra. That was to create crofts. But they did nothing for the cottars. They had no land rights. The Board wanted to buy Vatersay. But the landlord, Lady Gordon Cathcart, put too high a price on it.

Some people from Barra built sheds in Vatersay. Four years later, a group from Mingulay went there as well.

Mingulay is south of Barra and Vatersay. The fishing around the island was good. But they didn't have an anchorage for their boats.

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mun leabhar 'Bhatarsaigh agus na Raiders' le Lisa Storey. Seo mar a mhìnich Lisa an suidheachadh aig toiseach an fhicheadamh linn: '... ghabh na coitearan orra gun gabhadh iad am fearann dhaibh fhèin. Air an ochdamh latha dhen t-Sultain 1900, ghlac grunn choitearan pìosan fearainn anns a' Bhàgh a Tuath [ann am Barraigh]. Agus air an t-siathamh latha fichead den t-Sultain, chaidh grunn eile de choitearan a-null à Barraigh gu Eilean Bhatarsaigh, agus chomharraich iad a-mach pìosan fearainn – 'croitean' – dhaibh fhèin.'

Beagan mhìosan an dèidh sin, cheannaich an Congested Districts Board fearann ann am Barraigh. Bha sin airson croitean a chruthachadh. Ach cha do rinn iad dad airson nan coitearan. Cha robh còraichean fearainn acasan. Bha am Bòrd ag iarraidh Bhatarsaigh a cheannach. Ach chuir an t-uachdaran, a' Bhaintighearna Gòrdan Cathcart, prìs ro mhòr air.

Thog feadhainn à Barraigh seadaichean ann am Bhatarsaigh. Ceithir bliadhna an dèidh sin, chaidh buidheann ann à Miughlaigh cuideachd.

Tha Miughlaigh deas air Barraigh is Bhatarsaigh. Bha an t-iasgach timcheall an eilein math. Ach cha robh acarsaid aca airson an eathraichean. Bha muinntir

The Mingulay people were fishing out of Castlebay in Barra.

Here's what one of the Raiders from Mingulay, Michael MacPhee, said: '... that was their only way of making a living – they had to be fishing, and they were only wanting house sites next to the shore on Vatersay. Four people came from Mingulay to Vatersay in 1907, and they built small sheds at the edge of the shore ...'

The landlord took a step against the Raiders. Ten people received interdicts. They had to appear in court in Edinburgh. The law was siding with the landlord. They got sentences of two months in prison. In the opinion of the people, however, they were heroes.

The government bought Vatersay. Crofts were created there. A population returned to the island. It's a great story. If you want to read about it in Gaelic, I'd recommend 'Bhatarsaigh agus na Raiders' by Lisa Storey.

Mhiughlaigh ag iasgach a-mach à Bàgh a' Chaisteil ann am Barraigh.

Seo na thuirt fear de na Raiders à Miughlaigh, Mìcheal Mac a Phì: '... sin an aon bheò-shlàin' a bh' aca – dh'fheumadh iad a bhith ris an iasgach, 's cha robh iad ach ag iarraidh àite nan taighean ri taobh a' chladaich ann am Bhatarsaigh. Thàinig ceathrar à Miughlaigh a Bhatarsaigh ann an 1907, agus thog iad seadaichean beaga an oir a' chladaich ...'

Ghabh an t-uachdaran ceum an aghaidh nan Raiders. Chaidh *interdict* a thoirt do dheichnear. Bha aca ri nochdadh anns a' chùirt ann an Dùn Èideann. Bha an lagh a' taobhadh leis an uachdaran. Chaidh binn dà mhìos sa phrìosan a chur orra. Ann am beachd a' phobaill, ge-tà, bha iad nan gaisgich.

Cheannaich an riaghaltas Bhatarsaigh. Chaidh croitean a chruthachadh ann. Thill sluagh don eilean. 'S e stòiridh air leth a tha ann. Ma tha sibh airson leughadh mu dheidhinn ann an Gàidhlig, mholainn dhuibh 'Bhatarsaigh agus na Raiders' le Lisa Storey.