

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 960 (which corresponds to Litir 1,264). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

In the last Litir, I was telling you how the southern border of Scotland was agreed with England in 1237. Alexander II was King of Scotland at the time. We call the agreement the Treaty of York.

Alexander was married to Joan, sister of Henry, King of England. But Joan died in 1238. They had no children. A year after that, Alexander married anew. His second wife was Marie de Coucy, a member of the French aristocracy. Two years after that, a son was born to them – Alexander son of Alexander.

Alexander II tried to take control of parts of the west of Scotland that were not loyal to him. He was involved in that campaign when he died on the island of Kerrera in 1249.

His son, Alexander III, was only a lad. He was nearly eight years of age. There is a very old picture of Alexander on the day of his crowning in Scone. The 'Ollamh' of the Scottish King – the chief bard – is welcoming the young king with words in Gaelic 'Blessing of God [on] the King of Scotland'.

Ann an Litir mu dheireadh, bha mi ag innse dhuibh mar a chaidh crìoch a deas na h-Alba aontachadh le Sasainn ann an dà cheud deug, trithead 's a seachd (1237). B' e Alasdair II Rìgh na h-Alba aig an àm. 'S e Co-chòrdadh York a chanas sinn ris an aonta.

Bha Alasdair pòsta aig Joan, piuthar Eanraig, Rìgh Shasainn. Ach chaochail Joan ann an dà cheud deug, trithead 's a h-ochd (1238). Cha robh clann aca. Bliadhna an dèidh sin phòs Alasdair às ùr. B' i an dàrna bean aige Marie de Coucy, ball de dh'uaislean na Frainge. Dà bhliadhna an dèidh sin, rugadh leanabh-gille dhaibh – Alasdair mac Alasdair.

Dh'fheuch Alasdair II ri smachd a thoirt air pàirtean de thaobh an iar na h-Alba nach robh dileas dha. Bha e an sàs ann an iomairt sin nuair a chaochail e ann an Eilean Chearrara ann an dà cheud deug, ceathrad 's a naoi (1249).

Cha robh a mhac, Alasdair III, ach na ghille. Bha e faisg air ochd bliadhna a dh'aois. Tha fìor sheann dealbh de dh'Alasdair air latha a chrùnaidh ann an Sgàin. Tha Ollamh Rìgh na h-Alba – am prìomh bhàrd – a' cur fàilte air an Rìgh òg leis na faclan ann an Gàidhlig 'Beannachd Dhè [air] Rìgh na h-Alba'.

Alexander was too young to be governing the country. There was a regency. It's nobles that were governing Scotland until Alexander reached adulthood.

When he was still young, Alexander married Margaret, the daughter of King Henry of England. The wedding was in York in 1251. Henry was wanting to gain overlordship of the Scottish King. But Alexander didn't accept that.

It was an amazing wedding. For food, they had 7,000 hens, more than 1,500 partridges, more than 100 cranes, 120 peacocks, nearly 300 pheasants, 1,300 hares, 660 boars and sows, 70 barrels of herring and 10,000 haddock! Some size of a wedding!

Bha Alasdair ro òg airson a bhith a' riaghladh na dùthcha. Bha tanaisteachd ann. 'S e uaislean a bha a' riaghladh na h-Alba gus an do ràinig Alasdair aois inbhich.

Nuair a bha e fhathast òg, phòs Alasdair Mairead, nighean Rìgh Eanraig Shasainn. Bha a' bhanais ann an York ann an dà cheud deug, caogad 's a h-aon (1251). Bha Eanraig ag iarraidh àrd-uachdranachd a bhith aige air Rìgh na h-Alba. Ach cha do ghabh Alasdair ri sin.

'S e banais air leth a bha ann. Mar bhiadh, bha seachd mìle cearc aca, còrr is mìle gu leth cearc-thomain, còrr is ceud corra-mhonaidh, sia fichead peucag, faisg air trì cheud easag, mìle is trì cheud maigheach, sia ceud is seasgad torc is muc, seachdad baraille de sgadain agus deich mìle adag! Banais mhòr dha-rìreabh!