

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 962 (which corresponds to Litir 1,266). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

I was telling you about Alexander III, King of Scotland, and how King Hákon of Norway sent a large fleet to Scotland in the year 1263.

The fleet left Bergen early in July. It went initially to Shetland. It was there for a fortnight. Then it went forward to Orkney.

The people of Scotland had known for months that the fleet was coming. Scouts were keeping an eye on the Norwegian ships while they were making their way from Orkney. A war was in the offing. The Scots built warships. They manufactured weaponry. They strengthened their strongholds – as far south as Galloway. They filled their storehouses with grain and meat.

The fleet turned at Cape Wrath. They turned south. They reached the narrows between Skye and the mainland. The village on the Skye side is called Kyleakin to this day – meaning 'the narrows of Hákon'.

The fleet kept going to Mull and Kerrera. They received support there from some of the local leaders such as Dubhghall. He was a 'king' of the

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Alasdair III, Rìgh na h-Alba, agus mar a chuir Rìgh Hákon Nirribhidh cabhlach mòr gu ruige Alba anns a' bhliadhna dà cheud deug, seasgad 's a trì (1263).

Dh'fhàg an cabhlach Bergen tràth san Iuchar. Chaidh e an toiseach a Shealtainn. Bha e ann a sin airson cealadeug. An uair sin, chaidh e air adhart a dh'Arcaibh.

Bha fios air a bhith aig muinntir na h-Alba fad mhìosan gun robh an cabhlach a' tighinn. Bha beachdairean a' cumail sùil air na longan Nirribheach fhad 's a bha iad a' dèanamh an slighe à Arcaibh. Bha cogadh air fàire. Thog na h-Albannaich longan cogaidh. Rinn iad armachd. Neartaich iad na daingnichean aca – cho fada deas ri Gall-Ghàidhealaibh. Lìon iad na taighean-stòraidh aca le gràin agus feòil.

Thionndaidh an cabhlach Nirribheach aig a' Pharbh. Chaidh iad gu deas. Ràinig iad an caolas eadar an t-Eilean Sgitheanach agus tìr-mòr. 'S e Caol Àcain a th' againn air a' bhaile air an taobh Sgitheanach chun an latha an-diugh – a' ciallachadh 'Caol Hákon'.

Chùm an cabhlach a dol gu ruige Muile agus Cerrara. Fhuair iad taic an sin bho chuid de cheannardan ionadail, leithid Dhubhghaill. Bha esan na 'rìgh' air na h-

islands under the sovereignty of Norway. Dubhghall and King Magnus from the Isle of Man added to the fleet with people and ships. Although Norway's authority had been somewhat distant for a while, many of the island people supported Hákon. He took control of Kintyre and Bute.

In the end Hákon had many more than a hundred ships. The way was open to him to the centre of Scotland up the River Clyde. It appears, however, that neither he nor Alexander wanted a war. Hákon sent messengers, including two bishops, to Alexander's court. Alexander sent his own messengers – Dominican monks - to Hákon. In the end, it's what would become of a group of islands that prevented an agreement. But which islands? The Western Isles? Uh-uh, as the old man would say! I'll tell you which ones next week.

eileanan fo àrd-uachdranachd Nirribhidh. Chuir Dubhghall agus Rìgh Mánus à Eilean Mhanainn ris a' chabhlach le daoine agus longan. Ged a bha ùghdarras Nirribhidh air a bhith car fad-às fad ùine, thug gu leòr de mhuinntir nan eilean taic do Hákon. Ghabh e smachd air Cinn Tìre agus air Eilean Bhòid.

Aig a' cheann thall, bha còrr math is ceud long aig Hákon. Bha an rathad fosgailte dha gu meadhan na h-Alba suas Abhainn Chluaidh. Tha e a' coimhead coltach, ge-tà, nach robh e fhèin no Alasdair ag iarraidh cogadh. Chuir Hákon teachdairean, a' gabhail a-staigh dithis easbaigean, gu cùirt Alasdair. Chuir Alasdair a theachdairean fhèin – manaich Dhoiminiceach – gu Hákon. Aig a' cheann thall 's e na thachradh do bhuidheann de dh'eileanan a chuir stad air aonta. Ach dè na h-eileanan? Na h-Eileanan Siar? Uh-uh, mar a chanadh am bodach! Innsidh mi dhuibh cò an fheadhainn an-ath-sheachdain.