

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 963 (which corresponds to Litir 1,267). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

I was telling you about the fleet that King Hákon sent to Scotland in 1263. The two sides tried to come to a peaceful accommodation. But they failed. The King of Scotland, Alexander III, would be satisfied by not gaining control of some of the islands. But a handful of islands were too important to him.

The islands that were exceptionally precious to him – and to the Norwegians – were Bute, Arran and the Cumbraes – Great Cumbrae and Little Cumbrae. They were important because they were in the Firth of Clyde. From there it would be pretty easy getting to the centre of Scotland up the River Clyde.

As proof of that, Hákon sent a fleet up Loch Long to Tarbet Loch Lomond. Then the Scandinavians took their ships across the isthmus to Loch Lomond itself. From there, they went to places in central Scotland where they caused destruction.

Some of Hákon's supporters warned him that he left Bergen too late in the summer. They were also of the opinion that he was too long in Shetland. The autumn gales came, as the Scots were expecting. There was a

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mun chabhlach a chuir Rìgh Hákon a dh'Alba ann an dà cheud deug, seasgad 's a trì (1263). Dh'fheuch an dà thaobh ri thighinn gu rèite shìtheil. Ach dh'fhàilnich orra. Bhiodh Rìgh na h-Alba, Alasdair III, riarachtaichte gun a bhith a' faighinn smachd air cuid de na h-eileanan. Ach bha grunn eileanan ro chudromach dha.

B' iad na h-eileanan a bha fìor phrìseil dha – agus do na Nirribhich – Eilean Bhòid, Arainn agus na Cumaraidhean – Cumaradh Mòr agus Cumaradh Beag. Bha iad cudromach a chionn 's gun robh iad ann an Linne Chluaidh. Às a sin, bhiodh e furasta gu leòr faighinn gu meadhan na h-Alba suas Abhainn Chluaidh.

Mar dhearbhadh air sin, chuir Hákon cabhlach suas Loch Long gu ruige Tairbeart Loch Laomainn. An uair sin, thug na Lochlannaich an longan tarsainn an tairbeirt gu Loch Laomainn fhèin. Às a sin, chaidh iad gu àiteachan ann am meadhan tìr-mòr na h-Alba, far an do rinn iad sgrios.

Thug cuid de luchd-taice Hákon rabhadh dha gun do dh'fhàg e Bergen ro fhada anns an t-samhradh. Bha iad cuideachd dhen bheachd gun robh e ro fhada ann an Sealtainn. Thàinig gèiltean an fhoghair, mar a bha na h-Albannaich an

storm. It's said that ten ships were destroyed in the storm.

Some of the ships were driven ashore. That was near Largs. Scottish archers were waiting for them. There was strife and combat. The Norwegians returned to their fleet. That was an occasion called Blàr na Leargaidh Ghallda or 'The Battle of Largs'. It wasn't a major battle. Neither side won.

It wasn't sensible for Hákon to remain there. He took the fleet north, via Kyleakin, to Orkney. On the 29th of October, he lost another ship on the sea journey between the mainland and Orkney. From Orkney, most of the ships went home to Norway. The king remained in Orkney. However, as we shall see, he wouldn't be alive for long.

dùil. Bha stoirm ann. Thathar ag ràdh gun deach deich longan a sgrìos anns an stoirm.

Bha cuid de na longan air an iomain gu tìr. Bha sin faisg air an Leargaidh Ghallda. Bha boghadairean Albannach a' feitheamh riutha. Bha strì is sabaid ann. Thill na Nirribhich don chabhlach aca. B' e sin tachartas air a bheil Blàr na Leargaidh Ghallda no 'The Battle of Largs'. Chan e blàr mòr a bh' ann idir. Cha do bhuannaich taobh seach taobh.

Cha robh e ciallach do Hákon fuireach ann. Thug e an cabhlach gu tuath, tro Chaol Àcain, gu ruige Arcaibh. Air an naoidheamh latha fichead dhen Dàmhair, chaill e long eile air an turas-mhara eadar tìr-mòr agus Arcaibh. Às Arcaibh, chaidh a' chuid as motha de na longan dhachaigh a Nirribhidh. Dh'fhuirich an rìgh ann an Arcaibh. Ge-tà, mar a chì sinn, cha bhiodh e beò fada.