

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 1,019 (which corresponds to Litir 1,323). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

I want to tell you about a man, who belonged to the descendants of Gaels, [and] who was in a famous occupation longer than anyone else. His name was Peter Fraser. He was the Prime Minister in New Zealand. He belonged to Baile an Droma 'the settlement of the ridge' in the region of Fearn. That's in Easter Ross near Tain.

The English for Baile an Droma is 'Hill of Fearn'. The local people still remember Peter Fraser with pride. He gained his reputation over in New Zealand, but he retained his great love for the Highlands.

Although he was called 'Peter' in English, I imagine that it is 'Pàdraig' that his parents called him. He was known as 'Pat' among his relations and friends. Both his parents spoke Gaelic. I can't say if Peter himself spoke Gaelic.

His mother's people belonged to Rogart in Sutherland. They were cleared from that place. Peter's grandfather moved to Fearn. He was a carpenter. Peter's mother – Isabella – was born there.

His father's people belonged to the area to the west of Loch Ness. They were blacksmiths. Peter's

Tha mi airson innse dhuibh mu fhear, a bhuineadh do shliochd nan Gàidheal, a bha ann an dreuchd ainmeil na b' fhaide na duine sam bith eile. 'S e Pàdraig Friseal an t-ainm a bha air. Bha e na Phrìomhaire ann an Sealann Nuadh, *New Zealand*. Bhuineadh e do Bhaile an Droma ann an Sgìre Manachainn Rois. Tha sin ann an Ros an Ear, faisg air Baile Dhubhthaich.

'S e '*Hill of Fearn*' a' Bheurla air Baile an Droma. Tha muinntir an àite fhathast a' cuimhneachadh Phàdraig Fhriseil le moit. Choisinn e a chliù thall ann an Sealann Nuadh, ach bha riamh gràdh mòr aige air a' Ghàidhealtachd.

Ged as e 'Peter' a bha air ann am Beurla, tha mi an dùil gur e 'Pàdraig' a bha a phàrantan a' gabhail air. Bha e aithnichte mar 'Pat' am measg a chàirdean 's a charaidean. Bha Gàidhlig aig a dhithis phàrantan. Chan urrainn dhomh a ràdh an robh Gàidhlig aig Pàdraig fhèin.

Bhuineadh cuideachd a mhàthar do Sgìr' Raoghaird ann an Cataibh. Bha iad air am fuadachadh às an àite sin. Ghluais seanair Phàdraig gu Manachainn Rois. 'S e saor a bha ann. Rugadh màthair Phàdraig – Iseabail – an sin.

'S ann do sgìre taobh siar Loch Nis a bhuineadh sinnsirean athar. 'S e goibhnean a bha annta. Bha seanair

grandfather – Alexander – was a blacksmith in Balmuchy near Hill of Fearn. Peter’s father – Donald – was born in that area.

Donald was working as a shoemaker. He emigrated to Canada. He was in Manitoba. Then he moved to Montreal. Isabella went over to meet him, and they married in Montreal.

They saved a bit of money and returned to Scotland. They bought a three-roomed house in Hill of Fearn where they raised eight children. Donald continued as a shoemaker. Peter was born in 1884. He was the seventh of Donald and Isabella’s children.

Peter was educated in the local primary school. He was a good pupil. We’ll look at his life in the next Litir.

Phàdraig – Alasdair – na ghobha ann am Baile Mhuchaidh faisg air Baile an Droma. Rugadh athair Phàdraig – Dòmhnall – anns an sgìre sin.

Bha Dòmhnall ag obair mar ghreusaiche. Rinn e eilthireachd a Chanada. Bha e ann am Manitoba. An uair sin chaidh e a dh’fhuireach ann am Montreal. Chaidh Iseabail a-null a choinneachadh ris agus phòs iad ann am Montreal.

Shàbhail iad beagan airgid, agus thill iad a dh’Alba. Cheannaich iad taigh, le trì seòmraichean, ann am Baile an Droma far an do thog iad ochdnar cloinne. Lean Dòmhnall air mar ghreusaiche. Rugadh Pàdraig ann an ochd ceud deug, ochdad ’s a ceithir (1884). B’ esan an seachdamh leanabh aig Dòmhnall is Iseabail.

Fhuair Pàdraig foghlam anns a’ bhun-sgoil ionadail. Bha e na dheagh sgoilear. Bheir sinn sùil air a bheatha anns an ath Litir.