

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 1,021 (which corresponds to Litir 1,325). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

I'm continuing with the life story of Peter Fraser from Easter Ross. He belonged to a poor Highland family, but he rose to become the Prime Minister in New Zealand.

While he was in prison, he read a lot about politics. There was a by-election for Wellington Central in 1918. Peter stood for the Labour Party. He won.

He met Janet Kemp. She was a Scotswoman, from Glasgow. She was divorced from her husband. She had a young son. She and Peter married. They had no further children, but Peter and his stepson – Harold – were close to each other.

In 1935, he and Janet sailed to London. He had meetings connected to his work. They went to Hill of Fearn and 'Pat' showed to his wife the place where he was raised. His family had all left, but many friends still lived there.

Near the end of the year, the Labour Party won the national election in New Zealand. Peter took on the role of Deputy Prime Minister.

Tha mi a' leantainn le eachdraidh-beatha Phàdraig Fhriseil à Taobh Sear Rois. Bhuineadh e do theaghlach bochd Gàidhealach, ach dh'èirich e gu bhith na phrìomhaire ann an Sealann Nuadh.

Fhad 's a bha e anns a' phrìosan, leugh e tòrr mu phoilitigs. Bha fo thaghadh ann airson sgìre Meadhan Wellington ann an naoi ceud deug is ochd-deug (1918). Sheas Pàdraig airson a' Phàrtaidh Làbaraich. Bhuannaich e.

Thachair e ri Seònaid Kemp. 'S e ban-Albannach a bha innte, à Glaschu. Bha i dealaichte bhon chèile aice. Bha mac òg aice. Phòs i fhèin is Pàdraig. Cha robh clann a bharrachd aca, ach bha Pàdraig agus an dalta aige – Harold – dlùth ri chèile.

Ann an naoi ceud deug, trithead 's a còig (1935), sheòl e fhèin is Seònaid a Lunnainn. Bha coinneamhan aige co-cheangailte ri obair. Chaidh iad gu Baile an Droma agus sheall 'Pat' do a bhean an t-àite far an do thogadh e. Bha an teaghlach aige uile air falbh ach bha caraidean gu leòr fhathast a' fuireach ann.

Faisg air deireadh na bliadhna, bhuannaich am Pàrtaidh Làbarach an taghadh nàiseanta ann an Sealann Nuadh. Ghabh Pàdraig dreuchd an Leas-phrìomhaire.

Matters were deteriorating internationally. When war began in Europe, New Zealand gave its full support to the United Kingdom. A month after the start of the war, Peter was in London. He took the opportunity to visit his old home in the Highlands.

The Prime Minister died in March 1940. Peter was chosen in his place. There were thousands of soldiers from New Zealand in the Middle East. Peter went to visit them. He was also in Britain. He had meetings with Winston Churchill. He returned to the Highlands at that time. The freedom of five towns/cities was bestowed on him – Aberdeen, Glasgow, Inverness, Dingwall and Tain.

In 1942, Peter was in the White House in Washington DC. But he had to return home. There was unhappiness about the thousands of soldiers in the northern hemisphere, because Japan was threatening the countries of the Pacific.

Bha cùisean a' dol bhuaithe gu h-eadar-nàiseanta. Nuair a thòisich cogadh san Roinn-Eòrpa, thug Sealann Nuadh a làn-thaic don Rìoghachd Aonaichte. Mìos an dèidh toiseach a' chogaidh, bha Pàdraig ann an Lunnainn. Ghabh e cothrom tadhal air an t-seann dachaigh aige air a' Ghàidhealtachd.

Chaochail am Prìomhaire anns a' Mhàrt, naoi ceud deug is ceathrad (1940). Chaidh Pàdraig a thaghadh na àite. Bha mìltean de shaighdearan à Sealann Nuadh anns an Ear-Mheadhanach. Chaidh Pàdraig a thadhal orra. Bha e cuideachd ann am Breatainn. Bha coinneamhan aige le Winston Churchill. Thill e a-rithist don Ghàidhealtachd aig an àm sin. Chaidh saorsa còig bailtean a bhuileachadh air – Obar Dheathain, Glaschu, Inbhir Nis, Inbhir Pheofharain agus Baile Dhubhthaich.

Ann an naoi ceud deug, ceathrad 's a dhà (1942), bha Pàdraig anns an Taigh Gheal ann am Washington DC. Ach bha aige ri tilleadh dhachaigh. Bha mì-thoileachas ann mu na mìltean de shaighdearan anns an leth-chruinne mu thuath, oir bha Iapan a' bagairt air dùthchannan a' Chuain Sèimh.