

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 253 (which corresponds to Litir 557). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

When was the lynx last alive in Scotland? It's not known for certain. People were thinking that it became extinct thousands of years ago. But it appears that is not correct.

There are caves in Assynt near Inchnadamph. A skull of a lynx was found in one of the caves. That was in 1927. The experts were thinking that the skull was four thousand years old. They were thinking that the lynx became extinct at about that time in Britain. They were saying that it was the wet weather that did that.

But a correct assessment was made of the age of the skull. They used radiocarbon technology. And it wasn't that old. It was one thousand eight hundred years old. The weather had become wet long before that.

A lynx bone was found in England. Its age was assessed. The animal died between 425 and 600 AD. And there is an old song from the north of England in old Welsh. They say that the poem names the lynx.

The creature is called the "lioncs" today. That came from

Cuin a bha an lioncs beò mu dheireadh ann an Alba? Chan eil fios le cinnt. Bha daoine a' smaoinichadh gun deach e à bith mìltean bliadhnaichean air ais. Ach tha e coltach nach eil sin fìor.

Tha uamhan ann an Asainte faisg air Innis nan Damh. Chaidh claigeann lioncs a lorg ann an tè de na h-uamhan. Bha sin ann an naoi ceud deug, fichead 's a seachd (1927). Bha na h-eòlaichean a' smaoinichadh gun robh an claigeann ceithir mìle bliadhna a dh'aois. Bha iad a' smaoinichadh gun deach an lioncs à bith mun àm sin ann am Breatainn. Bha iad ag ràdh gur e an aimsir fhliuch a rinn sin.

Ach chaidh tomhas ceart a dhèanamh air aois a' chlaiginn. Chleachd iad teicneòlas rèidio-charboin. Agus cha robh e cho sean sin. Bha e mìle is ochd ceud bliadhna a dh'aois. Bha an aimsir air a dhol fliuch fada roimhe sin.

Chaidh cnàmh lioncs a lorg ann an Sasainn. Chaidh aois a sgrùdadh. Fhuair am beathach bàs eadar ceithir ceud, fichead 's a còig (425) agus sia ceud (600) AC. Agus tha seann dàn à ceann a tuath Shasainn ann an seann Chuimris. Tha iad ag ràdh gu bheil an dàn ag ainmeachadh an lioncs.

'S e lioncs an t-ainm air a'

English. In old Gaelic, it was “lug” or “lugh” that people said. The Gaels were familiar with those animals in olden times.

After the year 1200 AD the word lugh does not appear in Gaelic manuscripts. We don't have old stories of the lynx like we do of the boar. We have many stories of the wild boar.

But there is a report in English that “lions” were at one time plentiful in the north of Scotland. There were no lions in Scotland, however. Now, the Welsh for “lion” is llew. The word is related to lugh in Gaelic. When people were reporting that there were “lions” in Scotland, were they meaning lynxes?

chreutair an-diugh. Thàinig sin bhon Bheurla. Anns an t-seann Ghàidhlig, 's e *lug* no *lugh* a bha na daoine ag ràdh. Bha na Gàidheil eòlach air na beathaichean sin o shean.

Às dèidh na bliadhna dà cheud dheug (1200) chan eil am facal *lugh* ann an làmh-sgrìobhainnean Gàidhlig. Chan eil seann sgeulachdan againn dhen *lugh* no lioncs mar a tha againn dhen torc. Tha iomadh stòiridh againn dhen torc nimhe.

Ach tha aithris ann am Beurla gun robh “lions” uaireigin pailt ann an ceann a tuath na h-Alba. Cha robh leòmhainn ann an Alba, ge-tà. Nise, 's e a' Chuimris air “leomhann” *llew*. Tha am facal càirdeach do *lugh* ann an Gàidhlig. Nuair a bha daoine ag aithris gun robh “lions” ann an Alba, an robh iad a' ciallachadh lioncsaichean?