

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 391 (which corresponds to Litir 695). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling how I saw a lot of fish in Ireland. Those fish were sprats, mackerel and saithe. They were filling a bay on the shore of Aranmore. That's a small island off the north-west coast.

We were catching a lot of the fish. My children had gone up to an old man's house. They were asking the old man if he wanted 'saoidheanan' or 'saithe' or 'coalfish'. But he didn't understand any of those words. He came to the shore.

If my memory serves me correctly, his own name for the saithe was glíosan or something like that. We gave him a lot [of them].

When darkness fell, the fish were still in the bay. Next morning, they were still there. What was keeping them there? Dolphins, perhaps? I don't know.

What brought that island to mind was a small book that came out recently. The book is called Belonging to the Sea. It looks at two Gaelic islands – Aranmore in Ireland and Barra in Scotland.

Iain Mackinnon and Ruth Brennan are the authors. They write this about the two islands: '...the fisherman believe that their livelihood

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mar a chunnaic mi èisg gu leòr ann an Èirinn. B' iad na h-èisg sin garbhagan, rionnaich agus saoidheanan. Bha iad a' lionadh bàgh air cladach Àrainn Mhór. 'S e sin eilean beag far costa an iar-thuath.

Bha sinn a' glacadh gu leòr de na h-èisg. Bha a' chlann agam air a dhol suas gu taigh bodaich. Bha iad a' faighneachd dhen bhodach an robh e ag iarraidh 'saoidheanan' no 'saithe' no 'coalfish'. Ach cha do thuig e gin de na faclan sin. Thàinig e don chladach.

Mas math mo chuimhne, 's e glíosan no rudeigin coltach ri sin a bha aige fhèin air an t-saoidhean. Thug sinn na h-uidhir dha.

Nuair a thàinig an dorchadas, bha na h-èisg fhathast anns a' bhàgh. An ath mhadainn, bha iad fhathast ann. Dè bha gan cumail ann? Leumadairean 's dòcha? Chan eil fhios agam.

'S e na chuir an t-eilean sin nam chuimhne leabhar beag a thàinig a-mach o chionn ghoirid. 'S e *Dùthchas na Mara* ainm an leabhair. Tha e a' toirt sùil air dà eilean Ghàidhealach – Àrainn Mhór ann an Èirinn agus Barraigh ann an Alba.

'S iad Iain MacFhionghain agus Ruth Ní Bhraonáin na h-ùghdaran. Tha iad a' sgrìobhadh seo mun dà eilean: '...tha iasgairean dhen bheachd gu bheil an

and way of living are being threatened by powerful institutions who are not listening to them.'

The 'powerful institutions' are Scottish Natural Heritage and the Irish Government. Scottish Natural Heritage wants to designate two marine conservation areas in the waters of Barra. The Irish Government has placed a moratorium on fishing with drift-nets off the coast of Aranmore. The book looks at the dùthchas connected to each island. The authors say that [dùthchas] is connected as much to the sea as it is to the land.

The islanders have strongly opposed the powerful groups. Their opinions are strongly connected to dùthchas. It's not easy to translate dùthchas. We'll look at the word dùthchas next week.

teachd-an-tìr is an dòigh-beatha aca fo bhagairt aig buidhnean cumhdachdach nach eil a' toirt cluas-ri-claisneachd dhaibh.'

'S iad na 'buidhnean cumhachdach' Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba agus Riaghaltas na h-Èireann. Tha Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba ag iarraidh dà àrainn gleidheadh-mara ainmeachadh ann an uisgeachan Bharraigh. Chuir Riaghaltas na h-Èireann dàil air iasgach le lìn-siabaidh far chosta Àrainn Mhór. Tha an leabhar a' toirt sùil air an dùthchas co-cheangailte ri gach eilean. Tha na h-ùghdaran ag ràdh gu bheil sin a' buntainn a cheart cho mòr ris a' mhuir 's a tha e ris an tìr.

Tha na h-eileanaich air a dhol gu làidir an aghaidh nam buidhnean cumhachdach. Tha na beachdan aca co-cheangailte gu mòr ri dùthchas. Chan eil e furasta *dùthchas* eadar-theangachadh. Bheir sinn sùil air an fhacal *dùthchas* an-ath-sheachdain.