

## 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 479 (which corresponds to Litir 783). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk).

*In May I was in Knoydart in Canada. In June I was in Knoydart in Scotland. Both Knoydarts are nice, but different from each other.*

*In Canada, Knoydart is in the north of the Nova Scotian mainland. It's surrounded by forest. There are bilingual settlement signs – Gaelic and English – in the area.*

*There is a memorial cairn there which is rather like the cairn on the Culloden Battlefield in Scotland. Every year, people gather in Knoydart in April. They commemorate the Battle of Culloden.*

*When I returned to Scotland, my wife and I went to our own Knoydart. We had a weekend in Skiary, near Kinlochhourn. We were staying in a guesthouse run by a young couple.*

*We had good weather and the food was good. Loch Hourn was in front of the house, and [there were] high mountains all around it. The place has no electricity, but so what? It was peaceful, quiet and beautiful.*

Ann an a' Chèitean, bha mi ann an Cnòideart ann an Canada. Anns an Ògmhios bha mi ann an Cnòideart ann an Alba. Tha an dà Chnòideart snog, ach eadar-dhealaichte bho chèile.

Ann an Canada, tha Cnòideart – Knoydart – air taobh a tuath tìr-mòr na h-Alba Nuaidhe. Tha e air a chuairteachadh le coille. Tha soidhnichean-baile dà-chànanach – Gàidhlig agus Beurla – anns an sgìre.

Tha carragh-cuimhne ann a tha car coltach ris a' charragh air Blàr Chùil Lodair ann an Alba. A h-uile bliadhna, bidh daoine a' tighinn cruinn còmhla ann an Cnòideart anns a' Ghiblean. Bidh iad a' cuimhneachadh Blàr Chùil Lodair.

Nuair a thill mi a dh'Alba, chaidh mi fhìn 's mo bhean don Chnòideart againn fhìn. Bha deireadh-sheachdain againn ann an Sgiathairidh, faisg air Ceann Loch Shubhairne. Bha sinn a' fuireach ann an taigh-aogheachd a tha air a ruith le cupall òg.

Bha deagh shìde ann agus bha am biadh math. Bha Loch Shubhairne air beulaibh an taighe, agus beanntan àrda ceithir-timcheall air. Tha an t-àite às aonais an dealain, ach dè an diofar? Bha e sìtheil, sàmhach, bòidheach.

*When we look at the place-names of Knoydart, it's obvious that the Norse were there. There are Norse names. And the Old Norse language affected the Gaelic names. We can see mountain names like Buidhe Bheinn and Ladhar Bheinn. If they belonged to a purely Gaelic heritage, wouldn't we expect Beinn Bhuidhe and Beinn Ladhrach, or something similar, to be on the maps?*

*And Skiary itself. Behind the settlement, there's a mountain. It's called Sgùrr Sgiath Àirigh. Sgiath Àirigh would mean 'the shieling sheltered by the mountain'. And that's what it is. The mountain protects the settlement from the prevailing wind.*

*But it's not 'Sgùrr Sgiath Àirigh' that people say. They say 'Sgùrr Sgiathairidh' – the mountain of Skiary. I'd say that it was the settlement name – a Norse name – that came first. The shieling of a man called Skith, perhaps. The element –ary came from Gaelic into Norse, but Skiary is a Norse name. The Gaels re-interpreted the name according to the modes of their own language.*

Nuair a bheir sinn sùil air ainmean-àite Chnòideirt, tha e follaiseach gun robh na Lochlannaich ann. Tha ainmean Lochlannach ann. Agus thug an t-Seann Lochlannais buaidh air na h-ainmean Gàidhlig. Chì sinn ainmean beinne mar Buidhe Bheinn agus Ladhar Bheinn. Nam biodh iad a' buntainn a-mhàin ri dualchas nan Gàidheal, nach e Beinn Bhuidhe agus Beinn Ladhrach, no rudeigin coltach, a bhiodh air na mapaichean?

Agus Sgiathairidh fhèin. Air cùl a' bhaile, tha beinn. 'S e Sgùrr Sgiath Àirigh an t-ainm oirre. Bhiodh Sgiath Àirigh a' ciallachadh 'the shieling sheltered by the mountain'. Agus 's e sin a tha ann. Bidh a' bheinn a' dìon a' bhaile bhon ghaoith as cumanta.

Ach chan e 'Sgùrr Sgiath Àirigh' a chanas daoine. Canaidh iad 'Sgùrr Sgiathairidh' – *the mountain of Skiary*. Chanainn gur e ainm a' bhaile – ainm Lochlannach – a thàinig an toiseach. An àirigh aig fear Skith, 's dòcha. Thàinig an eileamaid –ary bhon Ghàidhlig don Lochlannais, ach 's e ainm Lochlannach a tha ann an *Skiary*. Rinn na Gàidheil nàdar de dh'ath-chruthachadh air an ainm a rèir nòsan an cànan fhèin.