

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 484 (which corresponds to Litir 788). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was in Tìree recently. Low-lying Tìree of the Barley [poetic name]. I was staying in Balephedrish. That's on the north side of the island. Balephedrish was named, apparently, for Aodh MacPhèadrais. He was a cleric in the fifteenth century.

I was pleased to be there as it's the closest village to a famous thing on the island. That's 'the corrie stone'. People know it better today as The Ringing Stone. It makes a noise like a bell when you hit it with another stone.

It's close to the shore. Perhaps it's in a sort of shallow corrie and that is the reason for its name in Gaelic. I'm not sure. But it's an intriguing stone.

It's more than three metres long. It's two and a half metres wide. And it's nearly my height above the ground. And one thing is certain about it – it doesn't belong to Tìree. It's a 'wandering stone'. That's the Gaelic for erratic – a stone that came from someplace else in ice more than ten thousand years ago. An erratic.

It's made of granite. It's much

Bha mi ann an Tìriodh o chionn greis. Tìriodh Ìosal an Eòrna. Bha mi a' fuireach ann am Baile Phèadrais. Tha sin air taobh a tuath an eilein. Bha Baile Phèadrais air ainmeachadh, a rèir choltais, airson fear Aodh MacPhèadrais. Bha e na chlàireach anns a' chòigeamh linn deug.

Bha mi toilichte a bhith ann oir 's e am baile as fhaisge air rud ainmeil anns an eilean. 'S e sin Clach a' Choire. Tha daoine nas eòlaiche oirre an-diugh mar *The Ringing Stone*. Bidh i a' dèanamh fuaim mar chlag nuair a bhualas tu oirre le clach eile.

Tha i faisg air a' chladach. 'S dòcha gu bheil i ann an nàdar de choire eu-domhainn agus gur e sin as coireach ri a h-ainm ann an Gàidhlig. Chan eil mi cinnteach. Ach 's e clach iongantach a tha innte.

Tha còrr is trì meatairean de dh'fhad innte. Tha dà mheatair gu leth de leud innte. Agus tha i faisg air m' àirde fhèin os cionn na talmhainn. Agus tha aon rud cinnteach mu a deidhinn – cha bhui i do Thìriodh. 'S e clach iomrallach a tha innte. 'S e sin a' Ghàidhlig air *erratic* – clach a thàinig à àite eile ann an dèigh o chionn còrr is deich mìle bliadhna. Clach iomrallach.

Tha i air a dèanamh de chlach-

younger than the gneiss around it. It started its journey on Rum and ended in Tiree. If it were a hundred yards north of where it is, there would be no sign of it. It would be beneath the waves. And that's what will happen to Tiree, according to oral tradition, if the stone is split. The island will go below the waves.

People have known it since time immemorial. It's covered with 53 markings about the size of a cup. They are round or egg-shaped. It's thought the stone was sacred to the prehistoric people that were living there. It was, and is, special to the Gaels as well. I'll tell you a story about it next week.

ghràin. Tha i mòran nas òige na 'n gneiss a tha timcheall oirre. Thòisich i a turas ann an Rùm agus sguir i ann an Tiriodh. Nam biodh i ceud slat gu tuath air far a bheil i, cha bhiodh sgeul oirre. Bhiodh i fo na tuinn. Agus 's e sin a thachras do Thiriodh, a rèir beul-aithris, ma thèid a' chlach a sgàineadh. Thèid an t-eilean fo na tuinn.

Tha daoine air a bhith eòlach oirre o chian nan cian. Tha i còmhdhaichte le caogad 's a tri làraichean mu mheud cupa. Tha iad cruinn no ann an cumadh uighe. Thathar a' smaoinichadh gun robh a' chlach naomh don t-sluagh ro-eachdraidheil a bha a' fuireach ann. Bha, agus tha, i sònraichte do na Gàidheil cuideachd. Innsidh mi dhuibh stòiridh mu a deidhinn an-ath-sheachdain.