

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 506 (which corresponds to Litir 810). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

In autumn last year, I was in Argos. I don't mean the Argos shop in Inverness. I was on holiday in Greece. And I went through a town called Argos.

I thought it was quite amusing. I didn't understand that there is a link between the Greek town and the shop. The man who established the shop was on holiday in Greece. The thought came to him of the shop's name. He was in Argos at the time.

The town is in an area called the Peloponnese. It's a peninsula. It's south west of Athens. I was sailing between ports. Among them was Epidavros. It's an attractive little town. It's situated on the shore at the end of an inlet. At one time, however, there was a town of the same name five miles away, inland. It was famous throughout the world of the Greeks.

There was no more important place for healing in the classical world. It was situated near the birthplace of Asklepios, Apollo's son. In the fourth and

As t-fhoghar an-uiridh, bha mi ann an Argos. Chan eil mi a' ciallachadh bùth Argos ann an Inbhir Nis. Bha mi air làithean-saora anns a' Ghrèig. Agus chaidh mi tro bhaile air an robh Argos mar ainm.

Bha mi a' smaoinichadh gun robh e car èibhinn. Cha do thuig mi gu bheil ceangal ann eadar am baile Greugach agus a' bhùth. Bha an duine a chuir a' bhùth air chois air làithean-saora anns a' Ghrèig. Thàinig an smuain thuige mu ainm na bùtha. Bha e ann an Argos aig an àm.

Tha am baile anns an sgìre ris an canar am Peloponnese. 'S e leth-eilean a tha ann. Tha e don iar-dheas air Baile na h-Àithne. Bha mi a' seòladh eadar bailtean-puirt. Nam measg, bha Epidavros. 'S e baile beag brèagha a tha ann. Tha e suidhichte air a' chladach aig ceann sàilean. Aig aon àm, ge-tà, bha baile leis an aon ainm còig mìle air falbh, taobh a-staigh na dùthcha. Bha e ainmeil air feadh saoghal nan Greugach.

Cha robh àite na bu chudromaiche airson leigheas anns an t-saoghal chlasaigeach. Bha e stèidhichte faisg air àite-breith mac Apollo, Asklepios. Anns a' cheathramh agus

third centuries BC, many thousands would go there to be healed. And for festivals, fun, trading and courtship.

There is an amazing amphitheatre there. It holds fourteen thousand people. It's in such good condition that it is still used to this day.

I stood in the place where the actors stand. My wife was in the highest row of seats. It was easy for us to talk to each other. The acoustics were amazingly good.

'Sing a Gaelic song,' she said. I sang a chorus of 'Fear a' Bhàta (The Boatman)' in a soft voice. She easily heard every word. Many a thing has happened in Epidavros over two and a half millennia. But I suspect that was the first time that 'Fear a' Bhàta' was sung there. Shortly after that, I bade farewell to Epidavros. And I left – in a boat.

treas ceud ro Chrìosd, bha na mìltean mòr' a' dol ann airson leigheas. Agus airson fèilltean-ealain, spòrs, marsantachd is suirghe.

Tha taigh-cluiche iongantach ann. Ghabhadh e ceithir mìle deug duine. Tha e ann an staid cho math 's gum bi e air a chleachdadh chun an latha an-diugh.

Sheas mi anns an àite far am bi na cluicheadairean a' seasamh. Bha a' bhean agam anns an t-sreath shuidheachan a b' àirde. Bha e furasta dhuinn bruidhinn ri chèile. Bha an fhuaimearrachd – no *acoustics* – iongantach math.

'Gabh òran Gàidhlig,' thuir i. Ghabh mi sèist de 'Fear a' Bhàta' ann an guth socair. Chuala i a h-uile facal gu furasta. 'S iomadh rud a thachair ann an Epidavros thairis air dà mhìle gu leth bliadhna. Ach tha amharas agam gum b' e sin a chiad turas a bha 'Fear a' Bhàta' air a sheinn ann. Goirid an dèidh sin, leig mi soraidh slàn le Epidavros. Agus dh'fhalbh mi – ann am bàta.