

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 535 (which corresponds to Litir 839). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

Recently I went to Eilean Bàn. It's under the Skye Bridge between Kyle of Lochalsh and Kyleakin. The island is somewhat well-known today because Gavin Maxwell made his home there. Maxwell is famous for the book 'Ring of Bright Water'. He bought the houses on Eilean Bàn in 1963.

It's the people of the lighthouse that were living in the houses before that. There is a large lighthouse on the island. When the lighthouse was made automatic at the beginning of the sixties, the Northern Lighthouse Board put the dwelling houses on the market. And Gavin Maxwell bought them.

At that time, Maxwell was still living in Sandaig near Glenelg. He went to live on Eilean Bàn fulltime in 1968, after his house in Sandaig was destroyed by fire.

The houses, that were connected to each other, were for two families. The wall between them was taken down. A large long room was made which is today

O chionn ghoirid chaidh mi don Eilean Bàn. Tha e fo dhrochaid an Eilein Sgitheanaich eadar Caol Loch Aillse agus Caol Àcain. Tha an t-eilean car ainmeil an-diugh oir rinn Gabhainn Maxwell a dhachaigh ann. Tha Maxwell ainmeil airson an leabhair 'Ring of Bright Water'. Cheannaich e na taighean anns an Eilean Bàn ann an naoi ceud deug, seasgad 's a trì (1963).

'S e muinntir an taigh-sholais a bha a' fuireach anns na taighean roimhe sin. Tha taigh-solais mòr anns an eilean. Nuair a rinneadh an taigh-solais fèin-obrachail aig toiseach nan seasgadan, chuir Bòrd Taighean-solais a' Chinn a Tuath na taighean-còmhnaidh air a' mhargaidh. Agus cheannaich Gabhainn Maxwell iad.

Aig an àm sin, bha Maxwell fhathast a' fuireach ann an Sandaig faisg air Gleann Eilg. Chaidh e a dh'fhuireach anns an Eilean Bàn làn-thìde ann an seasgad 's a h-ochd (1968), às dèidh gun deach an taigh aige ann an Sandaig a sgrìos le teine.

Bha na taighean, a tha ceangailte ri chèile, airson dà theaghlach. Chaidh am balla eatarra a leagail. Rinneadh seòmair mòr fada ann air a bheil an-diugh 'The Long Room'. Tha sin na thaigh-

called 'The Long Room'. That is a museum to Maxwell, exhibiting things that belonged to his life. The exhibition is interesting, although Maxwell wasn't on the island for long, as he died in 1969. There are information cards about the exhibition in Gaelic.

Maxwell was always making his living in a variety of ways. He at one time had a business based on the hunting of the basking shark. Maxwell wasn't living on Eilean Bàn for long before he started to put plans together for the island. He was going to create a private zoo, containing animals that were native to Scotland. Tourists were going to go to the zoo from Skye in a boat.

He also had plans to encourage the eider duck to nest there. Then he would collect the down from their nests. Because of his death, none of that happened, but eider ducks can still be seen around Eilean Bàn.

tasgaidh do Mhaxwell, a' taisbeanadh rudan a bhuineadh do a bheatha. Tha an taisbeanadh inntinneach, ged nach robh Maxwell anns an eilean fada oir chaochail e ann an seasgad 's a naoi (1969). Tha cairtean fiosrachaidh mun taisbeanadh ann an Gàidhlig.

Bha Maxwell a-riamh a' dèanamh a bhith-beò ann an caochladh dhòighean. Bha uaireigin gnìomhachas aige stèidhichte air sealg a' chearbain. Cha robh Maxwell fada a' fuireach anns an Eilean Bàn mus do thòisich e air planaichean a chur ri chèile airson an eilein. Bha e a' dol a chruthachadh sù prìobhaideach, le ainmhidhean ann a bha dùthchasach do dh'Alba. Bha luchd-turais a' dol a dhol don sù bhon Eilean Sgitheanach ann an eathar.

Bha planaichean aige cuideachd airson a bhith a' brosnachadh na lacha Lochlannaich gus a neadachadh ann. Bhiodh e an uair sin a' cruinneachadh na clòimhtich bho na neadan aca. Air sàillibh a bhàis, cha do thachair gin dhiubh sin, ach chithear lachan Lochlannach fhathast timcheall an Eilein Bhàin.