

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 560 (which corresponds to Litir 864). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was on a bed in the hills a few years ago. But I wasn't resting. I was on 'The Bed of the Yellow Stag'. On the maps, that's the name of the torr on the summit of Ben Avon on the eastern side of the Cairngorms. A strange name, isn't it? 'The Bed of the Yellow Stag'. I expect it's connected to Fingalian legend.

I was reading in a book about the place-name. The author was of the opinion that 'Leabaidh an Daimh Bhuidhe' was the new name for the torr. And that the old name was 'The Big Dark Stob of the Waterfall Burn'. But I reckon 'The Big Dark Stob of the Waterfall Burn' is the name that should be given to the summit still. 'Leabaidh' stands for a hollow, not a summit. I reckon that Leabaidh an Daimh Bhuidhe was the hollow adjacent to the summit.

I started to look at maps for other 'beds'. There are a few. The 'deer bed' is in the hills near Strath Oykeall. 'Walter's bed' is south of Glen Calvie. Near it is the 'badger's bed'. On the shore of Point in Lewis is 'the Minister's bed'.

Bha mi air leabaidh anns a' mhonadh o chionn beagan bhliadhnaichean. Ach cha robh mi a' gabhail fois. Bha mi air Leabaidh an Daimh Bhuidhe. Air na mapaichean, 's e sin ainm an torra air mullach Beinn Athfhinn air taobh sear a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh. Ainm annasach, nach e? Leabaidh an Daimh Bhuidhe. Tha mi an dùil gu bheil e co-cheangailte ri sgeulachdan na Fèinne.

Bha mi a' leughadh ann an leabhar mun ainm-àite. Bha an t-ùghdar dhen bheachd gum b' e 'Leabaidh an Daimh Bhuidhe' an t-ainm ùr air an tòrr. Agus gum b' e an seann ainm air – Stob Dubh Easaidh Mòr. Ach chanainn gur e Stob Dubh Easaidh Mòr an t-ainm a bu chòir a bhith air a' mhullach fhathast. Tha 'leabaidh' a' seasamh airson lag no glac, chan ann airson mullach. Tha mi an dùil gur e a bha ann an Leabaidh an Daimh Bhuidhe an lag ri taobh a' mhullaich.

Thòisich mi air sùil a thoirt air mapaichean airson 'leabannan' eile. Tha feadhainn ann. Tha Leabaidh Fhèidh anns a' mhonadh faisg air Srath Òiceall. Tha Leaba Bhaltair deas air Gleann Chailbhaidh. Faisg oirre tha Leaba Bhruic. Air cladach an Rubha ann an Leòdhas, tha

Some of the 'beds' are a bit like a cave. But they are not as deep as a cave. They are hollows. People were hiding in them. They were called 'protection/shelter beds' in olden times. One of them is in Rannoch. Its name is 'the bed of Black Duncan of the hill'.

Black Duncan was a Cameron and a Jacobite. He hid in his 'bed' after the Battle of Culloden. The redcoats were looking for him. They were close to him but they didn't see him. He was hiding in his 'bed'.

Duncan was famous. The Jacobite army was besieging Stirling Castle. Duncan was sent to Fort William on the Prince's business. People were saying that he reached Fort William within a day – that's eighty-eight miles. He was needing a real bed after that!

Leabaidh a' Mhinisteir.

Tha cuid de na 'leabannan' car coltach ri uamh. Ach chan eil iad cho domhainn ri uamh. 'S e lagan a tha annta. Bha daoine a' dol am falach annta. 'S e 'leabannan-dionaidh' a bha orra anns an t-seann aimsir. Tha tè dhiubh ann an Raineach. 'S e an t-ainm oirre Leaba Dhonnacha Dhuibh a' Mhonaidh.

Bha Donnchadh Dubh na Chamshronach agus na Sheumasach. Chaidh e am falach anns an 'leabaidh' aige an dèidh Blàr Chùil Lodair. Bha na saighdearan dearga a' coimhead air a shon. Bha iad faisg air ach chan fhac' iad e. Bha e am falach anns an 'leabaidh' aige.

Bha Donnchadh ainmeil. Bha armailt nan Seumasach a' cur sèist ri Caisteal Shruighlea. Chaidh Donnchadh a chur don Ghearasdan air gnothach a' Phrionnsa. Bha daoine ag ràdh gun do ràinig e an Gearasdan taobh a-staigh aon latha – sin ochdad 's a h-ochd mìle. Bha e feumach air leabaidh cheart an dèidh sin!