

# **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 746 (which corresponds to Litir 1,050). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk).*

*Think of a journey. You take the ferry from Stornoway to Ullapool. You get the train in Ullapool and go to Inverness. You then go to London on the night sleeper service, reaching London early next morning.*

*You'll understand that I'm dreaming. There is no railway line between Ullapool and Inverness. But there were plans for one more than a hundred years ago.*

*At the beginning of the summer I was in Ullapool for the book festival. There was a man there, Andy Drummond, who gave a lecture about the planned railway lines at the end of the 19th Century in the north-west Highlands. There were four of them, one of them between Garve and Ullapool. None of them were built. More's the pity.*

*Why did the plans exist? Well, people wanted to create a link between the mainland and Stornoway as a way of promoting fishing.*

*The plans for the railway line can still be seen. It was going to leave the line between Dingwall and Strome at Garve. It would follow the river up – pretty much the route that the road to*

Smaoinichibh air turas. Tha sibh a' gabhail a' bhàt'-aiseig à Steòrnabhagh gu ruige Ullapul. Tha sibh a' gabhail an tràna ann an Ullapul agus a' dol a dh'Inbhir Nis. Tha sibh an uair sin a' falbh a Lunnainn air seirbheis rèile na h-oidhche, agus a' ruigsinn Lunnainn tràth an ath mhadainn.

Tuigidh sibh gu bheil mi ag aisling. Chan eil rathad-iarainn ann eadar Ullapul agus Inbhir Nis. Ach bha planaichean ann airson fear o chionn còrr is ceud bliadhna.

Aig toiseach an t-samhraidh bha mi ann an Ullapul airson fèis nan leabhraichean. Bha fear an sin, Andaidh Drummond, a thug seachad òraid air rathaidean-iarainn a bha san amharc, aig deireadh an naoidheamh linn deug, ann an ceann an iar-thuath na Gàidhealtachd. Bha ceithir dhiubh ann, fear dhiubh eadar Gairbh agus Ullapul. Cha deach gin dhiubh a thogail. Is mòr am beud.

Carson a bha na planaichean ann? Uill, bha daoine ag iarraidh ceangal a dhèanamh eadar tìr-mòr agus Steòrnabhagh, mar dhòigh gus iasgach a bhrosnachadh.

Tha na planaichean airson an rathaid-iarainn fhathast rim faicinn. Bha e a' dol a dh'fhàgail na loidhne eadar Inbhir Pheofharain agus An Sròm aig Gairbh. Bhiodh e a' leantainn na h-aibhne suas – an

*Ullapool takes today. There was a difficulty at the Gorge of Corrieshalloch at Braemore. There is a hundred feet of depth in the gorge. And the route is steep between the gorge and the head of Loch Broom. They were recommending that the train go through a tunnel six hundred yards long there.*

*The scheme was going to cost up to quarter of a million pounds. An act of parliament was put through in 1890 to permit the development. They had three years to begin the building work.*

*And what happened? Well, the developers failed to put the finance together. After three years, another act of parliament went through – *The Garve and Ullapool Railway (Abandonment) Act*, and that was the end of the story. Up to now, at least. We'll see if the scheme is renewed in the future.*

ìre mhath mar a tha an rathad a dh'Ullapul an-diugh. Bha duilgheadas ann aig Glòm Choire Shalach aig a' Bhràigh Mhòr. Tha ceud troigh de dhoimhneachd anns a' ghlòm. Agus tha an t-slighe cas eadar an glòm agus ceann Locha Bhraoin. Bha iad a' moladh gum biodh an trèana a' dol tro thunail sia ceud slat a dh'fhaid an sin.

Bha an sgeama a' dol a chosg suas ri cairteal a' mhillein not. Chaidh achd pàrlamaid a chur troimhe ann an ochd ceud deug is naochad (1890) airson an leasachadh a cheadachadh. Bha trì bliadhna aca airson tòiseachadh air an obair-thogail.

Agus dè thachair? Uill, dh'fhàilnich air an luchd-leasachaidh an t-ionmhas a chur ri chèile. An dèidh trì bliadhna, chaidh achd pàrlamaid eile troimhe – *The Garve and Ullapool Railway (Abandonment) Act*, agus b' e sin deireadh an sgeòil. Gu ruige seo, co-dhiù. Chì sinn an tèid an sgeama ath-bheothachadh anns an ùine romhainn.