

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 776 (which corresponds to Litir 1,080). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclea@bbc.co.uk.

In the last Litir, I was talking about the Ross-shire landlord, Osgood Mackenzie. Osgood was keen on plants and trees that belong to other countries. He established a garden on the shore of Loch Ewe. From that arose Inverewe Gardens which are under the control of the National Trust for Scotland today.

I want to tell you about one special tree that belongs to Australia, and which grows well at Inverewe. I saw it last year, and it gave me great pleasure.

That's the Wollemi Pine, a very old tree. It's found naturally only in a national park in New South Wales, near Sydney. There are only three groves of them. They are all in deep, rugged canyons. It's only in 1994 that the trees were discovered. Before that, scientists knew them only as fossils. The fossils were up to two hundred million years in age.

It's a man called David Noble that found them. The tree was named Wollemia nobilis. Wollemia comes from the name of the national park. Nobilis comes from Noble, although

Ann an Litir mu dheireadh, bha mi a' bruidhinn mun uachdaran Rosach, Osgood MacCoinnich. Bha Osgood measail air lusan is craobhan a bhuineas do dhùthchannan eile. Chuir e leas air dòigh air cladach Loch Iù. Às a sin, dh'èirich Leas Inbhir Iù, a tha fo stiùir Urras Nàiseanta na h-Alba an-diugh.

Tha mi airson innse dhuibh mu aon chraobh shònraichte a bhuineas do dh'Astràilia, agus a tha a' fàs gu math ann an Inbhir Iù. Chunnaic mi an-uiridh i, agus thug i toileachas mòr dhomh.

'S e sin an Giuthas Wollemi, craobh air leth sean. Tha e ri lorg gu nàdarrach a-mhàin ann am pàirc nàiseanta ann an Cuimrigh Nuaidh a Deas, faisg air Sydney. Chan eil ach trì doireachan dhiubh ann. Tha iad uile ann an glòman domhainn garbha. 'S ann dìreach ann an naoi ceud deug, naochad 's a ceithir (1994) a chaidh na craobhan a lorg. Roimhe sin, bha luchd-saidheans eòlach orra a-mhàin mar fosailean. Bha na fosailean suas ri dà cheud millean bliadhna a dh'aois.

'S e fear Daibhidh Noble a lorg iad. Chaidh a' chraobh ainmeachadh mar *Wollemia nobilis*. Tha *Wollemia* a' tighinn bho ainm na pàirce nàiseanta. Tha *nobilis* a' tighinn à Noble, ged a tha e cuideachd a'

it also means 'noble' in Latin. The word wollemi belongs to the Aborigines. It means, 'look out, keep your eyes open'.

The Wollemi Pine is not a true pine. It's more closely related to the monkey puzzles. It's evergreen, with rather large leaves. The tree reaches forty metres in height.

I'm pleased it's growing at Inverewe. That means, if anything happens to the species in Australia, that it's safe in another place. And, recently, there was a real danger that the last natural trees would go [disappear] in the bushfires in Australia. The national parks service sent in a team of firefighters by helicopter. And, fortunately, they managed to save the groves in which the Wollemi Pine grows. My compliments to them.

ciallachadh 'uasal' ann an Laideann. Buinidh am facal *wollemi* do na tùsanaich. Tha e a' ciallachadh, 'thoir an aire, cùm do shùil a-mach'.

Chan e giuthas ceart a th' anns a' Ghiuthas Wollemi. Tha e nas dlùithe ann an càirdeas ris na *monkey puzzles*. Tha e sìor-uaine, le duilleagan rudeigin mòr. Ruigidh a' chraobh ceathrad meatair ann an àirde.

Tha mi toilichte gu bheil e a' fàs ann an Inbhir Iù. Tha sin a' ciallachadh, ma thachras dad don ghnè ann an Astràilia, gu bheil e sàbhailte ann an àite eile. Agus o chionn ghoirid, bha fìor chunnart ann gum falbhadh na craobhan nàdarrach mu dheireadh anns na teintean-coille ann an Astràilia. Chuir seirbheis na pàirce nàiseanta sgioba de smàladairean ann le heileacoptair. Agus, gu fortanach, chaidh aca air na doireachan, anns a bheil an Giuthas Wollemi a' fàs, a shàbhaladh. Mo bheannachd orra.