

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 885 (which corresponds to Litir 1,189). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

In autumn last year, I was in Weem in Perthshire. The name has a Gaelic origin. Weem comes from the word uamh (cave). Uamh is a feminine word. Thus, we say anns an uaimh (in the cave). Hundreds of years ago, it's thought that there was an 'm' at the end of the word, rather than 'mh'.

Professor Watson tells us in his book The Celtic Place-Names of Scotland that the 'ua' at the beginning of the word is sounded as 'wa'. I reckon that people in olden times were saying 'sa uaim' for 'in the cave'.

The Reverend Charles Robertson tells us that the Gaelic for Weem is Uaimh. Not 'An Uaimh', just 'Uaimh'. Robertson was a Gaelic scholar. In addition to that, he was raised in that area, close to Weem.

Behind Weem there is a large crag called Weem Rock in English. That's Creag Uaimh in Gaelic. Nearby there is a castle called Castle Menzies in English. The Gaelic for that is Caisteal Uaimh.

Weem Rock is covered with forest. It's a lovely place. There is a

As t-fhoghar an-uiridh, bha mi ann an Weem ann an Siorrachd Pheairt. Tha tùs Gàidhlig aig an ainm. Tha Weem a' tighinn bhon fhacal *uamh*. 'S e facal boireanta a tha ann an *uamh*. Mar sin, bidh sinn ag ràdh *anns an uaimh*. Ceudan bhliadhnaichean air ais, thathar a' smaoinichadh gur e 'm' a bha ann aig deireadh an fhacail, seach 'mh'.

Tha an t-Àrd-ollamh MacBhàtair ag innse dhuinn anns an leabhar aige *The Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* gun robh an 'ua' aig toiseach an fhacail air fhuaimneachadh mar 'wa'. Tha mi a' dèanamh dheth gun robh daoine ag ràdh anns an t-seann aimsir 'sa uaim' airson 'in the cave'.

Tha an Urramach Teàrlach MacDhonnchaidh ag innse dhuinn gur e a' Ghàidhlig a tha air Weem – *Uaimh*. Chan e 'An Uaimh', dìreach 'Uaimh'. 'S e sgoilear Gàidhlig a bha ann am MacDhonnchaidh. A bharrachd air sin, thogadh e anns an sgìre sin, faisg air Uaimh.

Air cùl Uaimh tha creag mhòr air a bheil *Weem Rock* ann am Beurla. 'S e sin *Creag Uaimh* ann an Gàidhlig. Faisg air làimh tha caisteal air a bheil *Castle Menzies* ann am Beurla. 'S e a' Ghàidhlig a tha air sin *Caisteal Uaimh*.

Tha *Creag Uaimh* còmhdhaichte le coille. 'S e àite snog a tha ann. Tha ceum-

walking path there. If you are lucky, you'll see red squirrels in the wood.

Robertson tells us that there are two caves on Weem Rock. I must admit that I didn't see the second one. And there is a strange story attached to it.

But the walking path goes to the first cave. It's high on a crag called Creag an t-Seipeil 'The Chapel Rock'. The cave is not large at all. It's just a split in the rock. But there is a well next to it. Thus, there was water there for any person who wanted to live in the cave in olden times.

And, according to tradition, Saint Cuthbert was living in it during the seventh century. And another man was living in it hundreds of years later. More on uaimh – and weem – in the next Litir.

coiseachd ann. Ma tha thu fortanach, chì thu feòragan ruadha anns a' choille.

Tha MacDhonnchaidh ag innse dhuinn gu bheil dà uaimh air Creag Uaimh. Feumaidh mi aideachadh nach fhaca mi an dàrna tè. Agus tha sgeul annasach co-cheangailte rithe.

Ach tha an ceum-coiseachd a' dol don chiad uaimh. Tha i gu h-àrd air creag ris an canar *Creag an t-Seipeil 'The Chapel Rock'*. Chan eil an uamh mòr idir. Chan eil innte ach sgoltadh anns a' chreig. Ach tha tobar ri a taobh. Mar sin, bha uisge ann do dhuine sam bith a bha airson fuireach anns an uaimh anns an t-seann aimsir.

Agus, a rèir beul-aithris, bha Naomh Cùithbeart a' fuireach innte anns an t-seachdamh linn. Agus bha fear eile a' fuireach innte ceudan bhliadhnaichean an dèidh sin. Tuilleadh air uaimh – agus *weem* – anns an ath Litir.