

# **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 889 (which corresponds to Litir 1,193). Ruairidh can be contacted at [fios@learngaelic.scot](mailto:fios@learngaelic.scot).*

*I was telling you about place-names containing the word 'leum'. There is one between Staffin and Flodigarry on Skye. That is Loch Leum nam Brà 'the loch of the jump of the quernstones'. Loch Leum nam Brà.*

*There was a bad landlord. He stopped the people from grinding their own corn. They had to use the landlord's mill. They were paying for that. They had to roll the quernstones down the slope and into the loch. The stones were round. While they were rolling down the slope, they started to jump off the ground. Loch Leum nam Brà.*

*There is a small settlement near Aviemore called Coylumbridge in English. In Gaelic, this is Drochaid Choileum. Coileum comes from Cuing-leum 'narrow leap'. The river is narrow there. When there was no bridge there, it must be that people were jumping across the river there.*

*Near Whitebridge in Stratherrick, there is a place where the river is narrow. Cnoc a' Choimhleum 'the hill of the narrow jump' is there. There is a small settlement beside the hill called*

*Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu ainmean-àite anns a bheil am facal 'leum'. Tha fear ann eadar Stafainn agus Flòdaigearraidh anns an Eilean Sgitheanach. 'S e sin Loch Leum nam Brà 'the loch of the jump of the quernstones'. Loch Leum nam Brà.*

*Bha droch uachdaran ann. Chuir e stad air an t-sluagh bho bhith a' bleith an arbhair aca fhèin. Bha aca ri muileann an uachdarain a chleachdadh. Bha iad a' pàigheadh airson sin. Bha aca ris na clachan-brà aca a roilgeadh sìos am bruthach agus a-steach don loch. Bha na clachan cruinn. Fhad 's a bha iad a' roilgeadh leis a' bhruthach, thòisich iad air leum far na talmhainn. Loch Leum nam Brà.*

*Tha baile beag faisg air an Aghaidh Mhòir air a bheil Coylumbridge ann am Beurla. Ann an Gàidhlig, 's e sin Drochaid Choileum. Tha Coileum a' tighinn bho Cuing-leum 'narrow leap'. Tha an abhainn an sin cumhang. Nuair nach robh drochaid ann, feumaidh gun robh daoine a' leum tarsainn na h-aibhne an sin.*

*Faisg air an Drochaid Bhàin ann an Srath Fharagaig tha àite ann far a bheil an abhainn cumhang. Tha Cnoc a' Choimhleum an sin – 'the hill of the narrow jump'. Tha baile beag ri taobh a' chnuic air a bheil Knockchoilum ann am Beurla – le 'K' aig an toiseach.*

*Knockchoilum in English – with ‘K’ at the start.*

*But does the word leum always mean ‘leap’? There is a mountain in Lochaber called Leum Uilleim. The Ordnance Survey Name Book says that it means ‘William’s Point or Line’ rather than ‘William’s Leap’.*

*Usually leum is spelt L-E-U-M. But occasionally it will have a genitive form. It will appear as L-È-I-M. There are two skerries in the sea in Harris, between Plocrapol and Scalpay. Those are Sgeir an Lèim Mhòir and Sgeir an Lèim Bhig.*

*Would people leap from rock to rock? What were they doing there? Collecting carragheen? Or does ‘leum’ there mean how breaking waves jump on a stormy day? Sometimes, there are more questions than answers!*

Ach a bheil am facal *leum* an-còmhnaidh a’ ciallachadh ‘leap’? Tha beinn ann an Loch Abar air a bheil an t-ainm – *Leum Uilleim*. Tha Leabhar nan Ainmean aig an t-Suirbhidh Òrdanais ag ràdh gu bheil e a’ ciallachadh ‘*William’s Point or Line*’ seach ‘*William’s Leap*’.

Mar as trice, tha leum air a litreachadh L-E-U-M. Ach, corra uair, bidh dreach ginideach air. Nochdaidh e mar L-È-I-M. Tha dà sgeir sa mhuir anns na Hearadh, eadar Plocrapol agus Sgalpaigh. ’S iad sin *Sgeir an Lèim Mhòir* agus *Sgeir an Lèim Bhig*.

Am biodh daoine a’ leum bho sgeir gu sgeir? Dè bha iad a’ dèanamh ann? A’ cruinneachadh cairgein? No a bheil ‘leum’ an sin a’ ciallachadh mar a bhios stuaghan-mara a’ leum air latha stoirmeil? Uaireannan, tha barrachd cheistean ann na freagairtean!