

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 935 (which corresponds to Litir 1,239). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

An interesting book came out last year. It was written by Jacob King and its name is 'The A to Z of Whisky Place-Names: Landscape, Language & Invention'. Dr. King is an expert on place-names.

I don't know how many 'glens' there are on the map of Scotland. But there are a lot of brands of whisky or distilleries which have the word gleann or glen in the name. I counted 152 of them in the book!

It's only one of them in which the word is in its Gaelic garb – Gleann Banbh. Banbh is the Gaelic for Banff and this whisky is from Moray. But if there is a place called Gleann Banbh, it is in Ireland!

Gleann Banbh is made at the Glenfarclas Distillery. And is Glenfarclas based on a true place-name? Well, yes – to a degree. Near the distillery is a hill called Tomfarclas. It's a Gaelic name. But it's not clear what farclas means.

Jacob King calls such things 'whisky glen'. The word 'Glen' is added to other elements to make a 'Gaelic' name. For example, the Glenallachie Distillery. The place-

Thàinig leabhar inntinneach a-mach an-uiridh. Bha e air a sgrìobhadh le Jacob King agus 's e an t-ainm a tha air 'The A to Z of Whisky Place-Names: Landscape, Language & Invention'. Tha an t-Ollamh King na eòlaiche air ainmean-àite.

Chan eil fhios a'm cia mheud 'gleann' no 'glen' a th' air mapa na h-Alba. Ach tha an t-uamhas de sheòrsaichean uisge-bheatha no thaighean-staile ann, agus am facal gleann no glen anns an ainm. Chunnt mi ceud, caogad 's a dhà dhiubh anns an leabhar!

'S e dìreach aonan dhiubh anns a bheil dreach Gàidhlig air an fhacal – Gleann Banbh. 'S e Banbh a' Ghàidhlig airson Banff agus tha an t-uisge-beatha seo à Moireibh. Ach ma tha àite ann air a bheil Gleann Banbh, 's ann ann an Èirinn a tha e!

Tha Gleann Banbh air a dhèanamh ann an taigh-staile Glenfarclas. Agus a bheil Glenfarclas stèidhichte air ainm-àite firinneach? Uill, tha – gu ìre. Faisg air an taigh-staile, tha cnoc air a bheil Tomfarclas mar ainm. 'S e ainm Gàidhlig a tha ann. Ach chan eil e soilleir dè tha farclas a' ciallachadh.

Tha Jacob King a' gabhail 'whisky glen' air a leithid. Bithear a' cur an fhacail 'Glen' ann an co-cheangal ri eileamaidean eile airson ainm 'Gàidhealach' a chruthachadh. Mar eisimpleir, taigh-staile

<i>name Allachie – from the Gaelic eileachaidh – belongs to the area (Speyside). And ‘Glen’ was added to it. Eileachaidh means ‘rocky place’.</i> <i>Glen Burgie is a bit like that. There’s a place in Nairnshire called ‘Burgie’. ‘Glen’ was added to it to make the name of the whisky.</i> <i>However, there are some whisky names that were created from scratch. They are not connected to a place-name. Glen Broch is an example [of them]. It appears that Glen Broch is a real Scottish name. But Jacob King tells us that there is no such place!</i> <i>Isn’t there a real place-name that is connected to any whisky in Scotland? Well, yes, and we’ll look at some next week.</i>	Glenallachie. Buinidh an t-ainm-àite Allachie – bhon Ghàidhlig eileachaidh – don sgìre (taobh Uisge Spè). Agus chaidh ‘Glen’ a chur ris. Tha eileachaidh a tha a’ ciallachadh ‘àite creagach’. Tha Glen Burgie rudeigin coltach ri sin. Tha àite ann an Siorrachd Narann air a bheil ‘Burgie’. Chaidh ‘Glen’ a chur ris airson ainm an uisge-bheatha a dhèanamh. Ge-tà, tha cuid de dh’ainmean uisge-bheatha ann, a chaidh a chruthachadh buileach glan. Chan eil iad ceangailte ri ainm-àite. ’S e eisimpleir dhiubh Glen Broch. Tha coltas ann gur e àite fìor Albannach a tha ann an ‘Glen Broch’. Ach tha Jacob King ag innse dhuinn nach eil a leithid de dh’àite ann! Nach eil fìor ainm-àite a’ nochdadh ann an co-cheangal ri uisge-beatha sam bith à Alba? Uill, tha, agus bheir sinn sùil air feadhainn an-ath-sheachdain.
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