

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 966 (which corresponds to Litir 1,270). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

Last summer I was in Rannoch Station in Perthshire. The station is quite remote, although it is on the railway line between Glasgow and Fort William.

I was giving somebody a lift. She was going to spend the day near the next station to the north. That is Corroun Station. No proper road goes there. But there is a youth hostel nearby. There is a restaurant at the station itself. People come and go on the train.

I was going to be in Rannoch all day. I took a rubber dinghy with me to go out on Loch Rannoch. I pumped up the boat with a pump. I attached the two oars to it. I donned a lifejacket and I went afloat.

I went first to an island which is called, on the maps, Eilean Beul na Gaoire. Beul is written B-E-A-L on today's maps. But it was written B-E-U-L on the old maps. The island is covered by willow scrub.

I was intrigued by the river's name. As you realise, the island is at a river mouth. The river is called River Gaur, at least according to today's maps. But what is the Gaelic

As t-samhradh sa chaidh bha mi ann an Stèisean Rèile Raineach ann an Siorrachd Pheairt. Tha an stèisean gu math iomallach, ged a tha e air an rathad-iarainn eadar Glaschu agus An Gearasdan.

Bha mi a' toirt lioft do chuideigin. Bha i a' dol a chur seachad an latha faisg air an ath stèisean gu tuath. 'S e sin Stèisean a' Choire Odhair. Chan eil rathad ceart a' dol ann. Ach tha ostail òigridh faisg air làimh. Tha taigh-bìdh aig an stèisean fhèin. Bidh daoine a' falbh 's a' tighinn air an tràna.

Bha mi gu bhith ann an Raineach fad an latha. Thug mi geòla rubair leam airson falbh a-mach air Loch Raineach. Stad mi aig ceann an iar Loch Raineach. Chuir mi am bàta a dh'at le pumpa. Cheangail mi an dà ràmh ris. Chuir mi seacaid-shàbhalaidh orm agus dh'fhalbh mi air fleod.

Chaidh mi an toiseach gu eilean air a bheil, air na mapaichean, Eilean Beul na Gaoire. Tha Beul sgrìobhte mar B-E-A-L air mapaichean an latha an-diugh. Ach bha e sgrìobhte mar B-E-U-L air na seann mapaichean. Tha an t-eilean còmhdhaichte le preaslach de sheilich.

Bha mi a' gabhail iongnadh mu ainm na h-aibhne. Mar a shaoileas sibh, tha an t-eilean aig beul aibhne. 'S e *River Gaur* a tha air an abhainn mar ainm, co-dhiù a rèir mapaichean an latha an-diugh. Ach dè a'

for that? Well, on some of the old maps it's called Abhainn Gaoire.

You'd think that the name is connected to the word gaoir. Dwelly's dictionary explains it as a 'loud and continuous murmuring sound'.

However, the expert William (J) Watson, says that the river is called Gamhar – G-A-M-H-A-R. Watson is of the opinion that Gamhar is the Gaelic form of an ancient Celtic name. It means 'wintry stream'. The river becomes a flood when the winter snow is melting. That left me with a question [in my head]. Should the island be called Eilean Beul a' Ghamhair or Eilean Beul na Gamhair, rather than Eilean Beul na Gaoire?

Ghàidhlig air sin? Uill, air cuid de na seann mhapaichean 's e Abhainn Gaoire a tha ann.

Shaoileadh sibh gu bheil an t-ainm co-cheangailte ris an fhacal *gaoir*. Tha faclair Dwelly ga mhìneachadh mar '*loud and continuous murmuring sound*'.

Ge-tà, tha an t-eòlaiche, Uilleam MacBhàtair, ag ràdh gur e Gamhar – G-A-M-H-A-R a tha air an abhainn mar ainm. Tha MacBhàtair dhen bheachd gu bheil Gamhar na dhreach Gàidhlig air ainm àrsaidh Ceilteach. Tha e a' ciallachadh 'uisge geamhraidh' no '*wintry stream*'. Bidh an abhainn na tuil nuair tha sneachd a' gheamhraidh a' leaghadh. Dh'fhàg sin ceist nam cheann. Am bu chòir don eilean a bhith ainmichte mar Eilean Beul a' Ghamhair no Eilean Beul na Gamhair, seach Eilean Beul na Gaoire?