

## **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 989 (which corresponds to Litir 1,293). Ruairidh can be contacted at [fios@learngaelic.scot](mailto:fios@learngaelic.scot).

*I was telling you about M.E.M. Donaldson and her book 'Wanderings in the Western Highlands and Islands'. In the book there is a photograph that she took of a mountain guide that was very famous. He was John MacKenzie from the Isle of Skye. He took many people to the Cuillins from Sligachan. And he gave his name to Sgùrr MhicCoinnich, one of those mountains.*

*Donaldson went on walks with John MacKenzie several times. One time, they went past Loch na Crèitheach. The name means the loch of the brushwood'. It's 'Loch na Creubhaig' that Donaldson wrote. She said that there was much 'brushwood' growing on the eastern side of the loch at that time.*

*Donaldson wrote that they saw two seagulls chasing a sea eagle. Now, the authorities tell us that sea eagles were not living in Scotland early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Perhaps it was a golden eagle she saw rather than a sea eagle.*

*There was an interesting conversation between Donaldson and John MacKenzie about adders that day. John said that when an adder came near a sheep, the sheep would stamp on its head and kill it! Did you ever hear*

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu M.E.M. Donaldson agus an leabhar aice 'Wanderings in the Western Highlands and Islands'. Anns an leabhar, tha dealbh-camara a thog i de dh'fhear-iùil nam beann a bha gu math ainmeil. B' esan Iain MacCoinnich às an Eilean Sgitheanach. Thug e gu leòr de dhaoine don Chuiltheann à Sligeachan. Agus thug e ainm do Sgùrr MhicCoinnich, tè de na beanntan sin.

Dh'fhalbh Donaldson a-mach air chuairt cuide ri Iain MacCoinnich grunn tursan. Aon turas, chaidh iad seachad air Loch na Crèitheach. Tha an t-ainm a' ciallachadh 'the loch of the brushwood'. 'S e 'Loch na Creubhaig' a sgrìobh Donaldson. Thuirt i gun robh 'brushwood' gu leòr a' fàs air bruach an ear an locha aig an àm ud.

Sgrìobh Donaldson gum fac' iad dà fhaoileig a' ruagadh iolair-mhara. Nise, tha na h-ùghdarrasan ag innse dhuinn nach robh iolairean-mara beò ann an Alba tràth san fhicheadamh linn. Saoil an e iolair-bhuidhe a chunnaic i seach iolair-mhara?

Bha còmhradh inntinneach eadar Donaldson agus Iain MacCoinnich mu dheidhinn nathraichean an latha sin. Dh'inns Iain, nuair a thigeadh nathair faisg air caora, gum biodh a' chaora a' saltradh air a ceann agus ga marbhadh! An cuala

*the like? Perhaps MacKenzie was teasing her!*

*In the book, Donaldson takes the reader from Skye to Lochalsh. Near Glenelg there is a small loch called Loch Iain Mhic Aonghais.*

*Donaldson tells us a tale about the loch. She heard it from the minister's wife. John MacInnes [or John the son of Angus] saw a handsome horse next to the loch. He asked a wise old man if it would be alright to make use of the horse. The old man said it would – if he blessed it. But he must not ride on the horse [‘go on horseback’].*

*John took hold of the horse. The horse worked for him cheerfully. But one day, John jumped on its back. Suddenly, the horse leapt into the water with John still on its back. Poor John was never seen again except for his lungs which were floating on the loch.*

sibh fhèin rud dhen t-seòrsa sin? Saoil an robh MacCoinnich a’ tarraing aiste?!

Ann an leabhar, tha Donaldson a’ toirt an leughadair bhon Eilean Sgitheanach gu Loch Aillse. Faisg air Gleann Eilg, tha loch beag ann air a bheil Loch Iain Mhic Aonghais.

Tha Donaldson ag innse dhuinn sgeul mun loch. Chuala i e aig bean a’ mhinisteir. Chunnaic Iain Mac Aonghais each brèagha ri taobh an locha. Dh’fhaighnich e de bhodach glic am biodh e ceart gu leòr an t-each a chur gu feum. Thuirt am bodach gum bitheadh – nam beannaicheadh e e. Ach chan fhaodadh e dhol air muin an eich.

Ghabh Iain grèim air an each. Rinn an t-each obair dha gu dòigheil. Ach latha a bha seo, leum Iain air a mhuin. Gu h-obann, leum an t-each don uisge le Iain fhathast air a mhuin. Chan fhacas sgeul tuilleadh air Iain bochd ach a-mhàin a sgamhan a bha air fleod anns an loch.