

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 1007 (which corresponds to Litir 1,311). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

I'm going to ask you a question. What is the castle in Scotland in which an English king was at one time living, but in which a Scottish king was never living? The solution is Caisteal Loch nan Doirb or, in English, Lochindorb Castle. It's up in the hills between Nairn and Grantown-on-Spey.

The castle is on an island in the loch. The distance of the island from the mainland is three hundred metres. The castle is obvious enough from the mainland. It has high stone walls. And it's more than an acre in extent.

Lochindorb Castle is more than seven hundred years old. It was built in the second half of the thirteenth century. And why did I say that an English king was at one time living there? Well, it's recorded that Edward I spent time there in the year 1303. I'll have more [for you] about the place's history in the time to come.

But another question struck me. Is it a natural island or was it built as a crannog? Archaeologists surveyed it. They concluded that it is a natural island but that it was supplemented with stones. That

Tha mi a' dol a chur ceist oirbh. Dè an caisteal ann an Alba anns an robh rìgh Sasannach uaireigin a' fuireach, ach anns nach robh rìgh Albannach riamh a' fuireach? 'S e am fuasgladh Caisteal Loch nan Doirb no, ann am Beurla, Lochindorb Castle. Tha e shuas sa mhonadh eadar Inbhir Narann agus Baile nan Granndach.

Tha an caisteal air eilean anns an loch. Tha trì cheud meatair anns a' chaolas eadar an t-eilean agus tìr-mòr. Tha an caisteal follaiseach gu leòr bho thìr-mòr. Tha ballachan cloiche àrda air. Agus tha e còrr is acaire ann am meud.

Tha Caisteal Loch nan Doirb còrr is seachd ceud bliadhna a dh'aois. Chaidh a thogail anns an dàrna leth dhen treas linn deug. Agus carson a thuir mi gun robh rìgh Sasannach uaireigin a' fuireach ann? Uill, tha e clàraichte gun do chuir Eideard I ùine seachad ann sa bhliadhna trì cheud deug 's a trì (1303). Bidh tuilleadh agam air eachdraidh an àite nas fhaide air adhart.

Ach bhuail ceist eile orm. An e eilean nàdarrach a tha ann no an deach a thogail mar chrannag? Rinn àrc-eòlaichean suirbhidh ann. Cho-dhùin iad gur e eilean nàdarrach a tha ann, ach gun deach clachan a bharrachd a chur ris. Bha

went against the opinion of locals. They had found large oaken planks there. Crannogs were built with wood to begin with. Then they were filled with stones.

The Comyns – a powerful clan in the north of Scotland – built a castle there. That was, perhaps, between the years 1260 and 1280. They built other castles in Badenoch and Lochaber around the same time. Among them was Inverlochy Castle in Fort William.

Today, Lochindorb is a bit out of the way. It's a quiet place. There is just one farm beside the loch, and a lodge occupied by the gentry. But, at one time, the place was really important. I'll tell you about that next week.

sin a' dol an aghaidh beachd muinntir an àite. Bha iadsan air dèilean mòra daraich a lorg ann. Bha crannagan air an togail de dh'fhiodh an toiseach. An uair sin, bha iad air an lìonadh le clachan.

Thog na Cuimeanaich – cinneadh cumhachdach ann an ceann a tuath na h-Alba – caisteal ann. Bha sin, math dh'fhaodte, eadar na bliadhnaichean dà cheud deug is seasgad (1260) agus dà cheud deug is ochdad (1280). Thog iad caistealan eile ann am Bàideanach is Loch Abar mun aon àm. Am measg sin, tha Caisteal Inbhir Lòchaidh anns a' Ghearasdan.

An-diugh, tha Loch nan Doirb rudeigin fad-às. 'S e àite sàmhach a tha ann. Tha dìreach aon tuathanas ri taobh an locha, agus loids aig na h-uaislean. Ach, aig aon àm, bha an t-àite fìor chudromach. Innsidh mi dhuibh mu dheidhinn sin an-ath-sheachdain.