

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 1011 (which corresponds to Litir 1,315). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

Over the last month, I was telling you about Lochindorb Castle. It's been a ruin since the middle of the fifteenth century.

Forty years ago, some people were considering developing the place. The Earl of Cawdor was wanting to attract tourists there. There would be a car park and jetty. A ferry boat would take people out to the island.

But not everybody was happy about the plan. Some bird conservationists were against it. The matter went to the government – the British Government at that time. It didn't happen.

What happened, however, to the stuff that was inside the castle? I don't know. Perhaps there is a lot of it in other castles. One or two pieces are in museums – such as a gunpowder-horn.

Over thirty years ago, a team of archaeologists conducted detailed research under the surface of the loch. They found one really special item. That was a large jug that was five hundred years old. It was in great condition. And the colours on it – yellow, green and brown – were still obvious. It was taken to the Inverness Museum.

Thairis air a' mhìos a dh'fhalbh, bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Chaisteal Loch nan Doirb. Tha e air a bhith na thobhta bho mheadhan a' chòigeamh linn deug.

O chionn ceathrad bliadhna, bha feadhainn a' beachdachadh air an t-àite a leasachadh. Bha Iarla Chaladair airson luchd-turais a tharraing ann. Bhiodh àite-pàrcaidh ann agus laimrig. Bhiodh bàt'-aiseig a' toirt daoine a-mach don eilean.

Ach cha robh a h-uile duine toilichte mun phlana. Bha cuid de luchd-dìon nan eun na aghaidh. Chaidh a' chùis don riaghaltas – Riaghaltas Bhreatainn aig an àm sin. Cha do thachair e.

Dè thachair, ge-tà, don stuth a bha am broinn a' chaisteil? Chan eil fhios a'm. Math dh'fhaodte gu bheil gu leòr dheth ann an caistealan eile. Tha pìos no dhà ann an taighean-tasgaidh – mar eisimpleir adharc-fhùdair – a gunpowder-horn.

O chionn beagan is trithead bliadhna, rinn sgioba de dh'arc-eòlaichean rannsachadh mionaideach fo uachdar an locha. Lorg iad aon rud fìor shònraichte. B' e sin siuga mòr a bha còig ceud bliadhna a dh'aois. Bha e ann an deagh òrdugh. Agus bha na dathan air – buidhe, uaine is donn – follaiseach gu leòr fhathast. Bha e air a thoirt a Thaigh-tasgaidh Inbhir Nis.

I would like to conclude my account of Lochindorb with a mention of a special plant that was growing there. The local people called it 'Lochindorb kale'. They reckoned it was a tar-chineal – that's the Gaelic for 'hybrid'. It was a hybrid between red cabbage and turnip. Those two plants were planted on the island by the last folk who were living there.

People were eating the leaves. And cattle were on the island from time to time. They were also eating Lochindorb kale. It wasn't just the leaves that people and animals were eating, but their roots. They were enormous.

Does that strange plant still grow on the island? Well, I never saw any. More's the pity.

Bu mhath leam mo chunntas air Loch nan Doirb a thoirt gu ceann le iomradh air lus sònraichte a bha a' fàs ann. Bha muinntir na sgìre a' gabhail 'Lochindorb kale' air an lus. Bha iad dhen bheachd gur e tar-chineal a bha ann – 's e sin a' Ghàidhlig air *hybrid*. 'S e tar-chineal a bha ann eadar càl dearg no *red cabbage* agus snèap no *turnip*. Bha an dà lus sin air an cur anns an eilean leis an fheadhainn mu dheireadh a bha a' fuireach ann.

Bha daoine ag ithe nan duilleagan. Agus bha crodh anns an eilean bho àm gu àm. Bha iadsan ag ithe càl Loch nan Doirb cuideachd. Chan e a-mhàin na duilleagan a bha daoine is beathaichean ag ithe, ach na freumhaichean aca. Bha iad air leth mòr.

A bheil an lus annasach sin fhathast a' fàs anns an eilean? Uill, chan fhaca mi gin. Is mòr am beud.