

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 1,017 (which corresponds to Litir 1,321). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

I was telling you about Loch na Doireanaich in Sleat. The name comes from Loch Doir' an Eich 'the loch of the small wood of the horse'. And what horse? The water-horse that was living there!

According to oral tradition, the water-horse would appear in the form of an old woman. Usually, a water-horse would appear in the form of a handsome man. Anyway, this old woman would visit the girls at the shieling in Glen Saasaig. She would kill them. But one time, one of them survived. She told other people what had happened.

The men went out and killed the water-horse. They buried it. People still knew the site of the burial in the early part of the twentieth century.

Loch Doir' an Eich put a thought in my head. Are there other lochs in the Highlands called 'Loch an Eich'? And could those names be connected to a water-horse?

I'm not sure. There is Loch an Eich in Pàirc in Lewis. But I don't know a tale about a water-horse there. The other lochs that are named for a horse – there is another element in the name. Loch an Eich Bhàin, Loch an Eich Dhuibh and Loch an Eich Uidhir.

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Loch na Doireanaich ann an Slèite. Tha an t-ainm a' tighinn bho Loch Doir' an Eich. Agus dè an t-each? Tha an t-each-uisge a bha a' fuireach ann!

A rèir beul-aithris, bhiodh an t-each-uisge a' nochdadh ann an cruth caillich. Bha sin annasach. Mar bu trice, bhiodh each-uisge a' nochdadh ann an riochd fear eireachdail. Co-dhiù, bhiodh a' chailleach seo a' tadhal air na caileagan aig an àirigh ann an Gleann Sàsaig. Bhiodh i gam marbhadh. Ach aon turas, mhair tè dhiubh beò. Dh'inns i do dhaoine eile mar a thachair.

Chaidh na fir a-mach agus mharbh iad an t-each-uisge. Thiodhlaic iad e. Bha fios fhathast aig daoine tràth anns an fhicheadamh linn far an robh an sloc.

Chuir Loch Doir' an Eich smuain nam cheann. A bheil lochan eile air a' Ghàidhealtachd air a bheil 'Loch an Eich'? Agus am faodadh na h-ainmean sin a bhith ceangailte ri each-uisge?

Chan eil mi cinnteach. Tha Loch an Eich ann am Pàirc ann an Leòdhas. Ach chan aithne dhomh sgeul mu dheidhinn each-uisge an sin. Na lochan eile a tha ainmichte airson each – tha eileamaid eile anns an ainm. Loch an Eich Bhàin, Loch an Eich Dhuibh agus Loch an Eich Uidhir.

Why were those lochs named for a horse?

Loch Maol Fhinn is next to the A835 road in Ross-shire. In English we call it 'Loch Garve'. There is a tale of a water-horse there.

This water-horse was carrying girls to the bottom of the loch. But it wasn't killing them. The girls were alive but cold. The water-horse was cold-blooded. There was no heat in his house.

One lass was crying about the cold. The water-horse went to a stonemason in the village of Garve. He took the mason to the bottom of the loch. The mason created a fireplace and chimney for him.

When we had cold winters, Loch Garve would freeze. Except for one part at the eastern end. Why would it not freeze there? Because that's where the water-horse's chimney was!

Carson a bha na lochan sin air an ainmeachadh airson each?

Tha Loch Maol Fhinn ri taobh an rathaid an A835 ann an Siorrachd Rois. Ann am Beurla canaidh sinn *Loch Garve* ris. Tha sgeul mu dheidhinn each-uisge ann.

Bha an t-each-uisge seo a' giùlan clann-nighean gu grunnnd an locha. Ach cha robh e gam marbhadh. Bha na nigheanan beò ach fuar. Bha an t-each-uisge fuar-fhuileach. Cha robh teas anns an taigh aige.

Bha aon nighean a' gul mun fhuachd. Chaidh an t-each-uisge gu clachair ann am baile Ghairbh. Thug e an clachair gu grunnnd an locha. Thog an clachair àite-teine agus similear dha.

Nuair a bha geamhraidhean fuara againn, bhiodh Loch Maol Fhinn a' reothadh. Ach a-mhàin aon phàirt dheth aig a' cheann an ear. Carson nach biodh e a' reothadh an sin? A chionn 's gur ann an sin a bha similear an eich-uisge!