

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 1,043 (which corresponds to Litir 1,347). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

<p><i>The place-name Tarbat – An Tairbeart – is common in Portmahomack in Easter Ross. But where is the tarbert itself – the ‘isthmus’ or ‘portage place’? Or perhaps ‘boat-transference place’. It’s not obvious.</i></p> <p><i>I visited the museum in Portmahomack – Tarbat Discovery Centre. The archaeology and history of the place is exhibited [there]. I bought a book there. The book’s name is ‘Portmahomack: Monastery of the Picts’. It was written by the archaeologist Martin Carver. The author tells us where the tarbert was – in his opinion, anyway.</i></p> <p><i>It was linking the Dornoch Firth in the north with the Cromarty Firth in the south. The two firths are not far from each other. However, to sail between them, mariners would have to go past Tarbat Ness to an open ocean. In bad weather, that would be dangerous.</i></p> <p><i>That is why there was a tarbert. There was a large loch on the route between the two firths. That is Loch Eye or, in Gaelic, Loch na h-Uidhe. It means ‘the loch of the isthmus’ or ‘the loch connected to the slow stream’. Old maps show a canal</i></p>	<p><i>Tha an t-ainm-àite Tarbat – An Tairbeart – bitheanta ann am Port mo Cholmaig ann an Taobh Sear Rois. Ach càit a bheil an tairbeart fhèin – an isthmus no portage place? No math dh’fhaodte boat-transference place. Chan eil e follaiseach.</i></p> <p><i>Thadhail mi air an taigh-tasgaidh ann am Port mo Cholmaig – an Tarbat Discovery Centre. Thathar a’ taisbeanadh airceòlas agus eachdraidh an àite. Cheannaich mi leabhar ann. ’S e an t-ainm air an leabhar ‘Portmahomack: Monastery of the Picts’. Chaidh a sgrìobhadh leis an àrc-eòlaiche Martin Carver. Tha an t-ùghdar ag innse dhuinn far an robh an tairbeart – na bheachd-san, co-dhiù.</i></p> <p><i>Bha e a’ ceangal Caolas Dhòrnaich anns a’ cheann a tuath ri Caolas Chrombaigh anns a’ cheann a deas. Chan eil an dà chaolas sin fada bho chèile. Getà, airson seòladh eatarra, bhiodh aig maraichean ri dhol seachad air Rubha Thairbeirt gu cuan fosgailte. Ann an droch shìde, bhiodh sin cunnartach.</i></p> <p><i>’S e sin as coireach gun robh an tairbeart ann. Bha loch mòr air an t-slighe eadar an dà chaolas. ’S e sin Loch Eye no, ann an Gàidhlig, Loch na h-Uidhe. Tha e a’ ciallachadh ‘the loch of the isthmus’ no ‘the loch connected to the slow stream’. Tha seann mhapaichean a’ sealltainn canal</i></p>
--	---

between the southern end of Loch Eye and the Cromarty Firth. And Ordnance Survey maps name what is left of it today as 'The Canal'.

Between Loch Eye and the Dornoch Firth was Loch Slin. It's not there today. But there is a wee village on the shore of the Dornoch Firth called Inver in English. In Gaelic, it is called Inbhir Loch Slinn. That tells us that a stream was flowing from the loch to the Dornoch Firth at that village.

The maps don't all agree with each other. But it looks like there was a route for small boats from Inver to Loch Slin, then to Loch Eye, and then through the canal to the Cromarty Firth at Nigg. A safe route in bad weather. Was that the 'tarbat'? We'll look at another [a different] opinion next week.

eadar ceann a deas Loch na h-Uidhe agus Linne Chrombaigh. Agus tha mapaichean na Suirbhìdh Òrdanais ag ainmeachadh na tha air fhàgail dheth an-diugh mar 'The Canal'.

Eadar Loch na h-Uidhe agus Caolas Dhòrnaich bha Loch Slinn. Chan eil e ann an-diugh. Ach tha baile beag air cladach Caolas Dhòrnaich air a bheil *Inver* ann am Beurla. Ann an Gàidhlig, 's e *Inbhir Loch Slinn* a tha air. Tha sin ag innse dhuinn gun robh uisge a' sruthadh bhon loch gu Caolas Dhòrnaich aig a' bhaile sin.

Chan eil na mapaichean uile a rèir a chèile. Ach tha e a' coimhead coltach gun robh slighe ann airson bhàtaichean beaga bho Inbhir Loch Slinn gu Loch Slinn, an uair sin Loch na h-Uidhe, agus an uair sin tron chanàl a Chaolas Chrombaidh aig an Eig. Slighe shàbhailte ann an droch shìde. Am b' e sin an 'tairbear'? Bheir sinn sùil air beachd eile an-ath-sheachdain.