

## **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 1,045 (which corresponds to Litir 1,349). Ruairidh can be contacted at [fios@learngaelic.scot](mailto:fios@learngaelic.scot).

*I was telling you about places that are named 'tarbert' – 'isthmus' or 'portage place'. They are all pretty much clear. We can explain them with knowledge of the topography or the history of the place.*

*But there is one other place, with a similar name, that is challenging. That is Toirbheartan in Wester Ross. Torridon in English. It was pronounced 'Toirbheartan' in olden times. The 'bh' in the middle of the word was pronounced like a 'v'.*

*Today we write it with the 'bh', but we don't sound it. We say 'Toir(bh)eartan'. Does it mean 'a place where boats were hauled over land'? If so, why is the 'b' in tairbeart lenited in 'Toirbheartan'? In every other example in Scotland, it's tairbeart we say, rather than tairbheart.*

*I can't answer that with certainty. Perhaps the name was created at a different time from the other ones.*

*Some people think of Torridon as a village at the head of Loch Torridon. But, in his book 'The Place-Names of Loch Torridon', Murdoch MacDonald, who belongs to the*

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu àiteachan a tha ainmichte mar tairbeart – 'isthmus' no 'portage place'. Tha iad uile an ìre mhath soilleir. Faodaidh sinn am mìneachadh le eòlas air cumadh na tìre no air eachdraidh an àite.

Ach tha aon àite eile, le ainm car coltach, a tha dùbhlanaich. 'S e sin Toirbheartan ann an Ros an Iar. Torridon ann am Beurla. Bha e air fhuaimneachadh 'Toirbheartan' anns an t-seann aimsir. Bha am 'bh' ann am meadhan an fhacail air fhuaimneachadh mar 'v'.

An-diugh, tha sinn ga sgrìobhadh leis a' 'bh' ann, ach cha bhì sinn ga fhuaimneachadh. Canaidh sinn 'Toir(bh)eartan'. A bheil e a' ciallachadh 'àite far an robh bàtaichean air an slaodadh thar tìr'? Ma-thà, carson a tha am 'b' ann an tairbeart air a shèimheachadh ann an 'Toirbheartan'? Anns a h-uile eisimpleir eile ann an Alba, 's e tairbeart a chanas sinn, seach tairbheart.

Chan urrainn dhomh sin a fhreagairt le cinnt. Math dh'fhaodte gun robh an t-ainm air a chruthachadh aig àm eadar-dhealaichte bhon fheadhainn eile.

Tha cuid a' smaoinneachadh air Torridon mar bhaile aig ceann Loch Thoirbheartain. Ach, anns an leabhar aige 'The Place-Names of Loch Torridon', tha Murchadh Dòmhnallach, a bhuineas don

<p><i>place, says that Torridon is an area name. It's 'Fasaig' that is the correct name for 'Torridon Village'.</i></p> <p><i>Murdoch agrees that perhaps Toirbheartan means 'place of transference'. William (J) Watson says that it is connected to how boats were carried over land between Loch Torridon and Loch Maree.</i></p> <p><i>I was always of the opinion that that is unlikely. The route through Glen Torridon is long and rough.</i></p> <p><i>There is another route, however, that would be more likely. That is between Loch Torridon and Loch Kishorn through Loch Damh, Loch Coultrie and Loch an Lòin. That would allow mariners to avoid the large peninsula of Applecross.</i></p> <p><i>But perhaps Torridon was a place where boats were drawn up onto land – at the head of the loch – for the winter. I don't know. I'll keep my mind open on the place-name 'Torridon'.</i></p>	<p>àite, ag ràdh gu bheil Toirbheartan na ainm sgìreil. 'S e 'Fasaig' an t-ainm ceart a th' air 'Torridon Village'.</p> <p>Tha Murchadh ag aontachadh gur dòcha gu bheil Toirbheartan a' ciallachadh 'place of transference'. Tha Uilleam MacBhàtair ag ràdh gu bheil sin a' buntainn ris mar a chaidh bàtaichean a ghiùlan thar tìr eadar ceann Loch Thoirbheartain agus Loch Ma-ruibhe.</p> <p>Bha mi riamh dhen bheachd gu bheil sin eucoltach. Tha an t-slighe tro Ghleann Thoirbheartain fada agus garbh.</p> <p>Tha slighe eile ann, ge-tà, a bhiodh na bu choltaiche. Tha sin eadar Loch Thoirbheartain agus Loch Ciseorn tro Loch Damh, Loch Caoltraidh agus Loch an Lòin. Leigeadh sin le maraichean rubha mòr na Comraich a sheachnadh.</p> <p>Ach math dh'fhaodte gum b' e Toirbheartan àite far an robh bàtaichean air an tarraing gu tìr – aig ceann an locha – airson a' gheamhraidh. Chan eil fhios a'm. Cumaidh mi m' inntinn fosgailte air an ainm-àite 'Toirbheartan'.</p>
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