

## **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 1,053 (which corresponds to Litir 1,357). Ruairidh can be contacted at [fios@learngaelic.scot](mailto:fios@learngaelic.scot).

*Are you familiar with Linne Fharair? That is the Beaully Firth – the sea-firth west of the Kessock Bridge in Inverness.*

*At the north-western end of the Beaully Firth, there is Redcastle. At Redcastle there is an unusual pier. It is narrow, straight and long. It sticks out into the sea, a good distance from the shore.*

*Last year, I went for a walk to the far end of the pier. It is covered today with grass and the ground is rough. But why was it built? The shore is not clean. Fine mud surrounds the pier. Even at high tide, there is not a great depth of water. They would have [had] to dredge the seabed to let boats or barges in.*

*And what were those vessels carrying? Red sandstone from a quarry near the pier.*

*Stone from the Redcastle Quarry appears in several places around Inverness and on the Black Isle. Among those are the cathedral in Fortrose and the old priory at Beaully.*

A bheil sibh eòlach air Linne Fharair? 'S e sin *The Beaully Firth* – an linne-mhara siar air Drochaid Cheasaig ann an Inbhir Nis.

Aig ceann an iar-thuath Linne Fharair, tha an Caisteal Ruadh. Aig a' Chaisteal Ruadh, tha cidhe annasach. Tha e caol, dìreach agus fada. Tha e a' stobadh a-mach gu muir, pìos mòr bhon chladach.

An-uiridh, chaidh mi air chuairt gu ceann a-mach a' chidhe. Tha e còmhdaichte an-diugh le feur, agus tha an talamh garbh. Ach carson a chaidh a thogail? Chan eil an cladach glan. Tha làthach a' cuairteachadh a' chidhe. Eadhon aig an làn, chan eil doimhneachd mhòr uisge ann. Dh'fheumadh iad an grunn a dhreidheadh airson bàtaichean no bàirdsean fhaighinn a-steach.

Agus dè bha na soithichean sin a' giùlan? Bha clach-ghainmhich ruadh bho chuaraidh faisg air a' chidhe.

Tha clach bho chuaraidh a' Chaisteil Ruaidh a' nochdadh ann an grunn àiteachan ann an sgìre Inbhir Nis agus san Eilean Dubh. Am measg sin, tha a' chathair-eaglais anns a' Chananaich agus seann mhanachainn 'ic Shimidh.

*On the really old maps there is no sign of the pier. But it is on Aaron Arrowsmith's map that was published in 1807. Two different groups were involved in building it.*

*When Cromwell's parliamentary forces were in Inverness in the middle of the seventeenth century, they built a fort or citadel at the harbour. They got stone for that from Redcastle. And they built the pier to bring over the stone.*

*At the start of the nineteenth century, the people that were building the Caledonian Canal chose to use stone from Redcastle. And they extended the pier.*

*In the 1840s, stone from Redcastle was used for repair work on the canal. Within thirty years of that, however, the quarry was closed. The pier was used for a period as a (rifle) firing range by the Ross-shire Volunteers. But now it is a peaceful place which is good for watching birds.*

Air na fìor sheann mhapaichean, chan eil sgeul air a' chidhe. Ach tha e air a' mhapa aig Aaron Arrowsmith a chaidh fhoillseachadh ann an ochd ceud deug 's a seachd (1807). Bha dà dhiofar bhuidheann an sàs ann a bhith ga thogail.

Nuair a bha feachdan pàrlamaideach Chrombail ann an Inbhir Nis ann am meadhan an t-seachdamh linn deug, thog iad dùn no *citadel* aig a' chala. Fhuair iad clach airson sin bhon Chaisteal Ruadh. Agus thog iad an cidhe aig a' Chaisteal Ruadh airson a' chlach a thoirt a-null.

Aig toiseach an naoidheamh linn deug, roghnaich an fheadhainn a bha a' togail a' Chanàil Chailleannaich clach bhon Chaisteal Ruadh a chleachdadh. Agus leudaich iadsan an cidhe.

Anns na ceathradan dhen naoidheamh linn deug, bha clach bhon Chaisteal Ruadh air a' cleachdadh airson obair-càraidh air a' chanàl. Taobh a-staigh trithead bliadhna on uair sin, getà, chaidh an cuaraidh a dhùnadh. Bha an cidhe air a' chleachdadh airson greis mar raon-losgaidh aig na *Ross-shire Volunteers*. Ach a-nise 's e àite sìtheil a tha ann a tha math airson coimhead air eòin.