An Litir Bheag

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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 1,122 *(which corresponds to* Litir 1,426). *Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.*

We were looking at the song 'Doire na Smeòraich'. It was written by the Skye bard, Neil MacLeod. It's a love song. Here is the third verse: *And we'll take a walk here up the pass,* *To see the honeyed little meadows, full of hollows,* *And although we might cross the ocean, our praises will endure* *For the hillsides of Doire na Smeòraich.* *The third and fourth lines of that verse are very nice.* 'S ged thèid sinn thar chuain, ar luaidh bidh maireann do bhruthaichean Doire na Smeòraich. *Although we might go across the ocean, our praises will always be for the hillsides of Doire na Smeòraich.* 'S ged thèid sinn thar chuain, ar luaidh bidh maireann do bhruthaichean Doire na Smeòraich. *I particularly like the fourth verse. Now, what is your Gaelic [word] for 'thought' as in 'I had a thought'? I would say 'smuain'. But there is also 'smaoin'. And the bard employs 'smaoin' in this verse in order to maintain the integrity of the rhyming. Listen to how the sound 'ao' or 'aoi' appears in each line. The rhythm and rhyme are really*	Bha sinn a' toirt sùil air an òran 'Doire na Smeòraich'. Chaidh a sgrìobhadh leis a' bhàrd Sgitheanach, Niall MacLeòid. 'S e òran gaoil a tha ann. Seo an treas rann: *Is bheir sinn a' chuairt seo suas am bealach,* *A dh'fhaicinn nan cluaineag cuachach meala,* *'S ged thèid sinn thar chuain, ar luaidh bidh maireann* *Do bhruthaichean Doire na Smeòraich.* Tha an treas agus ceathramh loidhnichean dhen rann sin gu math laghach. 'S ged thèid sinn thar chuain, ar luaidh bidh maireann do bhruthaichean Doire na Smeòraich. *Although we might go across the ocean, our praises will always be for the hillsides of Doire na Smeòraich.* 'S ged thèid sinn thar chuain, ar luaidh bidh maireann do bhruthaichean Doire na Smeòraich. Is fìor thoigh leam an ceathramh rann gu sònraichte. Nise, dè a' Ghàidhlig a tha agaibh air *thought* mar '*I had a thought*'? Chanainn 'smuain'. Ach tha 'smaoin' ann cuideachd. Agus tha am bàrd a' cleachdadh 'smaoin' anns an rann seo airson an comhardadh a chumail slàn. Èistibh mar a tha am fuaim 'ao' no 'aoi' a' nochdadh anns gach loidhne. Tha an ruitheam agus an comhardadh gu math

attractive, as is the imagery. Listen also to the rhyming at the end of each line. *Little was our thoughts of wealthy or valuables,* *When we were as free as the wind of the mountains,* *Driving the calves from the edges of the precipices,* *To the gentle streamlets of Doire na Smeòraich.* *The man who wrote the song – Neil MacLeod – belonged to Glendale. He also belonged to a family of famous poets. His brother – Iain Dubh – also composed poetry.* *Neil left to work in Edinburgh at a young age. He was a tea merchant. He was living among people who were rather fancy. Neil wrote many songs. Many folk are of the opinion that he was the most famous Gaelic bard in the 19th century – in the whole of Scotland.* *Iain Dubh, on the other hand, was a seaman. He didn't enjoy being among fancy folk in the cities. We'll take a look at Iain in the next Litir.*	brèagha, mar a tha an ìomhaigheachd. Èistibh cuideachd ris a' chomhardadh aig deireadh gach loidhne: *Nach beag a bha smaoin air maoin no earradh,* *Nuair bha sinn cho saor ri gaoth nam beannaibh,* *Ag iomain nan laogh bho thaobh nam bearradh,* *Gu caochain Doire na Smeòraich.* Bhuineadh am fear a sgrìobh an t-òran – Niall MacLeòid – do Ghleann Dail. Bhuineadh e cuideachd do theaghlach de bhàird ainmeil. Bha a bhràthair – Iain Dubh – cuideachd ri bàrdachd. Dh'fhalbh Niall a dh'obair ann an Dùn Èideann aig aois òg. Bha e na mharsanta teatha. Bha e a' fuireach am measg dhaoine a bha rudeigin spaideil. Sgrìobh Niall tòrr òran. Tha gu leòr dhen bheachd gum b' esan am bàrd Gàidhlig a b' ainmeile anns an naoidheamh linn deug – ann an Alba air fad. Bha Iain Dubh, air an làimh eile, na mharaiche. Cha do chòrd e ris a bhith am measg dhaoine spaideil anns na bailtean mòra. Bheir sinn sùil air Iain anns an ath Litir.