

## 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 173 (which corresponds to Litir 477). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk).

*I was sailing in a yacht recently. We went out to Oigh-sgeir. Oigh-sgeir lies in the sea west of Rum. It is south-west of Canna. There is a lighthouse on it.*

*Now, I'm not talking about Heisker west of Uist. The two names are alike. Some people say that Òigh-sgeir means "virgin rock". But I think it's not a Gaelic name. It's a Norse name.*

*We were hoping to see whales. The previous day, close to Canna, we saw a minke whale. But close to Oigh-sgeir we didn't see any whale.*

*But we were fortunate in another way. We also hoped to see basking sharks. And we saw some! Close to Oigh-sgeir we saw two fins breaking the sea. There were two basking sharks there. And they were big! They were swimming slowly, to and fro. Their mouths were open. They were eating small creatures – plankton.*

*I remembered the book that*

Bha mi a' seòladh ann an gheat o chionn ghoirid. Chaidh sinn a-mach gu Òigh-sgeir. Tha Òigh-sgeir na laighe anns a' chuan gu siar air Rùm. Tha i an iar-dheas air Canaigh. Tha taigh-solais oirre.

Nise, chan eil mi a' bruidhinn mu Heisgeir gu siar air Uibhist. Tha an dà ainm coltach ri chèile. Tha cuid ag ràdh gu bheil Òigh-sgeir a' ciallachadh "virgin rock". Ach tha mi a' smaoinichadh nach e ainm Gàidhlig a tha ann. 'S e ainm Lochlannach a tha ann.

Bha sinn an dòchas mucan-mara fhaicinn. An latha roimhe, faisg air Canaigh, chunnaic sinn mucmhara mhiongaidh. Ach faisg air Òigh-sgeir chan fhaca sinn mucmhara sam bith.

Ach bha sinn fortanach ann an dòigh eile. Bha sinn cuideachd an dòchas cearbain fhaicinn. Agus chunnaic sinn feadhainn! Faisg air Òigh-sgeir chunnaic sinn dà ite a' briseadh na mara. Bha dà chearban ann. Agus bha iad mòr! Bha iad a' snàmh gu mall, air ais 's air adhart. Bha na beòil aca fosgailte. Bha iad ag ithe biastagan beaga – plankton.

Chuimhnich mi an leabhar a

*Gavin Maxwell wrote about fishing for basking sharks – “Harpoon at a Venture”. Maxwell was based on Soay. That island is close to Skye. They were catching the sharks with harpoons. It was easy enough to fire the harpoons at the basking sharks.*

*We went to the narrow channel between Oigh-sgeir and Garbh-sgeir. That’s another skerry beside Oigh-sgeir. There is amazing rock on the two islands. It’s basalt. It’s in columns.*

*Two people went afloat on the channel. They were in a little rubber boat. Four of us were on Oigh-sgeir. The pair in the boat were among a group of basking sharks. Each fish was bigger than the boat. Were the two frightened? Yes! And so were we. There was no way of getting back to the yacht but the little rubber boat – or swimming!*

sgrìobh Gavin Maxwell mu iasgach nan cearban – “Harpoon at a Venture”. Bha Maxwell stèidhichte ann an Sòdhaigh. Tha an t-eilean sin faisg air an Eilean Sgitheanach. Bha iad a’ glacadh nan cearban le mòr-ghathan no *harpoons*. Bha e furasta gu leòr na mòr-ghathan a losgadh air na cearbain.

Chaidh sinn don chaolas eadar Òigh-sgeir agus an Garbh-sgeir. ’S e sin sgeir eile ri taobh Òigh-sgeir. Tha clach iongantach air an dà eilean. ’S e basalt a tha innte. Tha i ann an colbhan.

Chaidh dithis air bhog anns a’ chaolas. Bha iad ann am bàta beag rubair. Bha ceathrar againn air tìr air Òigh-sgeir. Bha an dithis anns a’ bhàta am measg còmhlan de chearbain. Bha gach iasg nas motha nam bàta. An robh an t-eagal air an dithis? Bha! Agus bha an t-eagal oirne. Cha robh dòigh airson faighinn air ais don gheàt ach am bàta beag rubair – no snàmh!