

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 363 (which corresponds to Litir 667). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

Do you know Loch Innis mo Cholmaig? It's an unusual place. Why? Well, the name of the loch in English is the Lake of Menteith. "The only lake in Scotland" as people often say – although it's a "loch" in Gaelic.

Here is an account of the loch from Thomas Garnett's book *Observations on a Tour Through the Highlands and Part of the Western Isles of Scotland that appeared in the year 1800*: "About six miles from Callander, we came to the Loch of Monteith, a beautiful little lake about five miles in circumference, adorned with two small sylvan islands." Loch of Monteith, rather than Lake of Menteith.

Garnett wrote an interesting account of the loch. And he wrote about a way of fishing in the loch. Two types of fish are plentiful in the Lake of Menteith. Those fish are not common in the Highlands. But they are common enough in the Lowlands and in England. That's the creagag-uisge (or muc-locha) and the geadas. The English for creagag-uisge or muc-locha is "freshwater perch". The English for geadas is "pike". Garnett's account is of the old means of catching pike.

A bheil sibh eòlach air Loch Innis mo Cholmaig? 'S e àite annasach a tha ann. Carson? Uill, 's e ainm an locha ann am Beurla *The Lake of Menteith*. "The only lake in Scotland" mar a chanas daoine gu tric – ged as e "loch" a tha ann, ann an Gàidhlig.

Seo cunntas dhen loch bhon leabhar aig Tòmas Garnett *Observations on a Tour Through the Highlands and Part of the Western Isles of Scotland* a nochd anns a' bhliadhna ochd ceud deug (1800): "About six miles from Callander, we came to the Loch of Monteith, a beautiful little lake about five miles in circumference, adorned with two small sylvan islands." Loch of Monteith, seach Lake of Menteith.

Sgrìobh Garnett cunntas inntinn-each mun loch. Agus sgrìobh e mu dhòigh iasgaich anns an loch. Tha dà sheòrsa èisg pailt ann an Loch Innis mo Cholmaig. Chan eil na h-èisg sin cumanta air a' Ghàidhealtachd. Ach tha iad cumanta gu leòr air a' Ghalltachd agus ann an Sasainn. 'S e sin a' chreagag-uisge (no muc-locha) agus an geadas. 'S e a' Bheurla air creagag-uisge no muc-locha "freshwater perch". 'S e a' Bheurla air geadas "pike". Tha cunntas Gharnett mun t-seann dòigh airson geadais a ghlacadh.

There were farmers on the banks of the loch. They were taking geese out to the islands. They were tying small lines to the geese's feet. The lines were very short. They put a hook on each line. And they put bait on each hook. Then the farmers were driving the geese into the loch.

The pike were grabbing the bait. They were caught with the hooks. There was a great struggle between the geese and the pike. The pike were trying to get to deep water. The geese were trying to get to land. The geese were winning. But they were very tired when they reached land.

It wasn't a pleasurable way of fishing, I'd say. People wouldn't be happy with it today.

Bha tuathanaich air bruaichean an locha. Bha iad a' toirt geòidh a-mach do na h-eileanan. Bha iad a' ceangal lìn-bheaga ri casan nan gèadh. Bha na lìn gu math goirid. Chuir iad dubhan air gach lìn. Agus chuir iad baoit air gach dubhan. An uair sin, bha na tuathanaich ag iomain nan gèadh a-steach don loch.

Bha na geadais a' greimeachadh air a' bhaoit. Bha iad air an glacadh leis na dubhain. Bha spàirn mhòr eadar na geòidh agus na geadais. Bha na geadais a' feuchainn ri faighinn gu uisge domhainn. Bha na geòidh a' feuchainn ri faighinn gu tìr. Bha na geòidh a' buannachadh. Ach bha iad uabhasach sgìth nuair a ràinig iad tìr.

Chan e iasgach tlachdmhor a bha ann, chanainn. Cha bhiodh daoine toilichte leis an-diugh.