

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 365 (which corresponds to Litir 669). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleane@bbc.co.uk.

There is a statue of Donald Dewar, Scotland's first First Minister, at the top end of Buchanan Street in Glasgow. But more than two hundred years ago, a memorial was nearly erected there to somebody else. Who?

The solution is George Buchanan, the scholar, poet and historian. I found out about that from the book by Thomas Garnett Observations on a Tour Through the Highlands ... The book was published in the year 1800.

Garnett saw the memorial to Buchanan in Killearn in Stirlingshire. He said that people were wanting initially to put it up in Buchanan Street. But Buchanan Street didn't get its [her] name from George. It [she] got it from another man, Andrew Buchanan. He made a fortune overseas in the tobacco industry.

When Thomas Garnett was in the vicinity of Loch Lomond, he received information that there were three marvels in the loch. They were: fish without fins, waves without wind and a floating island.

Garnett explained the three marvels in this way. Snakes are

Tha ìomhaigh de Dhòmhnall Mac an Deòir, a' chiad Phrìomh Mhinistear aig Alba, aig ceann shuas Sràid Bhochanain ann an Glaschu. Ach còrr is dà cheud bliadhna air ais, cha mhòr nach deach carragh-cuimhne a chur an sin do chuideigin eile. Cò?

'S e am fuasgladh Seòras Bochanan, an sgoilear, bàrd is eachdraiche. Fhuair mi fios air sin bhon leabhar aig Tòmas Garnett *Observations on a Tour Through the Highlands ...* Chaidh an leabhar fhoillseachadh anns a' bhliadhna ochd ceud deug (1800).

Chunnaic Garnett an carragh-cuimhne do Bhochanan ann an Cill Earrainn ann an Siorrachd Shruighlea. Thuirt e gun robh daoine ag iarraidh an toiseach a chur suas ann an Sràid Bhochanain. Ach cha d' fhuair Sràid Bhochanain a h-ainm bho Sheòras. Fhuair i e bho fhear eile, Anndra Bochanan. Rinn esan fortan thall thairis ann an gnìomhachas an tobacaca.

Nuair a bha Tòmas Garnett ann an sgìre Loch Laomainn, fhuair e fios gun robh trì mìorbhailean anns an loch. B' iad sin: èisg gun itean, tuinn gun ghaoth agus eilean air flod.

Mhìnich Garnett na trì mìorbhailean mar seo. Tha nathraichean pailt ann.

plentiful there. They swim from island to island. These were the “fish” without fins.

And the waves? Well, that’s the thing I was talking about a few Litrichean ago – seiches. That’s how an earthquake causes a movement of water in a loch, particularly a long narrow loch. And water in a loch of that type moves for a while after a storm, even when the weather is calm.

When Garnett was at Loch Lomond, there wasn’t a floating island there. But he heard that pieces were breaking from the other islands, and floating away.

And there was another type of “floating island”. That was a raft that people built. They were tying tree trunks together. They were putting soil on them. They moved cattle and people on them.

In time of war, people were tying their raft to an island in the loch. At a distance, it was appearing like part of the island itself. The people were safe on them.

Bidh iad a’ snàmh bho eilean gu eilean. B’ iad sin na “h-èisg” gun itean.

Agus na tuinn? Uill, ’s e sin an rud a bha mi a’ bruidhinn mu dheidhinn o chionn grunn Litrichean – *seiches*. Sin mar a bhios crith-thalmhainn ag adhbharachadh gluasad uisge ann an loch, gu h-àraidh loch fada caol. Agus bidh uisge ann an loch mar sin a’ gluasad airson ùine an dèidh stoirm, eadhon nuair a tha an aimsir ciùin.

Nuair a bha Garnett aig Loch Laomainn, cha robh eilean air flod ann. Ach chuala e gun robh pìosan a’ briseadh far nan eilean eile, agus a’ dol air flod.

Agus bha seòrsa eile ann de “eilean air flod”. B’ e sin ràth a thog daoine. Bha iad a’ ceangal ri chèile stocan craoibhe. Bha iad a’ cur ùir orra. Ghluais iad crodh is daoine orra.

Aig àm cogaidh, bha daoine a’ ceangal an ràtha aca ri eilean anns an loch. Aig astar, bha e a’ coimhead coltach ri pàirt dhen eilean fhèin. Bha na daoine sàbhailte orra.