

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 400 (which corresponds to Litir 704). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleane@bbc.co.uk.

I was speaking last week about animals that became extinct but are on the maps of Scotland. What about the boar, then? The wild boar. There are place names like An Torc, Allt nan Torc, Allt nan Torcan, An Torc-choire, Allt an Tuirc, Beinn an Tuirc and Loch an Tuirc.

There are many of them. But does that mean that the boar itself was once plentiful? Do all of the names represent the wild boar? Perhaps not.

The word torc also means cleft, notch, indentation. Torcan means little cleft. There is Allt nan Torcan near Achmore in Lewis. Perhaps that means the burn of the little clefts rather than the burn of the little boars. Does any listener know?

People see Meall an Torcain from the road between Garve and Ullapool. It's on the far side of Loch Glascarnoch. But what does Meall an Torcain mean? William Watson in Place Names of Ross and Cromarty said it means the hill of the young boar. Wouldn't it be good to be certain!

And what about Allt nan Torc

Bha mi a' bruidhinn an t-seachdain sa chaidh mu ainmhidhean, a chaidh à bith, ach a tha air mapaichean na h-Alba. Dè mun torc, ma-thà? An torc-nimhe no torc-allaidh – *the wild boar*. Tha ainmean-àite ann mar *An Torc, Allt nan Torc, Allt nan Torcan, An Torc-choire, Allt an Tuirc, Beinn an Tuirc* agus *Loch an Tuirc*.

Tha mòran ann. Ach a bheil sin a' ciallachadh gun robh an torc fhèin pailt aig aon àm? A bheil na h-ainmean gu lèir a' riochdachadh an tuirc-nimhe? 'S dòcha nach eil.

Tha am facal *torc* cuideachd a' ciallachadh *cleft, notch, indentation*. Tha *torcan* a' ciallachadh *little cleft*. Tha *Allt nan Torcan* faisg air an Acha Mhòr ann an Leòdhas. 'S dòcha gu bheil sin a' ciallachadh *the burn of the little clefts* seach *the burn of the little boars*. A bheil fios aig neach-èisteachd sam bith?

Chì daoine *Meall an Torcain* bhon rathad eadar Gairbh agus Ullapool. Tha e air taobh thall Loch a' Ghlas Chàrnaich. Ach dè tha *Meall an Torcain* a' ciallachadh? Thuir Uilleam Mac-Bhàtair ann am *Place Names of Ross and Cromarty* gu bheil e a' ciallachadh *the hill of the young boar*. Nach biodh e math a bhith cinnteach!

Agus dè mu dheidhinn *Allt nan*

south of Tobermory on Mull? The burn of the boars? Or the burn of the clefts? Tòrr an Tuirc is north of the shore of Loch Hourn. The hill of the wild boar? Perhaps.

Near Meall an Tuirc in Easter Ross is Cnoc Cèislein. William Watson tells us that Cnoc Cèislein means the hill of the sow. Boar and sow. When there is pairing of names like that, it appears that 'torc' is concerned with the mountain's shape. It has a ridge that reminded people of the back of a wild boar. Our ancestors were familiar with the boar. But the name doesn't mean that the wild boar was plentiful in that area.

Beside the A9 at Drumochter, there is a large hill called An Torc, or in English The Boar of Badenoch. I'll tell you more about that next week.

Torc deas air Tobar Mhoire ann am Muile? The burn of the boars? No the burn of the clefts? Tha Tòrr an Tuirc tuath air cladach Loch Shubhairne. The hill of the wild boar? 'S dòcha.

Faisg air *Meall an Tuirc* ann an Ros an Ear, tha *Cnoc Cèislein*. Tha Uilleam MacBhàtair ag innse dhuinn gu bheil *Cnoc Cèislein* a' ciallachadh *cnoc na muice* no the hill of the sow. Torc agus muc. Nuair a tha paidhreachadh ann de dh'ainmean mar sin, tha e coltach gu bheil 'torc' a' buntainn ri cumadh na beinne. Tha druim oirre a bha a' cur ann an cuimhne nan daoine druim an tuirc-nimhe. Bha ar sinnsearan eòlach air an torc. Ach chan eil an t-ainm a' ciallachadh gun robh an torc-nimhe pailt anns a' cheàrnaidh sin.

Ri taobh rathad mòr an A9 aig Druim Uachdair, tha beinn mhòr air a bheil *An Torc*, no ann am Beurla, *The Boar of Badenoch*. Innsidh mi tuilleadh dhuibh mu dheidhinn sin an-ath-sheachdain.