

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 416 (which corresponds to Litir 720). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk.

At the extreme southern end of Loch Lochy is Magh Comair. In English – Mucomir. There is a farm there. The name means a plain in which two rivers come together – in a 'comar'. Those are the River Spean and the River Lochy.

Among the people that were living there was a famous man – Sandy Cameron. Sandy was alive at the end of the 19th century, up until the middle of the 20th century. He was famous for being strong.

His sister Kate was also very strong. She said that they got their strength from their mother's father, who was a Macmillan. They had a reputation as strong people. They were telling a story about one of their ancestors. He pulled a horse out of a peat bog – with his bare hands!

It appears that Sandy was naturally strong. He wasn't doing any training, he said, apart from a bit of scything. I'm not sure if that's true. But it's true that he was happier being involved in farm work than in being a famous athlete.

But he went around the Highland games. He was 17 stones in weight. Despite that, he was winning

Aig fìor cheann a deas Loch Lòchaidh, tha Magh Comair. Ann am Beurla – Mucomir. Tha baile-fearainn ann. Tha an t-ainm a' ciallachadh magh no blàr anns a bheil dà abhainn a' tighinn còmhla – ann an 'comar'. 'S iad sin Abhainn Spiothain agus Abhainn Lòchaidh.

Am measg nan daoine a bha a' fuireach ann, bha fear ainmeil – Sandaidh Camshron. Bha Sandaidh beò aig deireadh an naoidheamh linn deug, suas gu meadhan an fhicheadamh linn. Bha e ainmeil airson a bhith làidir.

Bha a phiuthar, Ceit, cuideachd uabhasach làidir. Thuirteise gun d' fhuair iad an neart bho athair am màthar, a bhuineadh do Chloinn 'ic a' Mhaoilein. Bha cliù acasan mar dhaoine neartmhor. Bha iad ag innse stòiridh mu fhear de na sinnsirean aca. Tharraing e each a-mach à poll mònach – le a làmhan fhèin!

Tha e coltach gun robh Sandaidh làidir gu nàdarrach. Cha robh e a' dèanamh trèanadh sam bith, thuirteise, ach beagan spealaidh. Chan eil mi cinnteach a bheil sin fìor. Ach tha e fìor gun robh e na bu thoilichte a bhith an sàs ann an obair-fearainn seach a bhith na lùth-chleasaiche ainmeil.

Ach chaidh e timcheall nan geamannan Gàidhealach. Bha seachd clachan deug de chuideam ann. A

competitions such as the high jump. And he was often winning competitions of strength – wrestling, throwing the hammer and lifting stones.

Sandy was on one occasion wrestling with George Hackenschmidt, the ‘Russian Lion’. Hackenschmidt reckoned that Sandy was very good. He offered the Scot an opportunity to go an international tour with him. Cameron declined. He returned home to Lochaber.

But he went on international tours early in the 20th century. He was in Australia and New Zealand. He was also in Russia. It appears, however, that he was just as happy to be at the Glenfinnan Highland Games!

Sandy died in 1951 at the age of 76. We’re unlikely to see his like again in Mucomir.

dh’aindeoin sin, bha e a’ buannachadh fharpaisean mar àrd-leum. Agus bha e gu tric a’ buannachadh fharpaisean neart – carachd, tilgeil an ùird agus togail chlach.

Bha Sandaidh a’ carachd turas an aghaidh George Hackenschmidt, an ‘Leòmhann Ruiseanach’. Bha Hackenschmidt dhen bheachd gun robh Sandaidh air leth math. Thabhainn e cothrom don Albannach a dhol air turas eadar-nàiseanta leis. Dhiùlt an Camshronach. Thill e dhachaigh a Loch Abar.

Ach chaidh e air tursan eadar-nàiseanta tràth san fhicheadamh linn. Bha e ann an Astràilia ’s Sealan Nuadh. Bha e cuideachd anns an Ruis. Tha e coltach, ge-tà, gun robh e a cheart cho toilichte a bhith aig Geamannan Gàidhealach Ghleann Fhionnainn!

Chaochail Sandaidh ann an naoi ceud deug, caogad ’s a h-aon (1951), aig aois seachdad ’s a sia. ’S iongantach gum faic sinn a leithid tuilleadh ann am Magh Comair.