

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 433 (which corresponds to Litir 737). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk.

I was recently on the Isle of Skye. I went for a walk in Sleat. That's in the south of the island. I walked the route to the old settlement of Leitir Fura. There is beautiful woodland there.

I was living in Sleat more than twenty years ago. My family and I often went to a shore near that road. Often, we saw otters. One time, one [of them] was eating a fish.

One winter's day, we went to the shore. There was a large leather armchair there. It was in good condition. We lifted it to above the tideline.

We returned to the same shore after a few days. What was lying on the shingle but another leather armchair. It was identical to the other one! The two chairs must have been thrown out of the same vessel.

From that point on, when we went to the shore, we had two comfortable chairs. And what a view from them – of the mountains of Knoydart at the far side of the Sound of Sleat.

An old droving road goes to Leitir Fura. The drovers were taking their cattle on that road. They were

Bha mi anns an Eilean Sgitheanach o chionn ghoirid. Chaidh mi air chuairt ann an Slèite. Tha sin ann an ceann a deas an eilein. Choisich mi an rathad gu seann bhaile Leitir Fura. Tha coille bhrèagha ann.

Bha mi a' fuireach ann an Slèite o chionn còrr is fichead bliadhna. Chaidh mi fhìn is mo theaghlach gu tric gu cladach faisg air an rathad sin. Gu tric, chunnaic sinn dòbhrain. Aon turas bha fear ag ithe iasg.

Aon latha geamhraidh, chaidh sinn don chladach. Bha cathair mhòr leathair ann. Bha i ann an deagh òrdugh. Thog sinn i gu os cionn an tiùrr.

Thill sinn don dearbh chladach às dèidh grunn làithean. Dè bha na laighe air a' mhol ach cathair leathair eile. Bha i co-ionann ris an tèile! Feumaidh gun robh an dà chathair air an tilgeil a-mach às an aon soitheach.

Bho sin a-mach, nuair a chaidh sinn don chladach, bha dà chathair chofhurtaile againn. Agus abair sealladh bhuapa – de bheanntan Chnòideirt air taobh thall Linne Shlèite.

Tha seann rathad dròbhaidh a' dol gu Leitir Fura. Bha na dròbhairean a' toirt an sprèidh air an rathad sin. Bha

going to Kylerhea. At Kylerhea, the drovers were swimming their cattle across the channel to the mainland.

Perhaps the people of Leitir Fura were themselves involved in droving. Certainly, they were involved in smuggling of rum and brandy. We think that they were also making charcoal from the trees in the wood.

When you reach Leitir Fura, there are plenty of ruined buildings there. It was a sizeable village with up to twelve houses.

There is a piece of poetry preserved from the old days when the MacInnes clan were living in Leitir Fura: Hó ìrean ó ro bha hó, we'd better rise my brown-haired girl, we'd better go home, we've been long together, turning our faces to Mull from Leitir Fura of the branches...

But what does 'Leitir Fura' mean? We'll look at that next week.

iad a' dol a Chaol Readha. Aig Caol Readha, bha na dròbhairean a' snàmh an cruaidh thar a' chaolais gu tìr-mòr.

'S dòcha gun robh muinntir Leitir Fura fhèin an sàs ann an dròbhaireachd. Gu cinnteach, bha iad an sàs ann an cùl-mhùtaireachd de ruma agus branndaidh. Tha sinn a' smaoinneachadh cuideachd gun robh iad a' dèanamh gual-fiodha de na craobhan anns a' choille.

Nuair a ruigeas tu Leitir Fura, tha tobhtaichean gu leòr ann. 'S e baile susbainteach a bha ann le suas ri dusan taigh.

Tha pìos bàrdachd air a ghlèidheadh bho na seann làithean nuair a bha Clann 'ic Aonghais a' fuireach ann an Leitir Fura: *Hó ìrean ó ro bha hó, Is mithich dhuinn èirigh mo nighean donn, Is mithich dhuinn a dhol dachaigh, Tha sinn fad air ar cèilidh, A thoirt ar n-aghaidh air Muile, À Leitir Fura nan geugan...*

Ach dè tha 'Leitir Fura' a' ciallachadh? Bheir sinn sùil air sin an-ath-sheachdain.