

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 519 (which corresponds to Litir 823). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclea@bbc.co.uk.

I went past Eilean Donan Castle many times, without going inside. If you don't know it, Eilean Donan is on Loch Duich, near Dornie in Lochalsh. There is a picture of it on many tins of biscuits and shortbread.

Finally, I went in recently. I was driving past. The day was wild and wintry. There were only ten cars in the carpark. I thought to myself, 'Why don't I go in today when it's not busy?' The weather was so bad that I got soaked while running between the carpark and the front door of the castle!

Eilean Donan is famous because it is attractive to the eye. And it's in a beautiful setting. We had a guide, a man from the local area. He knew a lot about weaponry. He was also telling us about the films made there. There are lots of them, from 'Highlander' to some Bollywood films. And many couples have made their wedding vows in the castle. Many reckon it to be a romantic place. Perhaps it wasn't

Chaidh mi seachad air Caisteal Eilean Donnain iomadh turas, gun a dhol a-steach ann. Mura h-eil sibh eòlach air, tha Eilean Donnain ann an Loch Dubhthaich, faisg air an Dòrnaidh ann an Loch Aillse. Tha dealbh dheth a' nochdadh air iomadh bogsa bhriosgaidean is aran-geàrr.

Mu dheireadh thall, chaidh mi a-steach ann o chionn ghoirid. Bha mi a' dràibheadh seachad air. Bha an latha robach, geamhraideil. Bha dìreach deich càraichean anns an raon-phàrcaidh. Shaoil mi rium fhìn, 'Carson nach tèid mi ann an-diugh nuair nach eil e trang?' Bha an aimsir cho dona 's gun robh mi air mo bhog-fhliuchadh, agus mi a' ruith eadar an raon-pàrcaidh agus doras mòr a' chaisteil!

Tha Eilean Donnain ainmeil a chionn 's gu bheil e tarraingeach don t-sùil. Agus tha e ann an suidheachadh brèagha. Bha fear-iùil againn, fear às an sgìre fhèin. Bha e fiosrachail air armachd. Bha e cuideachd ag innse dhuinn mu na filmichean a chaidh a dhèanamh ann. Tha an t-uabhas dhiubh ann, eadar 'Highlander' is feadhainn Bollywood. Agus 's iomadh cupall a thug am bòidean pòsaidh seachad sa chaisteal. Tha mòran ga thomhas mar àite romansach. 'S dòcha nach robh e buileach cho romansach anns

quite so romantic in olden times, however, when there was no electric heating or light!

What does the name – Eilean Donan – mean? The island is named for a saint in ancient times. He was Donan, the same man who was killed on Eigg in the 7th century. There are at least nine places called Kildonan in Scotland. The saint was famous at one time. It's just one island that carries the saint's name, as far as I know.

It's thought there was a Christian cell on the island, perhaps in the 6th or 7th centuries. There is no evidence of that type of building there today. But vitrified stones were found on the island. It's thought that they were from a building that belonged to the Iron Age. I enjoyed my visit to Eilean Donan. I'll tell you more about the castle next week.

an t-seann aimsir, ge-tà, nuair nach robh teas no solas an dealain ann!

Dè tha an t-ainm a' ciallachadh – Eilean Donnain? Tha an t-eilean ainmichte airson naomh anns an t-seann aimsir. B' esan Donnain, an aon duine a chaidh a mharbhadh ann an Eilean Eige anns an t-seachdamh linn. Tha co-dhiù naoi àiteachan air a bheil Cill Donnain mar ainm ann an Alba. Bha an naomh uaireigin ainmeil. 'S e dìreach aon eilean a tha a' giùlain ainm an naoimh, fhad 's as aithne dhomh.

Thathar a' smaoinichadh gun robh cealla Chrìosdail anns an eilean 's dòcha anns an t-siathamh no seachdamh linn. Chan eil fianais ann de thogalach dhen t-seòrsa sin an-diugh. Ach chaidh clachan glainnichte a lorg anns an eilean. Thathar a' smaoinichadh gun robh iad sin à togalach a bhuineadh do Linn an Iarainn. Chòrd mo thuras a dh'Eilean Donnain rium. Innsidh mi dhuibh tuilleadh mun chaisteal an-ath-sheachdain.