

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 536 (which corresponds to Litir 840). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you recently about Eilean Bàn. It is situated under the Skye Bridge. There is a lighthouse there that marks the channel between Eilean Bàn and the Isle of Skye.

On the day I was on Eilean Bàn, the lighthouse was open to the public. I climbed the steep stairs to the light room.

The lighthouse is old but still in good condition. It was built in 1857. What fuel was being used at that time? None other than whale oil.

After forty years, the fuel was changed to paraffin vapour. When the lighthouse was made automatic in the 1960s, it's acetylene that was being used. From that time, there was no need for staff who would keep an eye on the light all the time.

The lighthouse is no longer working. It was extinguished in 1993. Marker buoys and the bridge mark the channel for mariners. There is no need for the

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh an t-seachdain sa chaidh mun Eilean Bàn. Tha e suidhichte fo Dhrochaid an Eilein Sgitheanaich. Tha taigh-solais ann a tha a' comharrachadh a' chaolais eadar an t-Eilean Bàn agus an t-Eilean Sgitheanach.

Air an latha a bha mi anns an Eilean Bàn, bha an taigh-solais fosgailte don phoball. Shreap mi an staidhre cas gu seòmair an t-solais.

Tha an taigh-solais sean ach fhathast ann an deagh òrdugh. Chaidh a thogail ann an ochd ceud deug, caogad 's a seachd (1857). Dè an connadh a bhathar a' cleachdadh aig an àm sin? Dè, ach ola nam mucan-mara.

An dèidh ceathrad bliadhna, chaidh an connadh atharrachadh gu gas bho pharaffin. Nuair a chaidh an taigh-solais a dhèanamh fèin-obrachail anns na seasgadan dhen fhicheadamh linn, 's e acetylene a bhathar a' cleachdadh. Bho sin a-mach, cha robh feum air luchd-obrach a chumadh sùil air an t-solas fad na h-ùine.

Chan eil an taigh-solais ag obair tuilleadh. Chaidh a chur às ann an naoi ceud deug, naochad 's a trì (1993). Tha bollachan-stiùiridh agus an drochaid a' comharrachadh a' chaolais do

lighthouse at night. But it's still there as an official sailing mark through the day. Thus, it must be kept in good condition.

I'd recommend that you stop sometime on Eilean Bàn. Even if the lighthouse or the exhibition are not open, there is a hide where wildlife can be observed.

And if you have time, there is another place nearby where you should stop. That is the Plock of Kyle. There is a parking place beside the old bridge fees office. The plock is beautiful, with many plants and native trees growing, and with a sheltered shore that is interesting. The view from the summit is magnificent. And there are tables for picnics.

I was looking at the figures for Gaelic-speakers in that area. In 1891 in Kyle and Erbusaig together, 89% of the population was Gaelic-speaking. The community has changed greatly since then.

mharaichean. Chan eil feum air an taigh-sholais air an oidhche. Ach tha e ann fhathast mar chomharra-seòlaidh oifigeil tron latha. Mar sin, feumar a chumail ann an deagh òrdugh.

Mholainn gun stad sibh uaireigin anns an Eilean Bhàn. Eadhon mura h-eil an taigh-solais no an taisbeanadh fosgailte, tha bothan-falaich ann far am faodar coimhead air fiadh-bheatha.

Agus ma tha ùine agaibh, tha àite eile ann faisg air làimh far am bu chòir dhuibh stad. 'S e sin Ploc a' Chaoil. Tha àite-pàircidh ri taobh seann oifis nan cìsean-drochaid. Tha am ploc brèagha, le tòrr lusan is chraobhan dùthchasach a' fàs ann, agus le cladach fasgach a tha inntinneach. Tha an sealladh bhon mhullach air leth. Agus tha bùird ann airson chuirmean-cnuic.

Bha mi a' coimhead air na figearan airson luchd-bruidhne na Gàidhlig anns an sgìre sin. Ann an ochd ceud deug, naochad 's a h-aon (1891) anns a' Chaol agus Earbasaig còmhla, bha Gàidhlig aig ochdad 's a naoi às a' cheud dhen t-sluagh. Thàinig atharrachadh mòr air a' choimhearsnachd bhon uair sin.