

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 570 (which corresponds to Litir 874). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you about the Rev. John Morrison. He was the minister at Petty, near Inverness, at the end of the eighteenth century. Petty Church is near the shore. Near the church there is a large shallow bay. At low tide there is a large expanse of beach.

There was a large stone on the shore called 'Clach an Àbain'. One day, the minister was preaching. 'Graceless sinners,' he was shouting, 'if you don't turn away from your bad ways, God will sweep you into the place where no mercy is obtained. As a sign that I am telling the truth, Clach an Àbain will be moved a good distance towards the sea without a person putting his hand on it!'

It took twenty six years but it happened. The occurrence was famous. The Ordnance Survey put information about it on their maps. There is a map that was made more than a hundred years ago. 'Clach an Àbain' is marked on the map. A distance away, this is written: 'Site of Clach an Àbain AD 1799'.

The minister had the second

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mun Urramach Iain Moireasdan. B' esan ministear Pheitidh, faisg air Inbhir Nis, aig deireadh an ochdamh linn deug. Tha Eaglais Pheitidh faisg air a' chladach. Faisg air an eaglais, tha bàgh mòr eudomhainn. Aig ìsle-mhara bidh tràigh mhòr ann.

Bha clach mhòr air a' chladach air an robh 'Clach an Àbain'. Latha a bha seo, bha am ministear a' searmonachadh. 'A pheacachaibh gun ghràs,' bha e ag èigheachd, 'mura seachain sibh ur droch dhòighean, sguabaidh Dia sibh don àite far nach fhaighear tròcair. Mar chomharra gu bheil mi ag innse na firinn, thèid Clach an Àbain a ghluasad pìos mòr a dh'ionnsaigh na mara gun duine a làmh a chur oirre!'

Thug e sia air fhichead bliadhna, ach thachair e. Bha an tachartas ainmeil. Chuir an Suirbhidh Òrdanais fios mu dheidhinn air na mapaichean aca. Tha mapa ann a chaidh a dhèanamh o chionn còrr is ceud bliadhna. Tha 'Clach an Àbain' comharraichte air a' mhapa. Pìos air falbh, tha seo sgrìobhte: 'Site of Clach an Àbain AD 1799'.

Bha an dà-shealladh aig a'

sight and he saw that the stone would be moved. It happened during the night on the twentieth of February 1799. It was picked up and taken away from the land more than two hundred yards.

How did it move? Well, it was winter. There was a big freeze. It appears that there was an ice-sheet surrounding the stone. That's the Gaelic for 'sheet of ice' – reòth-leac. The ice was a foot and a half thick.

Well, people reckoned that the tide picked up the ice-sheet. It picked up the stone with it. There was a great storm. Between the wind and the ebbing of the tide, the stone was moved over the shore.

When people awoke the next morning, Clach an Àbain was not where it had been the previous night. And they remembered the minister's prophecy. He certainly had the second sight! Mr Morrison proved his ability in other ways as well – as we'll see next week.

mhinistear agus chunnaic e gum biodh a' chlach air a gluasad. Thachair e air an oidhche air an fhicheadamh latha dhen Ghearran, seachd ceud deug, naochad 's a naoi (1799). Bha i air a togail agus air a toirt air falbh bhon tìr còrr is dà cheud slat.

Ciamar a ghluais i? Uill, 's e an geamhradh a bha ann. Bha reothadh mòr ann. Tha e coltach gun robh reòth-leac timcheall na cloiche. 'S e sin a' Ghàidhlig air 'sheet of ice' – reòth-leac. Bha troigh gu leth de thighead anns an deigh.

Co-dhiù, bha daoine dhen bheachd gun do thog an tìde-mhara an reòth-leac. Thog i a' chlach leatha. Bha stoirm mhòr ann. Eadar a' ghaoth agus tràghadh na mara, chaidh a' chlach a ghluasad thar a' chladaich.

Nuair a dhùisg daoine an ath mhadainn cha robh Clach an Àbain far an robh i an oidhche roimhe. Agus chuimhnich iad fàidheadaireachd a' mhinisteir. Bha an dà-shealladh aige, gu cinnteach! Dhearbh Mgr Moireasdan a chomas ann an dòighean eile cuideachd – mar a chì sinn an-ath-sheachdain.