

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 618 (which corresponds to Litir 922). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclea@bbc.co.uk.

There's a famous place on Jura called Cnoc an t-Sabhail. People are more familiar with it in its English guise – Barnhill. It's famous because that's where George Orwell wrote his famous novel 1984.

North of Barnhill there is another famous place – the Corryvreckan. The Corryvreckan is the most famous whirlpool in Scotland, and the third most powerful in the world. It is north of Jura, in the narrows between Jura and Scarba. It is a danger to mariners.

You'll understand that it's 'whirlpool' I mean by 'cuairt-shruth'. Does the Corryvreckan, however, really swallow mariners? Well, according to a report I read on the internet, a film crew did a test. They threw a mannequin into the Corryvreckan. It had on a lifejacket, and also a depth gauge.

The mannequin was swallowed up by the current and it disappeared under the sea. When it appeared again on the surface, it was a distance away. The depth gauge showed that it had gone down to eight hundred feet below the surface of the sea! Now, my marine chart

Tha àite ainmeil ann an Diùra air a bheil Cnoc an t-Sabhail mar ainm. Tha e nas aithnichte do dhaoine le dreach na Beurla air – Barnhill. Tha e ainmeil a chionn 's gur ann an sin a sgrìobh George Orwell an nobhail aige 1984.

Gu tuath air Cnoc an t-Sabhail tha àite ainmeil eile – Coire Bhreacain. 'S e Coire Bhreacain an cuairt-shruth as ainmeile ann an Alba, agus an treas fear as cumhachdaiche anns an t-saoghal. Tha e gu tuath air Diùra, anns a' chaolas eadar Diùra agus Sgarba. Tha e na chunnart do mharaichean.

Tuigidh sibh gur e whirlpool a tha mi a' ciallachadh le 'cuairt-shruth'. Am bi Coire Bhreacain, ge-tà, dha-rìribh a' slugadh mharaichean? Uill, a rèir aithris a leugh mi air an eadar-lìon, rinn sgioba filmidh deuchainn. Thilg iad corp fuadain a steach a Choire Bhreacain. Bha seacaid-sàbhalaidd air a' chorp, agus inneal-tomhais doimhneachd cuideachd.

Chaidh an corp a shlugadh leis an t-sruth agus dh'fhalbh e fon mhuir. Nuair a nochd e a-rithist air uachdar, bha e pìos air falbh. Sheall an t-inneal-tomhais doimhneachd gun robh e air a dhol sìos gu ochd ceud troigh fo uachdar na mara! Nise, tha a' chairt-mhara agam ag innse dhomh nach eil an doimhneachd a' dol

tells me that the depth does not exceed two hundred metres. But, anyway, apparently, the mannequin went into the depths.

A year or two ago, my son told me he was going to swim in the Corryvreckan. He is very competent at swimming in challenging places. But the Corryvreckan is exceptionally challenging. Before I had a chance to question him, he said, 'It will be at slack tide!' But slack tide does not last long. It's the flood tide that's most dangerous, particularly during spring tides. The whirlpool appears, as does a sea current running at eight knots.

The Corryvreckan is only six kilometres from the house in which George Orwell was living. One summer's day, the famous writer almost lost his life there. I'll tell you more about what happened next week.

seachad air dà cheud meatair. Ach, co-dhiù, a rèir choltais, chaidh an corp fuadain don aigeann.

Bliadhna no dhà air ais, thuir mo mhac rium gun robh e a' dol a shnàmh ann an Coire Bhreacain. Tha e gu math comasach a bhith a' snàmh ann an àiteachan dùbhlach. Ach tha Coire Bhreacain tuilleadh is dùbhlach. Mus d' fhuair mi cothrom ceist a chur air, thuir e, 'Aig àm an eadar-shruth a bhitheas e!' Ach cha mhair an t-eadar-shruth fada. 'S e an sruth-lìonaidh as cunnartaiche, gu h-àraidh aig àm an reothairt. Nochdaidh a' chuairt-shruth, agus sruth-mara a tha a' dol aig ochd mìle-mara san uair.

Tha Coire Bhreacain dìreach sia cilemeatairean air falbh bhon taigh anns an robh George Orwell a' fuireach. Aon latha samhraidh, cha mhor nach do chaill an sgrìobhadair ainmeil a bheatha ann. Innsidh mi dhuibh tuilleadh mu na thachair an-ath-sheachdain.