

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 732 (which corresponds to Litir 1,036). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.maclea@bbc.co.uk.

A few weeks ago, I was in Queensland in Australia. I was in the capital city, Brisbane. I met a group of Gaelic learners in the city's main library. My blessings on them for learning our language.

An amazing tree grows there. People call it the Bunya Pine. It reaches fifty metres in height. It's rather like the Monkey Puzzle Tree. The leaves are tough and sharp. It's the nuts that make the tree famous. They are tasty and nutritious. I tried some that had been roasted. They were somewhat like a mixture of brazil nut and potato. I enjoyed them.

The nuts appear in fruits – cones – that are incredibly big and heavy. Each one is up to ten kilograms in weight. If a Bunya cone fell on your head from a high branch – well, it could split your head. And they fall without warning.

It's thought that dinosaurs were eating the nuts, for the tree is very old. Whether or not that is true, the aborigines were, and are,

O chionn beagan sheachdainean, bha mi ann an Tìr na Banrigh ann an Astràilia. Bha mi anns a' phrìomh bhaile, Brisbane. Thachair mi ri buidheann de luchd-ionnsachaidh na Gàidhlig ann am prìomh leabharlann a' bhaile. Mo bheannachd aca airson a bhith ag ionnsachadh ar cànan.

Tha craobh iongantach a' fàs an sin. Canaidh daoine an Giuthas Bunya rithe. Bidh i a' ruigsinn caogad meatair ann an àirde. Tha i rudeigin coltach ri Craobh-thòimhseachain a' Mhuncaidh. Tha na duilleagan rìghinn agus biorach. 'S iad na cnothan a tha a' dèanamh na craoibhe ainmeil. Tha iad blasta agus beathachail. Dh'fheuch mi feadhainn a bha air an ròstadh. Bha iad car coltach ri measgachadh de chnò-bhrasail agus buntàta. Chòrd iad rium.

Bidh na cnothan a' nochdadh ann am measan – durcain – a tha cianail mòr is trom. Bidh suas ri deich cileagram de chuideam anns gach fear. Nan tuiteadh durcan Bunya air do cheann à geug àrd – uill, dh'fhaodadh e do cheann a sgàineadh. Agus bidh iad a' tuiteam gun rabhadh.

Thathar a' smaoinichadh gun robh dìneasaran ag ithe nan cnothan oir tha a' chraobh gu math sean. Co-dhiù tha sin fìor gus nach eil, bha agus tha na tùsanaich gu

very keen on them. Clans would gather together at particular times to eat the Bunya nuts.

That was a time for joy, when marriages would be organised, and peace between the clans. In 1842, the felling of these trees in a large area was prohibited, because they were so valuable.

Today, it is not only the aborigines who are keen on Bunya nuts. Some people put them on a pizza or make pesto with them!

In addition to Bunya nuts, I ate another indigenous food while I was in Queensland. That was a sort of lobster called a Moreton Bay Bug. It is more tasty than its name! But I enjoyed the Bunya nuts more. Fortunately the cone in which they [had been contained] fell some distance from me!

math measail orra. Bhiodh fineachan a' tighinn cruinn còmhla aig amannan àraidh airson na cnothan Bunya ithe.

B' e sin àm airson gàirdeachas, nuair a bha pòsaidhean air an cur air dòigh, agus sìth eadar na fineachan. Ann an ochd ceud deug, ceathrad 's a dhà (1842), chaidh stad a chur air leagail nan craobh seo ann an sgìre mhòr, a chionn 's gun robh iad cho prìseil.

An-diugh, chan iad na tùsanaich a-mhàin a tha measail air cnothan Bunya. Bidh feadhainn gan cur air *pizza* no a' dèanamh *pesto* leotha!

A bharrachd air cnothan Bunya, dh'ith mi biadh dùthchasach eile fhad 's a bha mi ann an Tìr na Banrigh. B' e sin nàdar de ghiomach air a bheil *Moreton Bay Bug*. Tha e nas blasta na ainm! Ach chòrd na cnothan Bunya rium na b' fheàrr. Gu fortanach thuit an durcan anns an robh iad pìos air falbh bhuam!