

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 1,071 (which corresponds to Litir 1,375). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

<i>There is a 'bridge' that is not a bridge in the eastern Highlands. It's north of Inverness on the border between the low country of Easter Ross and East Sutherland. It's near Tain.</i> <i>It's called Drochaid an Obh. It's a sandbank/shoal – a sandbank. It's at the mouth of the Dornoch Firth, between Dornoch and the Morrich More. It's a danger to mariners. The sea there is shallow and it is very rough at times.</i> <i>Before the road bridge was built across the Dornoch Firth, people were crossing the firth on a ferry. In 1809, the ferry sank at Drochaid an Obh. Scores (of people) were drowned.</i> <i>In December 1864, the schooner, the Sarah, was sailing between Portmahomack and Tain. The weather wasn't too bad but there were big waves at Drochaid an Obh.</i> <i>The vessel's keel went on the sand. It wasn't long until the vessel sank. Five of the six crew members on board lost their lives.</i> <i>Drochaid an Obh also has an English name. That is 'Gizzen</i>	Tha 'drochaid' nach eil na drochaid air taobh an ear na Gàidhealtachd. Tha i tuath air Inbhir Nis, air a' chrìch eadar Machair Rois agus Machair Chataibh. Tha i faisg air Baile Dhubhthaich. 'S e Drochaid an Obh an t-ainm oirre. 'S e oitir a tha innte – oitir-ghainmhich. Tha i aig beul Linne Dhòrnaich, eadar Dòrnach agus a' Mhormhaich Mhòr. Tha i na cunnart do mharaichean. Tha a' mhuir an sin eudomhainn agus bidh i gu math garbh aig amannan. Mus robh an drochaid-rathaid ann thar Linne Dhòrnaich, bha daoine a' dol tarsainn na linne air bàt'-aiseig. Ann an ochd ceud deug 's a naoi (1809) chaidh am bàta fodha air Drochaid an Obh. Bha na ficheadan air am bàthadh. Anns an Dùbhlachd ochd ceud deug, seasgad 's a ceithir (1864), bha an sgùinear, an Sarah, a' seòladh eadar Port mo Cholmaig agus Baile Dhubhthaich. Cha robh an t-side ro dhona ach bha tuinn mhòra ann aig Drochaid an Obh. Chaidh druim an t-soithich air a' ghainmhich. Cha b' fhada gus an deach an soitheach fodha. Chaill còignear dhen t-sianar air bòrd am beatha. Tha ainm Beurla air Drochaid an Obh cuideachd. 'S e sin 'Gizzen Briggs'.
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<i>Briggs'. In Lowland Scots, Gizen Briggs means 'leaky bridge'. The great place names expert – William Watson, who belong to Easter Ross – was of the opinion that it was from the Old Norse language that the name came. In Old Norse, it also means 'leaky bridge'.</i> <i>The Obh was a supernatural marine creature. It is also recorded as aobh or baobh. That means a 'wicked, mischievous, female spirit'. A creature that would take mariners to their death.</i> <i>There is another tale about the sailing vessel, the Rotterdam. Her captain was a rogue. He reckoned that the ship was so good that he ought not to fear anything. But he came to the Dornoch Firth. And the Gizen Briggs sank him.</i> <i>Are the Gizen Briggs natural? Well, according to oral tradition, they were constructed. I'll tell you the tale in the next Litir.</i>	Annas a' Bheurla Ghallda, tha <i>Gizen Briggs</i> a' ciallachadh 'drochaid aoidionach' no 'leaky bridge'. Bha an sàr-eòlaiche air ainmean-àite – Uilleam MacBhàtair, a bhuineadh do Mhachair Rois – dhen bheachd gur ann bhon t-Seann Lochlannais a thàinig an t-ainm. Ann an Seann Lochlannais, tha e cuideachd a' ciallachadh 'drochaid aoidionach'. 'S e creutair-mara os-nàdarrach a bha anns an Obh. Tha i air a clàradh cuideachd mar <i>aobh</i> no <i>baobh</i>. Tha sin a' ciallachadh 'wicked, mischievous, female spirit'. Creutair a bheireadh maraichean dom bàs. Tha sgeul eile mun t-soitheach-seòlaidh, an <i>Rotterdam</i>. Bha an sgiobair aice na thrustar. Bha e dhen bheachd gun robh an long cho math 's nach bu chòir eagal sam bith a bhith air ro rud sam bith. Ach thàinig e gu Linne Dhòrnaich. Agus chuir Drochaid an Obh fodha e. A bheil Drochaid an Obh nàdarrach? Uill, a rèir beul-aithris, chaidh a togail. Innsidh mi dhuibh an sgeul anns an ath Litir.
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