

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 1,079 (which corresponds to Litir 1,383). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learnghaelic.scot.

In the previous four Litrichean, we were in Glen Roy in Brae Lochaber. We are now high up in the glen. This place is famous throughout the world among geologists. Why? Well, that's where you'll see the 'parallel roads' – three lines on the hills that are parallel with each other.

In an account that was published in 1822, there is this: 'In English, they are now called parallel roads; the inhabitants know them by the name of the King's hunting roads.' The local people reckoned that the roads were made by people. Kings of Scotland were using them when they were hunting in the area. From time to time, the kings were staying in Inverlochy Castle – near where Fort William is today.

The 'roads' – at a distance – look like walking routes. But I was wanting to go to one of them, to see if it was easy to walk on it.

I climbed up the slope from the parking area. I went past the first parallel road without realising it. Fortunately, the map on my phone was connected to GPS. I returned down to the road. But it wasn't obvious at all.

Ann na ceithir Litrichean a dh'fhalbh, bha sinn ann an Gleann Ruaidh ann am Bràigh Loch Abar. Tha sinn a-nise gu h-àrd anns a' ghleann. Tha an t-àite seo ainmeil air feadh an t-saoghail am measg eòlaichean chreagan. Carson? Uill, sin far am faic sibh na 'rathaidean co-shìnteach' – trì loidhnichean air a' mhonadh a tha co-shìnteach ri chèile.

Ann an cunntas a chaidh fhoillseachadh ann an ochd ceud deug is dhà air fhichead (1822), tha seo: 'In English, they are now called parallel roads; the inhabitants know them by the name of the King's hunting roads.' Bha muinntir an àite dhen bheachd gun robh na rathaidean air an togail le daoine. Bha rìghrean na h-Alba gan cleachdadh nuair a bha iad a' sealg anns an sgìre. Bho àm gu àm, bha na rìghrean a' fuireach ann an Caisteal Inbhir Lòchaidh – faisg air far a bheil An Gearasdan an-diugh.

Tha na 'rathaidean' – aig astar – a' coimhead coltach ri ceumannan-coise. Ach bha mi airson a dhol gu fear dhiubh, feuch an robh e furasta coiseachd air.

Shreap mi suas an leathad bhon àite-phàrcaidh. Chaidh mi seachad air a' chiad rathad co-shìnteach gun fhiosta. Gu fortanach, bha am mapa air a' fòn agam co-cheangailte ri GPS. Thill mi sìos don rathad. Ach cha robh e

In the nineteenth century, scientists began to examine the place. People were of the opinion that water was involved in the formation of the roads. The three roads are parallel with each other but they are also horizontal. Were there old shorelines there high up in the hills of Glen Roy? How could that be when the roads are so high above the sea?

In 1838, a young scientist came to the Highlands. He was Charles Darwin. He had just returned from his journey around the world on the Beagle. He was very interested in the parallel roads. But, as we shall see, it was another man who worked out how the roads came into being in the Ice Age.

follaiseach idir.

Ann an naoidheamh linn deug, thòisich luchd-saidheans air sgrùdadh a dhèanamh air an àite. Bha daoine dhen bheachd gun robh uisge an sàs ann an cruthachadh nan rathaidean. Tha na trì rathaidean co-shìnteach ri chèile ach tha iad cuideachd còmhnaidh. An robh seann chladaichean an sin gu h-àrd air monaidhean Ghlinn Ruaidh? Ciamar a b' urrainn sin a bhith, agus na rathaidean cho àrd os cionn na mara?

Ann an ochd ceud deug, trithead 's a h-ochd (1838), thàinig neach-saidheans òg don Ghàidhealtachd. B' esan Teàrlach Darwin. Bha e dìreach air tilleadh bho a thuras air feadh an t-saoghail air a' Bheagle. Bha ùidh mhòr aige anns na rathaidean co-shìnteach. Ach, mar a chì sinn, 's e fear eile a dh'obraich a-mach mar a thàinig na rathaidean gu bith ann an Linn na Deighe.