

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

A special programme, in the form of a “letter”, designed for Gaelic learners who already have some knowledge of the language. A short vocabulary and comments on points of grammar and figures of speech are included with the text. If you have comments, Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleaen@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 496. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 192 corresponds to Litir 496.

Note: A special offer from Clì Gàidhlig – a free copy of the book and DVD “Leabhar nan Litrichean” (the first 200 Litrichean). P & P £3 in UK. Contact dj@cli.org.uk for details or phone 01463 226710

Nuair a bha mi aig a’ Mhòd Nàiseanta **anns an Eaglais Bhric** an-uiridh, ghabh mi an cothrom sùil a thoirt air Balla Antonine, an rud as motha a thog na Ròmanaich ann an Alba. Chan eil mòran dheth air fhàgail an sin – dìreach dìg a tha a’ ruith tro phàirc aig oir a’ bhaile. Ach tha sin fhèin inntinneach.

Tha Balla Antonine a-nise clàraichte air Clàr Dualchas na Cruinne aig UNESCO. Tha e am measg àiteachan a chaidh a chlàradh leis gu bheil iad a’ riochdachadh crìochan an fhearainn a bha fo smachd Ìompaireachd na Ròimhe. Agus, a’ dol eadar taobh an iar agus taobh an ear na h-Alba, tha am balla gu math fada. Gu dearbh, tha e seasgad cilemeatair a dh’fhaid.

Anns a’ bhliadhna ceud, trithead ’s a h-ochd (138 AD), chaochail an t-Ìompaire Hadrian. **Cha leig mi leas** innse dhuibh gur e Hadrian a thog am balla mòr a tha fhathast ri fhaicinn ann an ceann a tuath Shasainn. B’ e Balla Hadrian ceann a tuath na h-Ìompaireachd.

Bha Hadrian ag iarraidh gum biodh Marcus Aurelius a’ leantainn air mar Ìompaire. Ach bha Marcus ro òg. Fhuair Antoninus Pius an dreuchd – anns an eadar-ama, mar a bha Hadrian ga fhaicinn.

Bha Antoninus leth-cheud ’s a h-aon bliadhna a dh’aois nuair a chaochail Hadrian. Bha sin rudeigin sean aig an àm ud. Bha Hadrian dhen bheachd nach biodh Antoninus beò ro fhada. Agus fhad ’s a bha e beò, nach rachadh e an aghaidh nan co-dhùnaidhean mòra a rinn Hadrian fhèin. Cha robh Antoninus air a bhith na shaighdear. Bha Hadrian dhen bheachd gun robh am balla a thog e sàbhailte mar chrìoch a-tuath na h-Ìompaireachd ann am Breatainn.

Uill, bha e fada ceàrr! Chan e a-mhàin gun do thog Antoninus balla ùr gu tuath air balla Hadrian, ach bha e air cathair an Ìompaire fad trì bliadhna fichead – na b’ fhaide na gach Ìompaire roimhe, ach a’ chiad fhear, Augustus. Cha robh Balla Antonine air a chleachdadh ach airson mu fhichead bliadhna, ach dh’fhàg e dìleab luachmhor.

Cha robh e buileach mar a bha Balla Hadrian. Anns a' chuid mhòir, bha e air a thogail de sgrathan, seach clachan. Bha dìg mhòr air an taobh a tuath dheth, agus rathad mòr air an taobh a deas dheth. Ach, mar a bha le Balla Hadrian, bha daingnich co-cheangailte ris. Bha mi a' smaoinichadh gum biodh e inntinneach sgrìob bheag a ghabhail bho cheann gu ceann a' bhalla, a' toirt sùil air na daingnich.

Tòisicheamaid aig a' cheann an iar, ma-thà – aig Dùn Chill Phàdraig no *Old Kilpatrick Fort*. Tha sin faisg air ceann a tuath Drochaid Arasgain thar Abhainn Chluaidh. Tha làrach an dùin a' còmhdachadh còrr is ceithir acaire. Tha e coltach gun robh dùn air choreigin aig na Ròmanaich an sin fada mus robh am balla air a thogail. 'S dòcha gun do chleachd na Ròmanaich an daingneach sin mar àite às an cuireadh iad cabhlach gu ruige taobh siar na h-Alba.

Gu sear air Cill Phàdraig tha Dùn Tòchair. Tha Dùn Tòchair, a rèir choltais, a' riochdachadh ainm nas sine – Druim Tòchair – *the ridge of the causeway*. Chan eil mòran air fhàgail dhen daingneach Ròmanach sin.

An do mhothaich sibh rudeigin? Tha ainmean Beurla nan dùn thuige seo air a thighinn bhon Ghàidhlig. Saoil an lean sin? 'S e an t-ath àite air a' bhalla dùn beag air a bheil Cleddans – *Cleddans Fortlet*. Chan eil sin a' coimhead Gàidhlig, a bheil? Uill, chì sinn – an ath-sheachdain.

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Faclan na Litreach: Balla Antonine: *Antonine Wall*; Ròmanaich: *Romans*; dìg: *ditch*; daingneach: *fort, stronghold*.

Abairtean na Litreach: chan eil mòran dheth air fhàgail: *not much of it is left*; clàraichte air Clàr Dualchas na Cruinne: *listed on the World Heritage List*; leis gu bheil iad a' riochdachadh crìochan an fhearainn a bha fo smachd Ìompaireachd na Ròimhe: *because they represent the boundaries of the land that was controlled by the Roman Empire*; seasgad cilemeatair: *sixty kilometres*; anns an eadar-ama: *in the interim*; rudeigin sean aig an àm ud: *somewhat old at that time*; nach rachadh e an aghaidh nan co-dhùnaidhean mòra: *that he wouldn't reverse [go against] the big decisions*; cha robh Antoninus air a bhith na shaighdear: *Antoninus had not been a soldier*; bha e fada ceàrr: *he was very much mistaken*; chan e a-mhàin gun do thog X balla ùr: *not only did X build a new wall*; cathair an Ìompaire: *the Emperor's throne*; dh'fhàg e dìleab luachmhor: *he left a valuable legacy*; bha e air a thogail de sgrathan, seach clachan: *it was made of turf, rather than stone*; air an taobh a tuath dheth: *on the north side of it*; sgrìob bheag a ghabhail: *to take a wee excursion*; tòisicheamaid aig a' cheann an iar: *let's start at the west end*; Drochaid Arasgain thar Abhainn Chluaidh: *Erskine Bridge over the Clyde*; tha làrach an dùin a' còmhdachadh còrr is ceithir acaire: *the site of the fort covers more than four acres*; às an cuireadh iad cabhlach: *from where they would send a fleet*; gu ruige taobh siar na h-Alba: *to the west[ern coast] of Scotland*; saoil an lean sin?: *do you reckon that might continue?*

Puing-chànain na Litreach: anns an Eaglais Bhric: *in Falkirk. All the names for Falkirk – in Gaelic, British and Scots (Faw Kirk) – mean the same – “speckled church”. The Gaelic name An Eaglais Bhreac has been established for centuries. Because eaglais is a feminine word, any adjective qualifying it in the dative singular*

case is traditionally slenderized (cf air an làimh dheis, not air an làmh dheas). Thus, traditionally, the Gaels would say “anns an Eaglais Bhric”. I have retained this traditional usage in the Litir but note that many people today would naturally say anns an Eaglais Bhreac, retaining traditional lenition of the adjective but not slenderization.

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: Cha leig mi leas innse dhuibh: *I don't need to tell you.*

* Tha “Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh” air a maoinachadh le MG ALBA