

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.macleon@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 497. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 193 corresponds to Litir 497.

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Tha sinn a’ leantainn slighe Balla Antonine tro mheadhan na h-Alba on cheann an iar don cheann an ear. Tha sinn a’ tadhal air na dùin a thog na Ròmanaich. An t-seachdain sa chaidh thug sinn sùil air a’ chiad dhà – Dùn Chill Phàdraig agus Dùn Tòchair – agus iad le chèile a’ giùlain ainmean Gàidhlig. ’S e an treas dùn *Cleddans Fortlet*. Chan eil coltas Gàidhlig air sin, a bheil?

Uill, tha cuid dhen bheachd gur e dha-rìribh ainm Gàidhlig a th’ ann, ’s gu bheil e a’ tighinn bhon fhacal *cladhan*. A rèir Faclair Dwelly tha *cladhan* a’ ciallachadh “channel, very shallow stream”. Sgrìobh Uilleam MacBhàtair gun robh e a’ ciallachadh “little ditch” agus gur e *Claddens* leis an “s” an riochd iolra ann am Beurla.

Gu sear air *Claddens* tha *Castlehill Fort* – is tha an t-ainm sin soilleir gu leòr – agus mìle gu leth nas fhaide sear air sin tha *Bearsden Fort*. Chan eil càil ri fhaicinn dheth an-diugh ach an taigh-ionnlaid, a tha eadar flataichean àrda anns a’ bhaile.

Tha an t-ainm *Bearsden* annasach. Ann an Gàidhlig ’s e Cill Phàdraig Ùr a th’ air an sgìre eaglais. Agus ’s e *New Kirk* a bh’ oirre ann am Beurla. Ach nuair a thogadh rathad-iarainn agus stèisean ann an ochd ceud deug, seasgad ’s a trà (1863), chaidh ainmeachadh mar *Bearsden Station*. Tha cuid dhen bheachd gun robh sin an dèidh taigh faisg air an stèisean.

Ma leanas sinn oirnn air Balla Antonine, ruigidh sinn *Balmuilty Fort* a tha ri taobh Abhainn Chealbhainn. Bha an daingneach sin gu math mòr, agus air a dhèanamh de chloich, seach sgrathan. Bha e a’ còmhdachadh ceithir acaire de dh’fhearann. Nise, chanainn gur e *Balmuilty* ainm Gàidhlig ach chan eil mi cinnteach **dè is ciall dha**.

’S e an ath dhùn – *Cadder Fort*. ’S ann à canan nam Breatannach – seann Chuimris – a thàinig *Cadder*. Tha e a’ ciallachadh “dùn”. Às dèidh sin, *Kirkintilloch* no Cathair Cheann Tulaich. Tha an t-ainm sin a’ tighinn bho fhreumh Breatannach – *Caerpentaloch* – “fort at the end of the hill”. Tha a’ Ghàidhlig gu math coltach ri sin agus tha e a’ ciallachadh an aon rud.

Gu sear air sin tha *Auchendavy Fort*. Tha sin a’ coimhead coltach ri ainm achaidh ann an Gàidhlig. Fhuair sinn **ainm fear de na saighdearan** a bha stèidhichte anns an dùn sin. B’ esan Marcus Cocceius Firmus, *centurion* a bhuineadh don Dàrna Legion. Chuir

esan air dòigh ceithir altraichean ann, co-cheangailte ri deich diathan pàganach. Thathar a' dèanamh dheth gun do rugadh Marcus ann an taobh sear na h-Ìompaireachd, timcheall ceann shìos Abhainn Danube. Mus deach e a Bhreatainn, bha e anns an Ròimh far an robh e na bhall de dh'fheachd-dìon phearsanta an Ìompaire fhèin.

'S iad an ath dhà dhaingneach air a' bhalla *Bar Hill Fort* agus *Croy Hill Fort*. Is iongantach mura h-eil *Bar* ann am *Bar Hill* a' tighinn bhon Ghàidhlig bàrr – “*the uppermost part*”, is gun deach a' Bheurla *hill* a chur ris às dèidh làimh. Chithear tobhtaichean an dùin an sin fhathast – agus seann tobar Ròmanach.

Thathar a' dèanamh dheth gu bheil *Croy* a' tighinn bhon Ghàidhlig *cruaidh*, agus dh'fhaodadh sin a bhith, ceart gu leòr. 'S e seo an aon phìos de Bhalla Antonine far nach robh dìg air a chladhach làimh ris a' bhalla. 'S e a bu choireach ri sin gun robh a' chreag – *basalt* is *dolerite* – dìreach ro chruaidh. Nach eil an t-ainm ag innse sin dhuinn?

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Faclan na Litreach: Balla Antonine: *Antonine Wall*; Ròmanaich: *Romans*; Uilleam MacBhàtair: *William J Watson* [*“The Celtic Place Names of Scotland”*]; soilleir: *clear*; Abhainn Chealbhainn: *River Kelvin*; daingneach: *fort, stronghold*; tobar: *well [for water]*.
Abairtean na Litreach: on cheann an iar don cheann an ear: *from the western end to the eastern end*; a' tadhal air na dùin: *visiting the forts*; agus iad le chèile a' giùlain ainmean Gàidhlig: *which both carry Gaelic names*; chan eil càil ri fhaicinn dheth ach an taigh-ionnlaid: *nothing is to be seen of it but the bath-house*; eadar flataichean àrda: *between high flats*; nuair a thogadh rathad-iarainn agus stèisean: *when a railway line and station were built*; chaidh ainmeachadh mar: *it was named as*; air a dhèanamh de chloich, seach sgrathan: *made of stone, rather than turf*; ceithir acaire de dh'fhearann: *four acres of land*; freumh Breatannach: *a British [Cumbric] root*; ainm achaidh: *a field name*; a bhuineadh don: *who belonged to the*; chuir esan air dòigh ceithir altraichean ann: *he erected four altars there*; co-cheangailte ri deich diathan pàganach: *connected to ten pagan gods*; thathar a' dèanamh dheth: *it is said [made out]*; taobh sear na h-Ìompaireachd: *the east of the Empire*; timcheall ceann shìos Abhainn Danube: *around the Lower Danube*; far an robh e na bhall de dh'fheachd-dìon phearsanta an Ìompaire fhèin: *where he was a member of the Emperor's own bodyguard*; chithear tobhtaichean an dùin an sin fhathast: *the wall bases of the fort can be seen there still*; far nach robh dìg air a chladhach làimh ris a' bhalla: *where a ditch was not dug next to the wall*; 's e a bu choireach ri sin: *the thing that was responsible for that was*; dìreach ro chruaidh: *simply too hard*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: ainm fear de na saighdearan: *the name of one of the soldiers*. Note that we use fear [usually] in preference to aon for “one of the” with a masculine noun. The feminine equivalent is tè. If you're not sure of the gender of your noun, however, you can get away with saying [eg] ainm aon de na saighdearan. Note that fear here retains its nominative form. We might say ainm fir – a man's name – where fear takes the genitive singular form but in a construction like the one above where fear is following by a qualifying [dative] phrase, the nominative form is retained.

Gnathas-ainnt na Litreach: chan eil mi cinnteach dè is ciall dha: *I'm not sure what it means*.

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