

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.macleam@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 526. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 222 corresponds to Litir 526.

Mar a bha mi ag ràdh an t-seachdain sa chaidh, bha mi a’ seòladh o chionn ghoirid ann an gheat far costa siar na h-Alba. Air latha brèagha chaidh mi seachad air bàgh mòr gu tuath air Asainte air a bheil *Eddrachillis Bay*. Air a’ chiad shealladh, chan eil e follaiseach dè tha an t-ainm sin a’ ciallachadh, a bheil? Eddrachillis. Uill, tha e a’ tighinn bhon Ghàidhlig *Eadar Dà Chaolas*. Eadar Dà Chaolas – Eadrachaolas – Eddrachillis. Chì sibh mar a dh’atharraich an t-ainm air an t-slighe a-steach don Bheurla.

Ach a’ coimhead air na cairtean-mara a bh’ air bòrd na gheat, cha robh e follaiseach dè dìreach na caolais a thathar a’ ciallachadh anns an ainm. Dè an dà chaolas a th’ air gach taobh de dh’Eadar Dà Chaolas? A’ coimhead air na mapaichean-tìre aig an t-Suirbhidh Òrdanais anns an taigh, cha robh e follaiseach nas motha dè an dà chaolas a thathar a’ ciallachadh.

Gu fortanach, tha na seann mhapaichean ag innse dhuinn mar a dh’èirich an t-ainm. Bha mi a’ coimhead o chionn ghoirid air an *Atlas Maior* a dh’fhoillsich Joan Blaeu anns an Òlaind ann an sia ceud deug, seasgad ’s a còig (1665). Air mapaichean Bhlaeu, tha pàirt mhòr de cheann an iar-thuath na h-Alba, timcheall air a’ Pharbh, ainmichte mar *Edir-da-cheules*. Chan e bàgh a th’ ann, ach sgìre. Tha an sgìre a’ ruith bho Dhiùirinis anns a’ cheann a tuath gu ruige Loch a’ Chàirn Bhàin anns a’ cheann a deas. No, a thaobh nan caolas, eadar Caolas Dhiùirinis agus an Caolas Cumhang. ’S iad sin an dà chaolas. B’ e Eadar Dà Chaolas an sgìre eadar Caolas Dhiùirinis agus an Caolas Cumhang. Tha ainm a’ bhàigh a’ cuimhneachadh seann ainm na sgìre gu tuath air a’ bhàgh.

Tha e inntinneach cho tric agus a nochdas am facal *eadar* ann an ainmean-àite na Gàidhealtachd. Tha *Eadar Dà Fhadhail* (Ardroil) ann an Sgìre Ùige ann an Leòdhas. Anns na Hearadh, gu tuath air an Tairbeart, eadar na beanntan air a bheil Giolabhal Glas agus Giolabhal Dubh, tha cnoc. ’S e ainm a’ chnuic *Cnoc Eadar Dà Bheinn*.

Faisg air Gleann Bhreatail san Eilean Sgitheanach, tha bealach eadar Beinn Stac agus Beinn a’ Bhràghad. ’S e ainm a’ bhealaich *Bealach Eadar Dà Bheinn*. Tha bealach dhen aon ainm ann an Siorrachd Shruighlea. Agus tha *Loch Eadar Dà Bheinn* anns a’ Chòigich, air taobh siar Rois. Anns a’ Chuiltheann san Eilean Sgitheanach tha *Druim Eadar Dà Choire*. Agus ann an Ratharsair, eadar am Baile Meadhanach agus Baile a’ Chùirn, tha loch air a bheil *Loch Eadar Dà Bhaile*.

Agus tha sin gam thoirt don fhacal *cuinneag*. ’S dòcha gu bheil sibh eòlach air a’ bheinn mhòir dhrùidhtich ann an Asainte, dìreach gu deas air a’ Chaolas Chumhang. Ann an Gàidhlig, ’s e a h-ainm a’ *Chuinneag*. Ach air mapa Bhlaeu tha i ainmichte mar *Ben*

Quinag. Agus 's ann mar sin a chithear i sgrìobhte air na mapaichean againn fhathast – *Quinag* – ged a chanas muinntir an àite *Cuinneag* rithe eadhon ann am Beurla.

Ann an taobh sear Rois tha dà bheinn ann a tha ainmichte còmhla mar *Càrn Chuinneag*. Chanainn gur e a' *Chuinneag Mhòr* agus a' *Chuinneag Bheag* a bh' orra bho shean, oir tha allt faisg air tè dhiubh air a bheil *Allt na Cuinneige Bige*. Carson a tha mi ag ainmeachadh nam beann seo? Uill, nuair a thathar a' coimhead orra bhon cheann a deas, chithear meall eatarra. Agus 's e ainm *Meall Eadar an Dà Chuinneag*.

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Faclan na Litreach: gheat: *yacht*; cairtean-mara: *maritime charts*; caolas: *kyle, narrows*; Diùirinis: *Durness*; An Caolas Cumhang: *Kylesku*; Gleann Bhreatail: *Glenbrittle*; Siorrachd Shruighlea: *Stirlingshire*; cuinneag: *milk-pail, stoup*.

Abairtean na Litreach: chì sibh mar a dh'atharraich an t-ainm: *you can see how the name changed*; na mapaichean-tìre aig an t-Suirbhidh Òrdanais: *the land maps of the Ordnance Survey*; cha robh e follaiseach nas motha: *it wasn't obvious either*; a dh'fhoillsich X anns an Òlaind: *that X in the Netherlands (Holland) published*; a thaobh nan caolas: *with respect to the kyles*; tha ainm a' bhàigh a' cuimhneachadh seann ainm na sgìre: *the name of the bay remembers the old name of the area*; Eadar Dà Fhadhail: *[lit] between two sea/estuarine fords*; anns a' Chòigich, air taobh siar Rois: *in Coigach, in W. Ross*; Druim Eadar Dà Choire: *[lit] ridge between two corries*; gu bheil sibh eòlach air a' bheinn mhòir dhrùidhtich: *that you know the great impressive mountain*; ainmichte còmhla: *named together*; ged a chanas muinntir an àite *Cuinneag* rithe eadhon ann am Beurla: *although the local people call her Cuinneag even in English*; tha allt faisg air tè dhiubh: *there is a burn near one of them*; nuair a thathar a' coimhead orra bhon cheann a deas, chithear meall eatarra: *when they are observed from the south, a rounded hill can be seen between them*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: *I was recently asked what we call in Gaelic the country to the north of Assynt (Asainte) and west of Dùthaich MhicAoidh (the Mackay country of the north coast east of Durness) and I was a bit stuck. People refer to Am Parbh in general terms but strictly speaking that refers to Cape Wrath and its immediate vicinity and wouldn't be applicable to the country between Kinlochbervie and Kylesku (if you think my assertion is wrong please let me know). Historically, the north west portion between Kylesku and the Kyle of Durness was Eadar Dà Chaolas ("between two kyles"), a name now applied only to a bay (Eddrachillis) at the extreme southern end of the area. Blaeu's map lists the following areas in the modern county of Sutherland (Cataibh): Assynt, Edir-dacheules, Strath Naver (taking in Dùthaich MhicAoidh and Strathnaver) and Southerland (the historical Cataibh which was only the eastern part of the modern county, south of Caithness, but stretching west to meet Assynt near the W end of Loch Shin).*

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: 's ann mar sin a chithear i sgrìobhte air na mapaichean againn: *that's how it [fem] is seen written on our maps*.

Tha "Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh" air a maoinachadh le MG ALBA