

# Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

## **Eilean Bhòid**

*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.maclea@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.maclea@bbc.co.uk). This is Litir 715. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 411 corresponds to Litir 715.*

Bha mi a’ bruidhinn an t-seachdain sa chaidh mu eileanan ann an Linne Chluaidh. Am measg sin, bha Eilean Bhòid. Anns an leabhar – *A Voyage Round the Coast of Scotland and the Isles* – tha iomradh air Bòd. ’S e fear Seumas MacUilleim a sgrìobh an leabhar, a chaidh fhoillseachadh ann an ochd ceud deug, ceathrad ’s a dhà (1842).

Tha MacUilleim ag innse dhuinn gu robh Bòd uaireigin gu math Gàidhealach ach gun robh a’ Ghàidhlig a’ falbh agus nach robh an cànan aig an òigridh tuilleadh. Tha e cuideachd ag innse dhuinn mun ainm *Bòd*. Tha e ag ràdh gur ann à *Ebudae* a tha e a’ tighinn – an t-aon ainm às an tàinig *Hebrides*.

**Cha robh an aon bheachd aig** an Urramach Alasdair Mac an Lèigh, ministear ann am **Baile Bhòid** aig deireadh an ochdamh linn deug agus toiseach an naoidheamh linn deug. Bha Gàidhlig aigesan agus bhiodh e a’ dìon cliù a’ chànan. Thuir e gun tàinig *Eilean Bhòid* à *Eilean a’ Mhòid(e)* ‘the island where the court of justice (*mòd*) sits’. Ma tha sin fìor, nach e àite math a bhiodh ann airson a bhith a’ cumail a’ Mhòid Nàiseanta?!

Ach a bheil fear seach fear dhiubh sin ceart? Uill, gu fortanach, tha an sgoilear Gilbert Markús, à Oilthigh Ghlaschu, air leabhar fhoillseachadh o chionn ghoirid mu ainmean-àite Eilean Bhòid. Anns an leabhar, tha e a’ toirt sùil air *Bòd fhèin*. Tha an t-ainm a’ nochdadh o shean ann an làmh-sgrìobhainnean mar *Botis*, *Bote* agus *Buyt*. ’S e *Bót* no *Bótar* a nochdas anns na mòr-sgeulan Lochlannach. Mar sin, tha an t-ainm a’ tòiseachadh le ‘b’ seach ‘m’. Faodar a bhith cinnteach, ma-thà, nach e *Eilean a’ Mhòid* a th’ ann.

Tha Gilbert Markús dhen bheachd gur e tùs ann an cànan nan Seann Bhreatannach as coltaiche. Tha facal Breatannais ann – *bot* – a bha a’ ciallachadh ‘àite-fuirich’, ach cuideachd ‘seipeal’ no ‘eaglais’.

Agus dè mun ainm *Rothesay*? Cò às a thàinig sin? Sgrìobh Seumas MacUilleim gun tàinig e às a’ Ghàidhlig *Roth-suidhe* (no *Roth-suidhe* o shean) ‘circular seat’, a’ ciallachadh àite far an robhar a’ cumail chùirtean-lagha. Sin am ‘mòd’ a-rithist. Ach, a-rithist, chan eil e ceart.

Tha Gilbert Markús ag ràdh gur e tùs Lochlannach as coltaiche, ’s gu bheil e a’ ciallachadh ‘Eilean Ruðri’. Tha na mòr-sgeulan Lochlannach a’ dèanamh iomradh air fear Ruðri a fhuair Eilean Bhòid bho Rìgh Haakon anns an treas linn deug. ’S e an duilgheadas le seo, ge-tà, gun robh Nirribhidh a’ call a smachd air na h-eileanan mun àm sin agus gum b’ i a’ Ghàidhlig cànan Bhòid. Ach tha Gilbert Markús ag ràdh gur

dòcha gun robh fear de shinnsirean Ruðri ann air an robh ‘Ruðri’ cuideachd, oir bhiodh ainmean a’ ruith ann an teaghlaichean.

Ma tha sin fìor, an robh ‘Ruðrisey’ a’ seasamh airson Eilean Bhòid air fad? No an robh an seann dùn ann am prìomh bhaile an eilein air a thogail o thùs air eilean beag? No a bheil –ey a’ seasamh airson *eið* no ‘tairbeart’, seach ‘eilean’? Chan eil fios le cinnt. Agus, ann an Gàidhlig, chan eil e a’ cur cus dragh oirnn, oir ’s e ‘Baile Bhòid’ a chanas sinne co-dhiù!

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**Faclan na Litreach:** Linne Chluaidh: *The Firth of Clyde*; Bòd, Eilean Bhòid: *Isle of Bute*; Seumas MacUilleim: *James Wilson*; cùirtean-lagha: *law courts*; tairbeart: *isthmus [boat portage]*.

**Abairtean na Litreach:** gu robh Bòd uaireigin gu math Gàidhealach: *that Bute was very Highland in character at one time*; nach robh an cànan aig an òigridh tuilleadh: *that the young people no longer spoke the language*; bhiodh e a’ dìon cliù a’ chàinain: *he would defend the language’s reputation*; airson a bhith a’ cumail a’ Mhòid Nàiseanta: *to hold the National Mod*; a bheil fear seach fear dhiubh sin ceart?: *is either of those correct?*; o shean ann an làmh-sgrìobhainnean: *in olden times in manuscripts*; na mòr-sgeulan Lochlannach: *the Scandinavian sagas*; faodar a bhith cinnteach: *one can be certain*; gur e tùs ann an cànan nan Seann Bhreatannach as coltaiche: *that an origin in the language of the Old Britons [Strathclyde] is most likely*; bho Rìgh Haakon anns an treas linn deug: *from King Haakon in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century*; gun robh Nirribhidh a’ call a smachd air na h-eileanan: *that Norway was losing control of the islands*; a’ ruith ann an teaghlaichean: *running in families*; an seann dùn ann am prìomh bhaile an eilein: *the old fort in the island’s capital*; chan eil e a’ cur cus dragh oirnn: *it doesn’t cause us too much bother*; oir ’s e ‘Baile Bhòid’ a chanas sinne co-dhi: *because we say ‘Baile Bhòid’ anyway*.

**Puing-chànain na Litreach:** **Baile Bhòid:** *This is the Gaelic for the town of Rothesay; literally it means ‘town of Bute’. While the island name Bute may have a North British (Cumbric, Brythonic) origin in a word meaning ‘dwelling, chapel, church’, the most likely interpretation of Rothesay is that it is a Norse island name, carrying the common –ey suffix. The first part of the name is problematic, but there are Norse records of the island being under the control of a man called Ruðri. However, he was around in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century when Norse power was waning, and such a Scandinavian island name is unlikely to have been coined at that time. It’s possible, however, that this Ruðri was a descendant of an earlier Ruðri who controlled the island. You can get more information about this name and many others in a superb new book – The Place-names of Bute – written by Gilbert Markús and published by Shaun Tyas.*

**Gnàthas-cainnt na Litreach:** **Cha robh an aon bheachd aig** an Urramach Alasdair Mac an Lèigh: *the Rev Alexander McLea didn’t have the same opinion.*

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