

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Na Ceiltich (3)

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. This is Litir 972. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 668 corresponds to Litir 972.

Mun àm a bha Iulius Cèasar beò, bha na Ròmanaich a’ dèanamh dheth gun robh **A’ Ghall** – Gaul – ann an diofar phàirtean. Anns a’ cheann a deas bha *Provincia Romana*, sgìre a bh’ air tighinn fo bhuaidh nan Greugach an toiseach agus, an uair sin, fo bhuaidh na Ròimhe. Tha sinn eòlach air *Provincia Romana* an-diugh mar *Provence*.

Gu tuath air sin bha Gallia Celtica, sgìre mhòr anns an robh an cultar is dòigh-beatha gu math Ceilteach fhathast. Agus gu tuath air sin bha Gallia Belgica, an ìre mhath far a bheil A’ Bheilg an-diugh.

Airson greis mhòr, bha ceannardan Ròmanach air a bhith a’ beachdachadh air cho math ’s a bhitheadh e nam biodh A’ Ghall mar phàirt dhen Ìmpireachd Ròmanaich. Ghabh Cèasar, a bha na riaghladair air Gallia Transalpina (fior cheann a deas na Frainge) brath air cothrom sin a dhèanamh anns a’ bhliadhna caogad ’s a h-ochd (58) RC. Bha na Helvetii, treubh chumhachdach às an Eilbheis, a’ dèanamh eilthreachd airson fearann ùr fhaighinn air costa siar na Frainge.

Bha Cèasar a’ gabhail dragh gun dèanadh sin cron air a’ Ghaill, agus air malairt nan Ròmanach, agus chuir e armailt an sàs an aghaidh nan Helvetii, gan iomain air ais don dùthaich aca fhèin. Bha armailt mhòr aig Cèasar a-nise ann an Gallia Celtica. Thug e taic do na Ceiltich an aghaidh treubh Ghearmailteach ach cha do tharraing e na saighdearan aige an dèidh làimhe. Lean e air gus an robh smachd aige air an dùthaich gu ruige Caolas Shasainn. Ann an caogad ’s a còig (55) RC, chuir e armailt an sàs ann an ceann a deas Bhreatainn. ’S dòcha gun robh sin mar rabhadh do na Breatannaich gun a dhol an sàs air taobh an co-chreutairean Ceilteach anns a’ Ghaill.

Ann an co-cheangal ris na cogaidhean Gallach tha ceannard Ceilteach a’ tighinn am bàrr – ’s dòcha an Ceilteach a b’ ainmeile ri a linn – Vercingetorix. Bha e na cheannard air na h-Averni, treubh à meadhan na Gaill. Rinn e a’ chùis air armailt Ròmanach agus thug e còmhla measgachadh de threubhan. Ach, aig a’ cheann thall, ghabh e fhèin agus na mìltean shaighdearan aige tèarmann ann an dùn monaidh ris an cante Alesia.

Rinn Cèasar sèist air Alesia le bhith a’ togail dà bhalla – **fear am broinn an fhir eile**. Chuir sin stad air feachdan Ceilteach eile bho bhith a’ dèanamh cobhair air Vercingetorix. Mu dheireadh, cha robh roghainn aig Vercingetorix ach gèilleadh ris na Ròmanaich. Thugadh an grèim e agus chaochail e – no chaidh a mharbhadh – anns

a' phrìosan beagan bhliadhnaichean an dèidh sin. Le a bhàs, dh'fhalbh an dòchas mu dheireadh aig na Gallaich a bhith saor bho smachd na Ròimhe.

Chan eil sin a' ciallachadh nach robh na Gallaich fhathast a' coimhead orra fhèin mar Ghallaich. Bha, gus an deach treubh Ghearmailteach a-steach airson an gabhail thairis an dèidh nan Ròmanach. B' iad sin na Frangaich. Agus 's ann air an son a chaidh an Fhraing ainmeachadh. Bha dìreach aon phàirt dhen Fhraing a ghlèidh beagan dhen t-seann chànan aig na Ceiltich. B' e sin Armorica anns an iar-thuath, far a bheil a' Bhreatainn Bheag an-diugh. Ach carson as e a' Bhreatainn Bheag a chanas sinn ris an dùthaich sin, seach Armorica? Bheir sinn sùil air a' cheist sin anns an ath Litir.

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Faclan na Litreach: Ceiltich: *Celts*; Iulius Cèasar: *Julius Caesar*; riaghladair: *governor*; Frangaich: *Franks*.

Abairtean na Litreach: fo bhuaidh nan Greugach: *under the influence of the Greeks*; anns an robh an cultar is dòigh-beatha gu math Ceilteach fhathast: *in which the culture and way of life were still very Celtic*; an ìre mhath far a bheil A' Bheilg an-diugh: *pretty much where Belgium is today*; bha ceannardan Ròmanach air a bhith a' beachdachadh: *Roman leaders had been considering*; cho math 's a bhitheadh e nam biodh A' Ghall mar phàirt dhen Ìmpireachd Ròmanaich: *how good it would be if Gaul were part of the Roman Empire*; ghabh X brath air cothrom sin a dhèanamh: *X took advantage of an opportunity to do that*; treubh chumhachdach às an Eilbheis: *a powerful tribe from Switzerland*; a' dèanamh eilthireachd airson fearann ùr fhaighinn: *emigrating to get new land*; gun dèanadh sin cron air malairt nan Ròmanach: *that that would damage the Romans' trade*; chuir e armailt an sàs an aghaidh X: *he sent an army against X*; cha do tharraing e na saighdearan aige an dèidh làimhe: *he didn't withdraw his soldiers afterwards*; gu ruige Caolas Shasainn: *to the English Channel*; air taobh an co-chreutairean Ceilteach anns a' Ghail: *on the side of their co-Celts in Gaul*; ghabh e fhèin agus na mìltean shaighdearan aige tèarmann ann an dùn monaidh: *he and thousands of his soldiers took refuge in a hillfort*; cha robh roghainn aig X ach gèilleadh: *X had no choice but to yield*; thugadh an grèim e: *he was captured*; bha, gus an deach treubh Ghearmailteach a-steach: *they were until a Germanic tribe entered*; carson as e a' Bhreatainn Bheag a chanas sinn ris an dùthaich sin, seach Armorica?: *why do we call that country Brittany rather than Armorica?*

Puing-chànain na Litreach: A' Ghall: *Gaul*. *Have you noticed that this is identical to our word gall for a foreigner or non-Gaelic speaker? Isn't rather strange that the Gaelic word for a Gaul came often to mean a Germanic non-Celtic speaker (particularly Norse and Lowlanders)? Perhaps it demonstrates that the Gallic language was not viewed historically as being akin to Gaelic – they had already diverged significantly from their common Celtic roots. It should be noted that the 'd' in Gàidhlig indicates it does not share the same etymology as Gall. It represents an old Gadelic (Goidelic), referring to the Q Celtic branch of the Celtic language family.*

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: fear am broinn an fhir eile: *one inside the other*.

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