

An Litir Bheag le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

An Litir Bheag is a shortened and simplified version of Ruairidh's Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh (also available on the BBC website), designed for those who are at an earlier stage of learning Gaelic. The topic each week is the same as Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh so that, once the Litir Bheag is mastered, a student of the language might wish to try the full Litir. This is Litir Bheag 252 (which corresponds to Litir 556). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was in an interesting place recently. It's in [the region of] Braemar. The place is Càrn na Cuimhne. In English people say Carnaqueen or The Cairn of Remembrance. Càrn na Cuimhne. It's beside the River Dee in the old Gaidhealtachd of Aberdeenshire.

Càrn na Cuimhne is famous. According to oral tradition, it was connected to the Farquharson clan. People were gathering at the cairn. They were doing that when they were going into battle. Every man was picking up a stone from the river. He was putting the stone on the cairn. Then he was going to fight.

After the battle, the people were returning to the cairn. They were lifting a stone from the cairn. They were throwing the stone into the river. Then it was known how many people were killed in the battle. That was the number of stones that were left on the cairn.

Some people say that the practice was very old. Some are of the opinion that it was for everybody in the area. They say it wasn't just for the Farquharsons.

Bha mi ann an àite inntinneach o chionn ghoirid. Tha e ann am Bràigh Mhàrr. 'S e an t-àite Càrn na Cuimhne. Ann am Beurla canaidh daoine Carnaqueen no The Cairn of Remembrance. Càrn na Cuimhne. Tha e ri taobh Uisge Dè ann an seann Ghàidhealtachd Siorrachd Obar Dheathain.

Tha Càrn na Cuimhne ainmeil. A rèir beul-aithris, bha e co-cheangailte ri Clann 'ic Fhearchair. Bha na daoine a' coinneachadh aig a' chàrn. Bha iad a' dèanamh sin nuair a bha a' dol a chur cath. Bha gach fear a' togail clach bhon abhainn. Bha e a' cur na cloiche air a' chàrn. An uair sin chaidh e a shabaid.

An dèidh a' bhatail, bha na daoine a' tilleadh don chàrn. Bha iad a' togail clach bhon chàrn. Bha iad a' tilgeil na cloiche don abhainn. Bha fios an uair sin cia mhead duine a chaidh a mharbhadh anns a' chath. B' e sin àireamh nan clach a bha air fhàgail air a' chàrn.

Tha cuid ag ràdh gun robh an cleachdadh uabhasach sean. Tha feadhainn dhen bheachd gun robh e airson a h-uile duine anns an sgìre. Tha iad ag ràdh nach robh e airson Clann

And when did people stop putting stones on the cairn? Well, we're not sure. Some say that the practice stopped at the time of [the Marquis of] Montrose. That was in the Seventeenth Century. Thus, they didn't use the cairn at the time of the Jacobite uprising in the Eighteenth Century.

But is it "Càrn na Cuimhne" that it should be called? In their book The Place Names of Upper Deeside, Adam Watson and Elizabeth Allan say it was originally called Càrn na Coinneimh ["The Meeting Cairn"]. The soldiers were meeting there at the time of conflict. Before they started to fight they were shouting the name of the cairn. But, by all accounts, it's not "Càrn na Coinneimh!" they were shouting. They were shouting "Càrn na Cuimhne!"

'ic Fhearchair a-mhàin.

Agus cuin a sguir daoine bho bhith a' cur clachan air a' chàrn? Uill, chan eil sinn cinnteach. Tha cuid ag ràdh gun do sguir an cleachdadh ri linn Mhontròis. Bha sin anns an t-seachdamh linn deug. Mar sin, cha do chleachd iad an càrn ri linn Ar-a-mach nan Seumasach anns an ochdamh linn deug.

Ach an e "Càrn na Cuimhne" a bu chòir a bhith air mar ainm? Anns an leabhar aca, *The Place Names of Upper Deeside*, tha Adhamh Mac-Bhàtair agus Ealasaid NicAilein ag ràdh gur e Càrn na Coinneimh a bha air bho thùs. Bha na saighdearan a' coinneachadh ann aig àm catha. Mus do thòisich iad air sabaid bha iad ag èigheachd ainm a' chùirn. Ach, a rèir aithris, chan e "Càrn na Coinneimh!" a bha iad èigheachd. Bha iad ag èigheachd "Càrn na Cuimhne!"