

## 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 411 (which corresponds to Litir 715). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodny.macleane@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.macleane@bbc.co.uk).

*I mentioned the Isle of Bute last week. In the book – A Voyage Round the Coast of Scotland and the Isles – there is an account of Bute. It's James Wilson that wrote the book. It was published in 1842.*

*Wilson tells about the place name Bòd. He says it came from Ebudae. That's the same name from which the word Hebrides came.*

*The Reverend Alexander McLea did not have the same opinion. He was a minister in Rothesay. That was at the end of eighteenth century and the start of the nineteenth century. He was a Gaelic-speaker. He said that Eilean Bhòid came from Eilean a' Mhòid(e) 'the island where the court of justice (mòd) sits'.*

*But is either of those correct? The scholar Gilbert Markús, of the University of Glasgow, has published a book recently about the names of the Isle of Bute. He looks at Bute itself. The name appears anciently with a 'b' rather than an 'm'. It's not the Isle of the Mod.*

*It's not certain what Bute*

Dh'ainmich mi Eilean Bhòid an t-seachdain sa chaidh. 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. Chaidh fhoillseachadh ann an ochd ceud deug, ceathrad 's a dhà (1842).

Tha MacUilleim ag innse dhuinn mun ainm Bòd. Tha e ag ràdh gur ann à *Ebudae* a thàinig e. 'S e sin an t-aon ainm às an tàinig am facal *Hebrides*.

Cha robh an aon bheachd aig an Urramach Alasdair Mac an Lèigh. Bha esan na mhinistear ann am Baile Bhòid. Bha sin aig deireadh an ochdamh linn deug agus toiseach an naoidheamh linn deug. Bha Gàidhlig aige. Thuirt e gun tàinig *Eilean Bhòid* à *Eilean a' Mhòid(e)* 'the island where the court of justice (*mòd*) sits'.

Ach a bheil fear seach fear dhiubh ceart? Tha an sgoilear Gilbert Markús, à Oilthigh Ghlaschu, air leabhar fhoillseachadh o chionn ghoirid mu ainmean-àite Eilean Bhòid. Tha e a' toirt sùil air Bòd fhèin. Tha an t-ainm a' nochdadh o shean le 'b' seach 'm'. Chan e *Eilean a' Mhòid* a tha ann.

Chan eil fios le cinnt dè tha Bòd

*means. It's not known which language it was created in. But Gilbert Markús reckons an origin in Old British is most likely. There is a British word – bot – that meant 'dwelling place', 'chapel' or 'church'.*

*And what about the name Rothesay? Gilbert Markús says that a Norse origin is most likely. Perhaps it means Ruðri's Island. The Scandinavian sagas mention a man called Ruðri. He got the Isle of Bute from King Haakon in the thirteenth century.*

*There is a difficulty with this, however. Norway was losing control of the islands around that time. The people of Bute were speaking Gaelic. But perhaps Ruðri had an ancestor also called Ruðri. Names run in families. And did 'Ruðrisey' stand for the whole island of Bute? It's not certain, but it's interesting to contemplate these questions.*

a' ciallachadh. Chan eil fios dè an cànan anns an deach a chruthachadh. Ach tha Gilbert Markús dhen bheachd gur e tùs ann an Seann Bhreatannais as coltaiche. Tha facal Breatannais ann – bot – a bha a' ciallachadh 'àite-fuirich', 'seipeal' no 'eaglais'.

Agus dè mun ainm *Rothesay*? Tha Gilbert Markús ag ràdh gur e tùs Lochlannach as coltaiche. 'S dòcha gu bheil e a' ciallachadh 'Eilean Ruðri'. Tha na mòr-sgeulan Lochlannach a' dèanamh iomradh air fear Ruðri. Fhuair e Eilean Bhòid bho Rìgh Haakon anns an treas linn deug.

Tha duilgheadas le seo, ge-tà. Bha Nirribhidh a' call a smachd air na h-eileanan mun àm sin. 'S e Gàidhlig a bha muinntir Bhòid a' bruidhinn. Ach 's dòcha gun robh fear de shinnsirean Ruðri ann, agus Ruðri airsan mar ainm cuideachd. Bidh ainmean a' ruith ann an teaghlaichean. Agus an robh 'Ruðrisey' a' seasamh airson Eilean Bhòid air fad? Chan eil fios le cinnt, ach tha e inntinneach a bhith a' meòrachadh air na ceistean seo.