

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 871 (which corresponds to Litir 1,175). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you about The Book of Deer. Today, I'm going to read you the first part of the Gaelic notes in it. I'll put them in modern Gaelic – but in a form that is close to the original text: St Columba and Drostan mac Chosgraich his disciple, they came from Iona as God guided them to Aberdour, and it's Bede the Pict that was mormaer (provincial leader) of Buchan ...

Aberdour is on the coast north of [Old] Deer. Perhaps it is the most favourable harbour for getting to Deer. I expect that Columba and Drostan came in a boat.

The monk who wrote the account was of the opinion that God guided the saints. When they reached Buchan, they were dealing with the most powerful man in the area. That was Bede. He was a Pict.

Was Bede helpful to them? Yes, to begin with. Was Bede already a Christian? Or did he have political reasons to assist Columba? I don't know. But The Book of Deer tells us that Bede gave them the monastery 'in freedom forever'.

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Leabhar Dhèir, *The Book of Deer*. An-diugh, tha mi a' dol a leughadh dhuibh a' chiad earrainn de na notaichean Gàidhlig ann. Cuiridh mi ann an Gàidhlig an latha an-diugh iad – ach ann an cruth a tha faisg air an teacsa thùsail: Calum Cille agus Drostan mac Chosgraich a dhalta, thàinig iad à Eilean Ì mar a dh'fhoillsich Dia dhaibh gu ruige Obar Dobhair, agus 's e Bede an Cruithneach a bha na mhorair air Buchan ...

Tha Obar Dobhair air a' chladach gu tuath air Dèir. Math dh'fhaodte gur e am port as fàbharraiche airson faighinn a Dhèir. Tha mi an dùil gun tàinig Calum Cille agus Drostan ann ann am bàta.

Bha am manach a sgrìobh an cunntas dhen bheachd gun tug Dia stiùir do na naoimh. Nuair a ràinig iad Buchan, bha iad a' dèiligeadh ris an fhear a bu chumhachdaiche anns an sgìre. B' esan Bede. Bha e na Cruithneach.

An robh Bede taiceil dhaibh? Bha, aig an toiseach. An robh Bede na Chrìosdaidh mu thràth? No an robh adhbharan poilitigeach aige taic a thoirt do Chalum Cille? Chan eil fhios a'm. Ach tha Leabhar Dhèir ag innse dhuinn gun tug Bede a' mhanachainn dhaibh 'ann an saorsa gu bràth'.

But what monastery? Not Deer, but Aberdour. The account tells us that Columba and Drostan then went to another place: They came after that to another place, and Columba liked it because it was full of the grace of God.

That means that Columba enjoyed the place. It was full of the grace of God. This place was [Old] Deer. Columba asked Bede to grant him the place. But, this time, Bede refused.

The matter wasn't finished, however. Columba was powerful. Here is the next section of the account: a son of his (Bede) caught a disease ... and he was almost dead. That means that a son of Bede's contracted a disease. He was at death's door. We'll hear next week how Bede changed his mind.

Ach dè a' mhanachainn? Chan e Dèir, ach Obar Dobhair. Tha an cunntas ag innse dhuinn gun deach Calum Cille agus Drostan an uair sin gu àite eile: *Thàinig iad na dhèidh sin gu cathair eile, agus thaitinn i ri Calum Cille oir bu làn de rath Dhè i.*

Tha sin a' ciallachadh gun do chòrd an t-àite ri Calum Cille. Bha e làn gràs Dhè. B' e an t-àite seo Dèir. Dh'iarr Calum Cille air Bede an t-àite a thoirt seachad dha. Ach, an turas seo, dhiùlt Bede.

Cha robh an gnothach seachad, ge-tà. Bha Calum Cille cumhachdach. Seo an ath earrann dhen chunntas: *ghabh mac dha (Bede) galar ... agus bha e marbh ach beag.* Tha sin a' ciallachadh gun do ghabh gille aig Bede galar. Bha e aig uchd-bàis. Cluinnidh sinn an-ath-sheachdain mar a dh'atharraich Bede a bheachd.