

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

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.macleam@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 498. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 194 corresponds to Litir 498.

Gu sear air *Croy Fort* air Balla Antonine, tha *Westerwood Fort* agus *Castlecary Fort*. Bidh sibh eòlach air Castlecary, 's dòcha, oir 's ann tric a bhios sinn a' cluinntinn mun trafaig sgriosail air an M8 aig na *Castlecary Arches*. Bha MacBhàtair dhen bheachd gun robh an t-ainm Breatannach agus gu bheil e a' dèanamh iomradh air an dùn a thog na Ròmanaich. Tha *cary* a' tighinn bho *caerydd* – a' ciallachadh *dùin* no *forts*.

Chan eil dad air fhàgail dhen ath dhùn – *Seabegs*, ach gabhaidh an òig faicinn, agus faodar coiseachd air an rathad a thog na Ròmanaich ri taobh a' bhalla. Tha mi an dùil gu bheil Seabegs a' tighinn bhon Ghàidhlig *Suidhe Beag*.

Tha cuid dhen bheachd gur e an ath phìos dhen bhalla – aig *Rough Castle* – am pìos as drùidhtiche a th' ann. O chionn trì cheud bliadhna, 's e *Castle Ruff* a chanadh muinntir an àite ris. Ainm Gàidhlig eile, 's dòcha. No Breatannach?

Tha am balla a' dol seachad air *Falkirk Fort* – Dùn na h-Eaglaise Brice – gu ruige *Mumrills Fort*, an dùn as motha. Tha e a' còmhachadh sia acaire de dh'fhearann. Lorgadh crèadhaireachd is buinn ann, agus ìomhaigh de Hercules. **Tha eagal orm** nach eil fios agam cò às a thàinig an t-ainm Mumrills.

Chan eil ach trì dùin air fhàgail. Tha *Inveravon Fort* faisg air Inbhir Ghrainnse. Gu dearbh, tha e faisg air beul Abhainn Avon – seadh, agus cha leig mi leas dad a ràdh mun ainm sin. 'S e Amar-uisge Avon an t-amar-uisge as fhaide ann an Alba. Tha e a' giùlain Canàl an Aonaidh os cionn na h-aibhne.

Gu sear air Inveravon, tha *Kinneil Fortlet*, an dùn mu dheireadh air Balla Antonine. Tha *Carriden Fort* faisg air cladh Lodainn, ach tha sin beagan gu deas air a' bhalla. Bha an dùn ann an Kinneil air a lorg ann an naoi ceud deug, seachdad 's a sia (1976). Tha e a-nise am measg naoi dùin bheaga a chaidh a lorg. Thathar a' smaoinachadh gur ann aig na dùin bheaga seo a bha cead aig daoine dhol a-mach 's a-steach do dh'ìompaireachd na Ròimhe.

Tha an t-ainm Kinneil gu math inntinneach. Tha mi a' dol a chur *Ceann a' Bhalla* air ann an Gàidhlig. Chì sibh carson ann am mionaid.

Tha MacBhàtair ag innse dhuinn gun do sgrìobh Bede anns an ochdamh linn gum b' e an t-àite as fhaide sear air Balla Antonine *Peanfahel*. Co-dhiù b' e sin an t-ainm a thug na “Cruithnich” dha. Timcheall air a' bhliadhna ochd ceud (800 AD), sgrìobh Nennius gur e *guaul* a chanadh na Breatannaich ris a' bhalla. Thàinig *guaul* (no *gwal* ann an Cuimris an-diugh) bhon Laidinn *vallum*.

Sgrìobh Nennius gun robh am balla a' tòiseachadh aig *Penguaul*. Nise, tha sin a' ciallachadh *ceann a' bhalla*. Tha MacBhàtair dhen bheachd gu bheil an fhianais a' dearbhadh gun robh Gàidhlig a' gabhail àite na "Cruithnis" anns an sgìre sin timcheall àm Bhede. Tha Peanfahel a' riochdachadh *Pen-fàil – end of the rampart*, agus 's e measgachadh a th' ann de "Chruithnis" is Gàidhlig. Timcheall air a' bhliadhna naoi ceud (900), tha *pen* a' falbh agus tha *cenn* – airson *ceann* – a' nochdadh na àite. Mar sin, tha Pen-fàil ag atharrachadh gu Cenn-fhàil agus, an-diugh, Kinneil ann am Beurla.

Sin deireadh ar sgrìob air Balla Antonine. Bha am balla air a chleachdadh dìreach fad ginealach leis na Ròmanaich, ach dh'fhàg e dìleab mhòr dhuinn.

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Faclan na Litreach: ìomhaigh: *statue, image*; amar-uisge: *aqueduct*; mu dheireadh: *last*; MacBhàtair: [William J] Watson [“The Celtic Place Names of Scotland”].

Abairtean na Litreach: gu sear air: *to the east of*; bidh sibh eòlach air: *you'll know*; trafaig sgriosail: *terrible traffic*; gu bheil e a' dèanamh iomradh air an dùn a thog na Ròmanaich: *it gives an account of the fort the Romans built*; dhen ath dhùn: *of the next fort*; faodar coiseachd air an rathad: *one can walk on the road*; am pìos as drùidhtiche: *the most impressive part*; a chanadh muinntir an àite ris: *that the local people called it*; lorgadh crèadhaireachd is buinn ann: *pottery and coins were found there*; cò às a thàinig an t-ainm: *where the name came from*; cha leig mi leas dad a ràdh mun ainm sin: *I don't need to say anything about that name*; a' giùlain Canàl an Aonaidh os cionn na h-aibhne: *carrying the Union Canal above the river*; am measg naoi dùin bheaga a chaidh a lorg: *among nine fortlets which were found*; dhol a-mach 's a-steach do dh'Ìompaireachd na Ròimhe: *to enter and leave the Roman Empire*; gum b' e an t-àite as fhaide sear air Balla Antonine X: *that X was the place furthest east on the Antonine Wall*; a thug na "Cruithnich" dha: *which the "Picts" gave to it (Bede called them Picts but they were properly British or Cumbric)*; gu bheil an fhianais a' dearbhadh: *that the evidence proves*; gun robh Gàidhlig a' gabhail àite na "Cruithnis": *that Gaelic was displacing "Pictish"*; deireadh ar sgrìob: *the end of our journey*; air a chleachdadh dìreach fad ginealach: *used only for a generation*; dh'fhàg e dìleab mhòr dhuinn: *it left us a great legacy*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: *a little point this week about another name in Scotland for the Antonine Wall – Grim's Dyke, sometimes corrupted to Grahamsdyke. A 14th Century account tells us that Gryme was a grandfather of King Eugenius, but both these characters appear to be mythical! George Buchanan wrote in the 16th Century that Graeme was a Celtic leader who broke down the wall, allowing his people to invade the Roman lands. A recently published book says that "the real derivation ... may be more prosaic. The Gaelic word grym means strong". Mmm. Well, it's not in my dictionary... I think the author meant "Welsh", in which language grym means "strength". Any thoughts on those?! I'd love to hear from you – rodny.maclea@bbc.co.uk.*

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: Tha eagail orm nach eil fios agam: *I'm afraid I don't know*.

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