

## 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 170 (which corresponds to Litir 474). Ruairidh can be contacted at [roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk).

*On the island of Hoy in Orkney there is a place called Glens of Kinnaird. It looks Gàidhealach, doesn't it? But is it? I'm not sure. The scholar Hugh Marwick looked at the matter. He wasn't sure.*

*Marwick thought that some of the place names in Orkney were Celtic. They were from the language of the Picts or from Gaelic. Some people think that the monks who were there before the Vikings spoke Gaelic. They were in places like Papa Westray and Papa Stronsay. Papa means "monk".*

*There are a few farms/fermtouns called Airy. Marwick thought that came from the Gaelic word àirigh – a shieling. That word went over to the Scandinavian tongue. It appears in the Norse in the Orkneyinga Saga.*

*That's a little strange. The Norse already had a word for shieling – setr. Place-names in Lewis derive from setr – such as Shader, Ungeshader and*

*Ann an Eilean Hòdhaigh ann an Arcaibh tha àite air a bheil Glens of Kinnaird. Tha e a' coimhead Gàidhealach, nach eil? Ach a bheil e? Chan eil mi cinnteach. Thug an sgoilear Ùisdean Marwick sùil air a' chùis. Cha robh esan cinnteach.*

*Bha Marwick a' smaoin-eachadh gun robh cuid de dh'ainmean-àite ann an Arcaibh Ceilteach. Bha iad bho chànan nan Cruithneach no bhon Ghàidhlig. Tha cuid a' smaoin-eachadh gun robh Gàidhlig aig na manaich a bha ann ro na Lochlannaich. Bha iad ann an àiteachan mar Papa Westray is Papa Stronsay. Tha papa a' ciallachadh "manach".*

*Tha grunn bhailtean-fearainn air a bheil Airy. Bha Marwick dhen bheachd gun tàinig sin bhon fhacal Ghàidhlig àirigh – a shieling. Chaidh am facal sin a-null do chànan nan Lochlannach. Tha e a' nochdadh anns an Lochlannais ann an Orkneyinga Saga.*

*Tha sin car annasach. Bha facal aig na Lochlannaich mu thràth airson àirigh – setr. Tha ainmean-àite ann an Leòdhas a' tighinn bho setr – leithid Siadair, Ungasiadair is*

*Carishader. But, despite that, the Gaelic word became adopted into Norse.*

*On Sanday there is a place called the Kirk and Kill o' Howe. They are two hills a hundred metres apart. Hugh Marwick was of the opinion that the Kill was cille in Gaelic. He thought that there was a church there in the time of the Celts. The Norsemen came and they built a kirk or church of their own. That was a little distance from the old church.*

*Some people think that egil in the name Egilsay – another island in Orkney – comes from eaglais. And that Kili Holm, a little island just to the north of Egilsay, means the island of the religious cell.*

*I don't know how many Gaelic, or Pictish, words live on in Orkney's place-names. Very few, I'd say. Most of the names are Norse. But here and there, we see a name that might be Celtic.*

Cairisiadair. Ach, a dh'aindeoin sin, chaidh am facal Gàidhlig a-null do Lochlannais.

Ann an Eilean Shanndaigh – no Sanday – tha àite ann air a bheil *the Kirk and Kill o' Howe*. Is iad sin dà chnoc le ceud meatair eatarra. Bha Ùisdean Marwick dhen bheachd gum b' e an *Kill – cille* ann an Gàidhlig. Bha e dhen bheachd gun robh eaglais ann ri linn nan Ceilteach. Thàinig na Lochlannaich agus thog iad *kirk* no eaglais aca fhèin. Bha sin pìos beag air falbh bhon t-seann eaglais.

Tha feadhainn dhen bheachd gu bheil *egil* anns an ainm Egilsay – eilean eile ann an Arcaibh – a' tighinn bho *eaglais*. Agus gu bheil Kili Holm, eilean beag dìreach gu tuath air Egilsay, a' ciallachadh *eilean na cille*.

Chan eil fhios agam cia mheud facal Gàidhlig, no Cruithneach, a tha beò an-diugh ann an ainmean-àite Arcaibh. Glè bheag, chanainn. Tha a' mhòr-chuid de na h-ainmean Lochlannach. Ach an siud 's an seo, tha sinn a' faicinn ainm a dh'fhaodadh a bhith Ceilteach.