

## 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 260 (which corresponds to Litir 564). Ruairidh can be contacted at [roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk).

*I was talking last week about the Celts and elephants. There are many old words for elephant in Gaelic. The Celts were familiar with elephants in olden times. Hannibal involved elephants against Celtic tribes in Gaul. That was before he went across the Alps.*

*But that was not the end of the matter. A hundred years after Hannibal, the Romans themselves set elephants against Celtic tribes. That was around 121 BC. The Roman proconsuls Domitius Ahenobarbus and Quintus Fabius Maximus sent an army to the south of Gaul. That was a country called Gallia Transalpina in Latin. There was a strong Celtic tribe there – the Arverni. They were standing against the Romans. The Romans were not pleased.*

*There was a battle. The Romans defeated the Celts. How? Well, they used war-elephants. The elephants frightened the Celts. Think of a wild elephant running towards you. It's hardly surprising that the Celts fled!*

Bha mi a' bruidhinn an t-seachdain sa chaidh mu na Ceiltich agus aibheanan. Tha iomadach seann fhacal airson aibhean ann an Gàidhlig. Bha na Ceiltich eòlach air aibheanan anns an t-seann aimsir. Chuir Hannibal aibheanan an sàs an aghaidh threubhan Ceilteach anns a' Ghail. Bha sin mus deach e tarsainn nam beann Ailpeach.

Ach cha b' e sin deireadh a' ghnòthaich. Ceud bliadhna às dèidh Hannibal, chuir na Ròmanach fhèin aibheanan an sàs an aghaidh threubhan Ceilteach. Bha sin timcheall na bliadhna ceud, fichead 's a h-aon (121) RC. Chuir na proconsulan Ròmanach, Domitius Ahenobarbus agus Quintus Fabius Maximus, arm gu ruige ceann a deas na Gaille. B' e sin dùthaich air robh *Gallia Transalpina* ann an Laideann. Bha treubh làidir Ceilteach an sin – na h-Arverni. Bha iad a' seasamh an aghaidh nan Ròmanach. Cha robh na Ròmanaich toilichte.

Bha batail ann. Rinn na Ròmanaich a' chùis air na Ceiltich. Ciamar? Uill, chleachd iad aibheanan-cogaidh. Chuir na h-aibheanan eagal air na Ceiltich. Smaoinichibh air aibhean fiadhaich a' ruith dhad ionnsaigh. Is beag an t-iong-nadh gun do theich na

*That was in Gaul. But did the Romans use war-elephants in Britain? Well, apparently they did. Some people think Julius Caesar used them. The Romans reached a river. There was a British army. But the Britons were frightened by the elephants. The Romans won.*

*But some historians say it wasn't Caesar that did that. They say it was another emperor – Claudius – that set war-elephants against the Celts in Britain. He did that in the year 43 AC.*

*I don't know when a Gael first saw an elephant. But our Celtic ancestors were familiar enough with them for the wrong reasons.*

Ceiltich!

Bha sin anns a' Ghail. Ach an do chleachd na Ròmanaich aibheanan cogaidh ann am Breatainn? Uill, a rèir choltais, chleachd. Tha cuid dhen bheachd gun do chleachd Iulius Cesar iad. Ràinig na Ròmanaich abhainn. Bha arm Breatannach ann. Ach ghabh na Breatannaich eagal ro na h-aibheanan. Rinn na Ròmanaich a' chùis.

Tha cuid de luchd-eachdraidh ag ràdh, ge-tà, nach e Cesar a rinn sin. Tha iad ag ràdh gur e ìmpire eile – Claudius – a chuir aibheanan-cogaidh an sàs an aghaidh nan Ceilteach ann am Breatainn. Rinn e sin anns a' bhliadhna 43 AC.

Chan eil fhios agam cuin a chunnaic Gàidheal aibhean a' chiad turas. Ach bha ar sinnsirean Ceilteach eòlach gu leòr orra air droch adhbhar.