

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 719 (which corresponds to Litir 1,023). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk.

I was speaking about the Argyll cars that were built in Scotland. That wasn't the only Scottish company that was making cars. For example, there was the Arrol-Johnston.

I want to tell you about one particular vehicle that Arrol-Johnston made. That was the one that Ernest Shackleton took with him to the Antarctic in 1907. It's my understanding that a Scottish car was the first car ever in Antarctica. You can see pictures of it on the internet.

It had a four cylinder engine that developed up to fifteen horsepower. Unlike most vehicles, the engine was cooled by air, rather than water.

A jacket was built around the carburettor. The exhaust gases from one cylinder were put through the jacket in order to warm the carburettor. The team took special oil with them which would not freeze. They took with them many spare parts, and many types of wheel[s].

But was the vehicle successful? To tell the truth, no. It was too heavy. They took everything off it except the chassis and one seat for the driver.

Bha mi a' bruidhinn mu dheidhinn nan carbadan Argyll, a bh' air an togail ann an Alba. Cha b' e sin an aon chompanaidh Albannach bha a' togail chàraichean. Mar eisimpleir, bha an Arrol-Johnston ann.

Tha mi airson innse dhuibh mu aon charbad sònraichte a thog Arrol-Johnston. B' e sin am fear a thug Ernest Shackleton leis don Antartaig ann an naoi ceud deug 's a seachd (1907). 'S e mo thuigse gum b' e càr Albannach a' chiad chàr riamh anns an Antartaig. Chì sibh dealbhan dheth air an eadar-lìon.

Bha einnsean ceithir-siolandair aige, a bha a' dèanamh suas ri còig horsepower deug. Eucoltach ris a' chuid as motha de charbadan, bha an t-einnsean air fhionnarachadh le èadhar, seach uisge.

Chaidh seacaid a thogail timcheall a' chàrbradair. Chaidh na gasaichean traoghaidh à aon siolandair a chur tron t-seacaid airson an càrbradair a bhlàthachadh. Thug an sgioba ola shònraichte leotha nach biodh a' reothadh. Thug iad tòrr phàirtean spèir aca, agus grunn seòrsaichean chuibhlichean.

Ach an robh an carbad soirbheachail? Airson an fhìrinn innse, cha robh. Bha e ro throm. Thug iad a h-uile rud dheth ach a-mhàin a chassis agus

They were wanting to use it just to pull sledges on the ice. But, as soon as there was soft snow, the wheels got stuck in it.

But people learned a lot from that Arrol-Johnston. They understood that tracks, rather than wheels, would be necessary in the Antarctic. And there were tracks on the vehicles that Rober F Scott took with him to the Antarctic in 1910.

Shackleton wasn't successful in reaching the South Pole. But he sent a group to the summit of Mt Erebus and some to within a hundred miles from the Pole. Another group reached the South Magnetic Pole. Thus, his expedition was successful in many ways.

When they left to return to New Zealand at the end [of the expedition], the Arrol-Johnston was on board. What happened to it? Unfortunately, I have no idea.

aon suidheachan airson an dràibheir. Bha iad ag iarraidh a chur gu feum dìreach airson slaodan a tharraing air an deigh. Ach, cho luath 's a bha sneachd bog ann, bha na cuibhlichean a' dol an sàs ann.

Ach dh'ionnsaich daoine gu leòr bhon Arrol-Johnston sin. Thuig iad gum biodh tragaichean, seach cuibhlichean, riatanach anns an Antartaig. Agus bha tragaichean air na carbadan a thug Raibeart F Scott leis don Antartaig ann an naoi ceud deug 's a deich (1910).

Cha robh Shackleton soirbheachail ann a bhith a' ruigsinn a' Phòla a Deas. Ach chuir e buidheann gu mullach Beinn Erebus agus feadhainn gu taobh a-staigh ceud mìle bhon Phòla. Ràinig buidheann eile aige am Pòla Magnaiteach a Deas. Mar sin, bha an triall aige soirbheachail ann an iomadach dòigh.

Nuair a dh'fhalbh iad airson tilleadh gu Sealan Nuadh aig deireadh gnothaich, bha an Arrol-Johnston air bòrd. Dè thachair dha? Gu mì-fhortanach, chan eil càil a dh'fhios a'm.