

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 836 (which corresponds to Litir 1,140). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodgy.maclea@bbc.co.uk.

In this Litir, I want to take you to Redcastle in the Black Isle. Why is the place called An Caisteal Ruadh – or Redcastle in English? Well, that's simple enough. There is an old castle there – and it's red! It's built of red sandstone. The castle is now a ruin. But it's attractive in form and appearance.

Redcastle is near the northern shore of the Beaully Firth. It's near the head of the firth. It's in a peaceful situation. And the surrounding land is fertile.

*A fortress was built on the site a long time ago. The King of Scotland, Uilleam Garbh mac Eanraig – William the Lion – built it near the end of the 12th century. William's castle was called Edirdovar. In today's Gaelic we'd say Eadar Dà Dhobhar. It often appeared in English as Edradour. That means 'between two waters'. The expert, William Watson, looked at this name for his book *Place Names of Ross and Cromarty*. He concluded that the two waters were the Beaully Firth and Cromarty Firth.*

Anns an Litir seo, tha mi airson ur toirt don Chaisteal Ruadh anns an Eilean Dubh. Carson as e *An Caisteal Ruadh* a tha air an àite – no *Redcastle* ann am Beurla? Uill, tha sin sìmplidh gu leòr. Tha seann chaisteal ann – agus tha e ruadh! Tha e air a thogail de chlach-ghainmhich ruadh. Tha an caisteal a-nise na thobhta. Ach tha e brèagha ann an cumadh agus coltas.

Tha An Caisteal Ruadh faisg air cladach a tuath Linne Fharair. Tha e dlùth ri ceann na linne. Tha e ann an suidheachadh sìtheil. Agus tha am fearann mu a thimcheall torrach.

Chaidh daingneach a thogail air an làraich seo o chionn fhada. Thog Rìgh na h-Alba, Uilleam Garbh mac Eanraig – *William the Lion* – e faisg air deireadh an dàrna linn deug. B' e ainm caisteal Uilleim *Edirdovar*. Anns a' Ghàidhlig an latha an-diugh, chanamaid *Eadar Dà Dhobhar*. Nochd e gu tric ann am Beurla mar *Edradour*. Tha sin a' ciallachadh 'eadar dà uisge'. Thug an t-eòlaiche, Uilleam MacBhàtair, sùil air an ainm seo airson an leabhair aige *Place Names of Ross and Cromarty*. Cho-dhùin e gum b' iad an dà uisge Linne Fharair agus Linne Chrombaidh.

Through time, however, he changed his opinion. He was thinking that the name was referencing two small burns near the castle. Anyway, the name Eadar Dà Dhobhar did not persist. Before the 14th century was past, people were calling it Reidcastell in English.

Over the centuries, the castle was in the hands of various families. To begin with, the Bissets owned it. They had land on the far side of the firth. Then the Grahams owned it. After that the Earls of Ross owned it. The royal family, the Stuarts, possessed it then. People reckon that Mary Queen of Scots went there in the year 1562.

In another six years, Redcastle would be in the hands of the Mackenzies. And that's where I'll commence my account next week.

Tro thìde, ge-tà, dh'atharraich e a bheachd. Bha e a' smaoin eachadh gun robh an t-ainm a' dèanamh iomradh air dà allt bheag faisg air a' chaisteal. Co-dhiù, cha do mhair an t-ainm *Eadar Dà Dhobhar*. Mus robh an ceathramh linn deug a-mach, bha daoine a' gabhail *Reidcastell* air ann am Beurla.

Thairis air na ceudan, bha an caisteal ann an làmhan diofar theaghlaichean. An toiseach bha e leis na Bissets. Bha fearann acasan air taobh thall na linne. An uair sin, bha e leis na Greumaich. An dèidh sin bha e le Iarlan Rois. Ghabh an teaghlach rìoghail, na Stiùbhartaich, grèim air an uair sin. Tha daoine a' smaoin eachadh gun deach Màiri, Banrigh na h-Alba, ann sa bhliadhna còig ceud deug, seasgad 's a dhà (1562).

An ceann sia bliadhna eile, bha an Caisteal Ruadh gu bhith ann an làmhan Clann 'ic Coinnich. Agus sin far an tòisich mi mo chunntas an-ath-sheachdain.