

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 847 (which corresponds to Litir 1,151). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you about the village of Cromdale near Grantown-on-Spey. There was a battle there in the year 1690. Major-General Thomas Buchan was in charge of the Jacobite army. The Jacobites were trying to restore James VII to the throne.

Buchan did not have a large army. There is an opinion that he only had eight hundred soldiers. They were in the Central Highlands. They were on their way to the north-east where they were hoping to find more soldiers.

They made a camp in Cromdale on the last day of April. Perhaps some of the officers were staying in Castle Lethendry, which is today a ruin.

However, a larger government force was drawing near. It reached the far side of the river. There was nothing between it and the Jacobite army but the River Spey. And many of the soldiers were on horseback. The river wouldn't stop them.

The Jacobite soldiers went to higher ground. They were at the base of the Cromdale Hills. And that's where the bloody fighting was. The Jacobites didn't resist long.

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu bhaile Chromdhail faisg air Baile nan Granndach. Bha cath an sin anns a' bhliadhna sia ceud deug is naochad (1690). Bha am Màidsear-Seanalair Tòmas Buchan os cionn arm nan Seumasach. Bha na Seumasaich a' feuchainn ri Seumas VII a chur air ais air an rìgh-chathair.

Cha robh armailt mhòr aig Buchan. Tha beachd ann nach robh aige ach ochd ceud saighdear. Bha iad ann am meadhan na Gàidhealtachd. Bha iad air an rathad don ear-thuath far an robh iad an dòchas tuilleadh shaighdearan a lorg.

Thog iad campa ann an Cromdhail air an latha mu dheireadh dhen Ghiblean. 'S dòcha gun robh cuid de na h-oifigearan a' fuireach ann an Caisteal an Leathann-ruigh, a tha an-diugh na thobhta.

Ge-tà, bha armailt na bu mhotha aig an riaghaltas a' teannadh dlùth. Ràinig i bruach thall na h-aibhne. Cha robh eadar i fhèin agus armailt nan Seumasach ach Uisge Spè. Agus bha gu leòr de na saighdearan air muin-eich. Cha bhiodh an abhainn a' cur stad orra.

Chaidh na saighdearan Seumasach gu talamh na b' àirde. Bha iad aig bonn Beinn Chromdhail. Agus sin far an robh an t-sabaid fhuilteach. Cha do sheas na Seumasaich fada.

Fortunately for them mist descended upon them. That prevented the cavalry from following them. And some of them fled. But the Jacobites lost half of their army, between dead and prisoners.

On the battlefield, 'Clach nam Piobair' can still be seen – a stone that stands by itself. It is said that pipers played their bagpipes there to encourage the soldiers.

The Battle of Cromdale was the last big battle in Britain in the seventeenth century. It brought to an end the campaign of the Jacobites in Scotland until they rose again in 1715 on behalf of the son of James VII.

Matters were not over at that [point] in Ireland. Two months after the loss at Cromdale there was the Battle of the Boyne. James lost there and eventually he fled to France. He never returned.

Gu fortanach dhaibh thàinig ceò a-nuas orra. Chuir sin stad air a' mharcshluagh bho bhith gan leantainn. Agus theich feadhainn aca. Ach chaill na Seumasaich mu leth dhen armailt aca, eadar mairbh agus prìosanaich.

Air blàr a' chatha an-diugh, chithear fhathast 'Clach nam Piobair' – clach a sheasas leatha fhèin. Thathar ag ràdh gun do sheinn pìobairean an cuid pìoban an sin mar bhrosnachadh do na saighdearan.

B' e Cath Chromdhail an cath mòr mu dheireadh ann am Breatainn anns an t-seachdamh linn deug. Thug e gu crìch iomairt nan Seumasach ann an Alba mus do dh'èirich iad a-rithist ann an seachd ceud deug is còig-deug (1715) às leth mac Sheumais VII.

Cha robh gnothaichean seachad aige sin ann an Èirinn. Dà mhìos an dèidh a' chall ann an Cromdhail bha Cath na Bóinne ann. Chaill Seumas an sin agus mu dheireadh theich e don Fhraing. Cha do thill e a-chaidh.