

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 328 (which corresponds to Litir 632). Ruairidh can be contacted at roddy.macleam@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you about cairidhean/yairs. There were lots of them in the Beaully Firth, west of Inverness. In olden times it was called Poll an Ròid in Gaelic. That means "the inlet of the rood or cross". That's the same Rood as in Holyrood House in Edinburgh.

How did Poll an Ròid get its name? Well, King Alexander II gave land to friars in Inverness. That was around the year 1236. They built a monastery in the town. Inverness was on a pilgrimage route to Tain in Ross-shire. And the King ordered a rood, or cross, to be erected close to Inverness.

We think the cross was on a small island in the firth. There is no sign of the island or cross today. But the cross left its name on the place – Poll an Ròid. Or, in English, the Rood Pool.

Anyway, back to the yairs. Some of them were long, more than a thousand feet in length. They weren't entirely made of stones. They had a stone base. But above that, they were made of wood. The wood was like a hurdle [ie interlaced]. The people were often

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu chairidhean. Bha gu leòr dhiubh ann an Linne Fharair, siar air Inbhir Nis. Anns an t-seann aimsir bha Poll an Ròid air ann an Gàidhlig. Tha sin a' ciallachadh "the inlet of the rood or cross". 'S e sin an aon Ròid a th' ann an Taigh an Ròid – Holyrood House – ann an Dùn Èideann.

Ciamar a fhuair Poll an Ròid ainm? Uill, thug Rìgh Alasdair II fearann do mhanaich ann an Inbhir Nis. Bha sin timcheall na bliadhna dà cheud dheug, trithead 's a sia (1236). Thog iad manachainn anns a' bhaile. Bha Inbhir Nis air slighe eilthreachd gu ruige Baile Dhubhthaich ann an Siorrachd Rois. Agus dh'òrdaich an Rìgh ròd, no crois, a chur suas faisg air Inbhir Nis.

Tha sinn a' smaoinichadh gun robh a' chrois air eilean beag anns an linne. Chan eil sgeul air an eilean no air a' chrois an-diugh. Ach dh'fhàg a' chrois a h-ainm air an àite – Poll an Ròid. No, ann am Beurla, the Rood Pool.

Co-dhiù, air ais do na cairidhean. Bha cuid dhiubh fada, barrachd na mìle troigh a dh'fhaid. Cha robh iad air fad air an dèanamh de chlachan. Bha bunait cloiche aca. Ach gu h-àrd bha iad air an dèanamh de fhiodh. Bha am fiodh mar chliath. Bha na daoine a' dèanamh obair-càraidh air na cairidhean gu tric.

doing repair work on the yairs.

In addition to yairs the people of the place were putting out nets. Small herring – or garbhagan – were coming in. The word garbhag comes from the Scots garvie. But garbhag went back into English in the Inverness area as garvack. In 1749 the Church was complaining about fishing on the Sabbath. They wrote about the “breach of the Lord’s Day for fishing for garvacks”.

The garvacks were important as food in the winter. But the people were also catching salmon in their nets. And Fraser of Lovat was unhappy about that. The debate about fishing with nets on the shores of Scotland is not new.

A bharrachd air cairidhean bha muinntir an àite a’ cur a-mach lìn. Bha sgadain bheaga – no garbhagan – a’ tighinn a-steach. Thàinig am facal *garbhag* bhon Albais *garvie*. Ach chaidh *garbhag* air ais don Bheurla ann an sgìre Inbhir Nis mar *garvack*. Ann an seachd ceud deug, ceathrad ’s a naoi (1749) bha an Eaglais a’ gearain mu iasgach air an t-Sàbaid. Sgrìobh iad mu “breach of the Lord’s Day for fishing for garvacks”.

Bha na garbhagan cudromach mar bhiadh anns a’ gheamhradh. Ach bha na daoine cuideachd a’ glacadh bhradan anns na lìn aca. Agus bha MacShimidh mì-thoilichte mu dheidh-inn sin. Chan e rud ùr a tha anns an deasbad mu iasgach le lìn air cladaichean na h-Alba.