

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 1,075 (which corresponds to Litir 1,379). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

There are Highland/Gaelic areas on the mainland of Scotland where the Catholic religion survived for a long time. An example is in Brae Lochaber – the country around Spean Bridge and Roybridge.

I was in Roybridge during the autumn. I went to the Catholic Church – St Margaret's Church. It's a beautiful church. Inside, there is a shrine to Mary MacKillop, the only Australian saint. Mary also belonged to Scotland – and particularly to Roybridge.

Her mother – Flora – was from Cranachan in Glen Roy. Her father – Alexander – was from Murlaggan in Glen Spean. It's not clear if they knew each other at home. But they met in Australia. Alexander emigrated in 1838. Flora went two years later.

Mary was born near Melbourne in 1842. Before she was twenty years of age, she knew that she wanted to be doing the 'work of God' as she would say herself.

Tha sgìrean Gàidhealach air tìr-mòr na h-Alba anns an do mhair an creideamh Caitligeach fad ùine mhòr. Tha eisimpleir ann am Bràigh Loch Abar – an dùthaich timcheall Drochaid an Aonachain agus Drochaid Ruaidh.

Bha mi ann an Drochaid Ruaidh as t-fhoghar. Chaidh mi don eaglais Chaitligich – Eaglais Naoimh Mairead. 'S e eaglais bhrèagha a tha innte. Na broinn, tha ionad coisrigte do Mhàiri NicIlp, an aon naomh Astràilianach. Bha buntanas aig Màiri do dh'Alba cuideachd – agus gu sònraichte don Drochaid Ruaidh.

Bha a màthair – Flòraidh – à Creithneachan ann an Gleann Ruaidh. Bha a h-athair – Alasdair – à Mùrlagan ann an Gleann Spiòthain. Chan eil e soilleir an robh iad eòlach air a chèile aig an taigh. Ach thachair iad ri chèile ann an Astràilia. Rinn Alasdair eilthireachd ann an ochd ceud deug, trithead 's a h-ochd (1838). Chaidh Flòraidh ann dà bhliadhna an dèidh sin.

Rugadh Màiri faisg air Melbourne ann an ochd ceud deug, ceathrad 's a dhà (1842). Mus robh i fichead bliadhna a dh'aois, bha fios aice gun robh i airson a bhith a' dèanamh 'obair Dhè' mar a chanadh i fhèin.

<p><i>I heard from people in Australia who know the story that Alexander and Flora would speak Gaelic to each other. Thus, Mary also spoke the language. I can't verify that, however. In 1873, she undertook a journey to Scotland. She went to visit her relations in Cranachan.</i></p> <p><i>In Australia, Mary was involved in establishing a new organisation and schools. However, she suffered because of the misbehaviour of a priest and Church politics. Mary was excommunicated.</i></p> <p><i>But the Pope – Pius IX – recognised that she was doing good work. She won a reputation within the Church. Long after her death, she was beatified. She was sanctified in 2010. The Catholic congregation in Roybridge, as would be expected, is very proud of her.</i></p>	<p>Chuala mi bho dhaoine ann an Astràilia a tha eòlach air an eachdraidh gum biodh Alasdair agus Flòraidh a' bruidhinn Gàidhlig ri chèile. Mar sin bha an cànan aig Màiri cuideachd. Chan urrainn dhomh sin a dhearbhadh, ge-tà. Ann an ochd ceud deug, seachdad 's a trì (1873), rinn i turas a dh'Alba. Chaidh i a chèilidh air na càirdean aice ann an Creithneachan.</p> <p>Ann an Astràilia, bha Màiri an sàs ann a bhith a' cur buidheann ùr agus sgoiltean air dòigh. Ge-tà, dh'fhuiling i air sàillibh mì-ghiùlan sagairt agus poilitigs na h-Eaglaise. Chaidh Màiri a chur a-mach às an Eaglais.</p> <p>Ach dh'aithnich am Pàp – Pius IX – gun robh i a' dèanamh obair mhath. Choisinn i cliù taobh a-staigh na h-Eaglaise. Fada an dèidh a bàis, bha i air a h-aithneachadh mar 'bheannaichte'. Chaidh a naomhachadh ann an dà mhìle 's a deich (2010). Tha an coitheanal Caitligeach ann an Drochaid Ruaidh, mar a bhiodh dùil, gu math moiteil aiste.</p>
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