

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 1,077 (which corresponds to Litir 1,381). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

In the last two Litrichean we were in Glen Roy in Brae Lochaber. We're still there. We're going to look at an amazing old stone and at the story connected to it.

The stone is beside the road in the glen. On one side of it, there are carved images – a chalice, wafer and the letters I-H-S. Those three things are connected to the Catholic religion.

There is a Gaelic account of the stone, written by Calum (Iain) Maclean. He collected oral tradition in Brae Lochaber in the fifties.

Here is the beginning: There is a stone next to the road which is called The Mass Stone. It is up opposite a place called Cranachan ... At one time there was a man going home who was called Big Angus. When he was opposite Cranachan ... the fairies came to stop him.

Half of the fairies were shouting, 'We won't let Big Angus pass.' The other half were shouting, 'We shall let Big Angus pass.'

The number was equal on each

Anns an dà Litir mu dheireadh bha sinn ann an Gleann Ruaidh ann am Bràigh Loch Abar. Tha sinn an sin fhathast. Tha sinn a' dol a thoirt sùil air seann chlach iongantach agus air an sgeul a tha ceangailte rithe.

Tha a' chlach ri taobh an rathaid anns a' ghleann. Air aon taobh dhith, tha ìomhaighean snaighe – cailis (no chalice), abhlan (no wafer) agus na litrichean I-H-S. Tha na trì rudan sin ceangailte ris a' chreideamh Chaitligeach.

Tha cunnatas ann an Gàidhlig mun chloich, sgrìobhte le Calum Iain MacGill-Eain. Chruinnich esan beul-aithris ann am Bràigh Loch Abar anns na caogadan.

Seo agaibh an toiseach: Tha clach ri taobh an rathaid ris an abair iad Clach na h-Aifrinn. Tha i shuas mu choinneamh àite ris an abair iad Creithneachan ... Bha uaireigin an siud ... fear a' dol dhachaigh ris an abradh iad Aonghas Mòr. Nuair a bha e mu choinneamh Creithneachan ... thàinig na sìthichean a chur stad air.

Bha leth de na sìthichean a' glaodhaich, 'Cha leig sinn seachad Aonghas Mòr.' Bha an leth eile a' glaodhaich, 'Leigidh sinn seachad Aonghas Mòr.'

Bha an àireamh co-ionann air gach

side. Angus supported himself and he got past.

There are other stories somewhat of the same type. There is a tale that a dangerous spectre was living at the burn there. The local people asked a priest to help them. The priest went to a large stone on the steep bank of the burn. He held a mass there, in an attempt to get rid of the spectre. Since then, the local people have called the stone 'The Mass Stone'.

The stone was then larger than it is today. The bank where it was was eroded by the burn. After a period, the stone fell into the burn and broke.

Some people lifted the largest piece out of the burn. They put it on the bank. But the burn was still eroding the land. And the stone was moved to the place where it is today. And who did the carving on it? I'll tell you that in the next Litir.

taobh. Thug Aonghas taic dha fhèin, agus fhuair e seachad.

Tha stòiridhean eile ann car dhen aon seòrsa. Tha sgeul ann gun robh bòcan cunnartach a' fuireach aig an allt an sin. Dh'iarr muinntir an àite air sagart taic a thoirt dhaibh. Chaidh an sagart gu clach mhòr air bruach chas an uillt. Chùm e aifreann ann, feuch faighinn cuidheas a' bhòcain. Bhon uair sin, ghabh muinntir an àite 'Clach na h-Aifrinn' air a' chloich.

Bha a' chlach na bu mhotha na tha i an-diugh. Chaidh a' bhruach far an robh i a chriomadh leis an allt. An dèidh ùine, thuit a' chlach don allt agus bhris I.

Thog feedhainn am pìos as motha a-mach às an allt. Chuir iad air a' bhruaich e. Ach bha an t-allt fhathast a' criomadh na talmhainn. Agus chaidh a' chlach a ghluasad don àite far a bheil i an-diugh. Agus cò rinn an snaigheadh oirre? Innsidh mi sin dhuibh anns an ath Litir.