

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 1,078 (which corresponds to Litir 1,382). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

We were looking at the Mass Stone in Glen Roy. There are three things engraved on it – a chalice, a mass wafer and the letters I-H-S. Those things are connected to the mass in the Catholic Church. Cailis – and the English ‘chalice’ – come from the Latin calix, meaning a ‘wine cup’.

Above the chalice on the Mass Stone is an image of a consecrated wafer. A congregation gets the wafer in addition to the wine as part of the mass.

The letters I-H-S represent Jesus with the first three letters of his first name. That is based to a degree on the old Greek alphabet. Catholics around the world recognise I-H-S as a symbol of Jesus Christ.

It was a Donald Campbell MacPherson that did the engraving. He was from the glen. He was a Gaelic scholar. He made the images around the year 1870.

Something amazing was found in the burn where the Mass Stone was originally situated. That was a mass vessel or, as it is called in English, a mass cruet. Those containers were keeping water or wine to use in the

Bha sinn a' toirt sùil air Clach na h-Aifrinn ann an Gleann Ruaidh. Tha trì rudan snaighte oirre – cailis, abhlan agus na litrichean I-H-S. Tha na rudan sin co-cheangailte ris an aifreann anns an Eaglais Chaitligich. Tha *cailis* – agus a' Bheurla *chalice* – a' tighinn bhon Laidinn *calix*, a' ciallachadh ‘copan-fiona’.

Os cionn na cailise air Clach na h-Aifrinn tha ìomhaigh de dh'abhlan coisrigte. Bidh muinntir coitheanail a' faighinn an abhlain a bharrachd air an fhòn mar phàirt dhen aifreann.

Tha na litrichean I-H-S a' riochdachadh Ìosa leis na ciad trì litrichean de a chiad ainm. Tha sin stèidhichte gu ìre air an t-seann aibidil Ghreugais. Tha Caitligich air feadh an t-saoghal ag aithneachadh I-H-S mar shamhla de dh'Ìosa Crìosd.

'S e fear Dòmhnaill Caimbeul Mac a' Phearsain a rinn an snaigheadh. 'S ann às a' ghleann a bha e. 'S e sgoilear na Gàidhlig a bha ann. Rinn e na h-ìomhaighean timcheall na bliadhna ochd ceud deug is seachdad (1870).

Chaidh rudeigin iongantach a lorg anns an allt far an robh Clach na h-Aifrinn suidhichte an toiseach. B' e sin soitheach-aifrinn no, mar a chanar ann am Beurla, a mass cruet. Bha na soithichean sin a' cumail uisge no fion

mass. A vessel of this type was found in that burn by an Angus Cameron. That was around the year 1880.

The vessel is tiny. It is made of silver. On its side there is the letter 'A' engraved. It stands for 'aqua'. It shows that it was for water rather than wine. The vessel was made in the 1830s in Dublin in Ireland.

It is thought that it was used by the same priest who was holding mass adjacent to the stone. Isn't that amazing! If you are interested, the cruet can be seen in the West Highland Museum in Fort William.

airson cleachdadh anns an aifreann. Chaidh soitheach dhen t-seòrsa a lorg anns an allt sin le fear Aonghas Camshron. Bha sin timcheall na bliadhna ochd ceud deug is ochdad (1880).

Tha an soitheach gu math beag. Tha e air a dhèanamh de dh'airgead. Air an taobh dheth, tha an litir 'A' air a snaigheadh. Tha i a' seasamh airson 'aqua'. Tha sin a' sealltainn gun robh e airson uisge, seach fion. Bha an soitheach air a dhèanamh anns na tritheadan dhen naoidheamh linn deug ann am Baile Atha Cliath ann an Èirinn.

Tha dùil gun robh e air a chleachdadh leis an aon sagart a bha a' dèanamh na h-aifrinn an cois na cloiche. Nach iongantach sin! Ma tha ùidh agaibh, tha an soitheach ri fhaicinn ann an Taigh-tasgaidh Taobh an Iar na Gàidhealtachd anns a' Ghearasdan.