

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 1,084 (which corresponds to Litir 1,388). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

The Book of Kells is in Trinity College in the capital of Ireland, Dublin. Some folk say that it is the most beautiful book in the world. And it is linked to Scotland.

In the book are the four gospels of the New Testament – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The text is in Latin. The book was made around the year 800. But where, exactly? In this Litir, I'll look at that question.

Scholars have put forward three ideas about the book's origins. In the first instance, that it was begun on the island of Iona. It was taken to Kells in Ireland to be completed.

The second idea is that it was done entirely on Iona. There were monks on Iona in St Columba's time, and after him. They had the ability and resources to create a book like that.

The third idea is that the Book of Kells was made in Lindisfarne. That is a small island off the coast of Northumbria in England. There were religious links between Lindisfarne and Iona. It's thought

Tha Leabhar Cheannanais, *The Book of Kells*, ann an Colaiste na Trianaid ann am prìomh bhaile na h-Èireann, Baile Atha Cliath. Tha cuid ag ràdh gur e an leabhar as brèagha san t-saoghal. Agus tha ceangal aige do dh'Alba.

Ann an leabhar tha ceithir soisgeulan an Tiomnaidh Nuaidh – Mata, Marcus, Lucas agus Eòin. Tha an teaca ann an Laidinn. Chaidh an leabhar a dhèanamh timcheall na bliadhna ochd ceud (800). Ach càite, dìreach? Anns an Litir seo, bheir mi sùil air a' cheist sin.

Tha sgoilearan air trì smuaintean a chur air adhart mu thùs an leabhair. Anns a' chiad dol a-mach gun robh e air a thòiseachadh ann an Eilean Ì. Bha e air a thoirt a Cheannanas, no *Kells*, ann an Èirinn airson crìoch a chur air.

'S e an dàrna smuain gun robh e air a dhèanamh gu lèir ann an Eilean Ì. Bha manaich ann an Ì ri linn Chaluim Chille, agus às a dhèidh. Bha comas agus goireasan acasan leabhar mar sin a chur ri chèile.

'S e an treas smuain gun robh Leabhar Cheannanais air a dhèanamh ann an Lindisfarne. 'S e sin eilean beag far costa Northumbria ann an Sasainn. Bha ceanglaichean creideimh eadar Lindisfarne agus Eilean Ì. Tha dùil gun robh an seann leabhar prìseil ris an canar

that the precious old book known as the Lindisfarne Gospels was made there in the 8th century. It is now in the British Library in London.

In the past few years, however, another idea has come to the fore. This appeared in print in a book that was published last year – ‘The Book of Kells: Unlocking the Enigma’ by the scholar and writer, Victoria Whitworth. She is based in Edinburgh.

Whitworth reckons that there is a good chance that the Book of Kells was written in Portmahomack. That is in coastal Easter Ross in the eastern Highlands. She says that there is a strong chance that it was Picts, or artists working according to Pictish tradition, that wrote it. In the next Litir, we’ll look at her opinion.

Soisgeulan Lindisfarne air a dhèanamh an sin anns an ochdamh linn. Tha e a-nise ann an Leabharlann Bhreatainn ann an Lunnainn.

Anns na beagan bhliadhnaichean a dh’fhalbh, ge-tà, tha smuain eile air tighinn am bàrr. Nochd sin ann an clò ann an leabhar a chaidh fhoillseachadh an-uiridh – *The Book of Kells: Unlocking the Enigma* leis an sgoilear agus sgrìobhadair, Victoria Whitworth. Tha ise stèidhichte ann an Dùn Èideann.

Tha Whitworth dhen bheachd gu bheil deagh theans ann gun deach Leabhar Cheannanais a sgrìobhadh ann am Port mo Cholmaig. Tha sin ann am Machair Rois air taobh an ear na Gàidhealtachd. Tha i ag ràdh gu bheil deagh choltas ann gur e Cruithnich, no luchd-ealain a bha ag obair ann an nòs nan Cruithneach, a sgrìobh e. Anns an ath Litir, bheir sinn sùil air a beachd.