

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 366 (which corresponds to Litir 670). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk.

Here is an interesting place-name from Mull – Maol Tobar Leac an t-Sagairt. The bare hill of the well of the flagstone, or gravestone, of the priest. Maol Tobar Leac an t-Sagairt. It's in the middle of the south of the island. It's close to the road between Craignure and Fionnphort.

There must be a well nearby. And, when you google it on the internet, there is indeed one there – Tobar Leac an t-Sagairt. But who was the priest? And why was the well named for him?

*Thomas Garnett was in that area in the year 1798. He got the story. He wrote about it in his book *Observations on a Tour Through the Highlands ...**

The story goes back to the time of St Columba. The saint was living on Iona. A priest died at Torosay. That was in the east of Mull. There was an opportunity for another man to gain his benefice. There were many priests with Columba on Iona. Two of them asked Columba if they could get their benefice in Torosay.

Columba said to them, "The

Seo ainm-àite inntinneach à Muile – Maol Tobar Leac an t-Sagairt. The bare hill of the well of the flagstone, or gravestone, of the priest. Maol Tobar Leac an t-Sagairt. Tha e ann am meadhan ceann a deas an eilein. Tha e faisg air an rathad eadar Creag an Iubhair agus Fionnphort.

Feumaidh gu bheil tobar faisg air làimh. Agus, nuair a tha thu ga ghoogladh air an eadar-lìon, tha gu dearbh fear ann – Tobar Leac an t-Sagairt. Ach cò an sagart a bha ann? Agus carson a chaidh an tobar ainmeachadh air a shon?

*Bha Tòmas Garnett anns an sgìre sin anns a' bhliadhna seachd ceud deug, naochad 's a h-ochd (1798). Fhuair esan an stòiridh. Sgrìobh e mu dheidhinn anns an leabhar aige *Observations on a Tour Through the Highlands ...**

Tha an stòiridh a' dol air ais do linn Chalum Chille. Bha an naomh a' fuireach ann an Eilean Ì. Chaochail sagart ann an Torosaigh. Tha sin ann an taobh sear Mhuile. Bha cothrom ann do dhuine eile a bheathachadh fhaighinn. Bha gu leòr de shagartan còmhla ri Calum Cille ann an Eilean Ì. Dh'iarr dithis aca air Calum Cille am beath-achadh fhaighinn ann an Torosaigh.

Thuirte Calum Cille riutha, "Am

first man to reach Torosay will get his benefice.” But it was night-time. Columba stopped the two men from starting until there was daylight.

The next morning, one of them left very early. The other priest found the first one. But he wasn't alive. He was dead beside the well.

What caused his death? Some were of the opinion that he drank too much water at the well. Others thought that the other priest murdered him. Anyway, the well was named “Tobar Leac an t-Sagairt”. And it's still called that.

And here's a Gaelic proverb that Thomas Garnett heard in Mull. Is mairg a loisgeadh a thiompan ris. Pity the man who'd burn his harp for him. I'll have a look at that proverb in the next Litir.

fear a ruigeas Torasaigh an toiseach, 's e a gheibh a bheathachadh.” Ach 's e an oidhche a bha ann. Chuir Calum Cille stad air an dithis bho bhith a' tòiseachadh gus an robh solas an latha ann.

An ath mhadainn, dh'fhalbh fear dhiubh gu math tràth. Lorg an sagart eile a' chiad fhear. Ach cha robh e beò. Bha e marbh ri taobh an tobair.

Dè thug bàs dha? Bha cuid dhen bheachd gun do dh'òl e cus uisge aig an tobar. Bha cuid eile dhen bheachd gun do mhuilt an sagart eile e. Co-dhiù, chaidh an tobar ainmeachadh “Tobar Leac an t-Sagairt”. Agus tha an t-ainm sin air fhathast.

Agus seo seanfhacal Gàidhlig a chuala Tòmas Garnett ann am Muile: *Is mairg a loisgeadh a thiompan ris. Pity the man who'd burn his harp for him. Bheir mi sùil air an t-seanfhacal sin anns an ath Litir.*