

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 447 (which corresponds to Litir 751). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you stories from the west side of Lewis. A local man left us accounts of those stories. This man was famous for various reasons. I want to tell you about him.

Dr Norman Morrison was born in Shawbost. The people of Shawbost know him as Tormod an t-Seòladair. He had a strange pastime. He kept snakes.

Most of us have a fear of snakes. The adder that belongs to Scotland – it's poisonous. But Tormod an t-Seòladair really liked snakes. There are photographs of Norman and adders. They are in his hands and around his head. One of them is crawling over his ear. Norman was not at all afraid.

Norman was born in Shawbost in 1869. He was the eldest of nine children. His father was a fisherman and crofter. Norman tells us in his autobiography 'My Story' that his mother had not had any English education but that she was a Gaelic scholar. She received her

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh stòiridhean à taobh siar Leòdhais. Dh'fhàg fear às an àite cunntasan againn de na stòiridhean sin. Bha am fear seo ainmeil air diofar adhbharan. Tha mi airson innse dhuibh mu dheidhinn.

Rugadh an t-Ollamh Tormod MacIlleMhoire ann an Siabost. Tha muinntir Shiaboist eòlach air mar Tormod an t-Seòladair. Bha cur-seachad iongantach aige. Bha e a' cumail nathraichean.

Tha a' chuid as motha againn eagallach ro nathraichean. Tha an nathair-nimhe a bhuineas do dh'Alba .. uill... nimhe no puinnseanta. Ach bha Tormod an t-Seòladair cianail measail air nathraichean. Tha dealbhan-camara ann de Thormod agus nathraichean-nimhe. Tha iad na làmhnan agus timcheall a chinn. Tha tè dhiubh a' snàgadh thairis air a' chluais. Cha robh eagal sam bith air Tormod.

Rugadh Tormod ann an Siabost ann an ochd ceud deug, seasgad 's a naoi (1869). B' esan an neach a bu shine de naoinear cloinne. Bha athair na iasgair agus na chroitear. Tha Tormod ag innse dhuinn anns an fhèin-eachdraidh aige 'My Story' nach robh a mhàthair air foghlam Beurla fhaighinn ach gur e sgoilear Gàidhlig a bha innte. Fhuair i

education before the Education Act wreaked damage on the state of Gaelic.

Norman received an education in the school in the village. He enjoyed the school. But he was exceptionally pleased when he got work on an uncle's fishing boat. He was fifteen years of age.

They were fishing with the long lines. Norman enjoyed the fishing. He enjoyed the maritime scenery. But he suffered terrible seasickness. He never got over that. And thus he didn't continue as a fisherman. At the age of nineteen, he went to Glasgow. He wanted to be a policeman.

Glasgow was different to Shawbost. Norman was amazed at how some of the city folk would behave on Saturday nights. They were drunk. They were fighting. A gang attacked Norman. He suffered a stabbing with a knife. It was a pity for him that he had not yet begun to carry a snake in his pocket, as he was going to do in the years ahead.

sgoil mus do rinn Achd an Fhoghlaim sgrios air suidheachadh na Gàidhlig.

Fhuair Tormod foghlam anns an sgoil anns a' bhaile. Chòrd an sgoil ris. Ach bha e anabarrach toilichte nuair a fhuair e obair air a' bhàt'-iasgaich aig uncail. Bha e còig bliadhna' deug a dh'aois.

Bha iad ag iasgach leis na lìn-mhòra. Chòrd an t-iasgach ri Tormod. Chòrd seallaidhean na mara ris. Ach dh'fhuiling e gu mòr le cur-na-mara. Cha d' fhuair e thairis air sin riamh. Agus, mar sin, cha do lean e le obair mar iasgair. Aig aois naoi-deug, chaidh e a Ghlaschu. Bha e airson a bhith na phoileas.

Bha Glaschu eadar-dhealaichte bho Shiabost. Chuir e iongnadh air Tormod mar a bha cuid de mhuintir a' bhaile gan giùlan fhèin air oidhche Shathairne. Bha an daorach orra. Bha iad a' sabaid. Thug gràisg ionnsaigh air Tormod. Dh'fhuiling e sàthadh le sgian. Bha e duilich dha nach robh e air tòiseachadh fhathast le bhith a' giùlan nathair na phòcaid, mar a bha e a' dol a dhèanamh anns na bliadhnaichean air thoiseach air.