

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 909 (which corresponds to Litir 1,213). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

Here is a Gaelic proverb. Thèid nathair tro theine dearg mun tèid i tro dhuilleach an uinnsinn 'a snake will go through a red-hot fire sooner than through the leaves of the ash tree'. Thèid nathair tro theine dearg mun tèid i tro dhuilleach an uinnsinn.

Last week, I was telling you a story from Lewis. The man who collected it was Tormod an t-Seòladair, Norman Morrison from Shawbost. Norman was an expert on adders. In his book 'The Life Story of the Adder', which appeared in print in 1924, he tells about the old cures of the Gaels for snakebite. Among them, they were using the bark of the ash tree.

People were boiling the bark. The liquid was filtered through cloth. They were soaking a piece of cloth in the liquid and putting it on the wound.

Norman reckoned that perhaps there was a chemical in the ash bark. That was working against the snake's venom. Perhaps there was truth in the proverb. Norman was told that a snake would never be found near an ash tree.

Seo seanfhacal Gàidhlig: *Thèid nathair tro theine dearg mun tèid i tro dhuilleach an uinnsinn 'a snake will go through a red-hot fire sooner than through the leaves of the ash tree'. Thèid nathair tro theine dearg mun tèid i tro dhuilleach an uinnsinn.*

An t-seachdain sa chaidh, bha mi ag aithris sgeulachd dhuibh à Leòdhas. B' e am fear a chruinnich i Tormod an t-Seòladair, Tormod Moireasdan, à Siabost. Bha Tormod na shàr-eòlaiche air nathraichean-nimhe. Anns an leabhar aige 'The Life Story of the Adder', a nochd ann an clò ann an naoi ceud deug is ceithir air fhichead (1924), tha e ag innse mu na seann leigheasan aig na Gàidheil airson lotadh nathrach. Nam measg, bha iad a' cleachdadh rùsg na craoibh-uinnsinn.

Bha daoine a' goil an rùsg. Bha an leann air a shìolachadh tro chlà. Bha iad a' bogadh pìos clòtha anns an leann agus ga chur air an lot.

Bha Tormod dhen bheachd gur dòcha gun robh stuth ceimigeach ann an rùsg an uinnsinn. Bha sin ag obair an aghaidh nimh na nathrach. Math dh'fhaodte gun robh firinn anns an t-seanfhacal. Chaidh innse do Thormod

According to Norman, the old Gaels had three other ways to cure snakebite. Firstly, they were killing a black cockerel and splitting it down its breast. They were putting the cockerel like that on the wound.

People were also using a 'serpent-stone'. That was a flat, round stone, about three inches across. There was a hole in the middle. The old people were believing that it was a snake that made the hole. If a serpent-stone were put on the wound, the patient would recover. However, Norman wrote that serpent-stones were rare. There were only around half a dozen in the entire Highlands.

The final cure for snakebite was that people were rubbing the head of a dead snake on the wound. We'll be looking at that cure next week.

nach biodh nathair ri lorg uair sam bith faisg air craobh-uinnsinn.

A rèir Thormoid, bha trì dòighean eile aig na seann Ghàidheil airson leigheas a dhèanamh air lotadh nathrach. Anns a' chiad dol a-mach, bha iad a' marbhadh coileach dubh agus ga sgoltadh sìos a bhroilleach. Bha iad a' cur a' choilich mar sin air an lot.

Bha daoine cuideachd a' cleachdadh 'clach-nathrach'. B' e sin clach chruinn rèidh, mu thrì òirlich ann an leud. Bha toll anns a' mheadhan. Bha na seann daoine a' creidsinn gur e nathair a rinn an toll. Nam biodh clach-nathrach air a cur air an lot, thigeadh feabhas air an euslainteach. Ge-tà, sgrìobh Tormod gun robh clachan-nathrach tearc. Cha robh ach mu leth-dhusan dhiubh air a' Ghàidhealtachd air fad.

B' e an leigheas mu dheireadh airson lotadh nathrach gun robh daoine a' suathadh ceann aig nathair mharbh air an lot. Bidh sinn a' toirt sùil air an leigheas sin an-ath-sheachdain.