

## **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 910 (which corresponds to Litir 1,214). Ruairidh can be contacted at [fios@learngaelic.scot](mailto:fios@learngaelic.scot).

*In the last Litir, I was telling you about different ways that the old Gaels had for curing adder bite. I was looking at an account by Norman Morrison. I want to look further at one of the cures he named. That is rubbing a snake's head on the wound.*

*There is an account of the same cure on the Tobar an Dualchais website. Alexander Nicolson, Alasdair Shomhairle Mhòir, was recorded by his sister's son. He was the folklorist, Calum Iain Maclean. That was in 1959. Alexander was from Braes on the Isle of Skye.*

*He saw a neighbour rubbing a snake's head on a snakebite wound on a heifer. He was keeping the snake's head on the top of a wall inside his house.*

*That accords with what I read [written] by Norman Morrison. He wrote that people were keeping the head of an adder they killed. And the heifer's condition improved. She was back to full health the next morning.*

*Before his neighbour came with the snake's head, a woman was attempting other cures. To begin*

anns an Litir mu dheireadh, bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu dhiofar dhòighean aig na seann Ghàidheil airson lot nathrach a leigheas. Bha mi a' toirt sùil air cunntas aig Tormod an t-Seòladair. Tha mi airson sùil a bharrachd a thoirt air fear de na leigheasan a dh'ainmich e. 'S e sin suathadh ceann nathrach air an lot.

Tha cunntas dhen dearbh leigheas air làrach-lìn Thobar an Dualchais. Bha Alasdair MacNeacail, Alasdair Shomhairle Mhòir, air a chlàradh le mac a pheathar. B' esan am fear-cruinneachaidh beul-aithris, Calum Iain MacGill-Eain. Bha sin ann an naoi ceud deug, caogad 's a naoi (1959). Bha Alasdair às a' Bhràighe anns an Eilean Sgitheanach.

Chunnaic esan coimhearsnach a' suathadh ceann nathrach air lot nathrach air agh. Bha e a' cumail ceann na nathrach air mullach balla am broinn an taigh aige.

Tha sin a' dol leis na leugh mi aig Tormod an t-Seòladair. Sgrìobh esan gun robh daoine a' gleidheadh ceann aig nathair-nimhe a mharbh iad. Agus thàinig feabhas air an agh. Bha i slàn a-rithist an ath mhadainn.

Mus tàinig a choimhearsnach le ceann na nathrach, bha boireannach a' feuchainn leigheasan eile. Dh'fheuch i an

*with, she tried water that had been poured over silver. That didn't work.*

*Then she tried with a red thread. She tied that 'around the animal'. And she recited a verse at the same time. That wasn't successful. But the snake's head did the trick.*

*I found another man's account on Tobar an Dualchais. He was speaking about old cures for snakebite. He was also from Skye. He was the Rev. Norman MacDonald from Valtos in Trotternish. Again, it was Calum Iain Maclean who recorded him. That was in 1953.*

*He had two cures. One of them, they were killing a hen. They were opening the carcass and putting it on the wound while the carcass was still warm.*

*And the other cure? They were getting hold of the snake that made the bite. It was immersed in water. And the water was poured on the wound.*

toiseach le uisge a chaidh a dhòrtadh thairis air airgead. Cha do dh'obraich sin.

Dh'fheuch i an uair sin le snàithlean dearg. Cheangail i sin 'timcheall air a bheothach'. Agus ghabh i rann leis. Cha robh sin soirbheachail. Ach rinn ceann na nathrach a' chùis.

Lorg mi cunntas aig fear eile air Tobar an Dualchais. Bha e a' bruidhinn air seann leigheasan airson lot nathrach. Bha esan cuideachd às an Eilean Sgitheanach. B' esan an t-Urramach Tormod Dòmhnallach à Bhaltos anns an Taobh Sear. A-rithist, 's e Calum Iain MacGill-Eain a chlàir e. Bha sin ann an naoi ceud deug, caogad 's a trì (1953).

Bha dà leigheas aige. Aonan dhiubh, bha iad a' marbhadh cearc. Bha iad a' fosgladh na closaich agus ga cur air an lot, agus an closach fhathast blàth.

Agus an leigheas eile? Bha iad a' faighinn grèim air an nathair a rinn an lotadh. Bha i air a bogadh ann an uisge. Agus bha an t-uisge air a dhòrtadh air an lot.