

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 1001 (which corresponds to Litir 1,305). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

I was telling you about the weaver and his family. They were living on the Stac Àrd, south of Eriskay. The only ones to survive were the weaver's wife and their youngest son. His name was John – John MacNeil.

They were living with John's grandfather in South Uist. John was pleased but there was one thing that was upsetting him. Every day, his mother would be crying.

She refused to say why. But when John reached fourteen [years of age] his mother told him how his father and brothers were killed. John said, 'I'm going to sea. I won't stop until I find the man who killed my father and my brothers.' That really upset his mother. But Iain was certain.

He reached Greenock on the Clyde. A skipper of one of the vessels saw him. 'Do you want to go to sea?' he said in English. John did not reply. He had no English. The captain then spoke to him in Gaelic, 'A bheil thu ag iarraidh falbh gu muir?'

'Yes,' replied John. The captain belonged to the Isle of Arran. His

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mun bhreabadair agus a theaghlach. Bha iad a' fuireach air an Stac Àrd, deas air Èirisgeigh. Cha do mhair beò ach bean a' bhreabadair agus an gille as òige aca. 'S e Iain an t-ainm a bha air – Iain MacNèill.

Bha iad a' fuireach còmhla ri seanair Iain ann an Uibhist a Deas. Bha Iain toilichte ach bha aon rud a' cur dragh air. A h-uile latha bhiodh a mhàthair a' gul.

Dhiùlt i innse carson. Ach nuair a ràinig Iain aois ceithir-deug, dh'inns a mhàthair dha mu mar a chaidh athair agus a bhràithrean a chur gu bàs. Thuirt Iain, 'Tha mi a' falbh gu muir. Cha stad mi gus an lorg mi an duine a mharbh m' athair 's mo bhràithrean.' Chuir sin a mhàthair troimhe-chèile buileach. Ach bha Iain deimhinne.

Ràinig e Grianraig, air Chluaidh. Chunnaic sgiobair aig tè de na soithichean e. 'Do you want to go to sea?' thuirt e ann am Beurla. Cha do fhreagair Iain. Cha robh Beurla aige. Bhruidhinn an caiptean ris ann an Gàidhlig an uair sin, 'A bheil thu ag iarraidh falbh gu muir?'

'Tha,' fhreagair Iain. Bhuineadh an caiptean do dh'Eilean Arainn. 'S e MacNèill a bha air mar ainm-cinnidh

surname was also MacNeil. 'Where are you from?' he asked.

'My father was from Barra,' said John, 'but I was raised on the Stack Islands south of Eriskay.' The two men shook hands. From that day on, they were good friends.

John left on maritime journeys. He came to know the ways of the sea. He obtained instruction in the skills of a mariner. He received promotion in his job. After years, Captain MacNeil retired from his job. John took command of the ship.

John did not forget his promise that he would avenge the death of his father and his brothers. One day, he was in London. He was among old mariners. One of them told the others how he killed a pirate and his three sons on the west coast of Scotland. What did John MacNeil do? I'll tell you in the next Litir.

cuideachd. 'Cò às a tha thu?' dh'fhaighnich e.

'Bha m' athair à Barraigh,' ars Iain, 'ach thogadh mise air Eileanan nan Stac, deas air Èirisgeigh.' Rug an dithis air làimh air a chèile. Bhon latha sin a-mach, bha iad nan deagh charaidean.

Dh'fhalbh Iain air tursan-cuain. Dh'fhàs e eòlach air dòighean na mara. Fhuair e oideachadh ann an sgilean a' mharaiche. Fhuair e àrdachadh san dreuchd aige. An dèidh bhliadhnaichean, leig an Caiptean MacNèill dheth a dhreuchd. Ghabh Iain comann air an t-soitheach.

Cha do dhìochuimhnich Iain an gealltanas aige gum faigheadh e dìoghaltas airson bàs athar agus a bhràithrean. Latha a bha seo, bha e ann an Lunnainn. Bha e am measg sheann mharaichean. Dh'inns fear do chàch mar a mharbh e spùinneadair agus a thriùir mhac air taobh an iar na h-Alba. Dè rinn Iain MacNèill? Innsidh mi dhuibh anns an ath Litir.