

## **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 1,024 (which corresponds to Litir 1,328). Ruairidh can be contacted at [fios@learngaelic.scot](mailto:fios@learngaelic.scot).

*I was telling you about the bad situation on Great Bernera a hundred and fifty years ago. Three officers came to the island with eviction notices for the crofters. The crofters were angry.*

*The crofters said that the land agent, James MacRae, was dishonest. He was trying to break an agreement. But they did not get a hearing. As the Bernera bard and scholar, Donald MacAulay, wrote, 'The two groups parted from each other, very dissatisfied.*

*When the officers departed, young people followed them. They threw peats and clods of earth at them. The sheriff officer – Colin MacLennan – said if he had had a gun, that mothers in Bernera would be mourning the death of their sons.*

*The officers spent the night at Haclete Farm. When they returned to speak to the crofters in the morning, MacLennan threatened them again. A group of people was waiting for the officers when they reached their boat on the shore. There was a scuffle. Three crofters stood out as spokesmen for them. They were Aonghas Thormoid, Iain Chaluim and Tormod Mhurchaidh.*

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mun droch shuidheachadh ann am Beàrnaraigh Leòdhais o chionn ceud gu leth bliadhna. Thàinig trìuir mhaor don eilean le pàipearan bàrlingidh – *eviction notices* – do na croitearan. Bha na croitearan feargach.

Thuir na croitearan gun robh am maor-fearainn, Seumas MacRath, eas-onarach. Bha e a' feuchainn ri cùmhnant a bhriseadh. Cha d' fhuair iad èisteachd. Mar a sgrìobh am bàrd is sgoilear Beàrnarach, Dòmhnall MacAmhlaigh, 'Dhealaich an dà bhuidheann ri chèile glè mhì-riaraichte.'

Nuair a dh'fhalbh na h-oifigearan, lean òigridh iad. Thilg iad caoranan agus plocan orra. Thuir an t-oifigear-siorrain – Cailean MacGillFhinnein – nam biodh gunna aige, gum biodh màthraichean ann am Beàrnaraigh a' caoidh bàs am mac.

Chuir na h-oifigearan seachad an oidhche aig Tuath Thàcleit. Nuair a thill iad a bhruidhinn ris na croitearan sa mhadainn, mhaoidh MacGillFhinnein orra a-rithist. Bha buidheann a' feitheamh ris na h-oifigearan nuair a ràinig iad an t-eathar aca air a' chladach. Bha tuasaid ann. Sheas trìuir chroitearan a-mach mar fhir-labhairt dhaibh. B' iad sin Aonghas Thormoid, Iain Chaluim agus Tormod Mhurchaidh.

*A fortnight later, Aonghas Thormoid was in Stornoway. He was seen. The police arrested him because he was one of the 'Bernera rebels'. A large number of people gathered to help him. The Riot Act was read.*

*Aonghas was released because a large group of people from Uig Parish were making for Stornoway. They went to speak to the landlord, Sir James Matheson, in Lews Castle. He agreed to look into the matter.*

*Three weeks later, Aonghas Thormoid, Iain Chaluum and Tormod Mhurchaidh were called to court in Stornoway. They were charged with attacking Colin MacLennan.*

*On the seventh of July 1874, the court case was [held] in Stornoway. Charles Innes, a lawyer from Inverness, was representing the crofters. He was excellent. And the three crofters were found not guilty.*

*The matter heartened crofters throughout the Gàidhealtachd. The ones on Bernera were not evicted from their houses. Donald Munro, the Lewis estate factor, suffered a loss of reputation, and he died in poverty.*

Ceala-deug an dèidh seo, bha Aonghas Thormoid ann an Steòrnabhagh. Chunnacas e. Chuir na poilis an grèim e oir b' esan fear de na 'reubaltaich Bheàrnarach'. Chruinnich sluagh airson taic a thoirt dha. Chaidh Achd na h-Aimhreit a leughadh.

Bha Aonghas air a leigeil mu sgaoil oir bha buidheann mhòr à Sgìr' Ùige a' dèanamh air Steòrnabhagh. Chaidh iad a bhruidhinn ris an uachdaran, Sir Seumas MacMhathain, ann an Caisteal Leòdhais. Dh'aontaich esan a' chùis a rannsachadh.

Trì seachdainean an dèidh sin, chaidh Aonghas Thormoid, Iain Chaluum agus Tormod Mhurchaidh a ghairm gu cùirt ann an Steòrnabhagh. Bha iad fo chasaid gun tug iad ionnsaigh air Cailean MacGillFhinnein.

Air an t-seachdamh latha dhen Iuchar, ochd ceud deug, seachdad 's a ceithir (1874), bha a' chùis-chùirt ann an Steòrnabhagh. Bha Teàrlach Innes, fear-lagh à Inbhir Nis, a' riochdachadh nan croitearan. Bha e fìor mhath. Agus fhuair an triùir chroitearan neoichiontach.

Mhisnich an gnothach croitearan air feadh na Gàidhealtachd. Cha deach an fheadhainn ann am Beàrnaraigh a chur às an taighean. Dh'fhuiling Dòmhnall Rothach, Siamarlan Leòdhais, call cliù, agus chaochail e ann am bochdainn.