

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 228 (which corresponds to Litir 532). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk.

I want to tell you about a thing that happened to me in Orkney. I was in the village of Longhope. That was in the summer this year. There was a maritime accident in Longhope forty years ago. Eight people from the area died. They were the crew on the Longhope lifeboat. This year the people of Longhope were remembering the accident.

It happened in March 1969. There was a terrible storm. A ship, which was registered in Liberia, in trouble. The Longhope lifeboat was called out. The ship went on the rocks. The coastguards rescued the crew. But the lifeboat did not return.

My wife and myself were in Longhope this year. A woman – one of the locals – started to speak to my wife. We were off a yacht. We didn't have a vehicle. The woman offered us a lift in her car around the area.

We were driving past the cemetery. "That's the memorial to those who were lost," the woman said. She spoke the melodious Orcadian dialect. I looked over. I saw a large memorial in the

Tha mi airson innse dhuibh mu rud a thachair dhomh ann an Arcaibh. Bha mi ann am baile beag Longhope. Bha sin as t-samhradh am-bliadhna. Bha tubaist mhara ann an Longhope o chionn ceathrad bliadhna. Chaochail ochdnar às an àite. B' iad an criutha air bàta-teasairginn Longhope. Am-bliadhna bha muinntir Longhope a' cuimhneachadh na tubaist.

Thachair i sa Mhàrt naoi ceud deug, seasgad 's a naoi (1969). Bha stoirm mhòr mhòr ann. Bha long, a bha air a clàradh ann an Liberia, ann an trioblaid. Chaidh bàta-teasairginn Longhope a ghairm a-mach. Chaidh an long air na creagan. Rinn na maoir-chladaich cobhair air a' chriutha. Ach cha do thill am bàta-teasairginn.

Bha mi fhìn is a' bhean agam air tìr ann an Longhope am-bliadhna. Thòisich boireannach – tè às an àite – air bruidhinn ris a' bhean agam. Bha sinn far gheat. Cha robh carbad againn. Thabhainn am boireannach lioft dhuinn sa chàr aice timcheall na sgìre.

Bha sinn a' dràibheadh seachad air a' chladh. "Sin an carragh-cuimhne don fheadhainn a chailleadh," thuirt am boireannach. Bha Beurla bhinn Arcach aice. Choimhead mi a-null. Chunnaic mi

cemetery. I said, "The wounds will still be there. People will still be feeling the loss."

She stopped the car. "I lost my husband, my father-in-law and my brother-in-law," she said. She was sad. [The] tears were running down her face. The wounds were still there. They always will be.

What could [would] I say to her? The two of us said that we were very sorry for her loss. We were, as people who go to sea, extremely grateful to the people who work on the lifeboats. And that woman has a close relative still working on the Longhope lifeboat. Her son.

My blessing on that kind woman. My blessing on people like her in all places. The RNLI does heroic work throughout Britain and Ireland. A stone on the cairn of those who were lost forty years ago. And my blessing on every person that works on the lifeboats. They are all heroes.

carragh-cuimhne mòr anns a' chladh. Thuir mi, "Bidh na lotan ann fhathast. Bidh daoine fhathast a' faireachdainn a' chall."

Stad i an càr. "Chaill mi an duine agam, m' athair-chèile is mo bhràthair-chèile," thuir i. Bha i brònach. Bha na deòir a' sruthadh sìos a gruaidhean. Bha na lotan ann fhathast. Bithidh gu sìorraidh.

Dè chanainn rithe? Thuir an dithis againn gun robh sinn fìor dhuilich mu a call. Bha sinn, mar dhaoine a thèid gu muir, taingeil dha-rìribh do na daoine a tha ag obair air na bàtaichean-teasairginn. Is tha dlùth-charaid a' bhoireannaich sin fhathast ag obair air a' bhàta-teasairginn ann an Longhope. A mac.

Mo bheannachd air a' bhoireannach choibhneil sin. Mo bheannachd air a leithid anns gach àite. Tha an RNLI a' dèanamh obair ghaisgeil air feadh Bhreatainn is na h-Èireann. Clach air càrn an fheadhainn a chailleadh o chionn ceathrad bliadhna. Agus mo bheannachd air a h-uile duine a tha ag obair air na bàtaichean-teasairginn. 'S e gaisgich a tha annta uile.