

**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 386 (which corresponds to Litir 690). Ruairidh can be contacted at [rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk).

*Have you ever heard of Keith Norman MacDonald? He was a Skyeman. He was born in 1834. He was a doctor. But he was famous for collecting and publishing the music of the Gaels. This year, his collection of puirt-à-beul appeared anew in print.*

*Keith Norman graduated in Edinburgh in 1854. He returned to Skye as a doctor for two years. Then he spent ten years in Lochaber, Wales, England and Burma.*

*Back in Britain, he married Eliza Mary Niblett from Edinburgh. They had five children. Keith Norman was busy with his family and with his work as a doctor. But he found enough time to write scientific articles. He was an agnostic. He was of the opinion that Christianity placed too much emphasis on suffering after death. He wrote a booklet On Death and How to Divest It of Its Terrors.*

*As time went by, he occupied himself more with his own language and culture. While he*

An cuala sibh riamh mu Chè Tormod Dòmhnallach – Keith Norman MacDonald? 'S e Sgitheanach a bha ann. Rugadh e ann an ochd ceud deug, trithead 's a ceithir (1834). Bha e na dhotair. Ach bha e ainmeil airson a bhith a' cruinneachadh agus a' foillseachadh ceòl nan Gàidheal. Am-bliadhna, nochd an cruinneachadh aige de phuirt-à-beul ann an clò às ùr.

Cheumnaich Cè Tormod ann an Dùn Èideann ann an ochd ceud deug, caogad 's a ceithir (1854). Thill e don Eilean Sgitheanach mar dhotair airson dà bhliadhna. An uair sin, chuir e seachad deich bliadhna ann an Loch Abar, a' Chuimrigh, Sasainn agus Burma.

Air ais ann am Breatainn, phòs e tè, Eliza Mary Niblett, à Dùn Èideann. Bha còignear chloinne aca. Bha Cè Tormod trang le theaghlach agus le obair mar dhotair. Ach fhuair e ùine gu leòr airson a bhith a' sgrìobhadh altan saidheansail. 'S e neo-chreidmheach a bha ann. Bha e dhen bheachd gun robh Crìosdachd a' cur cus cuideim air fulangas às dèidh a' bhàis. Sgrìobh e leabhran *On Death and How to Divest It of Its Terrors*.

Mar a chaidh an ùine seachad, rinn e barrachd airson a chànan is a chultair fhèin. Fhad 's a bha e a' fuireach ann am

*was living in Fife, he published The Skye Collection of Reels and Strathspeys. He was wanting to preserve old Gaelic tunes. But he was also wanting people to play the tunes. So, in the fashion of the time, he included a piano accompaniment for each tune.*

*I understand that people in Cape Breton liked his collection. But I can't say if it influenced their style of playing over there.*

*Im 1890, Keith Norman returned to the land of his ancestors. He got work as a medical officer in Gesto Hospital on Skye. He was on Skye for six years. Before he left that place, he published another book – The Gesto Collection of Highland Music. I'll tell [you] more about Keith Norman next week*

Fìobh, dh'fhoillsich e *The Skye Collection of Reels and Strathspeys*. Bha e ag iarraidh seann phuirt Ghàidhealach a ghleidheadh. Ach bha e cuideachd ag iarraidh gum biodh daoine a' cluich nam port. Mar sin, ann am fasan an latha, chuir e ceòl piàna ann airson gach port.

Tha mi a' tuigsinn gun robh daoine measail air a' chruinneachadh aige ann an Ceap Breatainn. Ach chan urrainn dhomh a ràdh co-dhiù thug e buaidh air an stoidhle chluich aca thall an sin.

Ann an ochd ceud deug is naohad (1890), thill Cè Tormod do dhùthaich a shinnsirean. Fhuair e obair mar oifigear meidigeach ann an Ospadal Gheusto anns an Eilean Sgitheanach. Bha e ann an Geusto airson sia bliadhna. Mus do dh'fhàg e an t-àite sin, dh'fhoillsich e leabhar eile – *The Gesto Collection of Highland Music*. Innsidh mi tuilleadh mu dheidhinn Chè Thormoid an-ath-sheachdain.