

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 449 (which corresponds to Litir 753). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you about Tormod an t-Seòladair, 'the adder man'. One day he was in a headteacher's office. The lesson was over. Children were in the corridor. Norman heard screaming. He put his hand in his pocket. His snake had gone.

He ran out into the corridor. The snake was on the floor. It was making for the front door. The children were in every corner. They were frightened. Norman picked up the snake and put it in his pocket. The children didn't know he had extracted the snake's teeth. They reckoned Norman was a snake-charmer!

But he was bitten one time. He had five adders in cages. He was taking poison from them twice a week. One day he made a mistake. A snake sunk its fangs into the palm of his left hand.

Norman tied a bandage tightly around his wrist. He cut the wounds – two small holes – with a lancet. He sucked the blood. Then he rubbed crystals of potassium permanganate on the wounds. His hand started to swell. It was sore.

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Thormod an t-Seòladair – 'fear nan nathraichean'. Latha a bha seo bha e ann an oifis ceannard-sgoile. Bha an leasan seachad. Bha clann anns an tranntsa. Chuala Tormod sgreuchail. Chuir e a làmh na phòcaid. Bha an nathair aige air teicheadh.

Ruith e a-mach don tranntsa. Bha an nathair air an làr. Bha i a' dèanamh air an doras mhòr. Bha a' chlann anns gach oisean. Bha an t-eagal orra. Thog Tormod an nathair agus chuir e na phòcaid i. Cha robh fios aig a' chloinn gun robh e air fiaclan na nathrach a spìonadh às. Bha iad dhen bheachd gur e seunadair-nathrach a bha ann an Tormod!

Ach chaidh a bhìdeadh turas. Bha còig nathraichean aige ann an cèidsichean. Bha e a' faighinn puinnsean bhuapa dà thuras anns an t-seachdain. Latha a bha seo, rinn e mearachd. Chuir nathair a fiaclan a-steach gu bas a làimhe clì.

Cheangail Tormod bann gu teann timcheall caol a dhùirn. Gheàrr e na lotan – dà tholl bheag – le lannsa. Dheothail e an fhuil. An uair sin, shuath e criostalan de photassium permanganate air na lotan. Thòisich a làmh air a dhol a dh'at. Bha i piantail.

Next day, his hand and arm had swollen significantly. But within a few days he was back to normal.

Norman experimented on the poison. He wrote a book – The Life Story of the Adder. There is a chapter in it about how, perhaps, adder poison could provide a cure for cancer. People are still looking for a cure for cancer, however.

Norman was well-known as an expert on adders. Experts on natural history from the universities respected his scholarship.

I'm not entirely sure why he had such an interest in adders. Perhaps it was linked in some way to the creature's shape. Because he was also very interested in another animal that is long and thin – the eel. I'll tell you more about that next week.

Air an làrna-mhàireach bha a làmh is a ghàirdean air an at gu mòr. Ach taobh a-staigh beagan làithean bha e ceart gu leòr a-rithist.

Rinn Tormod deuchainnean air an nimh. Sgrìobh e leabhar – *The Life Story of the Adder*. Tha caibideil ann mu dheidhinn mar a dh'fhaodadh, 's dòcha, nimh na nathrach a bhith na leigheas do dh'aillse. Tha daoine fhathast a' coimhead airson leigheas do dh'aillse, ge-tà.

Bha Tormod ainmeil mar eòlaiche air nathraichean. Bha eòlaichean-nàdair aig na h-oilthighean a' cur sùim anns an sgoilearachd aige.

Chan eil mi buileach cinnteach carson a bha ùidh mhòr aige ann an nathraichean. 'S dòcha gun robh e co-cheangailte ann an dòigh air choreigin ri cumadh a' chreutair. Oir bha ùidh mhòr aige cuideachd ann an ainmhidh eile a tha fada, caol – an easgann. Innsidh mi dhuibh mu dheidhinn sin an-ath-sheachdain.