

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 462 (which corresponds to Litir 766). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk.

There is an amazing lighthouse on the Skerryvore near Tiree. It's the highest one in Scotland, at a height of 48 metres. The Skerryvore is about twelve miles from Tiree and fifty miles from the mainland. Before there was a lighthouse on it, it was a great danger to shipping. Over a period of a little more than fifty years, more than thirty ships sank after hitting the skerry or other skerries near it. Thus, the government paid to erect a lighthouse on it.

It was built by Allan Stevenson between 1838 and 1844. At the time, it was the highest lighthouse in the world.

A wooden structure – living accommodation – was built first. It was built in Gourock. It was big enough to accommodate forty men. In August 1838, it was erected on the Skerryvore. The legs of the building were inserted into holes in the rock.

In November, the work had stopped for the winter. But the stonemasons were still working at

Tha taigh-solais iongantach air an Sgeir Mhòir faisg air Tiriodh. 'S e am fear as àirde ann an Alba, aig àirde de cheathrad 's a h-ochd meatair. Tha an Sgeir Mhòr mu dhusan mìle à Tiriodh, agus caogad mìle à tìr-mòr. Mus robh taigh-solais oirre, bha i gu math cunnartach do luingeas. Thairis air beagan is caogad bliadhna, chaidh còrr is trithead soitheach fodha às dèidh dhaibh bualadh air an sgeir no sgeirean eile faisg oirre. Mar sin, phàigh an riaghaltas airson taigh-solais a thogail oirre.

Thogadh e le Ailean Stevenson eadar ochd ceud deug, trithead 's a h-ochd (1838) agus ochd ceud deug ceathrad 's a ceithir (1844). Aig an àm b' e an taigh-solais a b' àirde anns an t-saoghal.

Chaidh taigh-fiodha – taigh-còmhnaidh – a thogail an toiseach. Bha e air a thogail ann an Guireag. Bha e mòr gu leòr airson ceathrad duine a bhith a' fuireach ann. Anns an Lùnastal ochd ceud deug, trithead 's a h-ochd (1838) bha e air a chur suas air an Sgeir Mhòir. Chaidh casan an togalaich a chur ann an tuill anns a' chreig.

Anns an t-Samhain, bha an obair air sguir airson a' gheamhraidh. Ach bha clachairean fhathast ag obair ann an

Hynish on Tiree. They were making stones for the tower. Allan Stevenson received a letter from the storekeeper in Hynish. He was telling that a storm had destroyed the building on the Skerryvore. There was nothing left of it.

Stevenson built a new accommodation block but this time it withstood the winter storms. People were living out on the Skerryvore during the summer months while they were building the lighthouse.

The work was dangerous. Sometimes food became scarce because the supply boat couldn't get out to the rock. But nobody's life was lost during the building of the lighthouse.

The Skerryvore lighthouse has saved many vessels. The waters of Tiree are now much safer. But there has been the occasional maritime accident, despite it. I'll tell you about one of them next week.

Haoidhnis ann an Tiriodh. Bha iad a' dèanamh chlachan airson an tùir. Fhuair Ailean Stevenson litir bho fhear an stòir ann an Haoidhnis. Bha e ag innse gun robh stoirm air sgrios a dhèanamh air an togalach air an Sgeir Mhòir. Cha robh dad air fhàgail dheth.

Thog Stevenson taigh-còmhnaidh ùr ach an turas seo sheas e an aghaidh stoirmean a' gheamhraidh. Bha daoine a' fuireach a-muigh air an Sgeir Mhòir thairis air mìosan an t-samhraidh, agus iad a' togail an taigh-sholais.

Bha an obair cunnartach. Uaireannan bha am biadh a' fàs gann oir cha robh am bàta-frithealaidh a' faighinn a-mach don sgeir. Ach cha robh aon duine air chall fhad 's a bhathar a' togail an taigh-sholais.

Tha taigh-solais na Sgeir Mhòir air iomadh soitheach a shàbhaladh. Tha uisgeachan Thiriodh mòran nas sàbhailte a-nise. Ach tha corra tubaist-mhara air a bhith ann dha aindeoin. Innsidh mi dhuibh mu thè dhiubh an-ath-sheachdain.