

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 463 (which corresponds to Litir 767). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleane@bbc.co.uk.

There was, and is, a lighthouse on Skerryvore near Tiree. Despite that, however, there was an occasional maritime accident in those waters. The accident of the Cairnsmuir was in 1885. It was rather like the famous accident of the Politician near Eriskay.

The Cairnsmuir displaced eleven hundred tons. She was out of Hamburg. She was on her way to Glasgow and then on to China. She went through the Pentland Firth. She turned south at Cape Wrath. She had a crew of twenty-six.

The Cairnsmuir went past Uist. At about a quarter to three in the morning, she struck the Bogha Mòr [large submerged rock] off the west coast of Tiree. She was travelling at eight knots. She was badly damaged.

The captain gave the order to abandon ship. The crew made for land in the ship's boats.

Islanders came. They were assisting the mariners. 'What did you have on board?' they asked.

'Whisky, among other things,' said the mariners. The news spread quickly around the island.

Bha, agus tha, taigh-solais air an Sgeir Mhòir faisg air Tiriodh. A dh'aindeoin sin, ge-tà, bha tubaist-mhara ann bho àm gu àm anns na h-uisgeachan sin. Bha tubaist a' Chairnsmuir ann ann an ochd ceud deug, ochdad 's a còig (1885). Bha i car coltach ri tubaist ainmeil a' Pholitian faisg air Eirisgeigh.

Bha mìle is ceud tonna de chuideam anns a' Chairnsmuir. Bha i a-mach à Hamburg. Bha i air a slighe a Ghlaschu agus an uair sin a Shìonaidh. Chaidh i tron Chaol Arcach. Thionndaidh i gu deas aig a' Pharbh. Bha criutha aice de shia duine fichead.

Chaidh an Cairnsmuir seachad air Uibhist. Mu chairteal gu trì sa mhadainn bhuaill i anns a' Bhogha Mhòr far costa siar Thiriodh. Bha i a' dol aig astar ochd mìle-mara san uair. Bha i air a milleadh gu mòr.

Thug an sgiobair an t-òrdugh an soitheach a threigsinn. Rinn an criutha air tìr anns na geòlaichean.

Thàinig eileanaich. Bha iad a' dèanamh cobhair air na maraichean. 'Dè bha agaibh air bòrd?' dh'fhaighnich iad.

'Uisge-beatha, am measg eile,' thuirt na maraichean. Chaidh an naidheachd timcheall an eilein gu luath.

The Tiree folk went out to the shipwreck. They took bottles of whisky to shore. When the customs and excise people came, they tried to shoo away the islanders. But they got a heap of abuse. The Tiree people were pouring whisky into other containers. The customs and excise officers were then only finding empty bottles.

Customs officers saw a box afloat. They expected it to be full of bottles of whisky. They reckoned it would come to shore in the next bay. They were keeping their eyes on it, and walking towards the next bay.

But an islander called Kennedy took all his clothes off. He jumped into the water, swam out and took the box to land. The officers were going to stop him. But a large group of islanders appeared. The customs officers thought it wise not to get in the way. And there you have the story of the loss of the Cairnsmuir.

Chaidh na Tiristich a-mach don luing-bhrisidh. Thug iad botail uisge-bheatha gu tìr. Nuair a thàinig muinntir na cusbainn, dh'fheuch iad ri teicheadh a chur air na h-eileanaich. Ach fhuair iad droch-bheul. Bha na Tiristich a' dòrtadh uisge-beatha a-steach gu soithichean eile. Cha robh na h-oifigearan cusbainn a' faighinn an uair sin ach botail fhalamh.

Chunnaic oifigearan cusbainn bogsa air flod. Bha iad an dùil gun robh e làn botail uisge-bheatha. Bha iad dhen bheachd gun tigeadh e gu tìr anns an ath bhàgh. Bha iad a' cumail sùil air, agus a' coiseachd a dh'ionnsaigh an ath bhàigh.

Ach thug eileanach, air an robh MacUalraig mar ainm, a chuid aodaich gu lèir dheth. Leum e don uisge, shnàmh e a-mach agus thug e am bogsa gu tìr. Bha na h-oifigearan a' dol a chur stad air. Ach nochd buidheann mhòr de dh'eileanaich. Shaoil muinntir na cusbainn gum biodh e glic gun a bhith anns an rathad. Agus 's e sin agaibh stòiridh call a' Chairnsmuir.