

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 807 (which corresponds to Litir 1,111). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleam@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you about Mac an t-Srònaich. He murdered his sister on the mainland and fled to Lewis. He moved from place to place. Many caves are known as Mac an t-Srònaich's cave.

How did he get food? According to report[s], he was involved in theft and murder. The people of Lewis were scared of him.

Keose in Lochs was one of his hiding places. It is said that he was related to the wife of the minister there. Occasionally, he spent a night at the manse.

One day, he was in Ness. There was a family in a shieling bothy. They were taking food when there was a knocking at the door. Who was standing there but Mac an t-Srònaich. The family knew who he was. They didn't reveal that they knew him. They offered him a bed for the night.

They went to other families close by. They told them that Mac an t-Srònaich was there. The families remained awake all night. Nothing happened. In the morning, Mac an t-Srònaich said to the family's son, 'Show me the way to Tolsta.' But the

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Mhac an t-Srònaich. Mhurt e a phiuthar air tìr-mòr agus theich e a Leòdhas. Ghluais e bho àite gu àite. Tha iomadh uamh aithnichte mar Uamh Mac an t-Srònaich.

Ciamar a fhuair e biadh? A rèir aithris, bha e ri mèirle is murt. Bha eagal air muinntir Leòdhais roimhe.

B' e Ceòs air na Lochan aon de na h-àiteachan-falaich aige. Thathar ag ràdh gun robh e càirdeach do bhean a' mhinisteir an sin. Corra uair, bha e a' cur seachad oidhche sa mhansa.

Latha a bha seo, bha e ann an sgìre Nis. Bha teaghlach ann am bothan-àirigh. Bha iad a' gabhail biadh nuair a thàinig gnogadh air an doras. Cò bha na sheasamh an sin ach Mac an t-Srònaich. Bha fios aig an teaghlach gur e a bha ann. Cha do nochd iad gun robh iad ga aithneachadh. Thabhann iad cuid na h-oidhche air.

Chaidh iad gu teaghlaichean eile faisg air làimh. Dh'inns iad dhaibh gun robh Mac an t-Srònaich ann. Dh'fhuirich na teaghlaichean nan dùisg fad na h-oidhche. Cha do thachair càil. Anns a' mhadainn, thuirte Mac an t-Srònaich ri gille an teaghlaich, 'Seall

lad refused. 'You are lucky,' said Mac an t-Srònaich. 'If you had left along with me, you wouldn't have seen your father or mother again.'

Often, Mac an t-Srònaich was in Uig Parish. One day, a young lass was looking for a calf. She was walking past a cave when a man ran out. The girl shouted, 'John, Angus, Mac an t-Srònaich is here! Hurry up!' There was nobody else there, but Mac an t-Srònaich didn't know that. The girl got away.

Another day, there was a young lad sitting beside a lochan, when Mac an t-Srònaich appeared. The criminal drowned the lad. That was the one death that Mac an t-Srònaich ever regretted.

He was caught and hanged. When he went to the grave, according to report[s], he had murdered twenty people.

dhomh an t-slighe gu ruige Tolastadh.' Ach dhiùlt an gille. 'Tha thu fortanach,' thuir Mac an t-Srònaich. 'Nam biodh tu air falbh cuide rium, cha bhiodh tu air d' athair no do mhàthair fhaicinn tuilleadh.'

Gu tric, bha Mac an t-Srònaich ann an Sgir' Ùige. Latha a bha seo, bha nighean òg a' coimhead airson laogh. Bha i a' coiseachd seachad air uamh nuair a ruith fear a-mach. Dh'èigh an nighean, 'Iain, Aonghais, tha Mac an t-Srònaich ann! Greasaibh oirbh!' Cha robh duine eile ann, ach cha robh fios aig Mac an t-Srònaich air sin. Fhuair an nighean air falbh.

Latha eile, bha gille òg na shuidhe ri taobh lochan, nuair a nochd Mac an t-Srònaich. Bhàth an t-eucoireach an gille. B' e sin an t-aon bhàs ris an do ghabh Mac an t-Srònaich aithreachas riamh.

Chaidh a ghlacadh agus a chrochadh. Nuair a chaidh e don uaigh, a rèir aithris, bha e air fichead duine a mhurt.