

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 1,063 (which corresponds to Litir 1,367). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

A Gaelic book came out anew recently. Its title is Bha Siud ann Reimhid. It was first published fifty years ago. It's Lisa Storey – who belongs to Vatersay – who made the book. It is a nice collection of traditional stories from oral tradition.

I came across the book a long time ago. I didn't have much Gaelic at that time. I didn't understand the word 'Reimhid' in the title. It's not in every dialect. It's not in Dwelly's dictionary. But it belongs to the Southern Isles – Uist and Barra and the islands there.

Reimhid means 'beforehand'. It's based on the word roimhe 'before it' or, as some say, reimhe. Storytellers would start a story about old happenings with 'Bha siud ann reimhid'. In other dialects, perhaps they would say, 'Once upon a time' or 'One day' or 'There was at one time an old man ...'

Lisa Storey worked with the School of Scottish Studies. It's from the School's archive that most of the stories in the book come. They are in rich, idiomatic Gaelic. They are accompanied by nice illustrations.

Thàinig leabhar Gàidhlig a-mach às ùr o chionn ghoirid. 'S e an tiotal a tha air *Bha Siud ann Reimhid*. Chaidh fhoillseachadh an toiseach o chionn caogad bliadhna. 'S e Lisa Storey – a bhuineas do Bhatarsaigh – a rinn an leabhar. Tha e na chruinneachadh laghach de sgeulachdan traidiseanta à beul-aithris.

Thàinig mi tarsainn air an leabhar o chionn fhada. Cha robh mòran Gàidhlig agam aig an àm sin. Cha do thuig mi am facal 'Reimhid' anns an tiotal. Chan eil e anns a h-uile dualchainnt. Chan eil e ann am faclair Dwelly. Ach buinidh e do Ghàidhlig nan Eilean mu Dheas – Uibhist agus Barraigh is na h-eileanan an sin.

Tha *reimhid* a' ciallachadh 'beforehand'. Tha e stèidhichte air an fhacal *roimhe* 'before it', no mar a chanas cuid *reimhe*. Bhiodh seanchaidhean a' tòiseachadh sgeul mu sheann tachartasan le 'Bha siud ann reimhid'. Ann an dualchainntean eile, math dh'fhaodte gun canadh iad, 'Uair a bha siud' no 'Latha a bha seo' no 'Bha uaireigin bodach ann ...'

Bha Lisa Storey ag obair le Sgoil Eòlais na h-Alba. 'S ann on stòras aig an Sgoil a tha a' chuid as motha de na stòiridhean anns an leabhar a' tighinn. Tha iad ann an Gàidhlig ghlan, ghnàthasach. Tha dealbhan snoga nan cois.

<i>There are famous stories in the book, such as Biorachan Beag and Biorachan Mòr. Biorachadh Mòr wanted a rod that he could take to Biorachan Beag so that he wouldn't eat too many of the butts. But it's not a simple task to find a rod!</i> <i>There is another famous story in the book – The Grey Goat. It's about a goat who leaves her kids at the house when she goes out. While she is away, the fox comes ...</i> <i>The final story in the book is a short one – The Cockerel and the Fox. It starts with: 'There was at one time a smart-looking cockerel ...'</i> <i>The fox tells the cockerel they are related to each other. The cockerel is foolish. He sits next to the fox. He wasn't wise to do that!</i>	Tha sgeulachdan ainmeil anns an leabhar, leithid Biorachan Beag agus Biorachan Mòr. Tha Biorachan Mòr ag iarraidh slat a ghabhadh air Biorachan Beag gus nach itheadh e cus de na cnòthan. Ach chan e rud sìmplidh a tha ann slat a lorg! Tha sgeul ainmeil eile anns an leabhar – A' Ghobhar Ghlas. Tha e mu dheidhinn gobhar a dh'fhàgas a cuid mheann aig an taigh nuair a dh'fhalbhas i amach. Fhad 's a tha i air falbh, tha am madadh-ruadh a' tighinn. ... 'S e an sgeul mu dheireadh anns an leabhar fear beag goirid – 'Coileach agus Sionnach'. Tha e a' tòiseachadh le: 'Bha siud ann reimhid coileach spaideil ...' Tha am madadh-ruadh ag innse don choileach gu bheil iad càirdeach do chèile. Tha an coileach gòrach. Tha e a' suidhe ri taobh a' mhadaidh. Cha robh e glic sin a dhèanamh!
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