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Norman Campbell – Tormod A’ Bhocsair

13 - History - History

Norman Campbell, or Tormod a’ Bhocsair as he was more commonly known, was born in 1942 in the village of South Dell in Ness, in the Isle of Lewis. He was born into a family of writers, his father (Am Bocsair) and his uncle (Am Puilean) being well known bàrds.

Tormod lost his father when he was very young but he remembered the stories his father passed on to him. His mother was also a great influence on his writing through her interest in village life and people.

When Tormod was in school there was a lack of Gaelic texts and this too had an effect on him, although he did not realise it at the time.

It was whilst he attended Edinburgh University that he began to write for the first time. He wrote Gaelic poems, which found their way into the Gaelic magazine ‘Gairm’. This gave him the confidence to continue with his writing. He successfully wrote for a Gaelic children’s TV programme, ‘Cò Iad?’ which was aimed at children aged eight to fourteen years.

Tormod enjoyed writing and excelled in playing with the words and the sounds to create imaginative and inspirational texts.

His main passion was for writing drama. Whilst he was teaching in Lionel School, he wrote plays for his pupils each year which were often performed at the Mòd. He also acted in some of his plays.

Tormod wrote in a wide range of genre, including plays, poetry, short stories, picture books and novels. His short story ‘Jelly a’ Cho-op’ was one of his most famous pieces as his daughter, Catriona Lexy, told the story in the 1989 Mòd in Stornoway when she was just five and won her competition. She was the star of the Mòd with her delivery of her father’s hilarious story.

As well as the original texts he wrote, he translated a number of well-known children’s books into Gaelic; An Gruffalo, A’ Chàparaid Chàr and Nòra a’ Chremola amongst the most popular. His use of vocabulary, idioms and his inimitable turn of phrase was attractive to children of all ages.

His interest in local people, places and folklore was evident in his collection of Gaelic poems and verse, ‘Air do Bhoinneagan, a’ Ghaoil’. He collated the poems and verse, carefully chosen to appeal to all.

As well as being a prolific writer, Tormod had many other interests, he was very keen on building dry-stone dykes and built many around his house in Dell.

Tormod had three children, with his wife, **Mairi Sìne Catriona Lexy**, who has followed her father into writing and drama, **Seòras**, who is a musician and **Domhnall Alasdair**, who works in media but is also involved in

music.

Tormod died in May, 2015, aged 72, after a battle with cancer. His final book, Sgeulachdan sa Chiaradh, a collection of short stories was launched later that month.

Timeline

Frise

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Games

Activities

1. I can write my own texts, based on Tormod Caimbeul's style of writing.
2. I can create an original text, based on the style of one of Tormod Caimbeul's texts. Include: Front cover, back page with blurb

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