

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 313 (which corresponds to Litir 617). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk.

The village of Kinbrace is in the county of Sutherland. The Gaelic for it is Ceann a' Bhràist. But what does that mean? Iain Mac an Tàilleir has a very useful website. It contains information about place names. He says, "This may be 'the head of the upland', including a form of bràigh, 'upland'".

Perhaps that is correct. But I found another explanation, based on oral tradition. It is in the book Memorabilia Domestica: or Parish Life in the North of Scotland by the Reverend Donald Sage. He wrote the book in 1840. He tells us that Ceann a' Bhràist gets its name from a person.

He says there was a castle at Kinbrace. It was owned by the chief of the Clan Gunn, George. He was an important, noble man. He owned a lot of land. Because he was of such nobility, he had a large silver brooch on his breast. Because of that, people called him the Bràisteach Mòr – as Sage writes, "literally, 'the dignity of the

Tha baile beag Kinbrace ann an Siorrachd Chataibh. 'S e a' Ghàidhlig a tha air Ceann a' Bhràist. Ach dè tha sin a' ciallachadh? Tha làrach-lìn air leth feumail aig Iain Mac an Tàilleir. Tha fiosrachadh mu ainmean-àite oirre. Tha esan ag ràdh, "This may be 'the head of the upland', including a form of bràigh, 'upland'".

'S dòcha gu bheil sin ceart. Ach lorg mi mìneachadh eile, stèidhichte air beul-aithris. Tha e anns an leabhar Memorabilia Domestica: or Parish Life in the North of Scotland leis an Urramach Dòmhnall Saigeach, no Donald Sage. Sgrìobh e an leabhar ann an ochd ceud deug is ceathrad (1840). Tha esan ag innse dhuinn gu bheil Ceann a' Bhràist a' faighinn ainm bho dhuine.

Tha e ag ràdh gun robh caisteal ann an Ceann a' Bhràist. Bha e le ceann-cinnidh nan Gunnach, Seòras. 'S e duine cudromach, uasal a bha ann. Bha fearann mòr aige. Leis gun robh e cho uasal, bha bràiste mhòr airgid aige air a bhroilleach. Air sgàth sin, bha daoine a' gabhail "Am Bràisteach Mòr" air – mar a sgrìobhas an Saigeach, "literally, 'the dignity of the brooch'". Mar sin, chuir daoine an

brooch’”. Thus people called his castle Ceann a’ Bhràist, ‘the seat of the dignitary of the brooch’. In English, Kinbrace.

The minister tells us something else about the Bràisteach Mòr. One summer evening, he was in his castle. He heard a bugle being sounded. There were strangers there. The strangers were wanting a night’s accommodation.

Gunn let the strangers in. One of them was tall and elderly. He was the leader. The Bràisteach Mòr invited him and his companions to take food. When the stranger was sat next to Gunn, twelve young men came in. The young men sat at the table. Each one of them was six feet tall and handsome.

“Are these your sons?” the stranger asked.

“Yes,” replied the Bràisteach Mòr.

“You can be proud of them,” said the stranger. But he was going to say something that would put the two of them at loggerheads. We’ll see what it was next week.

t-ainm *Ceann a’ Bhràist* air a’ chaisteal aige, ‘the seat of the dignitary of the brooch’. Ann am Beurla, Kinbrace.

Tha am ministear ag innse dhuinn rudeigin eile mun Bhràisteach Mhòr. Feasgar samhraidh a bha seo, bha e anns a’ chaisteal aige. Chuala e dùdach air a sheinn. Bha coigrich ann. Bha na coigrich a’ sireadh cuid na h-oidhche.

Leig an Gunnach na coigrich a-steach. Bha fear dhiubh àrd agus sean. B’ esan an ceannard. Thug am Bràisteach Mòr cuireadh dha is do a chompanaich biadh a ghabhail. Nuair a bha an coigreach na shuidhe ri taobh a’ Ghunnaich, thàinig dusan fear òg a-steach. Shuidh na fir òga aig a’ bhòrd. Bha gach fear sia troighean a dh’àirde agus eireachdail.

“An iad seo do mhic?” dh’fhaighnich an coigreach.

“S iad,” fhreagair am Bràisteach Mòr.

“Faodaidh tu a bhith moiteil asta,” ars an coigreach. Ach bha e a’ dol a ràdh rudeigin a chuireadh an dithis an ugannan a chèile. Chì sinn dè bha ann an-ath-sheachdain.