

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 379 (which corresponds to Litir 683). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk.

Have you heard of Coinneach Odhar ["Sallow Kenneth"]? He's known in English as The Brahan Seer. He had the second sight. He made predictions.

But how did Coinneach get the second sight? Well, according to oral tradition from Uig in Lewis, here's how it happened. Coinneach was born in Baile na Cille in Uig. When he was a teenager, his mother was at the shieling. From the shieling she saw the old cemetery. About midnight, the graves opened. The dead arose from them.

They were of all ages. They went in all directions. After an hour, they returned to the cemetery. They returned to the graves. The graves closed again. But there was one grave that wasn't closed. Coinneach's mother was inquisitive. She wanted to find out who was in that grave.

She went to the cemetery. She placed her cuigeal over the grave. A cuigeal is a device that women were using for spinning – distaff in English. She placed her distaff over the mouth of the grave. That was to stop the dead person from going back into the grave.

After a minute or two, a fair

An cuala sibh mu Choinneach Odhar? Tha e aithnichte ann am Beurla mar *The Brahan Seer*. Bha an dà-shealladh aige. Rinn e fàidheadaireachd.

Ach ciamar a fhuair Coinneach an dà-shealladh? Uill, a rèir beul-aithris à Sgìr' Ùig' ann an Leòdhas, seo mar a thachair e: Rugadh Coinneach ann am Baile na Cille ann an Sgìr' Ùig'. Nuair a bha e na dheugaire, bha a mhàthair air an àirigh. Às an àirigh chunnaic i an seann chladh. Mu mheadhan-oidhche, dh'fhosgail na h-uaignean. Dh'èirich na mairbh asta.

Bha gach aois ann. Chaidh iad gu gach àird. Às dèidh uair a thìde, thill iad don chladh. Thill iad do na h-uaignean. Dhùin na h-uaignean a-rithist. Ach bha aon uaigh nach robh dùinte. Bha màthair Choinnich feòrachail. Bha i airson faighinn a-mach cò bha anns an uaigh sin.

Chaidh i don chladh. Chuir i a cuigeal thairis air an uaigh. 'S e cuigeal inneal a bha na boireannaich a' cleachdadh airson snìomh – *distaff* ann am Beurla. Chuir i a cuigeal thairis air beul na h-uaghach. Bha sin airson stad a chur air an duine mharbh bho bhith a' dol air ais don uaigh.

An ceann mionaoid no dhà, thàinig

woman arrived. *“Lift your distaff from the mouth of the grave,” she said.*

“I’ll do that,” replied Coinneach’s mother, “when you tell me why you were so long before [without] returning to the grave.”

“Well,” said the woman, “I went much further than the others. I went to Scandinavia. I am a daughter of a Norse king. I was drowned over there. My body came to this beach. I was buried in this grave. As a reward for your bravery, I’ll tell you a secret. Go to the loch over there. You’ll find a small, round, blue stone there. Give the stone to your son, Coinneach. He’ll use the stone to foretell the future.”

Coinneach’s mother did that. She got the small, round, blue stone in the loch. She gave it to Coinneach.

Well, that’s one story about The Brahan Seer. I’ll tell you more about him in the next Litir.

boireannach bàn. “Tog do chuigeal far beul na h-uaghach,” thuirt i.

“Nì mi sin,” fhreagair màthair Choinnich, “nuair a dh’innseas tu dhomh carson a bha thu cho fada gun tilleadh don uaigh.”

“Uill,” thuirt am boireannach, “chaidh mise mòran na b’ fhaide na càch. Chaidh mi gu ruige Lochlann. Is mise nighean aig Rìgh Lochlannach. Chaidh mo bhàthadh thall an sin. Thàinig mo chorp don tràigh seo. Bha mi air mo thiodhlacadh anns an uaigh seo. Mar dhuais airson do chalmachd, bheir mi fios dìomhair dhut. Thalla don loch thall an sin. Gheibh thu clach bheag chruinn ghorm ann. Thoir a’ chlach don ghille agad, Coinneach. Cleachdaidh esan a’ chlach airson fàidheadaireachd a dhèanamh.”

Rinn màthair Choinnich sin. Fhuair i a’ chlach bheag chruinn ghorm anns an loch. Thug i do Choinneach i.

Uill, ’s e sin aon stòiridh mu Choinneach Odhar. Innsidh mi tuilleadh mu dheidhinn anns an ath Litir.