

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 421 (which corresponds to Litir 725). Ruairidh can be contacted at rodgy.maclean@bbc.co.uk.

I was telling you about The Aberdeen Breviary. There are a few stories in it about the life and miracles of St Brigit/Bride. Here are examples from the book.

Her parents were wanting Brigit to marry. But she wasn't for it. She beseeched the Lord that she would gain a deformity. Thus, men would not be inclined towards her. One of her eyes burst in her head. She had a deformity just as she had asked.

When she was a nun, a woman came to her. She was suffering from leprosy. She was looking for milk. Brigit had no milk. But she gave the woman water. The woman drank the water and she was cured.

Another time, Brigit was travelling in a cart with horses. She saw a poor man and his family gathering wood. The work was heavy. Brigit felt sympathy for them. She gave her horses to the family. She and her maidens sat by the side of the road. They were thirsty. 'Lift that sod,' said Brigit. Under the sod, there was a spring! After that, a military commander was going past. He gave Brigit two horses.

She was at a big congregation on

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh mu Leabhar Ùrnaighean Obar Dheathain. Tha grunn stòiridhean ann mu bheatha is mìorbhailean Naomh Brìde. Seo eisimpleirean bhon leabhar.

Bha a pàrantan ag iarraidh air Brìde pòsadh. Ach cha robh i air a shon. Ghuidh i air an Tighearna gun tigeadh mì-chumadh oirre. Mar sin, cha bhiodh nòisean aig fir dhi. Spreadh tè de na sùilean aice na ceann. Bha mì-chumadh oirre mar a dh'iarr i.

Nuair a bha i na bean-chràbhaidh, thàinig boireannach thuice. Bha i a' fulang leis an luibhre. Bha i a' sireadh bainne. Cha robh bainne aig Brìde. Ach thug i uisge don bhoireannach. Dh'òl am boireannach an t-uisge agus thàinig leigheas oirre.

Turas eile, bha Brìde a' siubhal ann an cairt le eich. Chunnaic i fear bochd agus a theaghlach a' giùlain fiodh. Bha an obair trom. Ghabh Brìde truas riutha. Thug i na h-eich aice don teaghlach. Shuidh i fhèin is a maighdeanan ri taobh an rathaid. Bha am pathadh orra. 'Tog an sgrath sin,' thuir Brìde. Fon sgrath bha fuaran! An dèidh sin, bha commandair airm a' dol seachad. Thug esan dà each do Bhrìde.

Bha i ann an coitheanal mòr turas.

one occasion. A woman accused a bishop of being the father of her child. Brigit made the child speak. 'Who is your father?' she asked. He replied, 'It's not the bishop who is my father but an evil man at the edge of the congregation.'

But who was Brigit? She is named in places like Kilbride and Lhanbryde. She is strongly linked to Kildare in Ireland.

Scholars tells us that there was an old pagan goddess called 'Brìde'. She was adopted by the Church. She was celebrated on the first quarter-day of the year. That was Imbolg at the start of February. That's halfway between the start of Samhain [at Hallowe'en] and the Yellow Day of Beltane [the first of May].

Imbolg is what the pagan Irish called it. But in Scotland I've only heard 'Brigit's feast-day'. It was a feast that was both pagan and Christian – as was Brigit herself.

Chuir boireannach casaid às leth easbaig gum b' esan athair a' phàiste aice. Thug Brìde air a' phàiste bruidhinn. 'Cò d' athair?' dh'fhaighnich i. Fhreagair e, 'Chan e an t-easbaig m' athair, ach cuideigin olc air iomall a' choitheanail.'

Ach cò bha ann am Brìde? Tha i air a h-ainmeachadh ann an àiteachan mar Cille Brìde agus Lann Brìde. Tha i co-cheangailte gu làidir ri Cill Dara ann an Èirinn.

Tha sgoilearan ag innse dhuinn gun robh seann ban-dia phàganach ann, air an robh 'Brìde'. Bha i air a gabhail thairis leis an Eaglais. Bha i air a comharrachadh air a' chiad fhèill-chairteil dhen bhliadhna. B' e sin Imbolg aig toiseach a' Ghearrain. Tha sin letheach-slighe eadar toiseach na Samhna agus Latha Buidhe Bealltainn.

'S e *Imbolg* a chanadh na h-Èireannaich phàganach. Ach cha chuala mi fhìn ann an Alba ach Fèill-Brìde. 'S e a bha innte fèill a bha an dà chuid pàganach agus Crìosdail – mar a bha Brìde fhèin.