

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 950 (which corresponds to Litir 1,254). Ruairidh can be contacted at fios@learngaelic.scot.

Near Culloden, there is a farm on the maps called 'Blacktown'. That's a translation of the Gaelic 'Am Baile Dubh'. Near Blacktown there was a famous well. It was on the old maps as 'Fuaran Mac Bhreac'.

There is an account in the Celtic Magazine in 1876, explaining the name. There was once a man called 'Mac Briachd' or 'Mac Bhreac'.

This man was living in Barevan. That's on the Cawdor estate, a few miles east of Culloden. His house was near a well in which there was pure water.

Mac Bhreac was expelled from his house. He found a new dwelling place near Culloden where nobody was living. The site of his house was far above the River Nairn. There was no burn or well there. Mac Bhreac was going down to the river for water. It was heavy work.

One day, he went down to fetch water. The river was in flood. The water was dirty. Mac Bhreac was vexed by the matter. He shouted, 'Oh! This "town" is a black "town" to me!' He wasn't pleased. It's from that that his farm took the name 'Blacktown'.

Faisg air Cùil Lodair, tha baile-fearainn air na mapaichean air a bheil 'Blacktown'. Tha sin na eadar-theangachadh dhen Ghàidhlig 'Am Baile Dubh'. Faisg air a' Bhaile Dhubh bha tobar ainmeil. Bha e air na seann mhapaichean mar 'Fuaran Mac Bhreac'.

Tha cunntas anns a' Cheltic Magazine ann an ochd ceud deug, seachdad 's a sia (1876) a' mìneachadh an ainm. Bha fear ann uaireigin air an robh 'Mac Bhriachd' no 'Mac Bhreac' mar ainm.

Bha am fear seo a' fuireach ann am Bàrr Èibhinn. Tha sin air oighreachd Chaladair, beagan mhiltean sear air Cùil Lodair. Bha an taigh aige faisg air tobar anns an robh uisge fìorghlan.

Chaidh Mac Bhreac a chur às an taigh aige. Lorg e àite-còmhnaidh ùr faisg air Cùil Lodair far nach robh duine a' fuireach. Bha làrach an taigh aige fada os cionn Uisge Narann. Cha robh allt no tobar ann. Bhiodh Mac Bhreac a' falbh sìos don abhainn airson uisge. 'S e obair throm a bha ann.

Latha a bha seo, dh'fhalbh e sìos a dh'iarraidh uisge. Bha tuil san abhainn. Bha an t-uisge salach. Bha Mac Bhreac air a shàrachadh leis a' ghnothach. Dh'èigh e, 'O! 'S e baile dubh dhòmhsa am baile seo!' Cha robh e toilichte. 'S ann às a sin a fhuair am baile-fearainn aige an t-ainm 'Am Baile Dubh'.

Mac Bhreac continued, 'However I'd be happy living here if I had my old well that I had before at Barevan.' Well, when he was ascending the slope towards his house, he saw a new spring near the house. The water in it was pure.

The people of the place were calling it 'Mac Bhreac's spring'. When Mac Bhreac went to visit his old home in Barevan, his old well had gone dry!

Recently, I went to Barevan. I didn't find the place where Mac Bhreac was [had been] living. But I found two remarkable things – an old church and a famous stone. I'll tell you about them in the next Litir.

Lean Mac Bhreac air, 'Ge-tà, bhithinn toilichte a bhith a' fuireach an seo nam biodh an tobar agam a bha agam roimhe ann am Bàrr Èibhinn.' Uill, nuair a bha e a' dìreadh a' bhruthaich a dh'ionnsaigh an taigh aige, chunnaic e fuaran ùr faisg air an taigh. Bha an t-uisge ann fìorghlan.

Bha muinntir an àite a' gabhail 'Fuaran Mac Bhreac' air. Nuair a chaidh Mac Bhreac a thadhal air an t-seann dachaigh aige ann am Bàrr Èibhinn, bha an seann tobar aige air a dhol tioram!

O chionn ghoirid, chaidh mi a Bhàrr Èibhinn. Cha d' fhuair mi lorg air an àite far an robh Mac Bhreac a' fuireach. Ach lorg mi dà rud a bha iongantach – seann eaglais agus clach ainmeil. Innsidh mi dhuibh mun deidhinn anns an ath Litir.