THE OIr substantive *brigi* is a masculine lenited dental stem with genitive *brigad* and acc. / dat. *brigaid*. It is generally translated 'hostipaller' and denotes an important personage in early Irish society who out of the greatness of his wealth provided hospitality in his house for all and ranked equal to a petty king. This access to rank through service was a route by which a person of wealth could rise to a higher status within what was otherwise a rigidly stratified society. The form of the word in the earliest sources, which are largely but not exclusively the legal tracts, was as above. In the modern Irish period (after the 12th century) the usual form is nom. *brighaidh*, gen. *brughadh*, acc. / dat. *brughaidh*. This form is due to the influence of the quite distinct and unrelated word MidIr *brig* < OIr *mruig* 'land' with its adjective *brugach* / *brugas* 'rich in lands' and perhaps also to that of the word *bruiden* 'hostel, banqueting-hall' which was frequently associated with the *brigi* in his role of hospitable host. Since the change of OIr *mru* to MidIr *br* took place about the year 900, the form *brughaidh* can be no earlier than the tenth century. In old texts in *Lebor na hUidre* (LU) (*Togail Bruidne Da Derga* and *Serglige Con Culainn*) the spelling is exclusively *brigu* (e.g. 7049, 10282, 10288). The Irish Grammatical Tracts, which date from the fourteenth/fifteenth century, cite only *brughaidh*.

Derived abstract nouns are *brugas* / *brugas* 'function of a *brigu*, hospitality, riches', *brugamnus* / *brugamnus* 'id.', *brughaidh* / *brugamacht* 'id.', 'generosity', *brughachus* / *brugas* 'function of a *brigu*, *brugamnus* id. The various translations given for these abstracts in the *Dictionary of the Irish Language* (DIL) are largely context-conditioned and there was probably no real difference in meaning between them.

Compounds with *brigu* are limited as in their distribution. In legal texts the following short passage from an acephalous miscellany in H 3. 18, p. 423 is the only source for the three compounds which it contains: *Bobriugaidh cetach: ferbrigadh, tir imdha lais; righbrugadh, tuatha fo mam* 'The cattle-*brigu* is wealthy; the male *brigu* has much land, the royal *brigu* has kingdoms under his sway'. These compounds are clearly tautologous in that there cannot have been any other kind of *brigu* than one whose wealth consisted of cattle, who was a male, and who was of equal rank with kings. Hence it is unlikely that the prefixes in question added anything to the meaning of *brigu* itself. Other compounds occur in narrative and similar texts: *rathbrigu*, composed probably of

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1 This article was submitted to *Celtica* early in 1991 and the etymology of *brigu* proposed in it formed part of a paper delivered at the ninth Congress of Celtic Studies in Paris in July of that year (see now Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie (ZCP) 49-50 (1997) 482–93). The identical etymology, but with a different semantic interpretation, has since been proposed by Filippo Motta in Incontri Linguistici 18 (1995) 141–6. See also the observations of Patrizia de Bernardo-Stempel, ZCP 49-50 (1997) 94–6. I have to thank Professor Karl Horst Schmidt and Dr Rolf Köderitzsch (Bonn), and Dr Jodi Ann George (Dundee) for advice on various points in this paper. I wish also to thank Professor William Sayers (Victoria, Canada) for sending me the typescript of his article 'Hostellers in *Landnámabók*: a trial Irish Institution?' which has since appeared in *Skaldskaparmál* 4 (1995 [1997]) 162–78.

2 O. J. Bergin, ‘Irish Grammatical Tracts’, §21, Supplement in *Ériu* 8 (1915) i. On the date of these tracts see O’Cuív, *Celtica* 3 (1956) 87.

3 E. G. Quin et al. (ed.), (*Contributions to a*) *Dictionary of the Irish Language* based mainly on Old and Middle Irish materials ([(Dublin 1913–78) compact edition 1990])

4 D. A. Binchy (ed.), *Corpus Iuris Hibernici* (Dublin 1978) iii, 955-9 ff. (CIH)
rath ‘property’ and briugu, occurs in unrhymed heptasyllabic verse with trisyllabic line-endings in *Fled Bricrenn*: _is riatai di rathbriugaid LU_ 8959, where DIL suggests reading _rathbríugaid_, giving a meaning ‘he is trained as a _briugu_ of property’. _Fláithbríugaid_ ‘princely _briugu_’ occurs a few times in *Acallam na Senórach* 2239, 5323, 5521, where _trenbriugaid_ 2238, _ardbriugaid_ 3490, and _banbriugaid_ 1877 occur also. Again the first three of these compounds are just literary variations of the simplex and add nothing to its basic meaning, while the fourth, ‘female _briugu_’, was used merely as a suitable title for the wife of a _briugu_.

There are some adjectives which occur frequently with _briugu_:  

_briugu cétach_: This is the commonest epithet with _briugu_. Based on the substantival numeral _cét_ ‘100’, it means ‘hundredfold, possessing hundreds [of cattle etc.]’. Accordingly the law-tract *Uraicecht Bec* (UB) tells us that the _briugu_ should possess wealth in hundreds: _nibi briugu nad briugid _ci_ _n briugid dligtheach itir e mina rabad ceta imda aig i_. _in briugu cétach_, _nair deilegar de fet i mbeasib mogad aici 7 ceth cethra lais_. “He is no _briugu_ who is not a hundredfold; that is, he is not a lawful _briugu_ at all unless he possess many hundreds; that is, the hundredfold _briugu_, for he is obliged to have a hundred men in servitude and a hundred of all kinds of livestock.”

_briugu leitech_: _UB_ explains this epithet as follows: _briugu leiteac diablad tocus a la suidhi_ . . . _i. leth is deach, is togaidi, d’imarchraidaig i saoth in fer romuinid i_. _diablad tocus in briugad cetaigh acun briugaid leteach_. “The _briugu leitech_ has double the property . . . that is, the best part, the choicest, in excess over the man just mentioned [the _briugu cétach_], that is: the _briugu leitech_ has twice the property of the _briugu cétach_.” The medieval etymology of this word made it a compound of _leth_ ‘half, side’ and _dech_ ‘best’ (superlative of _maith_ ‘good’), as can be seen in the above quotation from _UB_. This explanation has nothing to recommend it. In recent times Dr Kim McCone has tentatively explained it as an adjective based on the noun _leithet_ ‘width’ with syncope of the internal syllable. This seems an acceptable etymology, particularly in view of the ModIr _leitheadach_ ‘broad, large, wide, extended, abundant; proud, arrogant, conceited’. However some details remain to be elucidated. Since in OIr only the syncopated form is attested, and since the non-syncopated form occurs in ModIr, one is forced to assume that OIr _leitech_ became obsolete and that ModIr _leitheadach_ is a new formation. If the non-syncopated form had existed in OIr the medieval etymologists would hardly have failed to explain the origin of the word correctly. The OIr form _leitech_ must have had an internal voiceless palatalised dental due to the coalescence of _-th_ and unlenited _-d_. In ModIr dialects the treatment of the internal consonants varies: either the two consonants are kept apart, as in Munster /l’echdalx/ or the intervocalic _lh_ disappears, as in Connacht /l’e:chdal/.  

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1 W. Stokes and E. Windisch (ed.), _Irische Texte 4/1_ (Leipzig 1900).
2 _CIH_ v, 1608.14.
3 _CIH_ v, 1608.30 ff.
briugu rámatach: This phrase occurs in Bretha Éigid; “a tract on liability for offences, but without sufficient context to explain the meaning of the epithet. It must be taken in conjunction with the stipulation found, for example, in a commentary on Cáic Conara Fuígill: a theach a comrac tri ramot, .i. tri rot, 7 mu chean firi cach gnus; nícon eitig nach recht, nícon urscara firi cach daim, nícon aimne nach cibha [a] mence “‘His house at the junction of three roads, (gloss: i.e. three ways), and welcome to every face; he refuses no person, he excludes no company, he does not reckon it against anyone no matter how often he comes’. Similarly in UB: ‘tri ramuta lais .i. tri roid ar amus a tigi ara reend (sic leg.) cach cuigi “He has three roads, that is three roads coming towards his house on which everyone rides to him’. Clearly one of the conditions of briugas was that the briugu’s house be at a crossroads for the convenience of travellers. There was also the connotation of prosperity attached to the ownership of a house to which many roads led (DIL R 105.27–31). From the spelling of the nom. sg. róm(a), and the form of the gen. sg. rómata attested in the placename Cluain Rómata and of the nom. and gen. pl. rómata one may conclude that this is a u-stem.

Taking a hint from Cormac’s probably incorrect explanation of rót as ro+sínt we may see róm as composed of róm(a) ‘spade’ + sínt ‘way’, indicating a road dug or cleared with a spade. In the manner of its construction it would then have been distinguished from e.g. lóm-rotae ‘by-road’ (DIL L 41.77–81; lit. ‘roadway cleared by hand’) and tuag-rotae ‘a type of road’ (DIL T 333.56–64; lit. ‘a roadway cleared with the axe’).

Beside its legal meaning ‘hospitaller’, briugu appears in the meaning ‘sutler’ in Táin Bó Cúalnge: recension I, “: do-breth biad dó óna brigaideib ‘Food was brought to him by the briugas’. In the Book of Leinster (LL) recension of TBC briugu is replaced by biattach in a similar context: daig raptar li a biattaib Fur Diad and biattaib Con Calaimn. Both words are used synonymously in Tochmarc Emire: rom-altsa . . . eter briugadaib 7 biattaib Ulad LU 10282 ‘I was reared among the hospitallers and sutlers of Ulster’. Biattach is derived from biathaid, verbal noun of biathaíd ‘feeds’, by the addition of the adjectival ending -ach, followed by syncope of the internal syllable. It means literally ‘feeder’ and is translated in DIL as ‘supplier of food, victualler, farmer; of a landholder or tenant whose duty it was to use his land to provide for the refection of a lord and his attendants when travelling through the country and to supply the army of their territory’. These functions are so close to those of the briug that there can scarcely have been any distinction between the offices designated by the two terms. Biattach appears to have replaced briugu as the name of the office at a time when the archaic political and social structure in which it had originated was in the process of change and the duties of the

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11 CIH i, 257.7.
12 CIH vi, 2173.39–42.
13 CIH v. 1608.33.
15 S. Mac Airt, The Annals of Inisfallen (Dublin 1951) 406, s.a. 1311 §6 and Studia Hibernica 3 (1963) 22, line 246.
hospitaller were restricted to catering for the king and his followers. The earliest roughly datable occurrence of biattach is that quoted above from Tochmarc Emire.

While briugu continued in use until the seventeenth century, it does look as if biattach had begun to replace it from the eleventh.

For the word briugu no etymology has been suggested. Vendryes, in stating that the etymology is unknown, expressly excludes any connection with the root of bri 'hill': ‘Un rapprochement avec bri semblé peu probable’, while at the same time affirming; ‘De même, c’est un terme trop ancien pour avoir été emprunté au vangl. breoga “gouverneur, chef”’. Nonetheless, in spite of Vendryes’s reservations, bri ‘hill’ does seem to provide a suitable starting-point for the discussion of the etymology of briugu. Bri, gen. breog, acc. brig has congeneres of similar meaning in all the Celtic languages and further correspondences in Germanic, e.g. Goth. biarja, OHG baurgs. All are derived from a root *bhARG- ‘exprimant l’idée de hauteur et de force’. A well-known Irish derivative of this root is the present participle formation found in the goddess/saint/personal name Brigit ≡ *bhARG-pri. The verb itself may well survive in Ir. brigaide/brigid ‘shows, declares, confirms, etc.’ Although, in the absence of rhyming examples to establish the length of the vowel in the first syllable, DIL (B 189.49) suggests that it may be a denominative from brig ‘force etc.’, a number of considerations point to its being an old verb:

1. It is found almost exclusively in early texts, mostly legal.
2. The attestations are very limited, both in form, usually 3 sg. pres. ind. pass. but also 3 sg. pres. ind. act. rel. and non-rel., 3 sg. pret. ind. act., 2 sg. imper., 3 sg. fut., and context, which is usually the statement or elucidation of legal or quasi-legal stipulations.
3. The verbal noun is bricht, not *brigad.

Briugu can be explained as deriving from the same root as the above forms with the old perfect participle active suffix *yōt, found typically in Gk. ειδότος, gen. of ειδός ‘witness’ and Goth. weidwōþ ‘witness’ < *weid-yōts, lit. ‘knowing one’. This same word and identical formation probably existed in Irish also, since the n-stem of OIr fhadu ‘witness’ seems to have been a re-formation of an older dental stem corresponding to the Greek and Germanic forms. Brugmann sees the same suffix in OIr bibdu, gen. bibdad ‘criminal, enemy’ which, following Sommer, he derives from *bhi-bhid-ėgo. A further example of the same formation in Irish is OIr coimdelu ‘lord’, derived by Pedersen from *kom-med-ōt. A participial

20 Vendryes, Lexique étymologique: lettre B 92.
21 ibid. p. 87.
22 F. K. Brugmann, Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der indogermanischen Sprachen, (2nd ed. Strassburg 1877) ii, §315.
23 Thurneysen, Grammar of Old Irish, §§203, 310.
24 Brugmann, Grundriss, ii, §315.
26 H. Pedersen, Vergleichende Grammatik der keltischen Sprachen ii, 102.
27 These and other participial formations in the Celtic languages have recently been discussed by K. H. Schmidt: ‘Zur Entwicklung indogermanischer Partizipien im Keltischen’, Linguistique Baltoïde 31
formation of this type formed on the root “bhrg-” in Irish would regularly result in *briugu*, with $r > -ri$" (note that the -u- preceding -g- is merely graphic, denoting the u-quality of the -g- which is caused by the following -u-), $\delta > -u$ in final syllables, and loss of the final consonants. In the oblique cases, where the o would not have stood in a final syllable, it would not have become -u-, and the i of the first syllable ought to have been lowered to e before the following o. The preserved i in these cases must have been taken over from the nominative.

As a perfect participle active *briugu* would have meant 'having surpassed' or substantivally 'one who has surpassed', referring to the prominent position occupied by the *briugu* in Irish society. It is clearly an archaic formation since the perfect participle active was no longer a productive category at any stage of the known history of the Irish language and survives only in the few lexical items noted above, 'lord', 'criminal', 'witness', and 'hospitaller', all of which belong to the socio-legal sphere, where such survivals might be expected. This may be compared to the parallel survival in Germanic of substantival formations from the same root with meanings also in the socio-legal sphere, AS *breogo* (u-stem) 'ruler', ON *bragr* 'metre (as elevated speech), pre-eminent', *bragningr* 'king', *Bragi* 'god of poetry'. Thus one may agree with Vendryes that Ir. *briugu* is not borrowed from AS *breogo* but both words and their ON congeners are differing formations based on the old root “bhrgh-.”

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(1988) 1–2, pp. 25–29, and 'Tocharica', Festschrift T. V. Gamkrelize, pp. 4 ff.). I wish to thank Professor Schmidt for presenting me with copies of these articles.

18 Thurneysen, Grammar of Old Irish, §815.

19 Ibid. §894.

20 Ibid. §177.

21 Ibid. §73.


23 A. Johannesson, Isländisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch (Bern 1956) 625.