THE VIKINGS OF COLL

A REAPPRAISAL OF NORSE SETTLEMENT



Dr John Holliday
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Abstract

It is clear that Norse settlement was an important period in the history of Coll. The Viking invasion is likely to have begun at the start of the ninth century, although the survival of what is plausibly a pre-Norse island-name implies that there had been earlier contact. The absence of other pre-contact place-names, however, strongly suggests that the invasion disrupted the indigenous population in the same way that it did in many parts of the Hebrides. An analysis of surviving Norse place-names suggests that the Norse settled the whole island in a number of phases. The duration of Scandinavian dominance is not known, but it is likely to have lasted for much of the Early Medieval period. In contrast to the invasion, it appears that the later language shift from Norse to Gaelic was gradual. The Norse 'signal' is as strong on Coll as it is on Tiree.

Front Cover : A noust at Fiskary

1. Methodology

This paper was written alongside a talk given in August 2023 at the invitation of *Comunn Eachdraidh Cholla* – Coll Historical Society. It builds on research into the Norse settlement of Tiree (Holliday 2021: available online, see Bibliography).

A scatter of surface finds suggests Norse settlement. John Crawford found Viking Age pottery in the dunes in Cornaigmore, Torastan, Gallanach and Feall (Crawford 1997: 499) and Norse pins in Feall, Cornaigmore, Gallanach and Sorisdale (Crawford 1997: 503). These objects are now in the National Museum in Edinburgh. Beveridge found what he described as 'rivets of the Viking type' in Bousd (Beveridge 1903: 16).

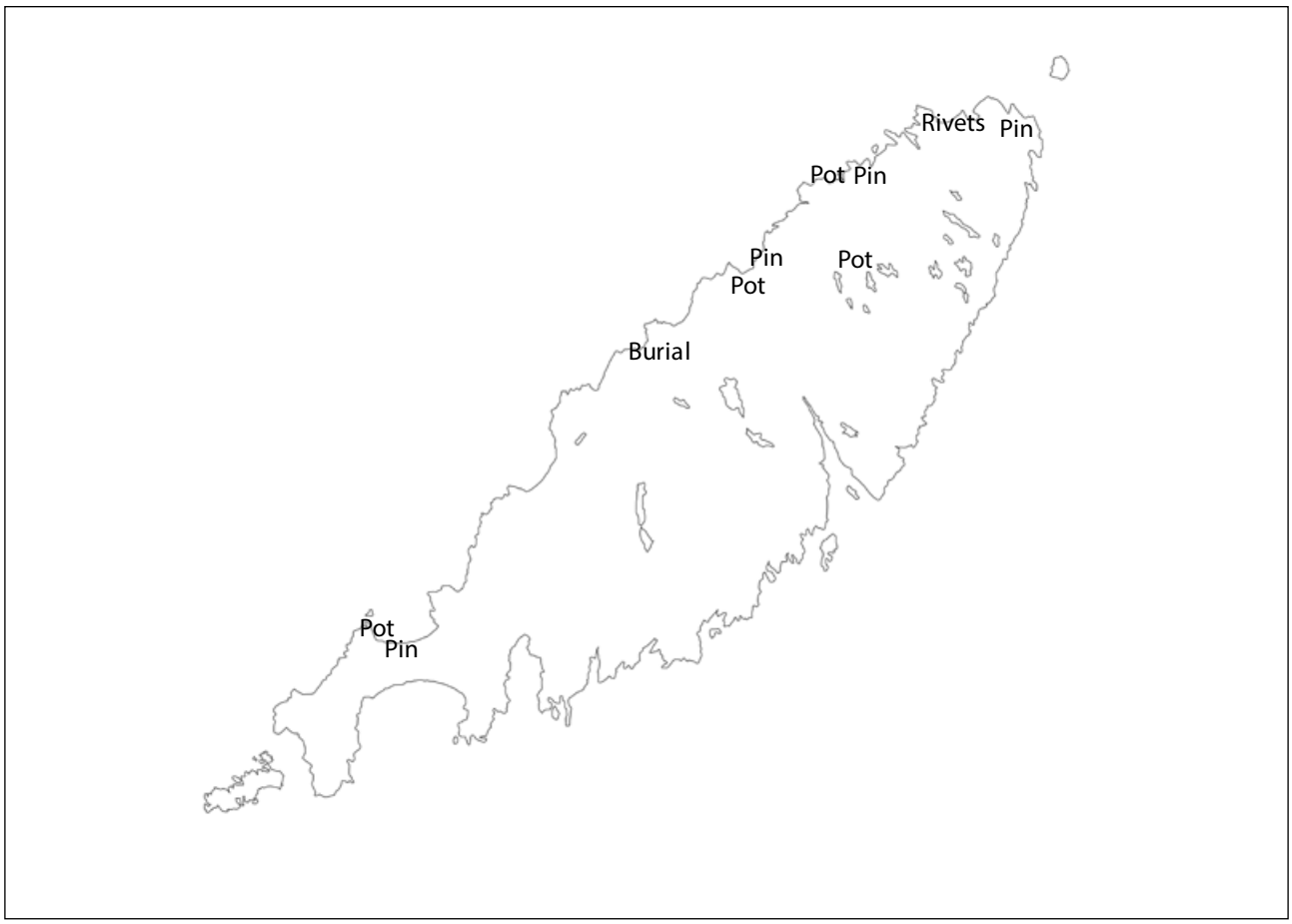


Figure 7 : the location of archaeological finds

There is one traditional story collected by Hector MacDougall (MacDougall 1928 and 1937) about the 'expulsion' of the Norse from the island. There is a brief mention of Coll in *Njáls saga*. Runic inscriptions on two Manx crosses suggest their sculptor came from Coll.

But by far the most important body of evidence comes from a fresh analysis of the island's place-names. Considerably fewer names—around 500 compared to 3300—have survived on Coll than on Tiree, despite the islands being similar in size. The reasons for this include a lower population and the fact that large parts of Coll were cleared in the mid-nineteenth century before place-names were systematically collected.

Sources used in this study include the 1654 Blaeu map (based on a presumed survey by Timothy Pont at the end of the sixteenth century); the first and second surveys by the Ordnance Survey (in 1878 and 1898); a 1914 article by Rev Dugald MacEchern, the Church of Scotland minister on Coll from 1899 to 1918; and John MacFarlane's 1963 recording by Professor Bill Nicolaisen from the School of Scottish Studies.

Anne Johnston was the first to systematically analyse the subject in her PhD thesis *Norse settlement in the Inner Hebrides ca. 800-1300; with special reference to the islands of Mull, Coll and Tiree* (Johnston 1991).

2. Coll Before the Norse

Around AD 500 a new mosaic of kingdoms collectively known as *Dál Riata* formed in Argyll, Kintyre and Antrim. Gaelic-speaking and Christian, their influence appears to have extended as far as Tiree and Coll.

Tiree became an important Early Christian centre subordinate to Iona. The hagiography *Vita Columbae* 'The Life of Columba' was written by Adomnán around a century after the saint's death. In this account, Tiree is mentioned eleven times, and the island is recorded as having at least three monasteries. Tiree also has six surviving Early Christian crosses. In contrast, Coll is mentioned just twice in *Vita Columbae*, there is no evidence for a monastery and there are no known surviving Early Christian crosses. It is plausible, therefore, that Coll had less of a Christian presence before Norse settlement.

Vita Columbae records the story of a man named *Erc moccu-Druidi* [*moccu* is an archaic equivalent of the Scottish Gaelic *mac*], who sailed from Coll to Mull. There he camped under his boat, which he attempted to camouflage with grass. When he was spotted by the Iona monks, Saint Columba suspected that his plan was to hunt seals on an islet claimed by the monastery. *Erc* was intercepted, and brought before the saint. He was admonished, but given several sheep carcasses to take home. When word came some time later that *Erc* was dying, Columba ordered a fat beast and six measures of grain to be sent to him from Tiree. They arrived too late, however, and were eaten at his funeral. (*Vita Columbae* I: 41 in Anderson and Anderson 1961: 294; see also *Vita Columbae* II: 22). The presence of a man with an Irish name living on Coll suggests that the island was at that time, to some extent, under Dalriadan influence.

However, Coll was plausibly at the limit of that influence, with Pictish Iron Age tribes in the islands to the north and west. Beveridge lists 30 duns, forts and crannogs on Coll. This compares with 32 on Tiree (Beveridge 1903). This abundance of fortified sites suggests that the Late Iron Age was an unsettled time. None of the Coll forts have been scientifically excavated, but the broch Dun Mor Vaul on Tiree may be comparable. Its 1963 excavation showed that this had been built in the Iron Age with dates of AD 60–160 (MacKie 1974), and recent dating from *Dùn nan Nighean* in Balephuil, Tiree, has given an Early Iron Age date (Heather James, pers. comm.).

3. The Norse Invasion

The majority of island names in Orkney are Norse: for example, Westray and Sanday. But most of the major Hebridean island names have their origins in an earlier period: for example, Mull, Skye, Lewis, Tiree and Coll (Broderick 2013). Some scholars see this as evidence that Norse traders had made contact with the Hebrides before the invasion.

The pre-Norse native population of Coll is likely to have been as militarised as the Viking raiders. Their settlements were plausibly close to the forts and crannogs. On Barra, it has been proposed that between 33 and 55 people were associated with each Iron Age roundhouse (Armit 2003: 84).

The key military advantage developed in Late Iron Age Scandinavia was the clinker built longship. The best surviving example of this is a well-preserved boat known as Skuldelev 2, which was excavated in Denmark in 1962. This longship was 30 m in length with a draught of 1 m. It had 30 benches, and carried a crew of up to 70. A large square sail gave speeds of up to 15 knots; under oars it could make 2.5 knots. The passage from southwestern Norway to Coll would have taken around six days under good conditions. Warships like this would have delivered, with little warning, an attacking force that would have overwhelmed any fortified site on Coll.

The construction of a longship demanded a huge investment. It has been estimated that it took 40,000 man-hours to fell the trees, split the timbers, build the boat, distil the pine tar needed to keep the wood in good condition, and make the ropes and woollen sail.

The Columban monastery on Iona was attacked for the first time in AD 795 (*Annals of Innisfallen* AI 795.2). Although monasteries are likely to have been the first and most attractive targets because of their silver, it is plausible that Coll was also raided around this time. There may not have been a wealthy monastery, but the most profitable arm of the Viking business model was the slave trade.

The Vikings that raided and then settled the Hebrides came from Hordaland, the area around the modern city of Bergen in southwestern Norway. Studies have shown Scandinavian genetic markers in around 15% of modern Hebrideans. This suggests a relatively small number of settlers, possibly between 50 and 100 on Coll. Other genetic studies have found that these settlers were predominantly male and single (see Holliday 2021: 215). Although some of the younger members of the native population may have been captured and exported as slaves by Viking raiders before and during settlement, many islanders are likely to have survived, working for, and some marrying, members of the new elite.

4. The Norse settlement sequence

The Viking settlement of other islands in the Norse expansion zone—for example, Orkney, Shetland and Iceland—has been studied. It appears that large, fertile estates were occupied by the first wave of settlers, those who had taken the greatest risk. The place-names of these first, or primary, Norse farms were usually simplex in form ('Bay' rather than 'Green Bay'); topographic (describing the landscape rather than a settlement); on the best agricultural land; usually long-lived as farm- or settlement-names; and had neighbouring farm-names ending in *-bol* or *-bost* (Holliday 2021: 111).

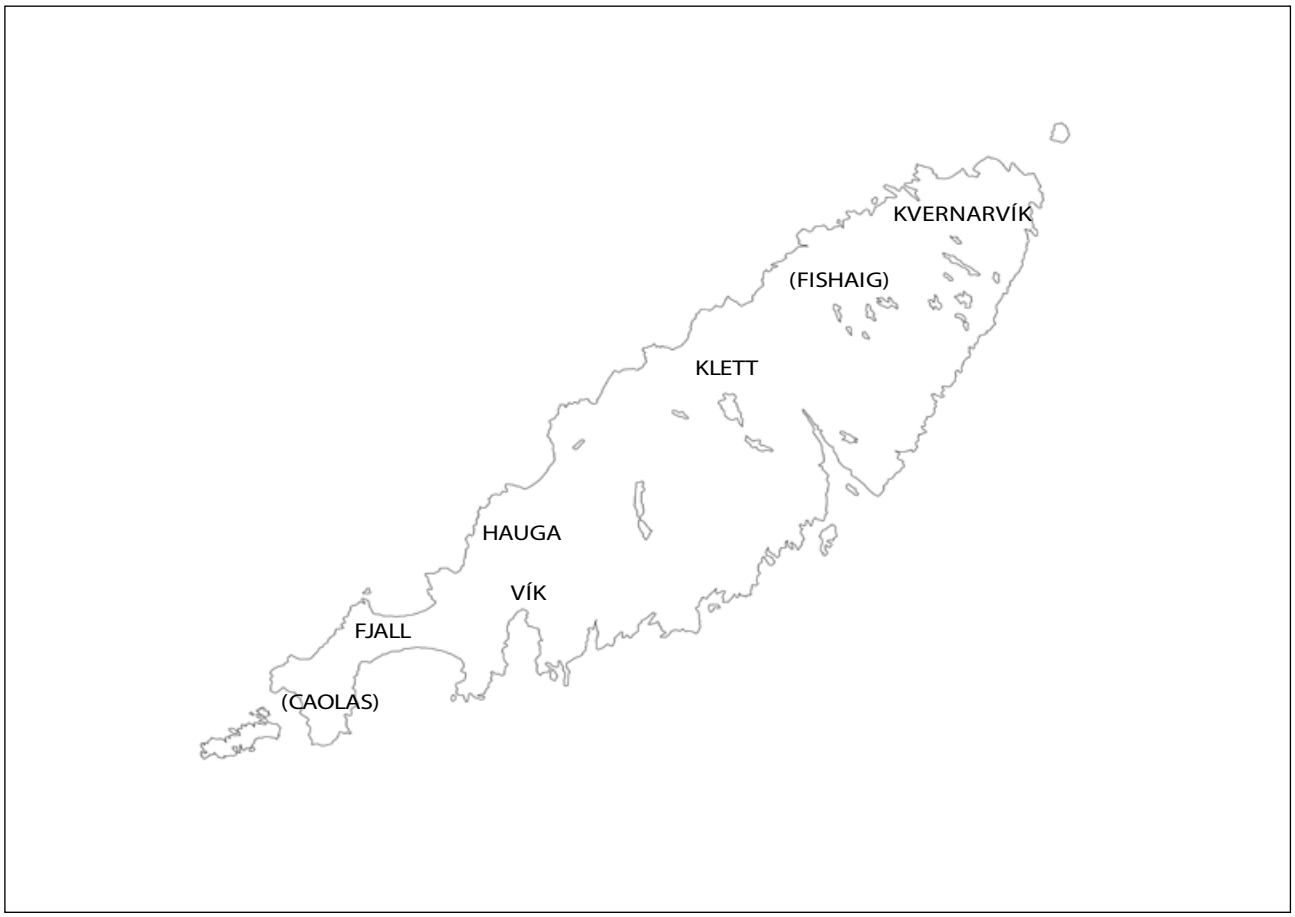


Figure 1: a proposed map of early or primary Norse estates on Coll

The Norse primary farm name at the west end of the island—known as Caolas today—appears to have been lost. Similarly, the Norse name of a farm at Gallanach may not have survived, although the nearby ridge-name *Druim Fishaig* 'the ridge of *Fishaig*' may contain an embedded Norse name.

As new settlers arrived and the original settlers had descendants, new 'secondary' farms were created between the primary estates, the largest of which were split. The Old Norse words *ból* and *bólstaðr* appear to mean 'farm created by breaking up a large estate'. Finally, small 'peripheral' farms were established on the most marginal land.

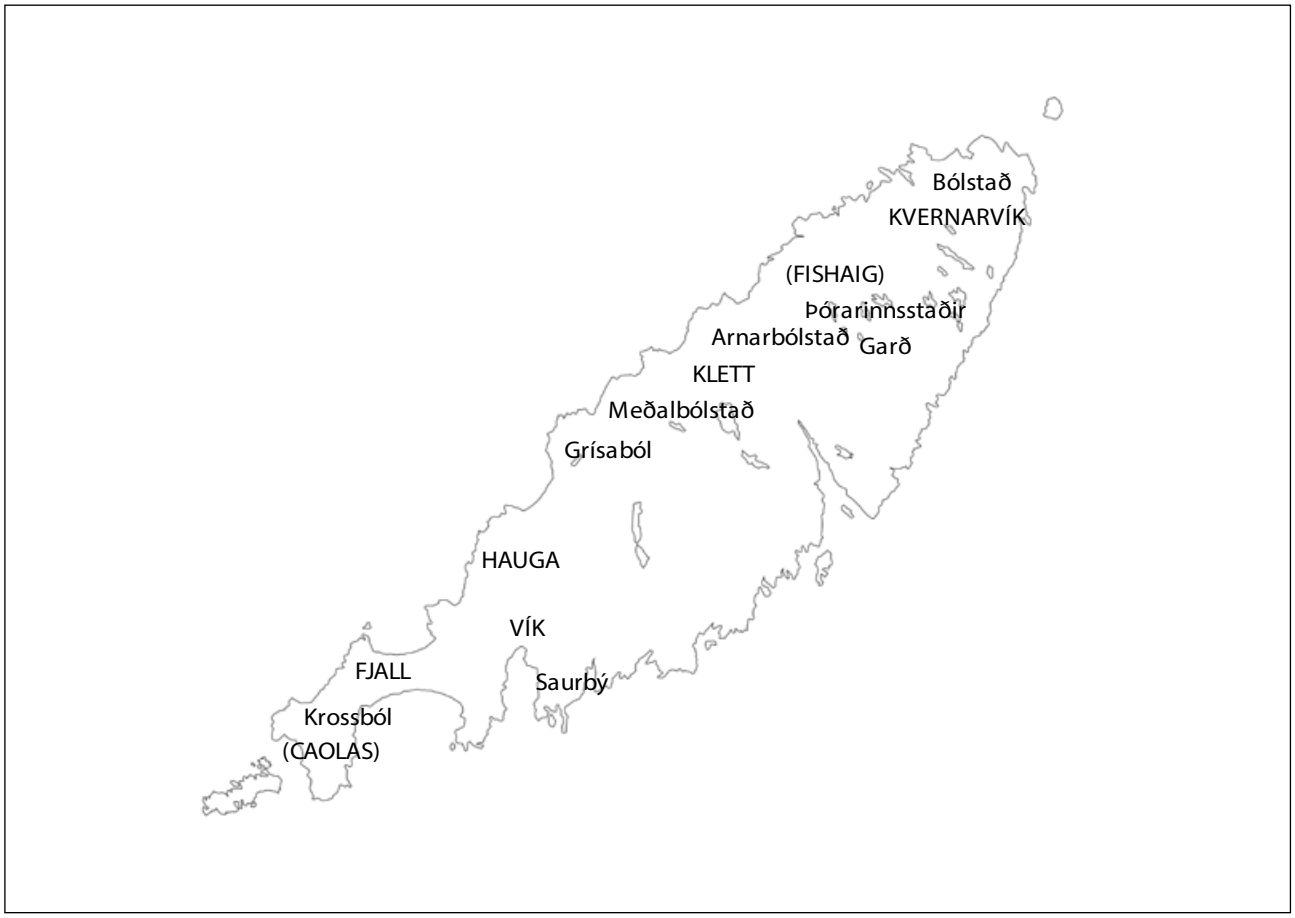


Figure 2: proposed primary, secondary and peripheral Norse farms on Coll

By mapping surviving reconstructed Norse place-names, it is clear that the Vikings settled the whole island.

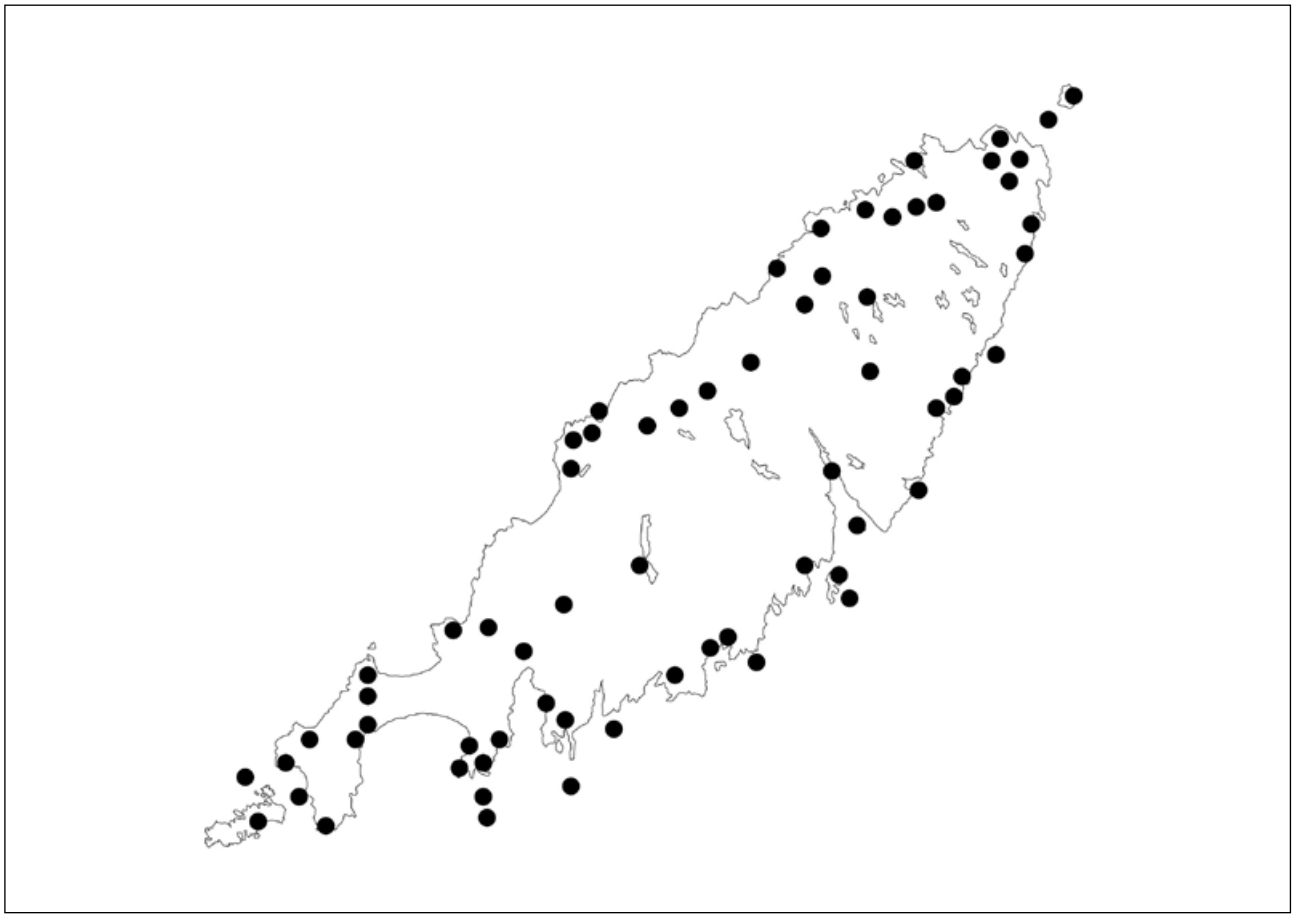


Figure 3: a dot map of all the probable Norse place-names that can be located

5. Early Medieval Coll

5.1 Agriculture

Coll and Gunna combined are just 0.7 sq km (1%) smaller than Tiree. As the image below shows, Coll has significantly less cultivable land and more rough grazing than Tiree. However, the contrast between the islands may have been less marked in the Early Medieval period due to more favourable weather, less peat accumulation and regular muirburns.

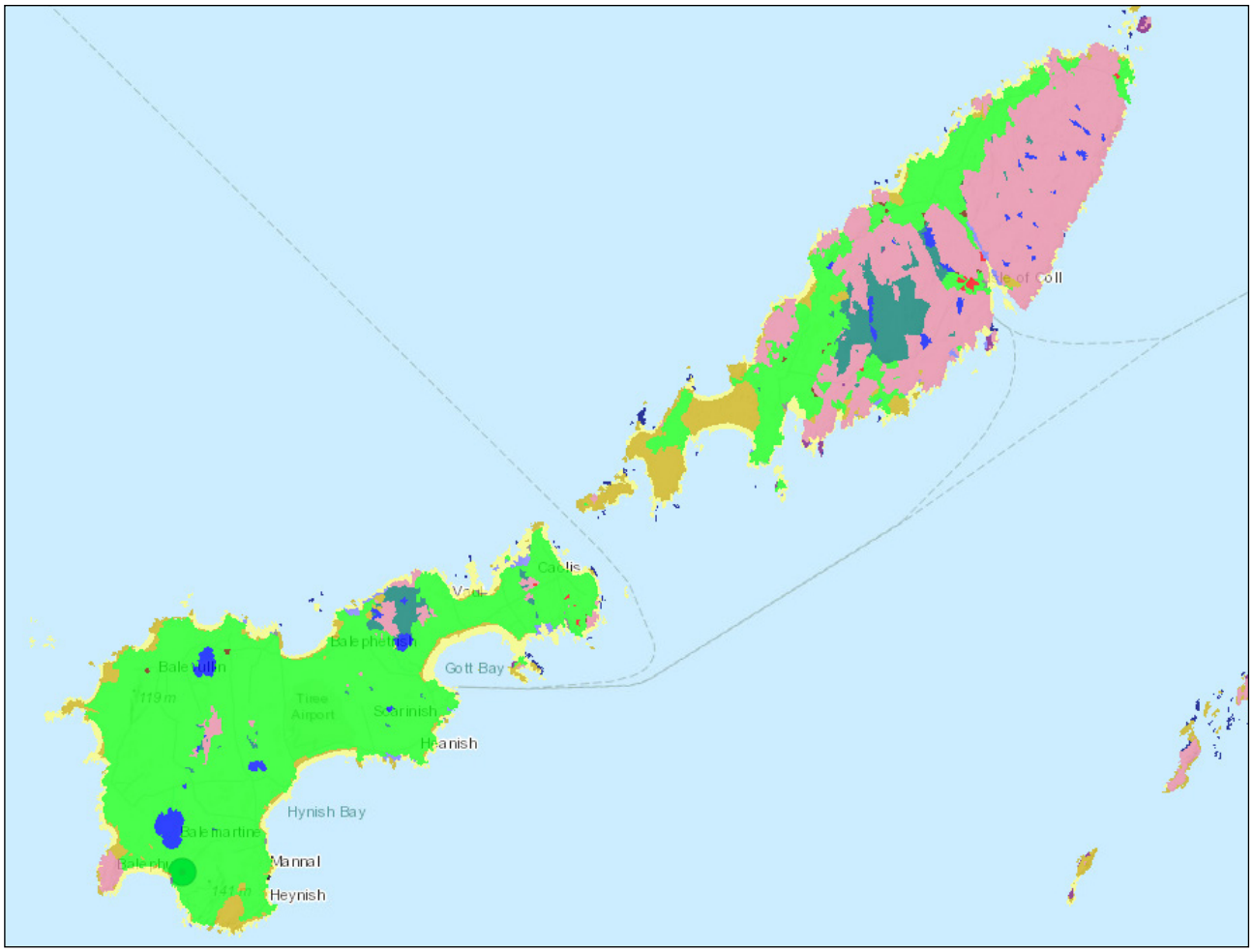


Figure 4: modern Land Capability for Agriculture from the Hutton Institute (https://www.hutton.ac.uk/learning/exploringscotland/land-capability-agriculture-scotland)

Coll has just one probable Norse field name in *geiri* or *gerði* (see *Calgary* in the Onomasticon below), while Tiree has nine. One the other hand, twenty-six shieling-names survive on Coll, including four Norse ones. This compares to sixteen on Tiree. Early Medieval Coll appears, not unexpectedly, to have had a predominantly pastoral economy, while Tiree had more cultivation and cereal production.

A full list of surviving Coll shieling names is:

A. Gaelic

- *Loch Àiridh Raonuill* (source: OS 1878)
- *Loch Àiridh Sitheachaidh* (OS 1878)
- *Loch Àiridh Ghlinne* (OS 1878)
- *Loch Àiridh Aon Oidhche* (OS 1878)
- *Loch Àiridh Leirge* (OS 1878)
- *Loch Àiridh Choilleag* (OS 1878)
- *Arivirig* (OS 1878)
- *Arimhaorach* (MacEchern 1914: 332; *Àirigh Mhaoraich* (1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394)
- *Arinagour* (OS 1878)
- *Loch Àiridh Meall Bhéide* (OS 1878); *Loch Àirigh Mhaol Bhrìghde* (John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394)
- *Druim an Àiridh Fhada* (OS 1878); *Ceann na h-àirigh fada* (MacEchern 1914: 327)
- *Arivichranich* (1841 Census)
- *Airigh Mhic Mhairich* (MacDougall 1937: 30; John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394)
- *Arintluic* 1794 (Johnston 1991: 125); *Airigh an t-Sluic* (MacDougall 1937: 63)
- *Airigh an t-Sagairt* (MacDougall 1937: 63)
- *Arileod* (OS 1878)
- *Airigh Chràcari* (MacEchern 1914: 332)
- *Àirigh Chraganaich* (John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394)
- *Airigh Bhuidhe* (MacEchern 1914: 332)
- *An Airigh Bhoidheach* (MacEchern 1914: 332); *An Àirigh Bhòidheach* (John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394)
- *Loch Airidh 'ille Chaluim* (MacEchern 1914: 333)
- *Àirigh Chailein* (John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394)
- *Garbh-àirigh* (John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394)

B. Norse

- *Bearn-airigh* (MacDougall 1937: 50)
- *Grimisary* (OS 1878)
- *Aondairigh* (MacDougall 1937: 29; MacEchern 1914: 328; John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394)
- *Salach-airidh* (OS 1878)

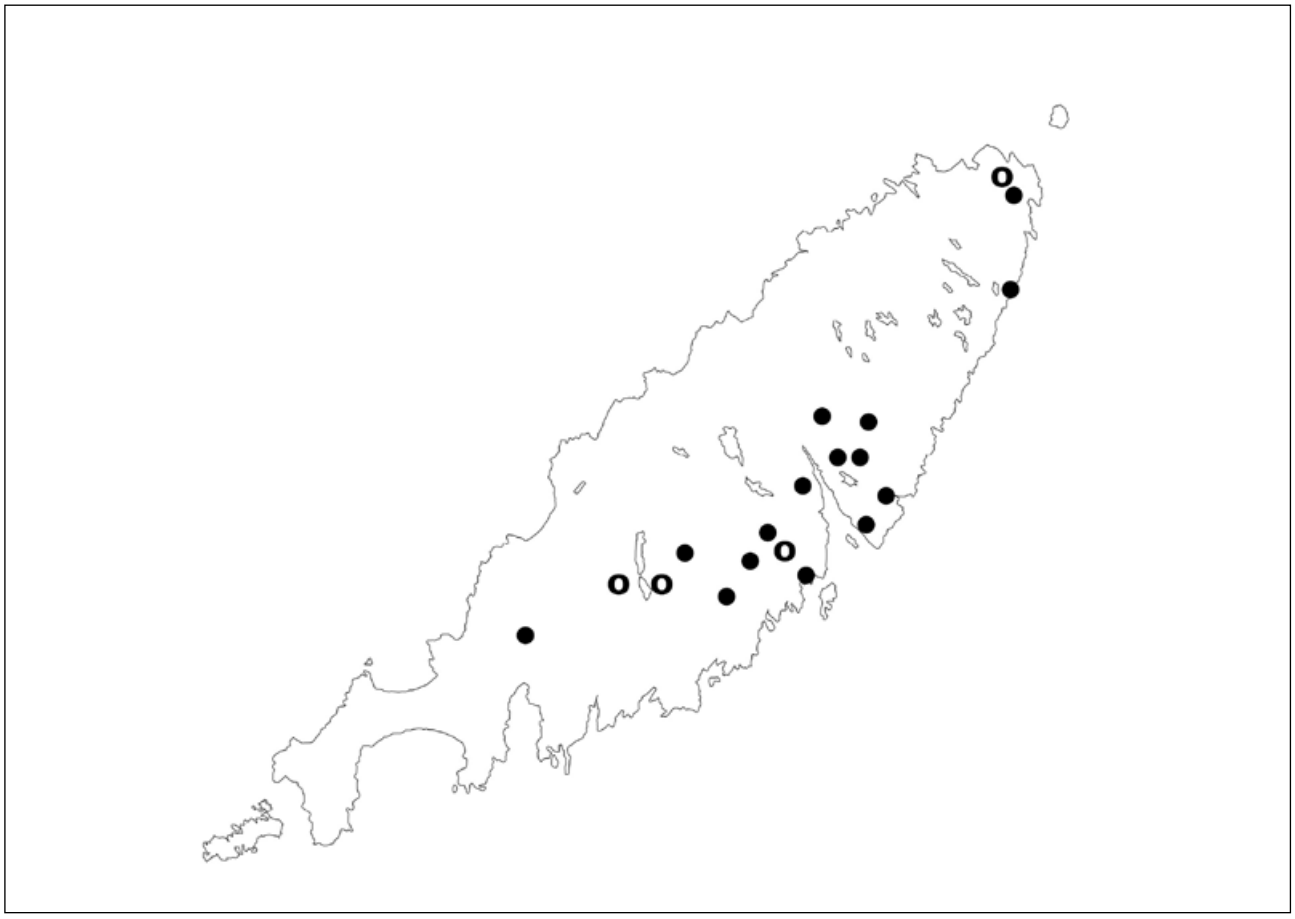


Figure 5: surviving shieling names whose locations are known. Key solid dot: Gaelic name; open dot: Norse name

Medieval rentals show that Tiree came to be valued at around 22 ouncelands (an ounceland was a large Norse farm able to pay an ounce of silver in annual rent), while Coll was valued at around 8. (Denis Rixson Land Assessment Scotland http://las.denisrixson.com/category/hebrides/coll/)

5.2 Religion

The first Norse settlers on Coll were pagan. The body in pagan burials was usually accompanied by grave goods. In contrast, Christian graves usually contained just the corpse wrapped in a simple shroud.

A possible Viking pagan burial was found in the 1950s by Colin Mitchell from Ardrishaig. This was located in sand-hills about 750 m north-east of Grishipoll (Canmore ID 21567). The skeleton was accompanied by 'two pieces of an iron socketed spearhead'. This item is now in the National Museum of Scotland (catalogue no. X.IL 751).

Also in Grishipoll is *Càrnan Mhic an Rìgh* 'the small cairn of the son of the King' (MacDougall 1937: 44; see also Gregorson Campbell 1895: 10). The antiquarian Erskine Beveridge collected this extraordinary story during his visits to Coll in 1896 and 1897: 'Fifty yards north of Grishipol farmhouse … is a small mound … This burial cairn was opened about the year 1765 by three Norwegians (or strictly, "by three men from Lochlinn" which may mean either Denmark or Norway) in the presence of Mr Hugh MacLean, then the laird of Coll.

It is added that the strangers took home with them the relics disclosed, claiming these to pertain to a fellow country-man, if not even an ancestor' (Beveridge 1903: 46). It is difficult to know how to interpret this account, and it is currently unknown if there are any records of these finds in Scandinavian collections.

The same mound was re-opened by Edward Clarke on 22 July 1797: 'Falling into conversation with [Mr MacLean, the brother of the wife of the Laird of Coll] on the subject of cairns, he informed me, there was only one in the whole island, called *Cairn mich Re* [sic], signifying the cairn, or tomb, of the king's son. I thought this would be a very favourable opportunity for putting in practice a plan I had long had in agitation, of opening one of these cairns; and expressing a wish to that effect, Mr. MacLean informed me he had often thought of doing it himself, and if I pleased, we would set out for the spot immediately. Having provided a sufficient number of the islanders with spades, a pick-axe, &c. we proceeded about three miles across the island to the spot mentioned by Mr M. I found here a small cairn by the road side. It is situated near the village of Grissipol in the north part of the island. We soon fell to work, and made rapid progress, endeavouring to perforate the cairn by opening the channel from east to west. While we were thus employed, a venerable figure, with hairs as white as snow, came slowly up to the cairn, shaking his head, and muttering something in Gaelic, which I did not understand. Mr MacLean, interpreting for me, told me he said 'it was unlucky to disturb the bones of the dead'. I am sorry to add, our labours at the cairn were not productive of much information. We discovered nothing; but in casting out the stones I found several of that description of stones which are venerated in Mull for their imaginary virtues: also, several specimens of beautiful black Mica ... Finding our labours ineffectual, we left our work' (Otter 1824: 234–5). Norse graves are often found at an estate's boundary.

Beveridge also reported that a penannular brooch had been in the possession of Colonel Stewart of Cliad in 1880 (Beveridge 1903: 38). This may also have come from another pagan Viking burial, this time from a woman's grave. This find is now lost.

Given that most of the Norse settlers on Coll were men that are likely to have married native Christian women, it is plausible that many Scandinavian families had converted by the second or third generation. Indeed, the secondary settlement-name *Krossból* (Crossapol) 'farm of the cross' supports this.

In 1852 Bishop William Reeves recorded these cemetery and chapel sites on Coll, although he did not visit the island himself: 'For this list I am indebted to my intelligent friend Mr Lachlan MacQuarrie, the Duke of Argyll's intelligent Ground Officer in Tiree' (Reeves 1854).

1. Gunna 'remains of a chapel and cemetery'
2. Caolas 'foundation of a chapel and remains of a cemetery'
3. Crossapol 'a burial place and the foundations of a chapel are also to be seen'
4. Breachachadh 'chapel and burying ground' at Ardnish
5. Breachachadh 'ruin of a chapel and burying ground' at Fasach
6. Clappach 'chapel and burying ground'
7. Gallanach 'chapel and burying ground'
8. Kilfinnaig 'cemetery which is still used and … formerly a chapel'
9. Arintluich 'chapel and cemetery'
10. Kilbride 'chapel and cemetery'
11. Greamsary 'chapel and cemetery, called Bearrigrein' (Reeves 1854: 243)

There are two or three surviving chapel dedications (see https://saintsplaces.gla.ac.uk):

- Kilbride: St Brigit of Kildare
- *Kilchainie* (1654 Blaeu): Saint Cainneach
- *Kilynaig* (1654 Blaeu): no saint suggested

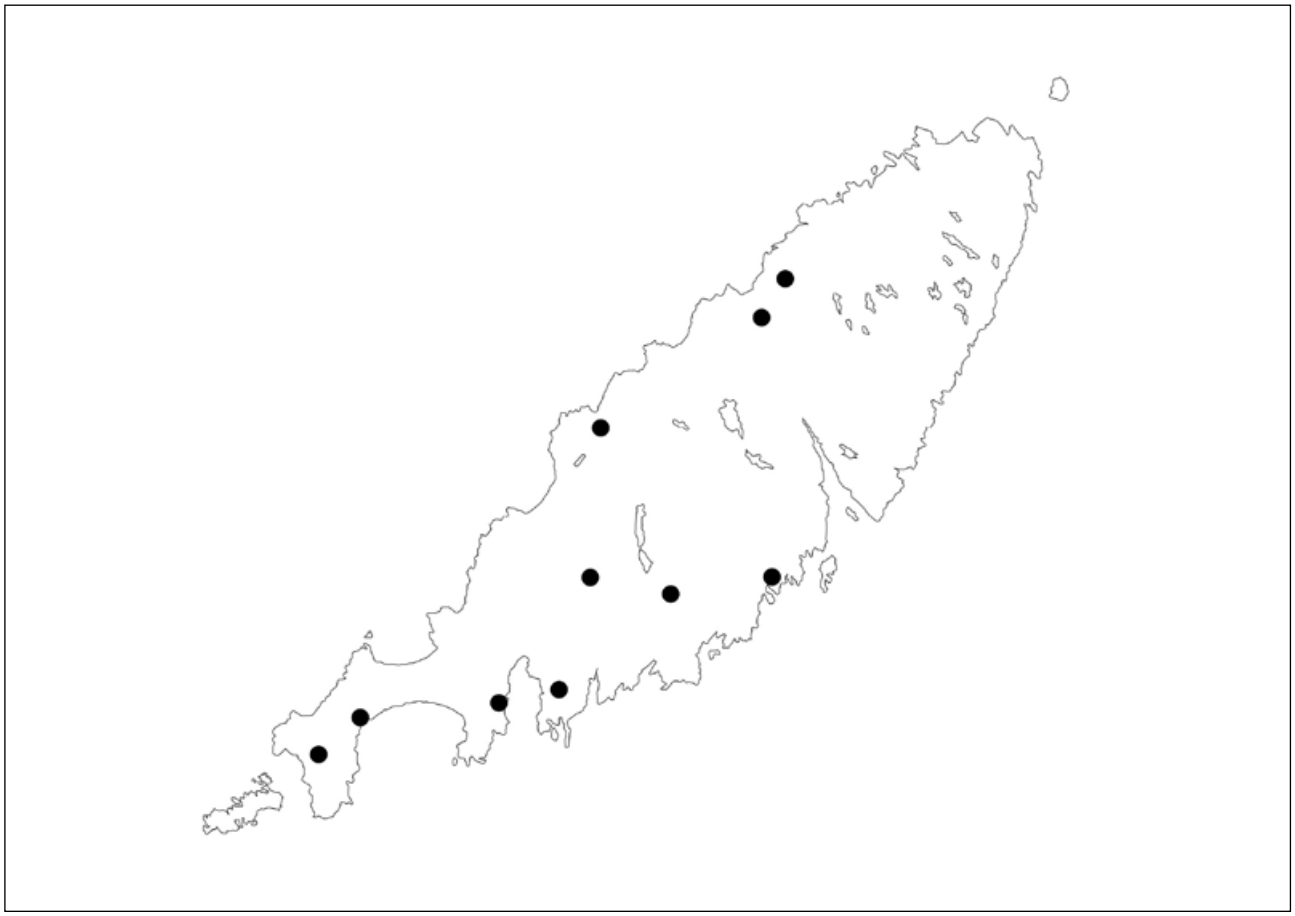


Figure 6: Medieval chapel sites on Coll

Many of these chapels are likely to have been established by the Norse elite. It has been found in Orkney that most Norse settlers occupying wealthy farms worth one ounceland had their own chapel.

Gaut Bjǫrnsson was an important—perhaps the most important—carver of Manx crosses in the tenth century. It is probable that he came from Coll. Two crosses with inscriptions by him survive, but he claimed to have created many more.

These are two entries in the Manx Historic Environment Record:

1. Andreas Cross Slab (Manx cross 99):

   This large and weathered slab stood on the small green outside the church where the war memorial is now located until the 1880s when it was brought inside the church. It had been used for tethering horses and as a billboard for posters. Its carvings are heavily worn, but each broad face bears a cross surrounded by a ring, both filled with plaited and interlaced carvings. The shaft on both faces is decorated with plait-of-five; one face bears twist and ring to the left and key-fret to the right, the other a plain twist and form of linked twist.

   The design follows the Scandinavian Borre style and dates to AD 950-1000. The runic inscription along the edge is now unclear, but with the help of an earlier drawing the inscription has been deciphered to read, 'this in memory of Ofeig his father, but Gaut made it, son of Biarn from Kuli'. The first part of the inscription is lost but probably recorded the name of the person who raised the stone. Gaut is also recorded on one of the stones at Kirk Michael (Manx Cross 101).

A number of stylistic similarities which appear on these and several other crosses from the Island suggest that they may have been carved by the same person, or at least come from the same workshop, and Gaut's intricate work has thus become some of the most iconic from the Island. The runic inscription implies something of the ancestry of Gaut: he was the 'son of Bjorn from kuli'. It has been suggested that 'kuli' refers to the island of Coll in the Hebrides.

(HER https://isleofmanher.im/report/3563fad8-6158-4b4e-ada3-8afa5c03714b) See also Kermode 1903: 148.

2. Gaut's Cross Slab (Manx cross 101)

The cross was discovered in the old parish church and removed from it in 1827 during demolition. One of the most well-known of the Manx crosses, famous for its sculptor, Gaut, it shows the treatment of the head characteristic of him and perhaps his workshop. The rectangular slab is decorated on both faces with a wheel-headed cross, and the entire monument is covered with some of the finest examples of interlace motifs found on the Island. One face shows the ring-chain design on the shaft which has often been ascribed to Gaut. To the left is a plait-of-four, and to the right the tendril pattern also linked with Gaut. Runes above the head of the cross translate, 'Gaut carved this and all in Man.'

On the strength of this inscription and another which also apparently names him (Manx Cross 99) Gaut has often been credited as a leading local carver whose supposedly signature style has been identified on a number of other Manx monuments. The other face bears a plait-of-five on the shaft; twist-and-ring to the left, and, to the right, a linked twist, which has likewise been ascribed to Gaut. A runic inscription runs up one edge. The reading is difficult because of grammatical inconsistencies, but the following is suggested, 'Mael Brigde, son of Athakan the smith erected this cross for his own soul (and that of) his brother's wife. (HER https://isleofmanher.im/report/6e521496-97a9-4f2f-b683-ebb4b2c0c6e9)

5.3 The elite

The Icelandic sagas were written down from the oral tradition in the thirteenth century, three to four hundred years after the events they describe. Coll is referenced once.

A chieftain called Earl Gilli appears in *Njáls saga* during the lordship of Sigurd the Stout, who was Earl of Orkney *c*.960–1014. Under Sigurd's rule, Orkney became the most powerful kingdom in Scandinavian Scotland:

> Kári was one of Earl Sigurd's body-guards, and had just been gathering scatts [rent] in the Southern Isles from Earl Gilli. (Dasent 1900: 150)

> But when the spring came, Kari asked Njal's sons to go on warfare with him, but Grim said they would only do so if he would fare with them afterwards out to Iceland. Kari gave his word to do that, and then they fared with him a-sea-roving. They harried south about Anglesea and all the Southern isles. Thence they held on to Cantyre, and landed there, and fought with the landsmen, and got thence much goods, and so fared to their ships. Thence they fared south to Wales, and harried there. Then they held on for Man, and there they met Godred, and fought with him, and got the victory, and slew Dungal the king's son. There they took great spoil. Thence they held on north to Coll, and found Earl Gilli there, and he greeted them well, and there they stayed with him a while. The Earl fared with them to the Orkneys to meet Earl Sigurd, but next spring Earl

> Sigurd [the Stout, Earl of Orkney ca.960-1014] gave away his sister Nereida [or Swanlauga] to Earl Gilli, and then he fared back to the Southern isles. (Dasent 1900: 165)

If this account is to be taken at face value—and the sagas need to be treated cautiously as accurate historical records—a Hebridean Norse elite was still locally dominant in the tenth and eleventh centuries but subservient to Orkney. It has been proposed that the ounceland system of taxation was introduced during this period.

5.4 Language

Although original Viking settlers are likely to have been outnumbered by the surviving native population, the place-name evidence suggests that Old Norse became the dominant—and possibly the only— language on Coll for several centuries. This developed into a local dialect know as Hebridean Norn.

6. How the Norse dominance of Coll came to an end

It is not known when Norse linguistic and political dominance was replaced by Gaelic. Martin Martin wrote of Coll in 1695 that 'All the inhabitants speak the Irish tongue [Gaelic] (a few excepted)' (Martin 1994 (1695): 297).

A 'deliverance story' has survived in the Coll oral tradition. One version was transcribed by Hector MacDougall:

> While Lachlan Bronnach was chief of the Duart MacLeans [*c.*1411–1472] he owned land on Tiree, while the Norse still had Coll. One day he was sailing to Tiree with his fleet, when he landed on Coll to pick up supplies of food and water. A woman met him at the shore, and when he explained what he was after, she told him it wasn't worth her while giving him anything because anyone with a drop of Highland blood would not need to be asked to expel the Norse from Coll. Duart asked her their number, who they were, where their base was and what lands they owned. She told him that there were a fair number of Norse on Coll, that they were led by Amhladh Mór [interestingly a Gaelic personal name], and that they had a strong fort on an islet in the loch that was named after him—Loch Amhlaidh—but had been previously known as Loch nan Cinneachan. The way to this islet was marked by a stone causeway, and she told him that if he got across the causeway with an elite group of fighting men it would be easy enough to take. She also explained the desperate situation of the islanders under the heel of the Norse.
>
> Duart decided to take Coll from the Norse as soon as he could, and when the preparations were complete to his satisfaction, he landed on Coll under cover of darkness with his best men. They reached Loch Amhlaidh, and just as Alfred the great king of the English had done [before the Battle of Edington AD 878 Alfred is said to have disguised himself as a musician to discover the Danes' battle plans. This was a common medieval folk tale motif], Lachlan Bronnach disguised himself as a musician and was assisted across the causeway. The rest of the group hid themselves nearby to see what transpired. Lachlan Bronnach played for the Norse all night, and the drink flowed freely. As soon as the company became sleepy, he made for their weapons and hurled as many as he could into the loch. Escaping back over the causeway, he led his men in a sudden attack on the islet. The Norse, without most of their weapons, were overcome. The rest of the Norse on Coll assembled, but the people of the island fell in with Duart and battle was pitched at Grimsary. The Norse were put to flight and hunted down. Lachlan Bronnach took over Coll, and according to the MacLeans, they owned the island for 472 years. The last of the MacLeans, Ewen, lost his lands in 1856, which makes the date 1384 a reasonable estimate for the date of the battle between Lachlan Bronnach and the Norse of Coll. On the other hand, Lachlan Bronnach was just eighteen when his father Eachan Ruadh was killed in battle in 1411, so he was not even born in 1384. (Translated by the author from MacDougall 1927: 179–81)

John Gregorson Campbell had another version:

> The Laird of Dowart was on his way to gather rent in Tiree, and sent ashore to Kelis (Caolas), Coll, for meat (*biadhtachd*). The woman of the house told MacLean was not worth sending meat to, and Dowart kindly came ashore to see why she said so. She said it because he was not taking Coll for himself. Three brothers from Lochlin had Coll at the time, Big Annla (*Annla Mor*) in Loch Annla, another in Dun Bithig in Totronald, and the third in Grisipol hill. She had thirty men herself fit to bear arms. Dowart went to Loch Annla fort late in the evening alone, and was hospitably received.

> Annla's arrows were near the fire, and Dowart gradually edged near them till he managed to make off with them. This led to a fight at Grimsari and is perhaps the reason why Dowart encouraged *Iain Garbh* to make himself master of Coll. (Campbell 1895: 7)

Beveridge collected a related story:

> The story runs that Dun Acha was the stronghold of a Norseman, the son of Anlaimh (or Olaf), and that the native islanders, in despair under his tyranny, resolved to attack it in force upon the first suitable opportunity. Accordingly, they one night set fire to the Dun, and thus succeeded in routing the foreigners. This testimony of folklore seems to be borne out, as regards the burning of the fort, by the numerous evidences of fire still visible in its foundations—a fact specially noted by the writer long before he heard the tradition. (Beveridge 1903: 7)

Tiree has a similar heroic deliverance story in the 'Battle of the Sheaves'. Here, Norse invaders were slaughtered by islanders using sheaves of corn. In fact, the Battle of the Sheaves is a re-telling of a fourteenth-century Irish Fingalian story given a local context.

These tales are likely to be mythological rather than historical.

There is ample place-name evidence—just as there is on Tiree—that the Norse language survived on Coll for a significant time. First, there are the sheer number of surviving Norse names, around 70 (see the Onomasticon below). Second, these names were important ones. The Blaeu map of Coll, published in 1654, shows seventeen settlement names, ten (60%) of which are Norse in origin. Many of these are still used. There are also around fifty surviving Norse topographic names—skerries, headlands and hills—showing that the Norse also named small landscape features.

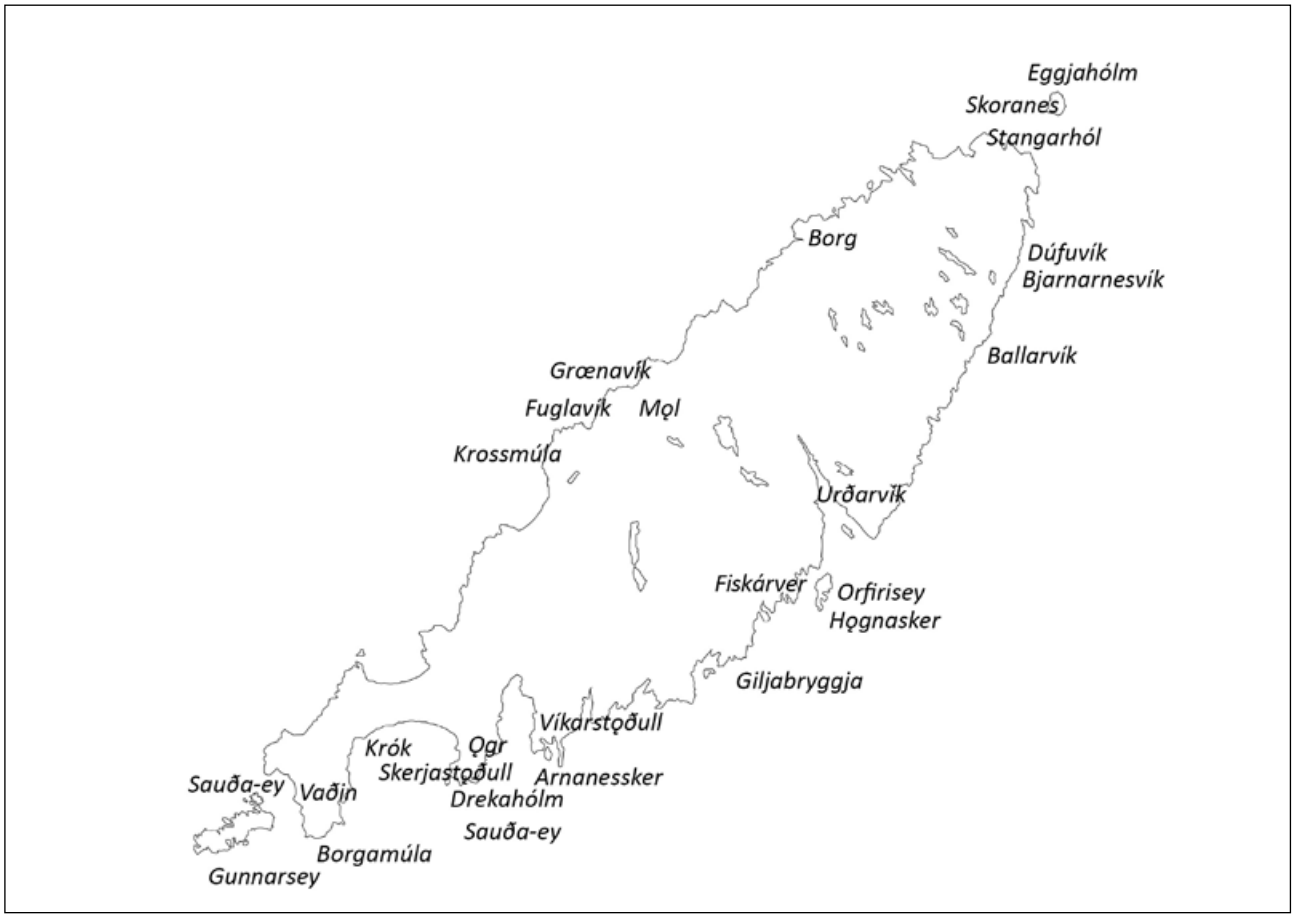


Figure 8: a reconstruction of some Norse topographic (non-settlement) names

There are also two probable examples of the post-positioned bound definite article. This is the suffix *-in* and means 'the'. It is generally thought to be a marker of place-names coined late in the Viking period, possibly as late as the fourteenth century. The two Coll examples are *Hyne*, probably derived from ON *Heiðrin* 'the heath', and **Fadhain* from ON *Vaðin* 'the wading place' (see *Hyne* and *Fadhain* in the Onomasticon below).

Norse may have given way to Gaelic in Hebrides at any time from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries. A date at the end of thirteenth century has been proposed for Tiree, and there seems no reason to suggest anything markedly different for Coll.

There is good evidence that the language shift from Norse to Gaelic on Coll took place gradually.

Examining surviving Coll place-names, eighteen Norse words were loaned into Gaelic: for example, the Norse *sker* became the Gaelic *sgeir* 'skerry'. The following examples are taken from the 1878 Ordnance Survey map unless otherwise stated:

- *Acairseid*, for example *Acairseid Mhòr* and *Acarsaid Fhalaich* (MacDougall 1937: 45). G (Gaelic) *acairseid* is derived from ON (Old Norse) *akkeris-sæti* 'harbour'
- *Baca*, for example *Bacan Seileach.* G *baca* 'sand dune' from ON *bakki* 'bank'
- *Bàgh*, for example *Ceann a' Bhàigh*, Cornaigmore, and *Bàgh na Coille*, Sòrasdal. G *bàgh* from ON *vágr* 'bay'

- *Bearradh*, for example *Bearraidh-gréin*, Grimsary (MacDougall 1927: 176). G *beireadh* from ON *berg* 'rock'
- *Bodha*, for example *Bogha Mòr.* G *bodha* from ON *boði* 'messenger'
- *Breac*, for example *Loch nam Breac Mòra* and *Srùthan nam Breac.* G *breac* from ON *brekka* 'slope'
- *Cleat*, for example *An Cleat* (John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394). G *cleat* from ON *klettr* 'rock'
- *Cuithe*, for example *Cuithe nam Fàs-shruthan*, Gallanach (MacDougall 1937: 51; 'Cuith is common in Coll' (MacEchern 1914: 324) and *Cuithe na Criche,* Ballard (John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394). G *cuithe* from ON *kví* 'milking pen'
- *Doc*, for example *An Doc Mhòr*, Sòrasdal (Kirsty MacFarlane, pers. comm.). G *doc* from ON *dǫkk* 'water-filled hollow'
- *Farspag*, for example *Sgeir Pharspig.* G *arspag* from ON *svart-bakkr* 'great black backed gull' (Cox 2002: 109)
- *Fadhail*, for example *Fhaodhail Mhòr* (John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394). G *fadhail* from ON *vǫðull* 'shallow water'
- *Leod AriLeod.* Personal name G *Leod* from ON *Ljótr*
- *Mealbhach* from ON *melr* 'marram' and ON *bakkr* 'bank'
- *Raonailt*, for example *Loch Airigh Raonailt*. Personal name G *Raonailt* from ON *Ragnhildr*
- *Sgeir*, for example *Sgeir Dhubh.* G *sgeir* from ON *sker* 'skerry'
- *Sloc*, for example *Sloc an Am-làin.* G *sloc* from ON *slǫkk* 'crevice'
- *Stalla*, for example *Stalla Bhàn* (MacDougall 1937: 43). G *stalla* from ON *stallr* 'cliff'
- *Tobhta*, for example *Totronald.* G *tobhta* from ON *topt* 'house site'

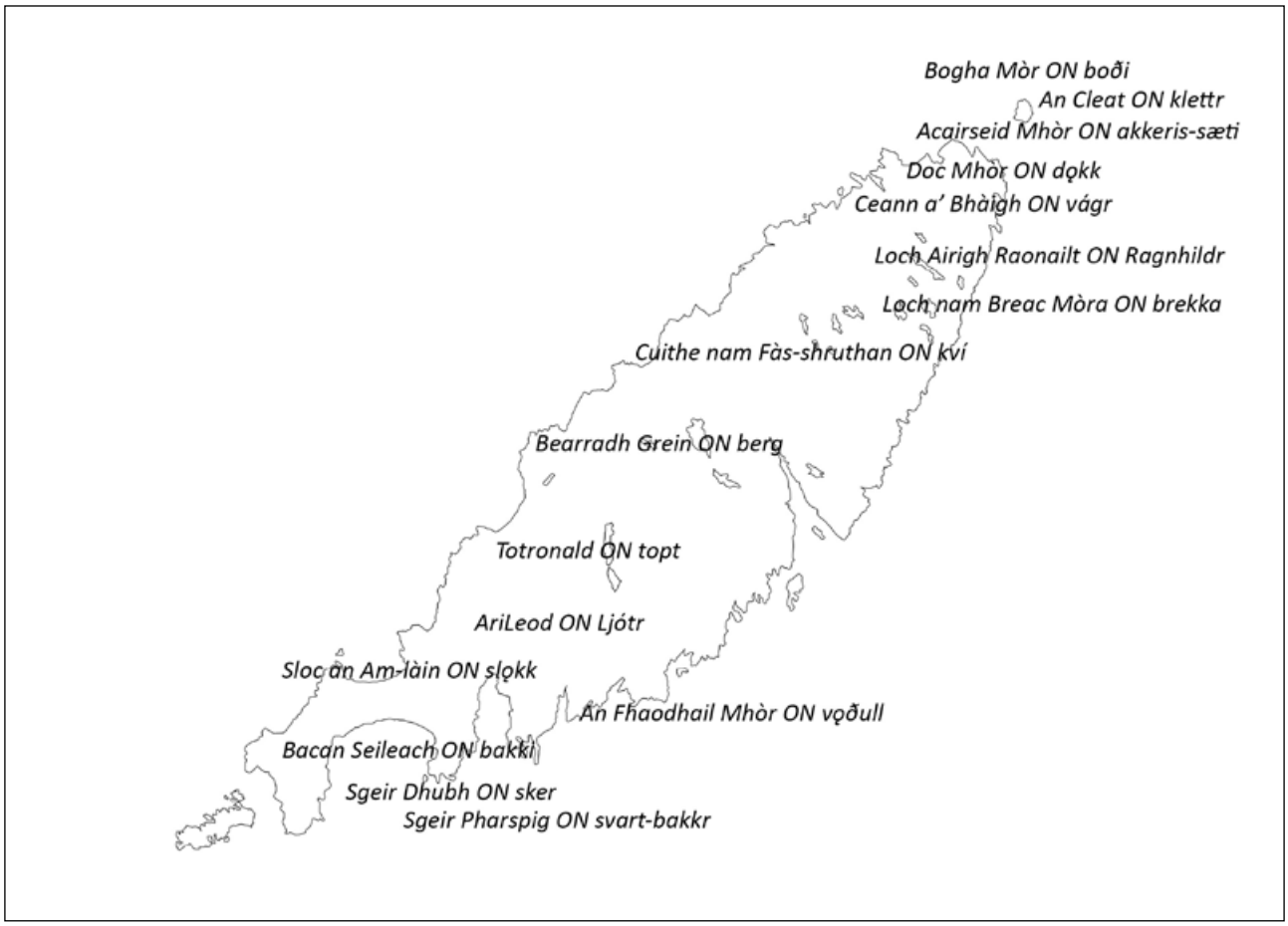


Figure 9: examples of Coll place-names which contain Norse loan words

There are also 27 Gaelic place-names which contain embedded Norse elements (in bold; see the Onomasticon below):

Post ***Aoir*** *Ard-innis*
Eilean ***Askanis***
Sloc ***Bhearnasaig***
Eilean ***Bhoramuil***
Dun ***Borbh***
Calgary *Point*
Coille ***Chanasgaig***
Ylen Loch ***Claad***
Cnoc ***Coirbidh***
Airigh ***Chràcari***
Clach ***Chrosamul***
Druim ***Dubhaig***
Tràigh ***Eileraig***
Poll ***Fadhain***
Bàgh ***Fianuis***
Druim ***Fishaig***
Ben ***Foill***
Dun ***Foulag***
Tràigh ***Grianaig***
Eilean ***Heibhlum***
Eilean an Àrd ***Heynish***
*Bally****haugh***
Tràigh ***Lògabhaig***
Eilean ***Ornsay***
Rudha ***Sgoirinnis***
Sgeir ***Stangail***
Dun ***Beic***

This is good evidence that the transition from Norse to Gaelic was slow and relatively non-disruptive.

7. What did the Norse do for Coll?

Hector MacDougall referred to the Vikings as ‘marauders’ (MacDougall 1937: 20). This reflected the somewhat dismissive view of scholars at that time. But although there may have been relatively few Norse settlers on Coll, their high-status language and culture had a profound effect on the island over a long period.

Once settlement was complete, the threat of raids is likely to have receded. In a sense, the Vikings could be said to have brought ‘peace’ to the Hebrides. This stability is likely to have allowed settlement on fertile land away from Iron Age forts and crannogs. Two large Norse silver hoards have been found on Tiree, and Viking raiding to the south also plausibly brought wealth to Coll. Trade developed between parts of the Norse expansion zone, allowing the import of goods and technology. For example, the design of the horizontal water mill was imported from Ireland. Norse clinker built boats allowed the exploitation of rich deep-sea fishing grounds and whale hunting around Coll.

The eight or so Norse farms valued at one ounceland form the basis of today’s farming landscape. The Vikings brought heavier ploughs allowing wetter land to be cultivated; the crops oat, rye and flax; a new breed of sheep; and domestic poultry. After their conversion to Christianity, the Norse elite are likely to have been responsible for the establishment of farm chapels and graveyards, many of which survived until the Reformation. They also brought with them fine-tooth combs, a new breed of house mouse and leprosy. A sculptor from Coll with a Norse name appears to have found work and fame in Man.

8. Conclusion

It is fair to say that the Norse settlement of Coll has been, up to now, under-appreciated. While several farm- and settlement-names are obviously Norse—Arnabost, Sorisdale—no ship burials have been uncovered on the island and the sagas are not filled with Viking adventurers sweeping through Coll. The general view, until recently, has been that the Vikings passed through the southern Hebrides, but did little more than toss a few place-names ashore.

A new analysis of the island's surviving place-names, however, shows that there was enduring Scandinavian settlement of the whole island. In this, the situation resembled Tiree. The Norse invasion appears to have been total, obliterating traces of an earlier culture. The Scandinavians established farms throughout the island in a number of stages. They also named small rocks, skerries and headlands. As their influence waned—and the timing of this remains unclear—new generations of Gaelic speakers learnt the Norse landscape names and adopted many Norse words. This proves that this language shift was gradual and largely peaceful.

COLL NORSE ONOMASTICON

An onomasticon is an alphabetical list of place-names. The head-name is taken, where possible, from the 1878 Ordnance Survey map. This onomasticon lists Coll place-names containing possible Norse material, as well as a few significant purely Gaelic names. Head-names that are underlined are probably derived from a Norse place-name.

Abbreviations
s *solidatus* shilling
den *denariat* penny
ON Old Norse
OS Ordnance Survey 1878 6" to the mile
* means that the name has been reconstructed

ADHAICEIR*
Sloc Adhaiceir Mòr and *Beag* 2007 OS
Sloc Adhaiceir Mòr and *Beag* 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394 (see the *Tobar an Dualchais* website)

This possibly derives from a name in ON *gja* 'gully'

AIRNE NA SGEIRE
Airne na Sgeire 1878 OS

This probably derives from a name in ON *sker* 'skerry', possibly *Arnanessker* 'the skerry of the headland of *Arni*'.

AMUSGAIG
Amusgaig 1914 MacEchern: 328 'at Toristan'
Creag Anasgaig 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

Gallanach

This probably derives from a name in ON *skagi* 'headland'. Given the differing names forms, it is best to leave the specific open at the moment.

ANLAIMH*
Dùn Anlaimh 1878 OS
Loch Amlaimh 1937 MacDougall: 20
Loch Annla 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

This possibly derives from a name in ON *ey* 'island'

AONDAIRIGH
Aondairigh and *Lag Aondairigh* 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

This probably derives from a name in ON *ærgi* 'shieling'.

AOIR*
Post Aoir Ard-innis 1878 OS
Port Aoir and *Eilean Aoir* 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

This simplex name probably derives from ON *Qgr* 'small inlet'.
There is a *Port Aoir* in Tiree

ARDNISH
Ardnisse Upper and Nether 1573 Johnston 1991: 121
Ardnish 1768 20 maillands
Ardnish 1775 Murdoch MacKenzie map The west side of the island Mull with the islands Tiri and Coll
Post Aoir Ard-innis 1878 OS
Port Aoir Ardnish 1897 OS
Ard Nis 2007 OS Explorer 372

This is a tautologous Gaelic name in *àrd* 'headland. It contains the Norse existing name, the simplex ON *Nes* 'headland'.

ARINABOST
Arnopoldo 1617 20s 1617 RMS vol. 7 no 1652
Arnapoldo 1642 Retour vol. 1 no 59
Arnabost 1776 List of the Inhabitants of Coll, Kirk Session Records
Arinabost 1878 OS
Arnabost 1937 MacDougall: 48
Arnabost 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

This probably derives from a name in ON *bólstaðr* 'farm', probably either with a personal name such as *Arnórsbólstað* (an ON personal name found 13 times in *Landnámabók* 1900: 327), or *Arnarbólstað* 'farm of the eagle' (Gameltoft 2001: 100).

ASCAOINEACH*
Eilean Ascaoineach 1878 OS
Eilean Askanis 1914 MacEchern: 326
Eilean Àisnis 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

This probably derives from a name in ON *nes* 'headland'. It is best to leave the specific open at the moment.

BALLARAIG
Ballaraig 1914 MacEchern: 328 'at Toristan'

This probably derives from a name in ON *vík* 'headland', possibly ON *Ballarvík* 'inlet of the round object'.

BEARNARA
Bearnara 1878 OS between Ben Hough and Loch Cliad
Bearnara 1914 MacEchern: 328 'not so pronounced but Bernary or Bearnairidh'
Bearn-airigh 1937 MacDougall: 50: 'the "rough bounds" of the island, lying between Loch Cliad and Loch nan Cinneachan'
Bearnairigh 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

This probably derives from a name in ON *ærgi* shieling, possibly ON *Bjarnaærgi* 'shieling of *Bjarni*'.

BEARNASAIG*
Uamha Shloc Bhearnasgaig 1927 MacDougall: 174
Sloc Bhearnasaig 1937 MacDougall: 54
Uamh Sloc Bhearnasgag 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

Just south of *Meall na h-Iolaire*

This probably derives from a name in ON *vík* 'inlet', possibly *Bjarnarnesvík* 'the inlet of the headland of *Bjarni*'.

BORAMUL*
Voialum 1654 Blaeu
Achabhorolam 1776 List of the Inhabitants of Coll, Kirk Session Records
Eilean Bhoramuil, *Caolas Eilean Bhoramuil* 1878 OS
Caolas Eilean Bhoramuil 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

This probably derives from ON *Borgamúla* 'headland of the fort'.

BORBAIDH*
Eilean Borbaidh 1878 OS
Tràigh Bhorbaidh 1878 OS
Dun Borbaidh 1903 Beveridge: 14: 'the local pronunciation is *Borow* or *Borive*.'
Dun Borbh, *Eilean Borbaidh* 1878 OS
Tràigh Bhorbaidh OS 1878
Dun Borbh 1914 MacEchern: 327
Dùn Bhuirbh 1927 MacDougall: 178
Dun a Bhuirbh MacDougall 1937: 53
Borbh MacDougall 1937: 54
Am Borgh Kirsty MacFarlane, Sòrasdal, 7/2023
The Morive modern local usage

Two miles NE from Gallanach

This simplex name probably derives from ON *Borg* 'fort'. The initial /m/ in *Morive* derives from an elision of the Gaelic definite article and the name: *Am Borgh.*

BOUSD
Pollis 1558
Bolstig, *Port Bolstig* 1654 Blaeu
Bourt 1769-1770 (bundle 817/1)
Bourt 1776-1821 Tiree Tacks
Bousd, *Tràigh Bhousd* 1878 OS
'Bowstu' MacDougall 1927: 173
Bousda MacEchern 1914: 320
Bouthasd 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394
Bouthasd Kirsty MacFarlane, Sòrasdal, 8/2023

This simplex name probably derives from ON *bólstaðr* 'farm' (Gammeltoft 2001: 97). It is likely to date from the ninth century (Gammeltoft 2001: 163).

BOW
Bow 1654 Blaeu

Between *Faill* and *How*

There are no other name forms and it is best to leave this name open at the moment.

BREACACHADH
Brakauche 1528 RMS vol. 3 no 712
Brakauche 1642 Retour vol. 1 no 59
Breakeach 1654 Blaeu

BUIGISTILE*
Eilean Bhuigistile 1878 OS

Cornaigbeg

This possibly derives from a name in ON *stǫðull* 'milking place'.

BULAVEIG
Bulaveig 1841 Census

Between *Fioslum* and *Tralivaig*

This probably derives from G *A' Bhuaile Bheag* 'the small pen'

CALGARY POINT
Calgary Point 1878 OS
Calgary 1914 MacEchern 321
Rubha Chalagaraidh 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

This probably derives from a name in ON *geiri* or *gerði* 'field', possibly ON *Kaltgerði* 'cold [exposed] field'.

CANASGAIG*
Coille Chanasgaig 1914 MacEchern: 322
Unknown location

This probably derives from a name in ON *skagi* 'headland'.

CAOLAS
Kelis 1573 *Terunga de Kelis* Johnston 1991: 116

CÀRNAN MHIC AN RÌGH
Càrnan mhic an Rìgh 1927 MacDougall, 193
Càrnan mhic an Rìgh 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

Grishipoll

CLABACH
Clabach 1878 OS
Clabbach 1914 MacEchern: 328 'always with the article *A' Chlabach*'
Clabhach 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394
A' Chlabach Kirsty MacFarlane, Sòrasdal 7/2023

Given the different name forms, it is best to leave this name open at the moment.

CLIAD
Claid 1528 20s RMS vol. 3 no 712
Clayd 1617 RMS Vol. 7 no 1652
Clyd 1642 Retour vol. 1 no 59
Klaad, *C*[astle] *Klead*, *Ylen Loch Claad* 1654 Blaeu
Cliad 1776 List of the Inhabitants of Coll, Kirk Session Records
Cliad 1878 OS
Cliad 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394
Cliad Kirsty MacFarlane, Sòrasdal, 7/2023

This simplex name probably derives from ON *klettr* 'hill or cliff'. It may be a transfer name.

COIRBIDH*
**Cnoc Coirbidh* OS 1878
Dun Coiribidh, *Cnoc Coirbidh* 1903 Beveridge: 8: 'locally pronounced "Croc Horabi"'
Cnoc Shòrbaidh 1927 MacDougall: 177
Cnoc and Traigh Shorbaidh 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

This probably derives from ON *Saurbý* 'wet farm'.

COLL
'*de insula Coloso*' *Vita Columbae* I: 41
'*inter Maleam et Colosum*' *Vita Columbae* II: 22
Cole 1231 *Manx Bull* (Broderick 2013: 12)
Colla modern Scottish Gaelic
From their context, both of these names are likely to refer to Coll rather than Colonsay.

The derivation of the name **Colosus* is obscure, but it is likely to be Pictish or prehistoric in origin (Broderick 2013: 12; Watson 1926: 84–5).

CORNAIG*
Tirunga de Chornack, *Sedustill*, *Pollis Cornakmore and Cornakbeg*' 1558 Johnston 1991: 136
Kornaig moir, *Kornaig beg* 1654 Blaeu
Cornaigbeg Cornaigmore 1878 OS
Cornag Bheag 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

This probably derives from a name in ON *vík* 'inlet', either *Kornvík* 'inlet of the corn' or *Kvernarvík* 'inlet of the mill'.

CRÀCARI*
Airigh Chràcari 1914 MacEchern: 332

Unknown location

This probably derives from a name in ON *ærgi* 'shieling', possibly *Krákærgi* 'shieling of the crows'.

CRÒG
Cròg 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

Crossapol. Alias of *Crois*

This simplex name probably derives from ON *krókr* 'hook'.

CROSSAPOL
Crocepoldo 1528 20s RMS vol. 3 no 712
Grotpoldo or *Crocepoldo* 1617 20s RMS vol. 7 no 1652 (the former is more likely from its position in the list)
Crocepoldo 1642 Retour vol. 1 no 59
Crossapol 1878 OS
Crossbull 1937 MacDougall: 36
Camas Chrossabuil 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

This probably derives from ON *Krossból* 'farm of the cross'. In 1861 a 'shaft of a sculptured cross of great beauty' was noted here (Beveridge 1903: 49).

CROSAMUL*
Clach Chrosamul 1914 MacEchern: 322
Glac [?] *Chrossamuil* 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

Grishipoll

This probably derives from ON *Krossmúla* 'headland of the cross'.

DREACH-LOM
Dreach-lom 1878 OS
Dreach-lom 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

Soa

This probably derives from a name in ON *hólmr* 'islet', possibly *Drekahólm* 'dragon rock'.

DUBHAIG*
Druim Dubhaig 1878 OS: 'a hill feature … west of *Meall nan Calman*' (translated as 'hillock of the doves': OS1/2/64/27)

This probably derives from a name in ON *vík* 'inlet', possibly *Dúfuvík* 'inlet of the dove'.

EAGAMUL
Eagamul 1914 MacEchern: 322 'Eag na Maoile on the map'
Eagamul Kirsty MacFarlane, Sòrasdal 8/2023 [ˈɛ gə ˌmʌl]

This probably derives from a name in ON *hólmr* 'islet' with metathesis, possibly ON *Eggjahólm* 'islet of the sharp edge', although it could also be a name in ON *múli* 'promontory' which has been transferred from the shore.

EATHARNA
Loch Yurrn 1654 Blaeu
Loch Irin 1775 Murdoch MacKenzie map The west side of the island Mull with the islands Tiri and Coll
Loch Irin 1794 Hoddart NLS EMW.X.108
Loch Eatharna 1878 OS
Loch Iathairne 1927 MacDougall: 173
Loch Ithiuirne MacDougall 1937: 48
Loch Ithiuirne and *Eilean Ithiuirne* 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394
Iurna Kirsty MacFarlane, Sòrasdal, 7/2023

This probably derives from a name in either ON *ey* 'island' or ON *ver* 'weir'. Given the variety of name forms, it is best to leave the specific open at the moment.

EILERAIG
Eileraig, *Tràigh Eileraig* 1878 OS
Eilearaig and *Eilean Eilearaig* 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

This probably derives from a name in ON *vík* 'inlet'.

EILEBRIG*
Cnoc Eilebrig 1914 MacEchern: 329 'near Gallanach'
Cnoc Eileabruig 1937 MacDougall: 37 'near Gallanach'
Cnoc Eilebrig 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

Gallanach

This probably derives from a name in ON *bryggja* 'landing place'.

FADHAIN*
Poll Fadhain 1878 OS
Poll Fadhain 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

This probably derives from ON *Vaðin* 'the wading place' with the post-positioned bound definite article (see *Hyne*). At spring low tide, it is possible to wade to Gunna (MacDougall 1937: 37)

Bhabhainn is a place-name in Tiree opposite *Soaidh*.

FÀIDEIN*
Poll Fàidein 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

Bousd

It is best to leave this name open at the moment.

FAYGARAVICK
Frigasvick 1751 Johnston 1991: 123
Faygaravick OS 1878
Fidheagarabhaig 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

Acha

Given the variety of name forms, it is best to leave this name open at the moment.

FIANUIS*
Bàgh Fianuis 1878 OS
Bàgh Fiaranuis 1897 OS
Fearnis 1914 MacEchern: 322 'the promontory southwest of Hogh Bay'
Feur-innis 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

This may derive from a name in G *feur-innis* 'grassy field' or from a name in ON *nes*.

FESHIM
Fislum 1794 56 acres Johnston 1991: 135
Fioslum 1841 Census
Feshim 1878 OS
Fì-islum 1914 MacEchern: 324 'accent on the first syllable'
Fidhislum 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394
Feisdlum 2007 OD Explorer 372

This probably derives from a name in ON *hólmr* 'islet'.

FISHAIG*
Druim Fishaig 1878 OS: ‘a long rocky Hill extending from the north end of Loch Airidh Ghlinne, in a north westerly direction for about 3/4 of a mile’ (OS1/2/64/56)
Druim Tiseag 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

Possibly references *Bàgh an Trailleich*

This probably derives from a name in ON *vík* ‘inlet’.

FISKARG
Fiskara 1794
Fiesgaradh 1841 Census
Fisgary 1851 Census
Fiskarg OS 1878
Fiskary 1914 MacEchern: 321 ‘pronounced Fioscara’
Fiosgaradh and *Bogha Mòr Fiosgaraidh* 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394
Fiskary common local usage

This probably derives from a name in ON *ver* ‘weir’, possibly *Fiskárver* ‘weir of the fish stream’.

FOILL*
Tyrvunghafeal 1409 1 ounceland Johnston 1991: 117
Fealda 3 merk 1642 Retour vol. 1 no 59
Faill, *Bin Faill* 1654 Blaeu
Feall 1776 List of the Inhabitants of Coll, Kirk Session Records
Benfiol Hill 1794 Hoddart NLS EMW.X.108
Feall 1841 Census
Foill B 1846 Robinson NLS Dep 313/3631/6
Foill Bay, *Tràigh Foill*, *Ben Foill* 1878 OS
Beinn Feall 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394
Feall Kirsty MacFarlane, Sòrasdal, 7/2023
Ben Feall 66 m (OS)

This simplex name probably derives from ON *fjall* ‘mountain’. This may be a transfer name from Norway.

FOULAG*
Dun Foulag 1903 Beveridge: 12: ‘near the south point of Traigh Grianaig … pronounced *Fulik*’

This probably derives from a name in ON *vík* ‘inlet’, possibly *Fuglavík* ‘inlet of the birds’.

FRACHLAN*
Bàgh and *Eilean Frachlan* 1878 OS
Eilean Frachlain and *Bàgh Frachlain* 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

Gunna

Possibly a name in ON *lón* ‘pool’

FRISLAND
Fresland 1573 Johnston 1991: 122
Freezeland 1672
Friesland 1674
Friesland 1841 Census
Frisland 1851 Census
Frisland OS 1878
Freslan 1914 MacEchern: 322 'pronounced *Freaslan* as "a" in "face"'
Freaslan, *Bàgh Freaslain* and *Bogha Mòr Freaslain* 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394
Freaslan Kirsty MacFarlane, Sòrasdal, 7/2023

This probably derives from a name in ON *land* 'farm', possibly from ON *Freysland* 'Freya's land'.

FROSGARADH
Frosgaradh 1776 List of the Inhabitants of Coll, Kirk Session Records

This is possibly a name in ON *ver* 'weir'

GAR
Gar and Knock 1528 20s RMS vol. 3 no 712
Gar and Knok 1617 1617 RMS vol. 7 no 1652
Gar et Knok 1642 Retour vol. 1 no 59

This simplex name probably derives from ON *garðr* 'farm'.

GEARASTAIN*
Rubha GheIrestein 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

This possibly derives from a name in ON *stein* 'stone'.

GIOLABRIG
Giolabrig 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394 (near Hyne by context)

This probably derives from a name in ON *bryggja* 'landing place', possibly *Giljabryggja* 'landing place of the gullies'.

GRIANAIG*
Tràigh Grianaig 1903 Beveridge: 51
Tràigh Grianaig 1914 MacEchern: 328
Tràigh Grianaig and *Rubha Grianaig* 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

The beach at Clabach

This probably derives from an name in ON *vík* 'inlet', possibly *Grœnavík* 'green or hopeful inlet'.

GRIMISARY
Gremysare 1528 20s RMS vol. 3 no 712
Gremysare 1617 RMS vol. 7 no 1652
Gremysare 1642 Retour vol. 1 no 59
Grimsary 1776 List of the Inhabitants of Coll, Kirk Session Records
Grimisary 1878 OS
Griomasairigh 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

This probably derives from a name in ON *ærgi* 'shieling', possibly *Grímsærgi* 'shieling of *Grímr*' (an ON personal name found 33 times in *Landnámabók* 1900: 342).

GRISHIPOLL
Crecepoldo 1528 20s RMS vol. 3 no 712
Grotpoldo or *Crocepoldo* 1617 20s RMS vol. 7 no 1652 (the latter is more likely from its position in the list)
Grotpoldo 1642 20s Retour vol. 1 no 59
Grisbol 1654 Blaeu
Grishipoll 1776 List of the Inhabitants of Coll, Kirk Session Records
Grissipol 1791 Boswell: 296
Grissipol 1794 Hoddart NLS EMW.X.108
Grisabil 1804 Heather NLS EMS.S.580
Grishipoll 1841 Census
Grishipoll 1851 Census
Grishipoll 1878 OS
Griseabull 1927 MacDougall, 191
Grìsibeal 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394
Grìsibeal Kirsty MacFarlane, Sòrasdal, 7/2023

This probably derives from a name in ON *ból* 'farm division', either *Grísaból* 'farm of pigs' or *Gríssból* 'farm of Gríss' (an ON personal name found 4 times in *Landnámambók* 1900: 343).

GUNNA
Guna 1573 Johnston 1991: 115
Gunna 1654 Blaeu
Gunna 1878 OS
Gunna 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

This probably derives from a name in ON *ey* 'island', probably *Gunnarsey* '*Gunnarr*'s island'. The ON personal name *Gunnarr* appears 10 times in *Landnámabók* (1900: 344).

HEIBHLUM*
Eilean Heibhlum, *Tràigh Heibhlum* OS 1878
Tràigh Shàlum and *Eilean Shàlum* 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

This probably derives from a name in ON *hólmr* 'islet'. The *Sàthalum* on Tiree may derive from ON *Selahólma* 'islets of seals'.

HEYNISH*
Eilean an Àrd Heynish 1878 OS
Eilean Ard Haonais and *Rubha Ard Haonais* 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

North of Cornaigmore

This probably derives from a name in ON *nes* 'headland'. Given the variety of name forms, it is best to leave the specific open at the moment.

HÒINISGEIR*
Hòinisgeir and *Bogha Mòr Hòinisgeir* 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

Orinsay

This probably derives from a name in ON *sker* 'skerry', possibly *Hǫgnasker.* The ON personal name *Hǫgni* appears 6 times in *Landnámabók* (1900: 356). There is a *Hùnasgeir* on Tiree.

HOUGH
Ballehow 1528 20s RMS vol. 3 no 712
Ballehow 1617 RMS vol. 7 no 1652
Ballehow 1642 Retour vol. 1 no 59
Hough, *Ballyhaugh* 1878 OS
Baile Hogh 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

Ben Hough is 104 m (OS). On its slopes is the perched boulder *Clach na Ban-Rìgh*

This simplex name probably derives from the ON *haugr* 'hill or grave'. This may be a transfer name. There is a *Hough* on Tiree.

HYNE
Hine 1794
Haoin 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394
Haoin Kirsty MacFarlane, Sòrasdal, 7/2023

This simplex name probably derives from ON *heiðrin* 'the heath'. The post-positioned bound definite article is a marker of a late date. There is a *Heren* on Tiree with a similar derivation.

ISFURT
Isfurt 1654 Blaeu

This probably derives from a name in ON *fjǫrð* 'firth, bay'. It is possibly the Norse name for *Loch Eatharna.*

LAGABHAG
Lagabhag 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

North of Loch Eatharna

This is possibly a name in ON *vík* 'inlet'.

LAORACHAN*
Dùn Lórachain 1927 MacDougall: 177
Dùn Laorachain 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

NE coast

This name should be left open.

LÒGABHAIG*
Tràigh Lògabhaig 1914 MacEchern: 323
Tràigh Lògabhaig 1927 MacDougall, 185
Tràigh Logabhaig 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

Sòrasdal

This probably derives from a name ON *vík* 'inlet'.

MEALLAIRD*
A' Mheallaird 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

Grishipoll

There is a *Rubha Mheileirt* on Tiree, for which ON *Melafjǫrð* 'bay of the marram grass' has been proposed.

MEILARD*
Loch Meilard 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

Near Hyne

This name should be left open.

MEIGASTIL
Meigastil 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

Near Hyne

This probably derives from a name in ON *stǫðull* 'milking stance'.

MIBOST
Mebois 1617 10s RMS vol. 7 no 1652
Mebois 1642 Retour vol. 1 no 59
Mibost 1878 OS
Meibost 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394
Meibost Kirsty MacFarlane, Sòrasdal, 7/2023

This probably derives from a name in ON *bólstaðr* 'farm division', possibly *Meðalbólstað* 'middle farm division'.

MULL
Mull 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

Grishipoll

This possibly derives from ON *mǫl* 'shingle'.

MULLAIN*
Sloc a' Mhullainn 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394: 'not a mill but gravel at the shore'

This possibly derives from ON *mǫlin* 'the pebbles on a beach' with the post-positioned bound definite article (see *Hyne*). There is a *Ceum a' Mhaoilein* on Tiree.

ORNSAY*
Oronsa 1654 Blaeu
Ilanorasay 1775 Murdoch MacKenzie map The west side of the island Mull with the islands Tiri and Coll
Ilanorasay 1794 Hoddart NLS EMW.X.108
Elanornsay 1851 Census
Eilean Ornsay 1878 OS
Ornsay 1914 MacEchern: 322 'pronounced *Orasa* or rather *Ora-asa*'
Orasay Kirsty MacFarlane, Sòrasdal, 7/2023

This probably derives from ON *Orfirisey* 'tidal island'.

SALACH-AIRIDH
Salach-airidh 1878 OS
Salacharaigh 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394
Salachairigh Kirsty MacFarlane, Sòrasdal, 7/2023

This probably derives from a name in ON *ærgi* 'shieling', possibly *Salarlækjarærgi* 'shieling of the hut stream'.

SGAISTEIL*
Traigh Sgaisteil OS !878
Tràigh Sgeiriastail 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

This probably derives from a name in ON *stǫðull* 'milking place', possibly *Skerjastǫðull* 'milking place of the skerries'.

SGOL-INNIS*
Rudha Sgol-innis 1878 OS
Rudha Sgoirinnis MacDougall 1937: 39
Sgolinus 1914 MacEchern: 322
Rubha Sgoranis 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394
Rubha Sgoranis Kirsty MacFarlane, Sòrasdal, 7/2023

Sòrasdal

This probably derives from a name in ON *nes* 'headland', possibly *Skoranes* 'headland of the notches'.

SISEALUM
Sisealum 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

This probably derives from a name in ON *hólmr* 'islet', possibly *Sigurðshólm* 'the islet of *Sigurðr.* This ON name occurs 16 times in *Landnámabók* (1900: 371).

SOA
Soa 1654 Blaeu
Soa OS 1878
Soaidh 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

This derives from ON *Sauða-ey* 'sheep island'. There is a *Soaidh* on Tiree

SODISDALE
Terra de Sotesdal 1203 Papal charter (MacEchern 1914: 320)
Sedustill 1558
Sodtsdael 1654
Soadisdal 1768
Sodistle 1769-1770 (bundle 817/1)
Sodisdil 1775 Murdoch MacKenzie map The west side of the island Mull with the islands Tiri and Coll
Sorisdale 1776 List of the Inhabitants of Coll, Kirk Session Records
Sortistle Tiree Tacks, 1776-1821, Inveraray Archives
Sordisdil 1804 Heather NLS EMS.S.580
Sorisdale 1841 Census
Sodisdale 1878 OS
Sórasdal 1927 MacDougall: 175
Sórasdal 1937 MacDougall: 50
Sórasdal Kirsty MacFarlane, Sòrasdal, 7/2023 [ˈso ɾəs ˌdɑʟ]

This probably derives from a name in ON *stǫðull* 'milking place', possibly *Saurdalstǫðull* 'milking place of the marshy farm' or *Sótastǫðull* 'milking place of *Sóti*'. The ON personal name *Sóti* is found 33 times in *Landnámabók* 1900: 373).

SOY GUNNA
Soy Gunna OS 1878

This probably derives from ON *Sauða-ey* 'sheep island'

STANGAL*
Sgeir Stangail 1878 OS

Off *Sòrasdal*

This probably derives from a name in ON *hól* 'hill', possibly *Stangarhól* 'hill of the pole'. There is a *Stànal* on Tiree.

SUILISDEIR*
An Camas Suilisdeir 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

Bousd

This probably derives from a name in ON *staðir* 'small farm'.

TIORAIDH*
Beinn Tioraidh 1878 OS
Beinn Dìridh 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

This possibly derives from a name in ON *heiðr* 'heath', possibly *Dýraheið* 'deer heath'.

TORASTAN
Torressa 1528 20s RMS vol. 3 no 712
Torressa 1617 RMS vol. 7 no 1652
Coressa 1642 Retour vol. 1 no 59
Torristy 1654 Blaeu
Torastan 1776 List of the Inhabitants of Coll, Kirk Session Records
Terestin 1804 Heather NLS EMS.S.580
Torastan 1878 OS
*Torathasdan** 1927 MacDougall: 178
Torathastan 1937 McEchern: 51
Torathastan 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394
Torathastan, Kirsty MacFarlane, Sòrasdal, 7/2023

This probably derives from a name in ON *staðir* 'small farm', possibly *Þórarinnsstaðir* 'farm of *Þórarinn*'. The ON personal name *Þórarinn* is found 44 times in *Landnámabók* (1900: 383).

TREELA
Treella 1528 20s RMS vol. 3 no 712
Treella 1617 RMS vol. 7 no 1652
Treellaw 1642 Retour vol. 1 no 59
Trealan 1654 Blaeu
Trialan 1751 2 merk
Triallain 1776 List of the Inhabitants of Coll, Kirk Session Records
Trialon 1841 Census
Trialan 1914 MacEchern: 332 'pronounced Tri-alun'
Triadhlan MacDougall 1937: 51
Trialan, Kirsty MacFarlane, Sòrasdal, 7/2023

A field name in Gallanach

This probably derives from a name in ON *land* 'farm', possibly *Þrælaland* 'farm of the slaves'. There is a *Ben Trealan* in Skye (OS1/16/9/74).

TRELVICK
Trelvick north and south Turnbull 1768 Johnston 1991: 135
Tralivaig 1841 Census
Trelvick 1914 MacEchern: 324 'pr. Treal'vaig'
Trealabhag 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394
Port Trealabhaig 2007 OS Explorer 372

This probably derives from a name in ON *vík* 'inlet'.

TRÌNESGEIR
Trìnesgeir 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

Appears to be a coastal name in *Goirtean*

Probably a name in ON *sker* 'skerry'

TUMALA*
Eilean Tuinn-làin 1878 OS
Eilean Tumala 1897 OS
Eilean Tumala 1914 MacEchern: 335 'burials made there … pronounced Tumala. I also heard Eilean an Tumha'
Eilean Tumala 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

Caolas

This probably derives from a name in ON *ey* 'island'.

ÙBHLAG*
Dùn Ùbhlag, *Loch Ùbhlag* and *Port Ùbhlag* 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

Near *Clabhach*

This probably derives from a name in ON *vík* 'inlet'.

UIG
Wig 1528 20s RMS vol. 3 no 712
Wig 1642 Retour vol. 1 no 59
Uig 1878 OS
Dun Bithig Campbell 1895: 7
Dun Beic 1903 Beveridge: n10: 'pronounced "Veyik"'
Dùn Ùithig 1963 John MacFadyen talking to Bill Nicolaisen on PN1963.017, track ID 82394

This simplex name probably derives from ON *vík* 'inlet'.

URBHAIG
Loch Urishaig 1794 Turnbull (MacEchern 1914: 322)
Loch Urbhaig 1878 OS

Possibly the Norse name for the inner part of *Loch Eatharna*

This probably derives from a name in ON *vík* 'inlet', possibly *Urðarvík* 'stony inlet'. There is an *Urbhaig* on Tiree.

VIGASTILL*
Island Vigastill 1914 MacEchern: 324

In Breacacha Bay

This probably derives from a name in ON *stǫðull* 'milking place', possibly *Víkarstǫðull* 'milking place of *Vík*'.

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