

# SCOTTISH PLACE-NAME NEWS

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The Newsletter of the  
**SCOTTISH PLACE-NAME SOCIETY**  
**COMANN AINMEAN-ÀITE NA H-ALBA**



*The ruins of Dunyvaig Castle on the south-east coast of Islay, an important place in the island's medieval and early modern history, if not also earlier. The Irish coast is just visible on the horizon at the left of the photo, and the small island of Texa lies behind the castle. A generally agreed etymology for Dunyvaig (Duonowak 1385) has proved elusive, apart from the obvious generic, Gaelic dùn, 'fortified place'. The latest suggestion for the rest of the name, in Alan Macniven's 'The Vikings in Islay', is a pre-existing Old Norse name \*Útvík, 'Outer Bay'. Nor is the name Texa straightforward, although the last syllable is likely to be Old Norse ey, 'island'. The specific may be ON teigr, referring to a strip of grazing land; \*tiksa, 'ewe'; or a derivative (via \*Dechsey) of an island called Oidecha insula by Adamnán at the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Lagavulin, just out of view to the right, is transparent as Gaelic \*Lag a' Mhuilinn, 'hollow of the mill'.*

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## A WORD FROM THE COMMITTEE

### Conference bookseller wanted!

For many years our place-names bookstall has been an important feature at our conferences. Leslie Fraser, with his wife Elizabeth, ran it successfully until his retirement last year; the stall was continued by committee members at the last two conferences. But we really need a member keen to take it on.

*The duties would involve:*

selling the books at conference (cash or cheque sales) – help would be available at lunch-time;

ordering stock to fill gaps, or when new books appear;

keeping the stock at home (not requiring a lot of space, about half a cubic metre);

bringing the stock to conference by car, and setting up the stall (with help available);

keeping accurate accounts of cash flows and liaising with the treasurer.

All necessary expenses will be met, attendance at conferences would be free, and your membership subs would be waived. If you are interested, contact Pete Drummond for a discussion, without commitment, at [peter.drummond@btinternet.com](mailto:peter.drummond@btinternet.com) or on 07769680293.

## BUTE FIELD NAMES ON THE MAY ESTATE MAPS, 1780-2

A corpus of some 770 field names is preserved on the thirty sheets of Bute Estate maps surveyed and drawn by Peter and Alex May in 1780-2. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Bute had initiated a programme of agricultural ‘improvement’ twenty years previously, but relatively little progress had been made, so that in 1780 most farms still retained their traditional system of small fields comprising infield, outfield and outset, with unenclosed ‘hill’ beyond.

The names are mostly in English or anglicised Scots, no doubt reflecting the speech of the Mays (Peter and his son Alex) and of their informants when in the company of social superiors. Only a quarter of the names have any element of Gaelic, but this should not be taken to indicate that the language was little spoken among the farmers of Bute. In fact, most were bilingual in this period and I suspect that many of the simpler Gaelic names were translated for the surveyors’ benefit. A significant proportion of the remaining Gaelic elements are opaque to us, and may already have been so in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

There is no evidence that open-field rig existed on Bute during the pre-improvement period. At any rate, the maps show infield divided into ‘crofts’ usually a furlong in length and from 2-4 acres in extent. The outfield is shown to consist of ‘folds’, often about 4 acres in area (though sometimes bigger) and generally of a roughly round shape. *Fold* and *Croft* are the commonest generics, accounting between them for 65% of all names.

The third commonest is *Butt*, with 16%. This is an unusual name other than on Bute, where it is frequent both as a field and settlement generic. Many small farms known as *Butts* existed on Bute in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, some persisting into the 19<sup>th</sup>, and a few cottages with Butt names are still inhabited today. Resembling what were known elsewhere as pendicles, they mostly comprised just one or two fields at the extremity of a larger farm. Butt fields did not necessarily have this location, but shared two features that may

indicate a relationship between the two usages of the word. Two kinds of specifics were used almost exclusively with the generic *Butt*: personal names or occupations, and the use to which the field was put. (Since Crofts and Folds were not worked by one individual, and did not have distinctive functions, they could not be identified in these ways.) The Buttman could use his field for a distinctive cash crop (such as potatoes or tobacco), or for keeping hens or geese, while also working at a trade. Examples from the maps include weaver, shoemaker, smith and hangman; one hopes the last was not too onerous. If the field was peripheral to the farm, it might eventually be disjoined and leased separately, thus giving rise to a settlement Butt.

Specifics reveal much of interest about the nature of the fields and how the farmers perceived them. Many refer to the nature of the ground, which was frequently hard (G. *cruie*), crappie (G. *crapoch* = tussocky), staney, rough or rocky, or alternatively boggy, wet, puddled (G. *lodanie*) or drowned. Colour specifics refer to soil or vegetation. Most frequent are black (never given in G.) signifying peaty soil; red (G. *diarag*) indicating the presence of iron oxide; grey (G. *glas* and *liath*) and white (G. *baan*), both referring to the pale moorland grasses and perhaps cotton grass too in the latter case, though *baan* is often used broadly to indicate waste or useless ground. Other specifics speak directly of the vegetation: ten fields are rushy and seven have willows (G. *sochky*), folds in particular, being often uncultivated for long periods, have whins, bracken, heather, brambles (G. *dreissag*) and sloes (G. *draynian*). The usual range of farm animals are mentioned, as well as rabbit, mole, dove, cat, dog and tod. This last seems to settle an old debate as to whether there were ever foxes on Bute in historic times.

There is an incidental bonus for the Bute onomasticon, in that a dozen compound specifics reveal lost topographical names, a category which has not survived well on the island. Examples are the *Grey Craig Fold* on Nether Ettrick and the same name in Gaelic on Nether Ardroscaidale (*Craiganliab Fold*),

both referring to crags that would be otherwise nameless to us. A mystery is the *Kirchandlaw Fauld*, which can hardly mean what it says, but is presumably a calque on some Gaelic name which I cannot guess at, of which the meaning was perhaps already long-lost.

Finally, an unusual and interesting name: *The Ten Pecks Sowing*. The area of this field is given as one rood and 36 falls (i.e. very nearly half a scots acre or 0.24ha). This affords us a rare opportunity to quantify the seed-corn requirement per acre in pre-improvement agriculture, and consequently, since we have information from other sources about the yield ratio, to estimate how much grain might be expected to be gathered. If this field can be regarded as fairly typical, we have a figure of one and a quarter bolls of seed per Scots acre. It would be interesting to know if this is similar to other estimates

*N.B. Gaelic names are quoted above in the forms used by May, which do not correspond to modern orthography.*

The original maps are held in the archive of the Bute Collection at Mountstuart. There are copies in the Bute Museum archive.

**Angus Hannah** (summarising his talk to the spring conference at Rothesay)

## CILL IN THE PLACENAMES DATABASE OF IRELAND

*Cill* 'church', is an element which occurs frequently in the placenames of Ireland, Scotland, and somewhat less frequently in the Isle of Man. *Cill* is an important indicator of early ecclesiastical settlement of one kind and another, and also indicative of the early distribution of the Gaelic language in Scotland (Nicolaisen 1976).

It [*cill*] is the dative singular of the word *ceall*, derived from Latin *cella*, which in Classical Latin referred to a 'room within a building'. In placenames it has a range of associated meanings: 'church, monastic settlement or foundation, churchyard, graveyard'. It is the most prevalent ecclesiastical element in parish names, townland names and minor names. (Flanagan 1994: 49-50)

This article focuses on the corpus of *cill-initial names* in Ireland; names where the initial or generic element is *cill*. For example: Cill Chainnigh ‘church of Cainneach’, An Chill Mhór ‘the church (big)’, Cill na Móna ‘the church of the bogland’, An Chill ‘the church’, etc.

The date range for such names is a broad one, with the structure *definite article + noun* (An Chill) remaining productive from an early date to the present. Names of the structure *noun + qualifying genitive* and *noun + personal name* represent a very large proportion of these names, and many of these date to the period AD 600-800 (see Butter 2007: 5-7 for a discussion of the date of *cill*-names in Ireland and Scotland).

The main tool I have used to assemble my findings, which represent very much a preliminary foray into a major area of enquiry, is the Placenames Database of Ireland, usually known by the name of its website: [www.logainm.ie](http://www.logainm.ie).

I have confined my enquiries to townland names and parish names – of which there is often a relationship. Parishes with names beginning in *cill* often contain a townland of the same name, in which we might expect to find the physical remains of an early ecclesiastical site, burial ground, or traditions of one or the other. *Cill* occurs frequently in minor [non-administrative] names, but such names are not considered here.

### How many *cill*-initial townlands?

The work of the Placenames Branch on establishing the Irish forms of the names of the c.61,191 townlands in Ireland has progressed to the point where **70.42%** of townland names now have an established Irish form (as of 4 May 2016).

The vast majority of these names have their origin in the Irish language, and establishing an Irish form for each townland name, based on historical evidence, is a crucial first step in analysing these names as a whole. *Cill* occurs as an initial or unqualified element in **1432** of the townland names which have an established Irish form.

### *Cill/coill* distinction in anglicised forms.

A search of the string of letters *kil-*, as an initial part of the anglicised form of a townland name in the Placenames Database of Ireland retrieves 3110 results. This number includes most of the 1432 examples of *cill*-initial names with established Irish forms, mentioned above, but also represents a further pool of potential *cill*-initial names. Can we estimate how many of these really are *cill*-initial names?

Of the 3110 townland names beginning in *kil-* (in their anglicised forms), 2312 have established Irish forms, or 74.34%. The breakdown of initial elements is as follows:

<b>Cill</b>	<b>1411</b>	<b>61.03%</b>
Cillín	95	4.11%
Cilleachán	2	
Cilleán	1	
Cille	1	
Cealla	2	
Total, <i>cill</i> etc.	1512	65.40%

c. 65% of *kil-* names (with established Irish forms in the database) are ecclesiastical, with *cill*, *cillín* etc. as an initial element. As for the remainder, the figures are as follows for *coill* ‘wood’ and its derivatives:

<b>Coill</b>	<b>581</b>	<b>25.13%</b>
Coillidh	74	3.20%
Coillín(í)	41	1.77%
Coillte	40	1.73%
Coilleach (án)	5	
Coilleán	2	
Coillíneach	2	
Coilteán	1	
Total, <i>coill</i> etc.	746	32.27%

The remaining 2.33% is accounted for by elements such as *cúil*, *cúl* and *cuileannach* and derived names (Killester Demesne etc.), which have not been categorised here.

An application of these ratios to the total number of townland names beginning in *kil-* (3110), gives an estimated total of c.1898 *cill*-initial townland names. *Cill* is also occasionally anglicised as *kyl-*, *keel(-)*, and *kel-*, though the latter two forms represent only a tiny number of *cill*-names and have been omitted here for the sake of brevity.

Of the 110 townland names beginning in *kyl(e)-*, all but six have established Irish forms, giving a coverage of 94.55%. Of these 104 *kyl(e)* names the break-down of initial elements is as follows:

Coill(te)	87	83.65%
Cill	14	12.73%
Caol	1	
Cúil	1	
Other	1	

This analysis suggests there are about 2012 *cill*-initial townland names in total, representing c.3.29% of all townland names.

#### Distribution of *cill* in civil parish names

I have identified a total of 585 *cill*-initial parish names, of which just twelve do not yet have an established Irish form in either the Logainm.ie or the PlacenamesNI database ([www.placenamesni.org](http://www.placenamesni.org)). This represents c.23% of the total number of parish names.

There is a fair degree of variation in this distribution throughout the country which can be seen at provincial level, and in sharper focus at county level:

	total parishes	<i>cill</i> -initial parish	% of total
Ulster	402	54	13.5%
Leinster	1015	184	18.13%
Munster	842	225	26.72%
Connacht	307	121	39.41%

Four counties represent the two highest (Clare and Sligo) and the two lowest (Fermanagh and Louth) incidences at county level. There are a number of possible explanations for this variation. Certainly, in some counties ecclesiastical elements other

than *cill* are more productive (Fermanagh), while in other areas the earlier corpus of *cill*-initial names seems to have been overlain by new names which have their origin in the period of Anglo-Norman settlement (Louth).

	total parishes	<i>cill</i> -initial parish	% of total
Clare	82	46	56.1%
Sligo	40	18	45%
Fermanagh	23	2	8.7%
Louth	67	3	4.48%

#### Further research:

I have begun to categorise the 1432 *cill*-initial townland names with established Irish forms following the morphological categorisation used by Ó Cearbhaill in his 2007 study of *cill* in the placenames of Tipperary. This is no small task and I can only offer some very tentative results at present. Rachel Butter has noted, in her doctoral study of *cill* in the placenames of Argyll (2007), 'the apparent contrast between *cill*-names in Ireland, and those in Scotland where the overwhelming majority seem to contain a personal name'. In Ireland, it seems only about half of the *cill*-initial townland names are qualified by a personal name. This greater diversity of form may reflect a longer period of productivity in Ireland for *cill* (as a generic element) than in Scotland. Detailed commentary on this matter will require further analysis.

#### Bibliography:

Butter, R. (2007) *Cill*-names and saints in Argyll: a way towards understanding the early church in Dal Riata?. Unpublished PhD thesis. University of Glasgow.

Flanagan D. & Flanagan, L. (1994) *Irish place names*. Dublin.

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**Aengus Finnegan** (summarising his talk at the conference in Rothesay, on an Irish generic also important in Scotland)

## **The Thomas Marcus Huser Fieldwork Fund**

*Every community on earth is being deprived of an ancient necessary nourishment. We cannot live fully without the treasury our ancestors have left us. Without the story – in which everyone living, unborn, and dead, participates – men are no more than ‘bits of paper blown on the cold wind...’.* George Mackay Brown, *Portrait of Orkney*, (John Murray, London), 1981.

Thomas Marcus Huser (1972-2010) was a Norwegian researcher with a great passion for Scottish place names. In 2008 he completed his MA dissertation *From ‘Færevåg’ to ‘Pier of Wall’? Early Habitative Names in Westray, the Orkney Isles, which attempted to establish the percentage of older Orkney place names of Norse origin.* A full version of his work can be downloaded from the website of the University of Oslo. Although his dissertation and supporting material are in Norwegian, an English summary can be found at the end of Part 2 (Appendix) and the idea behind his work was effectively summarised in an article by Dr Ragnhild Ljosland (<http://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/research-enterprise/cultural/centre-for-nordic-studies/mimirs-well-articles/cracking-the-place-name-puzzle>).

There is no doubt that the highlights of Thomas’s research were his trips to Orkney. On his first trip he carried out extensive fieldwork for his project and during the second one he presented a copy of his MA dissertation to the Westray Heritage Centre. This is why a fieldwork fund is the most appropriate way to celebrate his memory while promoting future research in this area.

The Thomas Marcus Huser Fieldwork Fund aims to provide a small contribution of up to £100 towards fieldwork-related costs. All postgraduate students and early-career researchers working in the field of Scottish place names are eligible to apply. Applications must be made to the Scottish Place-Name Society in the form of a cover letter (detailing what the project is about and what the funds will be used for) and a CV, sent by email to the Secretary, Leonie Dunlop:

[leonie.m.dunlop@gmail.com](mailto:leonie.m.dunlop@gmail.com).

The deadline for applications is 31 March 2017. Successful applicants will be notified in May 2017, with an announcement at the Scottish Place-Name Society’s spring conference.

## **SETTLEMENTS, SHIPS AND STRUCTURES OF POWER IN THE NORSE CELTIC SEAWAYS OF WESTERN SCOTLAND**

While the events of Scotland’s Viking Age (c. AD 800 – 1000) may not be well documented, it is safe to assume that violence and disruption were major themes. For the Celtic populations of the western seaways, they seem to have been especially traumatic. Ironically, however, it was not until the hiatus in Viking raids in the middle of the 9th century that long-standing local traditions came to an abrupt and final end. Recent studies have attributed this development to the culturally aggressive settlement of whole communities of ethnic Scandinavians, rather than disparate groups of retiring warriors, with societal aspirations requiring the full range of social and cultural apparatus.

Following work undertaken by the international Ping Project, for example, we can assume with some confidence that this apparatus included systems of administration and justice. But with their security threatened from the outset by dispossessed Celtic landowners and political rivals, the incoming Norse communities would also have required a functioning military infrastructure to embed quite so visibly in the local namescapes.

Despite the success of marine archaeologists in locating unrecorded prehistoric harbour sites, such as Rubh an Dunan (G ‘Headland of the Little Fort’) in Skye, there have, as yet, been no confirmed discoveries of Viking Age fortifications, harbours or ship-building in the Hebrides. This could be because the only surviving remains are buried under later structures, where they are destined to remain hidden. But it is also possible, as I suggested in my talk in Rothesay, that the focus of the

search is flawed. Where harbours and forts have thrived, it seems likely to have been for their utility to land-based communities. As such, it follows that any attempt to find them should concentrate on cultural markers in that landscape, not least, the local names of places.

My starting point was the body of later medieval fortifications known as ‘Galley-Castles’, for which Ian Macneil and others have controversially speculated Scandinavian origins (Figure 1). There is one such structure in Bute – Rothesay Castle. Although the name shared by the castle and the island’s main town appears to belie Scandinavian origins (Márkus suggests ON *\*Ruðrisey* ‘\*Ruðri’s Island’), the castle itself can only be traced to the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, long after the end of the Viking Age, when it was built by either Alan fitz Walter, 2<sup>nd</sup> High Steward of Scotland, or his son Walter. By 1230, the originally wooden structure seems to have been replaced by a stone curtain wall, which is described by the Icelandic scholar Sturla Þórðarson in his near contemporary biography of the 13<sup>th</sup> century Norwegian king Hákon Hákonarson.

According to Sturla, this stone castle was successfully attacked on two occasions during Hákon’s reign by Christian Norwegians and their Hebridean placemen. The first siege, in 1230, was led by a certain Óspakr Ögmundarson, also known as Gilla Esbuig mac Dubgaill, a likely grandson of Somerled MacGillebride. Óspakr had been made king of the Hebrides by Hákon and furnished with a fleet of 80 ships to secure his territory.

The venture did not end well for Óspakr, who died from his wounds in Bute, even before Alan of Galloway arrived with a fleet of 200 ships to see him off. The second siege, in 1263, involved Hákon himself, in collaboration with the psychotic Hebridean sea-captain, Ruadri mac Raonall, another grandson of Somerled, who considered Bute to be his birthright, and saw no problem in personally murdering nine of the garrison before Hákon ‘reduced’ the rest of the island.

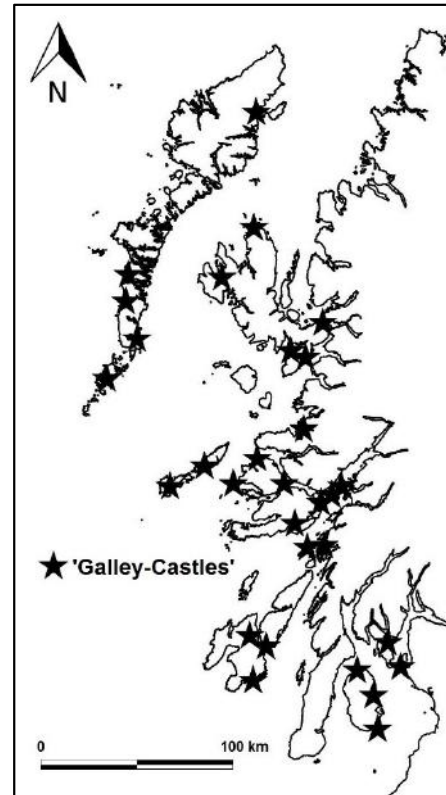


Figure 1: Pre-15th Century Galley Castles

Although entertaining, these stories are of little direct relevance to Bute’s Viking Age infrastructure. Scrutiny of other galley-castles reveals similar problems. While their onomastic context tends to suggest a Scandinavian heritage (e.g. Stornoway < ON *\*Stjörnuvágr* ‘Steerage Bay’; Kisimul < ON *\*Kjósamúli* ‘Rock of the Small Bay’; Lochranza < ON *\*Reynisá* ‘Rowan-Tree River’), this is only to be expected for an area known from the 10<sup>th</sup> century as Innse Gall (G ‘Islands of the [Scandinavian] Foreigners’). In the absence of detailed typological analysis or other diagnostic finds, it is impossible to say whether the structures pre-date the later medieval boom in castle building. With most being close to successful settlements, medieval chapels, and easy access to important waterways, however, it would be surprising if the locations had not always been thought worthy of defence. In a Hebridean context, where the sea is omnipresent, they might be just as easily linked to the drystone traditions of the Iron Age, or the military concerns of the Pictish or Dál Riata elites as the Vikings. But it would be unwise to imagine that the long-term transmission of these traditions was either direct or seamless.

To help establish any overarching chains of continuity, whether the Vikings had an active place in them, and whether this was a result of accident or design, requires the focus to be shifted away from the castles themselves and onto the wider districts within which they were built. Doing so allows use to be made of the Central Place theories devised to identify structures of power in prehistoric landscapes. In their simplest form, these involve identifying markers of societal importance in the landscape from the period after the Viking Age and triangulating these with confirmed contemporary remains and local place-names with appropriately diagnostic Old Norse components to identify the most likely sites for Viking Age infrastructure.

In deciding what to look for, the lead can be taken from recent Scandinavian research on the cognitive landscape of naval warfare and defence. Review of the Iron Age tradition of western Norway, the likely home of Scotland's Viking settlers, suggests that some drystone forts had been used to control communications or resources since the Iron Age. The most common appellative used to describe them in early records appears to be Old Norse *borg* (f) 'wall, fortification, castle, conical hill), similar in range to Gaelic *dùn* (m). By the early Viking Age, however, defensive strategies seem to have been revised to rely on the landscape, wooden palisades and ships, with the attendant use of harbours, boat-houses, slip-ways etc. Comparison of excavated remains with the place-name record has highlighted the importance of naming elements alluding to major vessels (e.g. *dreki* (m), *snekkja* (f), *skeið* (f) and *skúta* (f)); the sheltering of major vessels (e.g. *höfn* (f) (gen. *hafnar*) 'harbour', *naust* (n) 'boathouse', *stöð* (f) (gen. & pl. *stöðvar*) 'landing-place'); and systems of naval levy (e.g. *leiðangr* (m) 'naval levy' *herr* (m) 'host/force/army', *skipreiða* (f) 'ship-service district').

While no material examples have been identified in the Hebrides, the echoes of these maritime traditions can be seen in the later medieval customs of the Lordship of the Isles, and anecdotal references to insular Norse levies in the Irish annals of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Adapting the Scandinavian approach for the

Hebridean landscape requires a number of adjustments. Compared to south-west Norway, the pre-19<sup>th</sup> century sources for local place-names are limited in number and detail. Allowances must also be made for the effect of the Gaelic language and culture on these names in the 500 years that separate the Viking Age from the earliest records. It is possible, for example, that place-names building on ON *skip* (n) 'ship' have been translated with G *long* (f) 'ship', or preserved through replacement with the loanword *sgioib* (f). The operation of lexical substitution and folk etymology may have seen further transformations, e.g.. ON *drag* (n), 'place where boats are dragged', being re-imagined as G *tràigh* (f) 'strand'. Consideration of topographical and cultural contexts are crucial here.

The availability of raw materials is also likely to have had an impact on the components of local infrastructure. While a large number of huge wooden boathouses are known from SW Norway, the relative expense of suitable timbers may have been an issue in the Hebrides. More recently, boat storage in the Long Island typically involved the transfer of smaller ships from the sea to convenient bodies of fresh or brackish water. This protected the boats from winter storms, rid them of marine parasites, and prevented the hulls from drying out, obviating the need for re-swelling in the spring. If this recent practice is a legacy of the Viking Age, it would make sense to consider place-name elements alluding to portage, such as ON *eið* (n) meaning 'isthmus or portage'.

I began my search with the ON appellative *borg*. Despite clear typological differences from the Iron Age forts of Scandinavia, a selection of Scottish duns and brochs are recognised in the surviving ON nomenclature as 'borgs'. The best-preserved of these is the *Móseyarborg* or 'Broch of Mousa' of *Egils saga Skallagrímsson*, where Björn Brynjólfsson, a wayward chieftain's son from Norway absconds with Þóra *blaðhönd* (ON 'Lace Cuff'). In Orkney and Shetland, the word has remained transparent and productive, albeit as the Norn loanword, and now archaeological term, 'broch'. In the West



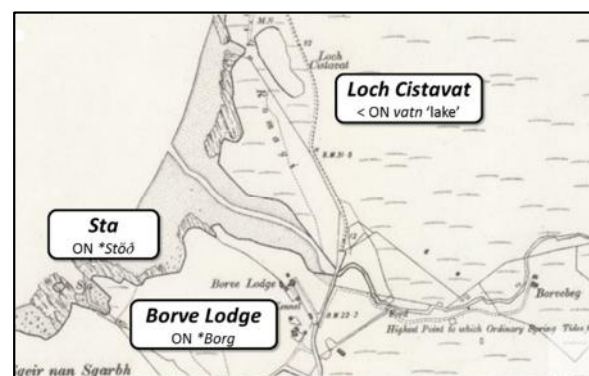
Highlands and Islands, on the other hand, it has been altered to varying degrees by the subsequent influence of the Gaelic language. The Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 Inventory preserves more than 130 examples, with forms ranging from *borg* to *broc*. While closer scrutiny of older and smaller-scale maps would no doubt reveal others, these reflect only a small fraction of the region's drystone fortifications. This is due in part to the later medieval replacement or (part-)translation of *borg*-names with others based on Gaelic *dùn*. Even so, it seems reasonable to conclude that the word *borg* as used in the Hebrides had acquired a narrower meaning than 'fortification' in general, and may never have been a particularly common feature of the Hebridean namescape. While the available archaeological evidence points to the wide-ranging abandonment of native fortifications not long after the beginning of the Viking Age, structures with *borg*-names may once have functioned as central places in the administrative districts of Dàl Riatan Islay, whose boundaries were later repurposed by Norse settlers.

Of the *borg*-names observed in the 1:50,000 Inventory, a number display convincing combinations of the cultural markers discussed above. In Skye, the district of Borve in Snizort, with its commanding dun, faces onto the sheltered inner part of Loch Snizort. The nearby Skeabost Island, where the River Snizort enters the loch, was once considered 'central' enough to house the cathedral of Sodor and the Isles. While the specific element in the name Skeabost is unclear, it would be reasonable to speculate a reconstructed *\*Skeiðabólstaðr* 'Warship Farm'. Not too far away, in Trotternish, the promontory fort of Dùn Skudiburgh dominates the skyline of the sheltered bay and settlement of Uig (<ON *\*Vík*, 'Bay') and Scuddaborg Farm. Although derivation from *G scut* or *sgut* meaning 'cluster' is possible, a ready alternative is provided by ON *\*Skútaborg* 'Warship Fort'.

In South Uist, the Viking settlement site at Bornais (<ON *\*Borgnes* 'Fort Headland') is well-known for both the richness of its assemblage and the lack of continuity from

the preceding Pictish period. With the settlement district, burial-ground and chapel-site of Kildonan immediately adjacent to the south, and the later Ormaclett Castle nearby to the north, the location has clearly retained its prestige into the following centuries. The hinterland boasts a wealth of Old Norse place-names, with Bornais likely to have been the Viking name for the headland now known as Rudha Ardvule. This would make Dùn Vulcan, the eponymous *borg*, and its abandonment around AD 800 highly significant. While the coast here is exposed, there are also a number of inland lochs nearby, including Loch Ardvule at the end of the peninsula.

Further south, in Islay, the promontory fort of Am Burg looks out over the sea not far from Loch Gorm, where the Clan MacDonald castle on Eilean Mòr was demolished by royalist forces in 1608. This locality also includes the early chapel at Kilchoman, where the Cawdor Campbell lairds of Islay are said to have had a mansion in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and the farm at Ballinaby, whose soils and sand dunes have produced an array of high status Viking burials. Elsewhere in the Hebrides there are a number of other important locations whose close proximity to the sea, freshwater lochs, and Iron Age fortifications combines with local *borg*-names. These include Borve Lodge in Harris, which is 450m inland from a sheltered *slochd* called Sta (<ON *\*Stöð* or *\*Stöðvar*, 'Landing-Place': **Figure 2**); Borerary in North Uist, and Borve in Barra.



**Figure 2: Borve, Harris (OS 1st ed. 6 inch to the mile map)**

If other place-name inventories were considered, however, it is almost certain that more would be uncovered. A case in point

here is Rothesay Castle. Although the 1:50,000 Inventory entries for Bute do not appear to preserve any local ‘borgs’, the OS 1<sup>st</sup> edition 6 inch to the mile map shows a Dun Burgidale (< ON \**Borgadalr*, ‘Fort Valley’) c. 2.8 km to the WNW. With the territories of Western Scotland being smaller and less well-resourced than the *fylki* or *lag* of medieval Norway, it would also be reasonable to expect greater cross-over between the military and the mercantile. My future research will also take account of more general terms for ships, such as ON *skip* or Gaelic *long*, may help, as might more specific terms for mercantile activity such as (*lað*)*hella*, *markaðr*, and their Gaelic equivalents.

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Some of the proceeds from sales of ‘In the Beginning was the Name’ are being used to fund an annual

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**BOOK REVIEW:**

***'The Vikings in Islay: the Place of Names in Hebridean Settlement History'* by Alan Macniven**

(Published by John Donald 2015. ISBN 9781906566623. Price £25 paperback).

This book presents the first inclusive survey of Islay's place-names, covering the names of settlements, rivers, natural features and structures. The conclusions drawn from the survey alter conventional and tenacious notions of Celtic continuity in Islay during the Viking period, and instead point to the occurrence of Scandinavian migration, ethnic cleansing and cultural transplantation. This has significant ramifications for our understanding of medieval Islay, and demonstrates the value of using place-name material to illuminate undocumented periods of history.

After a stimulating introduction, where recent debates concerning the nature and impact of Viking settlement in Scotland are discussed, the book is divided into two parts. The first part is devoted to the multilingual history and landscape context of Islay's place-names, a background to the survey (including methodologies, approaches and source material), and examining the impact of Viking settlement. Careful attention is given to post-Viking history and the re-introduction of Gaelic to the island. The history of land denomination and administration in Islay is also explored, and together with the survey results, is argued to provide evidence for a drastic change in the island's administration during the Viking

Age. Areas with concentrations of Gaelic farm-names, however, are shown to have demonstrable links to notable Gaelic families from the twelfth century onwards, and therefore are unlikely to be early. Altogether, the evidence indicates the existence of a large and socially elite Norse population settled throughout the island, suggesting either 'extermination or extreme subordination' of the native Dál Riata inhabitants.

Part II contains the comprehensive, and well-presented place-name survey. Each entry, organised alphabetically by parish, includes a map for the reader's convenience, as well as an exhaustive list of historical forms, followed by etymological discussion. The survey concludes with a glossary of Old Norse and Gaelic elements. Entries for Old Norse place-names are accompanied by comparative toponymic evidence, primarily from the northern Isles and Scandinavia. As a result, the entries for Old Norse names are generally more detailed than the Gaelic place-names, but despite this slight imbalance, the overall quality of the survey is not diminished. Of particular importance is the attention devoted to economic context. Every entry includes historic rental assessments where possible, and associated land holdings. Each entry is completed by a discussion of any local minor-names, fortifications, monuments and antiquities. Any reservations I had with explanations of names were infrequent and very minor, and do not undermine the survey or the compelling thesis of this work.

Macniven's conclusions are ground-breaking, and it will be very interesting to see if future place-name surveys of neighbouring islands replicate similar results to this study. I have no doubt that this work will generate a fascinating dialogue about the extent and impact of Viking settlement in Scotland. *The Vikings in Islay* is praiseworthy on many levels, and is a significant contribution to settlement history and Scottish place-name studies. This book will be of great interest and benefit to a diverse audience, and it is highly recommended.

**Kelly Kilpatrick**

**'Names and Naming: People, Places, Perceptions and Power'** (edited by Guy Puzey and Laura Kostanski) is now available, through [www.multilingual-matters.com](http://www.multilingual-matters.com).

### BOOKS FROM SPNS

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The eponymous oak and ash are still to be seen on Islay in Glenegeedale (Gaelic *gleann* 'valley' + Old Norse *eik* 'oak tree' + *dalr* 'valley') and (Port) *Askaig* (Old Norse *askr* 'ash tree' + *vík* 'bay' or *vágr* 'bay'; in this case there may not have been continuous presence of the species from Viking times but conditions including lime-rich soil are favourable. (Photos by Alan Macniven)



*Oak in Glenegeedale*



*Port Askaig with ash trees in the woodland*

### FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The joint SPNS / SSNS special conference to celebrate the work of Doreen Waugh will be held in Edinburgh on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> October\*. Details and application form with this newsletter.

The regular SPNS autumn conference on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> November, in Edinburgh, will this time be themed on subjects of special interest to the late Bill Nicolaisen. Details and form also with this newsletter. Our spring 2017 conference with AGM is being planned for Galashiels/ Tweedbank on 6<sup>th</sup> May.

The Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland (SNSBI) has its autumn day conference in Newcastle on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> October\*. Topics include Leonie Dunlop on coastal names of Berwickshire and Simon Taylor and Alison Grant on names of islands and rocks in the Firth of Forth.

The SNSBI is also preparing for its spring 2017 conference to be held on 24-27 March at Steventon near Didcot, Oxfordshire; and (provisionally) to return to Scotland for its spring 2018 conference on 6-9 April at Blackwaterfoot on Arran.

\*N.B. Travel arrangements for some will have to take account of the planned closure of the East Coast main line between Edinburgh and Newcastle on these days.)