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The South Harris Machair: Sources and Settlements

Emma Jane Anderson

BA, MA (Hons)

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School of Humanities

College of Arts

University of Glasgow

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Table of Contents

1	INTRODUCTION.....	7
1.1	THE PROJECT	7
1.2	TOPOGRAPHY.....	8
1.3	LANGUAGE AND POPULATION	8
1.4	EXISTING SCHOLARSHIP	9
1.5	METHODOLOGY	12
2	HISTORICAL EVIDENCE.....	14
2.1	PRE-NORSE PERIOD	14
2.1.1	PRE-HISTORIC EVIDENCE: SETTLEMENT PATTERNS AND CELTIC LINKS.....	14
2.1.2	EVIDENCE FOR EARLY MEDIEVAL GAELS IN THE HEBRIDES.....	16
2.2	MEDIEVAL SETTLEMENT	18
2.2.1	ICELANDIC SOURCES	18
2.2.2	IRISH AND NORSE SOURCES: CONTACT CONSIDERATIONS	19
2.2.3	INTERPRETING THE EVIDENCE.....	20
2.2.4	THE SETTLED NORSE	20
2.2.5	IDENTITY IN HEBRIDEAN-NORSE COMMUNITIES.....	22
2.2.6	TAXATION SYSTEMS IN THE HEBRIDES.....	24
2.3	VALUATION: ACCOUNTS, ROLLS AND RENTALS	26
2.3.1	FUNCTION AND PURPOSE	27
2.3.2	REFLECTIONS OF LANDHOLDING	29
2.3.3	LINGUISTIC CONSIDERATIONS	32
2.4	EARLY MODERN AND MODERN PERIODS	34
2.4.1	DEAN DONALD MUNRO: A DESCRIPTION OF THE OCCIDENTAL I.E. WESTERN ISLANDS OF SCOTLAND.....	35
2.4.2	MARTIN MARTIN: A DESCRIPTION OF THE WESTERN ISLANDS OF SCOTLAND.....	36
2.4.3	WILLIAM MACGILLIVRAY: <i>A HEBRIDEAN NATURALIST'S JOURNAL 1817-1818</i>	38
2.5	STATISTICAL ACCOUNTS AND <i>ORIGINES PAROCHIALES SCOTIAE</i>	40
2.5.1	<i>OLD STATISTICAL ACCOUNT (1791-9)</i>	40
2.5.2	<i>NEW STATISTICAL ACCOUNT (1834-5)</i>	40
2.5.3	<i>ORIGINES PAROCHIALES SCOTIAE (1854)</i>	41
3	MAPS, PLANS AND CHARTS	42
3.1	EARLY MAPS.....	42

3.2	AINSLIE AND BALD	46
3.2.1	THE AINSLIE GROUP	48
3.2.2	THE BALD GROUP	50
3.3	MARINE CHARTS	61
3.3.1	CHARTS DRAWING ON AINSLIE	61
3.3.2	HYDROGRAPHIC SURVEY	62
3.4	THE ORDNANCE SURVEY	68
3.4.1	THE ORDNANCE SURVEY ORIGINAL OBJECT NAME-BOOKS	68
3.4.2	THE ORDNANCE SURVEY MAPS	73
4	<u>SOUTH HARRIS SETTLEMENT-NAMES</u>	79
4.1	PLACE-NAME STUDIES IN HARRIS	79
4.1.1	A.A. CARMICHAEL	79
4.1.2	F.W.L. THOMAS	81
4.1.3	DONALD MACIVER	83
4.2	ELEMENTS EMPLOYED IN HARRIS SETTLEMENT-NAMES	84
4.2.1	DATING THE SETTLEMENT-NAMES: THE NORSE NAMES	84
4.2.2	THE GAELIC NAMES	88
4.2.3	EXISTING NAME CONSTRUCTIONS	92
4.2.4	LOCAL FEATURES	94
4.3	GAZETTEER	95
4.3.1	BORVE/NA BUIRGH	96
4.3.2	HORGABOST	97
4.3.3	LOSGAINTIR	98
4.3.4	NISABOST	99
4.3.5	SCARASTA	100
4.3.6	SEILEBOST	102
4.3.7	TAOBH TUATH	104
4.3.8	SOUTH TOWN	105
4.3.9	CEAPABHAL AREA	105
4.3.10	DRUIM A' PHUIND	106
5	<u>CONCLUSIONS</u>	107
	<u>BIBLIOGRAPHY</u>	111
	MAP SOURCES	111

PRIMARY	113
SECONDARY	114
WEB RESOURCES	118
Figure 1-1 Area of Study (South Harris Machair)	7
Figure 1-2: Machair Areas of Scotland	8
Figure 2-1: Topographical Features of the Seilebost Area	14
Figure 2-2: Broch Distribution in Scotland	16
Figure 3-1 Pont/Blaeu (pub 1654)	43
Figure 3-2 Pont/Blaeu (pub. 1654)	44
Figure 3-3 Bald's Plan of Harris 1805	46
Figure 3-4 Ainslie's Map 1789	47
Figure 3-5 MacKenzie's Map 1776 (L) and Ainslie's Map 1789 Map (R)	48
Figure 3-6 Thomson's Map (1822)	49
Figure 3-7 Wyld's Map (1846)	50
Figure 3-8: Thomson's list of Sources, 1824	51
Figure 3-9 Arrowsmith's Map (1807)	51
Figure 3-10 Arrowsmith 1807 (Long Island)	52
Figure 3-11 Arrowsmith Map (detail)	52
Figure 3-12 Black's Map (1862)	53
Figure 3-13 Bald Map Detail "Contents of Harris"	54
Figure 3-14 Bald 1805 plan: Boundaries Highlighted	56
Figure 3-15 Bald Map <i>Luskintire</i>	56
Figure 3-16 Bald Map <i>Nisibost</i> area	57
Figure 3-17 Bald Map: <i>Scarrista-North Town</i>	58
Figure 3-18 Huddart and Depot Generale de la Marine	62
Figure 3-19 Heather's Chart 1804	62
Figure 3-20 Hydrographic Survey 1: <i>Losgainntir</i> Area	63
Figure 3-21: Hydrographic Survey 2: <i>Nisaboist</i> Area	64
Figure 3-22: Hydrographic Survey 3: <i>Borgh</i> Area	64
Figure 3-23: Hydrographic Survey 4 <i>Taobh Tuath</i> Area	67
Figure 3-24: Hydrographic Survey: North Lewis 1849	68
Figure 3-25: OSNB Inverness-shire Outer Heb. Vol 4/p.262	70

Figure 3-26: South Harris "Forest" 1in/Mile 3rd ed. (1911).....	77
Figure 3-27: South Harris Forest Pop.ed. 1931	78
Figure 3-28: 1in/Mile Pop.ed. (1923)	79
Figure 4-1 Bald's Map 1805	87
Figure 4-2 Bald's 1805 Map (detail)	95
Figure 4-3 1st ed. 6in/Mile Ordnance Survey Sheet XVII (1881)	96

1 Introduction

1.1 The Project

The Outer Hebrides have been settled by speakers of a range of languages over the centuries, with a variety of Celtic and Germanic languages making a contribution to the toponymic record. By examining the name-coining choices made by successive settlers, it is possible to gain an insight into how they viewed and used the land. Despite this rich heritage, little work has been done on place-names or indeed on the sources in which they might be found. Even where existing-name constructions continue to be productive long after the language of coining has disappeared can be insightful when one examines what they are applied to: particular features likely to adopt this practice can emerge, and the names themselves may offer insight into landholding and taxation practices over time. The area chosen for this study is shown in Fig. 1 below, and includes all settlements on the South Harris machair, from Losgaintir in the north, to the settlements at the south end. At the south of the machair only Taobh Tuath continues to exist as a settlement today. The forms shown on the map below will be used as the standard name-form throughout this thesis, as they are taken from the most recent Ordnance Survey (OS) edition available online via EDINA.¹



Figure 1-1 Area of Study (South Harris Machair)

¹ <http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/digimap>

² A. McKirdy and R. Crofts: *Land of Mountain and Flood: The Geology and Landforms of Scotland*. Edinburgh.

1.2 Topography

The Isle of Harris shares a landmass with neighbouring Lewis, but is almost separated from it by lochs Seaforth and Reasort. It is composed of Precambrian lewissian gneiss, with anorthosite intrusions, responsible for the famous ‘moon-rock’ appearance of parts of the island.² Notably the island stood in for Jupiter in ‘2001: a space odyssey’.³

Harris contains Clisham, which at 799m is the highest hill in the Western isles, and the island is substantially more mountainous than its neighbours, particularly in the north.⁴ The island is divided into North and South Harris by the narrow isthmus at Tarbert, with the southern

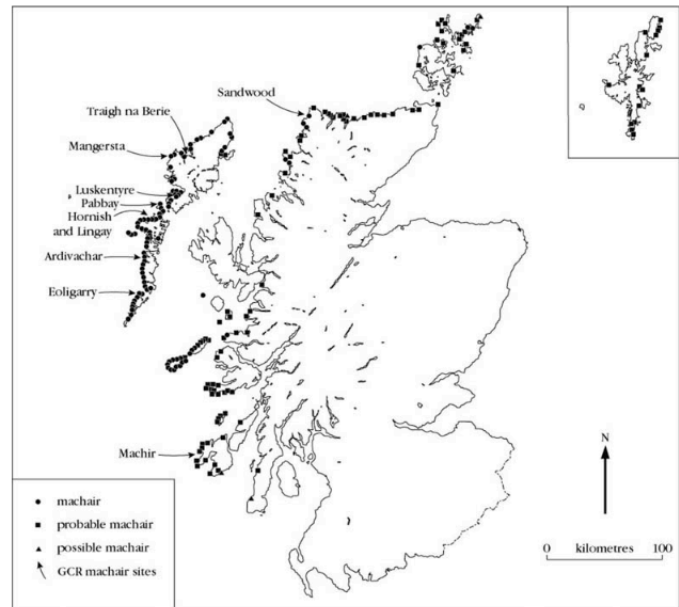


Figure 1-2: Machair Areas of Scotland

part of the island being characterised by rocky bays on the east and fertile machair on the west. As shown in Fig. 2 above, machair is found only in the north and west of Scotland (including Orkney, Shetland, Outer and Inner Hebrides and a few mainland sites) and the north-west of Ireland, and is an internationally important wildlife habitat.⁵

1.3 Language and Population

Census data groups Lewis and Harris together, which, while reflecting their geographical status can present difficulties in obtaining sufficiently localised data. However, 2011 data from the National Records office shows the current population of the Isle of Harris at 1916, reflecting an established trend of

² A.McKirdy and R. Crofts: *Land of Mountain and Flood: The Geology and Landforms of Scotland*. Edinburgh. (Birlinn.2007) p.94 and C.Gillen: *Geology and Landscapes of Scotland* (Terra Publishing 2003) pp.63–4.

³ <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0062622/locations> visited 08/04/2014

⁴ S.Johnstone, H. Brown and D.Bennet, *The Corbetts and Other Scottish Hills*. Edinburgh. (Scottish Mountaineering Trust 1990) p.240

⁵ <http://www.snh.gov.uk/about-scotlands-nature/habitats-and-ecosystems/coasts-and-seas/coastal-habitats/machair/> visited 08/04/14 and <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/gcrdb/GCRsiteaccount231.pdf> p.1

population decline.⁶ This reflects a general trend of population ageing and decline across the Western Isles, although recent population increases in Lewis Benbecula and Barra have yielded a potentially misleading figure of 4.5% population increase since 2001.⁷ Furthermore, a *Comhairle nan Eileanan an Siar* (CneS) report on the census data indicated that birth rate in the Western isles increased in line with overall population growth in the period from 2001-2011.⁸

While the Western Isles has the highest proportion of Gaelic speakers within the population at 52% (with 61% of the population recording some Gaelic proficiency), regional fluctuations are difficult to assess due to the methods of data collection: while Lewis and Harris overall have the lowest proportion of people with some Gaelic proficiency in the western isles at 59%, Scalpay, which is situated adjacent to Harris, has the highest Gaelic proficiency at 80%.⁹ Furthermore, it must be remembered that the language situation is not a static picture: the proportion of children educated in Gaelic on Harris (which has two schools offering GME (Gaelic Medium Education) has increased in recent years, with the most recent primary 1 intake being predominantly to the GME stream, most of whom would have been excluded from this census data as it only requested information about individuals over the age of 3.¹⁰

1.4 Existing scholarship

Publications relevant to this thesis fall into several categories. These include early studies, like D. MacIver's *Place-names of Lewis and Harris* (1934) which is essentially a collection of names accompanied by attempted interpretations rather than a scholarly examination of name-elements. Scholarly approaches follow a fairly long trajectory, and may focus on the names of a defined area, coinings in a particular language or a combination thereof.

⁶ <http://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/factfile/population/islandpopulations.asp> accessed 10/04/14

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ <http://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/factfile/population/documents/LACensusProfile2011.pdf> accessed 10/04/14

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

While no study specific to South Harris has ever been undertaken (to the best knowledge of this author), studies of other parts of the Hebrides do exist, although of course one should remember the dangers of comparing one island with another. Although all may be broadly categorized as ‘Hebridean’, the settlement and linguistic records can be quite different, as can the sources that provide the names. The early Irish foundation at Iona, has resulted in a wealth of contemporary, or near-contemporary information for the early medieval period for the Southern Hebrides, albeit of varying degrees of reliability. The Western Isles however are virtually absent from the historic record: The islands are referred to in a number of Old Norse (ON) sagas, but these offer little in the way of identifiable place-names. Furthermore, many of the sources survive only in later copy. Approaches to such evidence as there is will be dealt with in Chapter 2 below. Scholarly studies of a local area might be argued to have begun with the work of Captain F.W.L. Thomas, whose work with the Hydrographic Survey and friendship with Alexander Carmichael provided him with a wealth of information on which to base his hypotheses. Capt. Thomas made a number of contributions towards the study of settlement in the Hebrides, including some which touch on Harris place-names and which begin to examine language contact issues in the Hebrides. These are discussed more fully in Chapter 4.1. Books studying names across Scotland vary in focus and in quality, but in terms of developing an effective approach to onomastic science more widely, the work of W.J. Watson in the early part of the 20th century marked a key stage of development. This was built upon in the work of W.F.H. Nicolaisen, whose approach to the study of onomastics has done much to contribute to the development of a scientific methodological framework for name-studies, and whose 1976 book *Scottish Place-names: their Study and Significance* is still a central work today.

Throughout the 20th century, scholarship in relation to the Western Isles continued to develop: on one hand, there was an increasing interest in language contact led by scholars such as Kenneth Jackson, while on the other, the role of onomastics in unpicking the history of the western Isles in the period of Norse settlement was realised. Indeed, the 1959 *International Congress of Celtic*

Studies included a paper on place-names from Magne Oftedal alongside discussions of Norse-Gaelic contact and its impact on art, literature and language although the proceedings were not published until 1975.¹¹ Oftedal's time living on Lewis resulted in his *Village Names of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides* (1954), a study with obvious relevance to this thesis. Increasing interest in all forms of onomastics led to the creation of bodies such as *The International Council of Onomastic Sciences*, founded in 1949, and, more locally to the present study, the *Scottish Place-name Society*, launched in 1996. Such bodies contribute a great deal to our understanding of the broader toponymic heritage of Scotland through publication outputs and conferences. Regarding studies specific to the Hebrides, Oddgeir Eysteinnsson's *Norse Settlement-Names of North Harris* made a detailed examination of Norse names in North Harris as part of an unpublished master's thesis at the University of Aberdeen in 1992. This examines only Norse names and does not extend either to Gaelic nomenclature or indeed to the southern part of the island. Other notable studies include Richard Cox's *The Gaelic Place-names of Carloway, Isle of Lewis* (2002) and Anke-Beate Stahl's unpublished PhD thesis *Place-names of Barra in the Outer Hebrides*. All of these have a sound academic basis, with Cox in particular taking a detailed approach to language and morphology. Both rely to a much greater degree than this study on the evidence of informants, although a number of place-name recordings from the 1960's (sadly incomplete) held in the School of Scottish Studies (University of Edinburgh) have been consulted.

While detailed surveys of the area are clearly in short supply, specialist studies of particular elements, such as Peder Gammeltoft's detailed analysis of *bolstaðr*-names are of tremendous value, and also represents a recent innovation in a long historiographical trajectory stretching from Marwick and Watson, through Nicolaisen right up to Gammeltoft himself. Gammeltoft's approach in his 2001 publication *The Place-name Element Bólstaðr in the North Atlantic Area* is particularly noteworthy in that it examines one element over a large area. Given that Norse involvement in the Northern and Western Isles was

¹¹ B. Ó Cuiv (ed): *The Impact of The Scandinavian Invasions on the Celtic-Speaking Peoples 800-1100 AD* (Dublin 1975)

not uniform; this study is particularly useful for examining the development of the element *bolstaðr* in wide-ranging linguistic and social contexts. wider historical studies have much to contribute towards this study in terms of contextualisation, and range from general surveys, such as Woolf's *From Pictland to Alba* (2007), through to the laudable and extensive work of genealogist and local historian Bill Lawson, whose source collections, publications and personal opinions have all provided stimuli for this project.

1.5 Methodology

There are two key aims for this project: the first is to identify and critically discuss sources for Harris place-names, drawing them together in a manner that has not been done to date, while the second is to discuss the evidence such names provide for settlement and human activity in the south-west Harris area. Due to the scarcity of relevant studies for the Harris area, the identification and analysis of potential name sources of itself represents original research and will be a central aspect of the project.

This will be presented as follows: Chapter 2 will examine evidence which might be deemed 'historical' in the widest sense and will incorporate archaeological evidence as well as material from early sources and chronicles for the prehistoric to medieval period, and travel accounts and journals from the early modern period onwards. It will also include evidence produced for a specific purpose, which can be securely dated, including Rentals, Valuation Rolls and sources such as Statistical Accounts and *Origines Parochiales Scotiae*. Chapter 3 will focus on maps, estate plans and charts and discuss the imperatives and methodologies behind their production. This chapter will discuss interdependencies between sources and the implications of this for the cartographic record. The processes of data-collection for map-making and the role of authorities and local informants will be discussed where appropriate. In particular, this project will engage with recent technological developments as a means of evidence collection. The Ordnance Survey notebooks have very recently been made available as a digitised resource at the time of writing. This offers a huge number of advantages to the place-name scholar, and this thesis

will undertake a detailed examination of the name-books, not only as a source of names for a gazetteer, but as a historical source in their own right. The name books draw on an extensive range of resources, and wherever possible, ambiguities over which sources are referred to will be resolved, by comparative analysis of the name-data contained within them.

Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis will focus on linguistic evidence in greater depth, providing detailed examination of the elements identified in the sources identified in chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 4 will deal with existing scholarship specifically covering the machair area in their historical context and apply relevant existing studies in discussion of the generic and specific elements found in the machair area. Chapter 5 will present conclusions drawn from this study and the accompanying gazetteer, which will be provided in chapter 4 for ease of reference.

2 Historical Evidence

2.1 Pre-Norse Period

2.1.1 Pre-historic Evidence: Settlement Patterns and Celtic Links

Naturally fertile, the west part of Harris has been settled and cultivated for several millennia, and Historic monuments, and are reflected in the onomastic record: *Horgabost* reflects the presence of a chambered cairn, and possibly associated monuments at *Nisabost*, through the ON specific *horgr* (grave), while Na Buirgh employs ON *borg* the element coined by Norse settlers to describe the ancient ruined sites that they found upon their arrival rather than, as Martin Martin wrote c.1695, the names settlers gave to their own forts.¹²

While the present-day landscape of Harris is largely devoid of trees, this is unlikely to always have been the case, and as Megaw and Simpson have noted, the Isles were likely to have been much more wooded at the time of the earliest Norse settlement.¹³ As

fig. 2.1 (right) shows, small traces of wooded land still remain, near Horgabost and Na Buirgh, and it seems likely both that this area would have been more extensive in the early medieval period

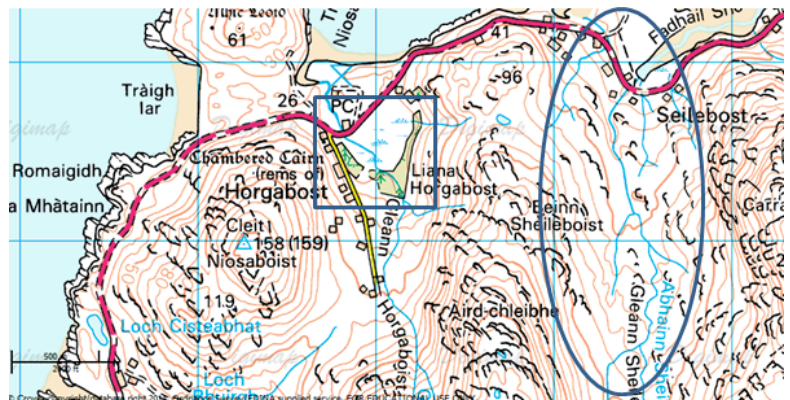


Figure 2-1: Topographical Features of the Seilebost Area

and that successive population groups would have deemed such fertile land, with a read source of fuel and building materials, an ideal site for cultivation-based settlement.

¹² Martin Martin: *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland Circa 1695* (Edinburgh 2002) p.33

¹³ J. Megaw and D. Simpson: *Introduction to British Prehistory* (Leicester 1979) p.22

Seilebost is located next to multiple watercourses, providing superior circumstances for water loving willow trees to grow. A cognate attestation is *Sellebister*, Orkney.¹⁴ By thinking about what the pre-historic landscape looked like, it becomes clear that it is possible that such trees were a feature at that site and offers a plausible explanation for the name. The evidence of names such as *Seilebost* can in turn challenge assumptions evident in historiographical approaches: as Richard Cox has noted, there has been a tendency to assume that the deforestation of the Hebrides was due to a ‘scorched earth’ approach by the incoming Vikings.¹⁵ *Seilebost* represents a coining referring both to settlement for agricultural purposes and to the continuing presence of trees known from pre-historic times in the period of Norse settlement.

Early linguistic evidence is both scant and difficult to interpret; Ptolemy’s writings provide a whole host of names that appear to be Celtic for the groups who lived in Scotland c.200 AD.¹⁶ However, the problems of this evidence are legion: we cannot be sure exactly where they applied to, who was included and who the informant for these names was or indeed what language s/he spoke. We can’t be sure whether these labels are what the groups in question called *themselves* (endonyms) or whether these were simply exonymic reflections from a Celtic-speaking outsider.

Archaeological evidence can once again help to build up a picture, although, unsurprisingly, the record is varied, as is the degree of exploration. Although examination of the archaeological record shows that people settled on the Machair as early as the Mesolithic period, it also offers information about their cultural context: As Ian Armit has suggested, Bronze- and Iron-age round structures represent a distinctively insular cultural difference from continental Europe.¹⁷ Of course, not all parts of the British Isles used exactly the same structures, and regional variations; such as the concentration of broch-type

¹⁴ P. Gammeltoft: *The Place-name Element Bólstaðr in the North Atlantic Area* (Copenhagen 2001) p.145

¹⁵ R Cox: *The Gaelic Place-names of Carloway, Isle of Lewis* (DIAS 2002) p.2

¹⁶ I. Armit: *Celtic Scotland* (London 2005) p.69

¹⁷ *Ibid.* p.26

structures in the Northern and western Isles and down parts of the Western seaboard show (See fig 2.2, right).¹⁸ However, this evidence supports the broad principle that Celtic-speakers inhabited the British Isles, including the Northern and Western Isles in the Bronze- and Iron-Ages. Harris requires a great deal of further investigation in terms of its early round structures, but many likely sites have already been identified: the CANMORE database managed by *the Royal Commission for the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland* lists burials, agricultural sites and round structures, or potential round structures at several sites on the machair, including at Luskentyre,¹⁹ Horgabost,²⁰ Na Buirgh²¹ and Scarasta.²² The oldest known settlement in the Western isles, dating back c. 9000 years, is to be found to the west of Taobh Tuath, and has been the subject of extensive archaeological exploration.²³ From shell middens through to a post-medieval farmstead, there is ample evidence for the continued settlement and cultivation of the land, before, during and after the arrival of ON speakers.²⁴



Figure 2-2: Broch Distribution in Scotland

2.1.2 Evidence for Early Medieval Gaels in the Hebrides

Despite conducting extensive research to test his hypothesis of pre-Norse Gaelic underlay, Richard Cox has been unable to discover any Gaelic name that can be conclusively dated to earlier than the 12th century.²⁵ However, coinings in Old Norse suggest that Early Gaelic speakers may have been nearby at the time Norse raiders and settlers arrived. *Papar* names are ultimately derived from

¹⁸ Image courtesy of <http://www.geos.ed.ac.uk/~mscgis/12-13/s1262144/>

¹⁹ <http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/en/event/972192/>

²⁰ <http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/en/site/336295/details/h140+horgabost+harris/>

²¹ <http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/en/site/336906/details/borve+harris/>

²² <http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/en/site/336965/details/s64+scarista+harris/>

²³ *Rubh' an Teampaill headland Harris, Western Isles of Scotland Written Scheme of Investigation for Programme of Archaeological Fieldwork* (University of Birmingham 2010)

²⁴ C. Burgess: *Ancient Lewis and Harris: Exploring the Archaeology of the Outer Hebrides* (Thomson 2008) pp. 90-91

²⁵ R. Cox: 'Notes on the Norse Impact on Hebridean Place-names' *JSNS* 1 p.142

Latin, with *papa* giving Early Gaelic (EG) *pápa*, which in turn becomes ON *papi*.²⁶ The term carries the meaning of pope, a ‘father’ or a religious recluse, and is applied to sites throughout the Norse settled areas.²⁷ However, with the exception of a couple of examples in northeast Caithness, all *papar* sites are located on islands. There are two in (unusually) close proximity both to each other to the area under discussion, although none actually within it. These are the island *Pabbay* in the sound of Harris and *Paible* on Taransay.²⁸

There is evidence besides the likely borrowing from EG to support that such sites were home to Gaelic-speaking religious practitioners: several Norse sources, although surviving only in later copies state specifically that the *papar* were Irish.²⁹ *Landnámabók* and *Íslendingabók* both report that not only were the Christians on the islands Irish, but that they left behind bells, books and croziers when they departed.³⁰ Furthermore, Pabbay has considerable archaeological evidence for early settlement, including two chapels, while Taransay has yielded early stones, including a small cross-marked stone discovered by Capt. F.W.L. Thomas at a site adjacent to two chapels.³¹ However, despite all of this evidence for early Gaelic-speaking inhabitants in the vicinity, as with the evidence presented by names such as *Borve* for earlier inhabitants, it must be noted that the surviving names are still ON coinings and as such are ultimately exonyms which reflect the ON perspective on their predecessors in the area and their settlements.

²⁶ A. MacDonald: ‘The *Papar* and some Problems: a Brief Review’ Crawford, B (ed) *The Papar in the North Atlantic: Environment and History* (St Andrews 2002) p.15

²⁷ Ibid. p.25 (distribution map) <http://edil.qub.ac.uk/dictionary/search.php>

²⁸ <http://www.paparproject.org.uk/hebrides.html> this proximity might well provide a solution as to why Taransay is not also called Pabbay.

²⁹ Even accepting the complexities of terminology for Scots and Irish, it seems reasonable to accept that Q-Celtic speakers were in question here.

³⁰ MacDonald, ‘Papar’ pp.13-4

³¹ Fisher: ‘Crosses in the Ocean: some *papar* sites and their sculpture’ in Crawford, B (ed) *The Papar in the North Atlantic: Environment and History* (St Andrews 2002) p.44

2.2 Medieval Settlement

Viking raids on Scotland's western seaboard, and indeed on Ireland had certainly begun by 794 where the Annals of Ulster record the “...*Uastatio omnium insularum Britannie a gentilibus.*” (Devastation of the Islands of Britain by the gentiles.)³² Such an excursion would have required the raiders to pass between the Scottish mainland and the outer isles, including some notoriously dangerous waters, and surely suggests that the Vikings had sufficient prior knowledge of the area to navigate successfully and identify suitable raiding targets. In the period of Norse settlement, documentary evidence is understandably scant, but limited sources are nonetheless available, which provide insight into the Western Isles in the medieval period.

2.2.1 Icelandic Sources

Many sources, particularly annals and saga material, refer to Viking raids, but the precise identification of places involved can be difficult. In many cases, such sources are written well after the events in question, and even where multiple sources appear to agree, one must bear in mind both the potential for interdependency and that they represent the view of one historic event at a later point in time, albeit one nearer than our own. As Woolf has noted, *Landnámabók* was most likely written in the twelfth century, with later versions subject to influence by later saga material.³³

A significant problem with these sources is that it is not always clear exactly who is being referred to: as Woolf has noted, Icelandic texts discussing the ninth century but which survive from the 12th-14th-centuries may distinguish fairly consistently between *Írland* and *Skotland*, but fail to mention the Picts.³⁴ To complicate the situation further, *Eyrbyggja saga* refers to *Írland* and *Írland the Great*, while Latin texts often opt for *Scotia* (Scotland) and *Scotia Magna*

³² <http://www.ucc.ie/celt/online/G100001A.html> visited 31/08/14 A.O.Anderson: *Early Sources of Scottish History: A.D. 500 to A.D. 1286* (Edinburgh 1922) pp.254-5. ‘Gentiles’ here carries the sense of ‘heathen’ i.e. non-Christian, rather than the original meaning of non-Jew.

³³ A. Woolf: *From Pictland to Alba* (Edinburgh 2001) pp.278-282

³⁴ *Ibid.* p.282

(Ireland).³⁵ It seems likely that what is going on in the *Eyrbyggja* instance is that the Gaelic-speaking portion of Argyll and the Hebrides are denoted by *Irland*, while *Irland the great* refers to the island of Ireland. It appears that the text has been updated to make sense to readers contemporary to the version of the text, rather than to the events described. This in turn creates problems for modern readers by obscuring the situation contemporary to the events described, and imposing the views at the time the text was written.

2.2.2 Irish and Norse Sources: contact considerations

The discussion above highlights the caution needed when using such texts as evidence, but also raises a further consideration: Alex Woolf raises the possibility that the origin of the journey to ‘Ireland the Great’ in *Eyrbyggja Saga* lies in a Latin source, rather than Norse oral tradition. While this is plausible, the possibility that by the 12th-13th centuries the compilers of the Icelandic sagas were aware of the origin myths surrounding the Gaelic-speaking population of Scotland derived from the *Fergus Mór* legend recorded in sources such as the *Annals of Tigernach* and *Minuigud Shenchas Fher nAlban*.

Like the Icelandic material discussed above, these sources are problematic in relation to the period before they were written, and of course this origin theory is now much disputed, with archaeological evidence of, for example, the distribution of crannogs, suggesting that there was a longstanding two-way cultural exchange rather than an invasion.³⁶ That does not preclude the possibility that the compilers of the Norse sagas picked up on it, indeed, given the extent of Norse settlement in Scotland by the time that the sagas were written down in the form we have them today, one would be more surprised if they were not aware of Gaelic sources and the ‘information’ contained in them, historically accurate or otherwise.

³⁵ Ibid. p.285

³⁶ E. Campbell, ‘Were the Scots Irish?’ *Antiquity*, vol. 288 (2001) p.287

2.2.3 Interpreting the evidence

A rather gloomy picture of the reliability of our sources emerges from the foregoing discussion, but that is not to say that such sources are to be ignored, rather that care is needed when claiming an early attestation of a place-name, or citing such sources as evidence. In the context of studies such as this, annals and saga material are vital sources of information about governance and social activity. While this may not yield actual place-names, evidence of settlement by Norsemen and bearers of Norse names can provide a context and a very approximate *terminus post quem* for Old Norse place-name coinings in the area.

As Alex Woolf has noted, assessing when Vikings began to raid and settle in the Northern Hebrides is a challenging pursuit: annals make very few identifiable references to what is now Lewis and Harris.³⁷ Furthermore, the early references to attacks, such as that made in a letter of 793 by Alcuin of York in relation to assaults on Northumbria, record Viking activity in the British Isles, but at some remove from the area in question.³⁸

Misinterpretation of sources has complicated the issue yet further: while raids on sites like Iona are readily identifiable, others are more problematic. An entry in the annals of Ulster for 795 apparently reports the first Viking raid on Scotland, stating that ‘Sci’ was pillaged and wasted.³⁹ However, as Claire Downham has shown, this almost certainly represents a scribal alteration from Old Irish *scrín*, ‘shrine’, which makes much more sense and places the locus of activity firmly in Ireland.⁴⁰ This is a prime illustration of the difficulty of working with place-names that are not widely attested in early sources; particularly where so little contextual information is provided.

2.2.4 The Settled Norse

References to *Gall-Ghàidheil* in AU in 855-6 may possibly refer to Hebrideans, although this is far from certain and could refer to people from Ireland, the southern Hebrides or the Isle of Man, which all saw extensive interaction

³⁷ Woolf, *Pictland* p.43

³⁸ *Ibid.* p.43

³⁹ www.ucc.ie/celt/online/T100001A/

⁴⁰ C. Downham: ‘An Imaginary Raid on Skye in 795?’ *Scottish Gaelic Studies* vol 20 (2000) pp192-6

between Norse and Gaelic speakers.⁴¹ As Thomas Clancy has noted, references to *Gall-Ghàidheil* in the annals apparently disappear between 857 and 1034.⁴² However, by 866, Scottish and Irish *Gallaibh* were employed in an assault on Fortriu.⁴³ Who are these ‘Irish and Scottish’ *Gallaibh*? While a full exploration is beyond the scope of this thesis, such references suggest that ‘foreigners’ are well settled and are impacting upon domestic politics from bases within Ireland and Scotland. A thorough understanding of such settlement is obviously helpful when trying to contextualise name coining, and so is examined here in considerable depth. One often needs to look beyond the polemic of the reporting in the sources: as Clancy has noted, there is plenty of evidence to demonstrate that not all Norse settlers were church-smashing barbarians: By the second half of the tenth century, the king of the *Gaill* had accepted Christianity, dying at Iona, and had at least one praise-poem in Gaelic written for him.⁴⁴

Even references to military activity referring to *Gallaibh* from Ireland and Scotland suggests structured and organised settlement: such references point to a society that was successfully organised from the perspective of military service and was capable of feeding and sheltering a large number of people. While references to Scottish *Gallaibh* do not of course guarantee that they were settled in Harris, or even in the Hebrides, the large corpus of Norse farm-names suggests settlement rather than overwintering, as does the presence of buildings and burials that are clearly Norse in style.⁴⁵

Bearing in mind the caveats above in relation to reliability, sources discussing Norse settlement in the Hebrides can offer up the occasional name, as well as information that supports the archaeological evidence for settlement in the Western Isles specifically. By 873 *Landnámabók* refers to the marriage of one Thorstein, a son of Olaf the White as taking place in the Hebrides, and *Gretti’s*

⁴¹ Anderson, *Sources* pp 285-6, T. Clancy: ‘The Gall-Ghàidheil and Galloway’ *JSNS* 2 (2008) pp.24-5

⁴² Clancy, ‘Gall-Ghàidheil’, p.25

⁴³ Anderson, *Sources* p.296, p.302

⁴⁴ Clancy ‘Gall-Ghàidheil’, p.25

⁴⁵ <http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/en/site/335605/details/nisabost+harris/>

Saga attests to the practice of overwintering in the ‘Barra Islands’ and using them as a base for summer raiding.⁴⁶ Rule by any given individual alone does not necessarily mean that their culture has been embedded in the area governed, but sources from both Irish and Norse sources clearly imply that a well-developed social and military community was in place in the Hebrides in the early middle ages underneath the obvious Norse overlordship.

While no *thing* sites (parliament sites in ON communities) have been identified in Harris, they are attested on the Scottish Mainland, at Dingwall, in Faroe, and on the Isle of Man, and date back to the end of the first millennium.⁴⁷ Given Harris’s geographical positioning within the ‘sea road’ from Scandinavia, and Northern Scotland to Ireland and the western seaboard of Britain, and the relative lack of detailed examination of it from a historic, archaeological or onomastic point of view, the absence to date of *thing* names should not be taken as evidence of absence. Indeed, given the number of place-names pointing to Norse settlement and particularly agricultural activity, it seems reasonable to conclude that Norse-speakers were socially and culturally embedded in south-west Harris: the Norse names are not ‘top down’ impositions of an invading ruling class, but a reflection of life on the ground in Norse settlements.

2.2.5 Identity in Hebridean-Norse Communities

A further consideration is the matter of how Norse-speaking settlers in the Hebrides perceived themselves: *Eyrbyggja Saga* provides an excellent example of just how complex such identities were seen to be, even several hundred years later:

“This was the time [c.874] when king Harold the Fairhaired came to the kingdom of Norway. Many noble-men fled to escape this war, out of their odal-lands and out of Norway; some east beyond the Ridge, others West over the sea. There were some who remained in winter in the Hebrides or

⁴⁶ Anderson, *Sources* p. 305

⁴⁷ <http://www.thingproject.eu/>

the Orkneys but in the summers plundered in Norway and did much harm in king Harold's dominion."⁴⁸

According to this source it was these events that lead to Harold deploying Ketil Flatnose to subdue the area. However, he in turn rejects the overlordship of the Norwegian king, and the saga reports:

*"Ketil Flatnose was lord in the Hebrides, but they said that they knew not that [Ketil] would bring under King Harold the dominion to the west of the sea. And when the king heard this, he took under himself the possessions that Ketil had had in Norway."*⁴⁹

Not only does this suggest the extent to which 'domestic' Norwegian politics spilled over into the Hebrides, or were at least perceived to have done so by the time the sagas were written, it is also potential evidence for how the islands were settled and ruled. Of course, we should not take such narratives as gospel, given the concerns about the reliability of such sources, but it does offer an insight into how later medieval Norse-speakers understood the settlement of the Hebrides to have come about.

Eyrbyggja Saga reports that Ketil Flatnose took most of his family with him, and *Landnámabók* states that his children, except Bjorn, accepted Christianity:⁵⁰ an early sign perhaps that he had no intention of returning. It is plausible that the noblemen who fled before him did the same: an *odal* was heritable land, and to flee from it represented a commitment to carving out a new life in the islands. Such abandonment of *odal* land required the immediate location and settlement of alternative land and in Ketil's case *Eyrbyggja Saga* claims that the Hebrides passed to his son, Helgi, after his death in the mid 880's.⁵¹ It seems likely that such a situation might be the cause of the coining of place-names containing farm elements such as *-staðir* and *-bólstaðr*. The *Eyrbyggja* and (even less

⁴⁸ Anderson, *Sources* p.349

⁴⁹ Ibid. p.349

⁵⁰ see Ibid pp.349-363 save one Bjorn, who is later attested in this Saga, as well as *Landnámabók* both as attempting to regain his father's lands from his base in Jamtaland, Sweden, and as refusing to accept Christianity 'like the other children of Ketil.' The latter point underlines the extent to which Ketil's family had become established in the Hebrides.

⁵¹ Anderson, *Sources* p.361

reliable) *Laxdoela* sagas both suggest that Ketil Flatnose followed after an earlier wave of settlers. Even though there are issues of accuracy, and possibly interdependency between these two sources, it is worth acknowledging that the version of events was considered sufficiently plausible to the audience it was written for. Given the extent of evidence for Viking raiding and settlement in the Irish material, which is more often contemporary to the events described around the 9th century, it seems plausible that such relocations were fairly common, and, with caveats acknowledged the material can offer us *potential* motive and dating for settlement in South-west Harris; a factor to be borne in mind during the discussion of the linguistic evidence in chapter 4 below.

2.2.6 Taxation Systems in the Hebrides

The late c.12 *Historia Norvegiae* notes that both the Northern and Southern (i.e. Orkney, Shetland and ‘our’ Western) Isles yielded considerable tribute ‘*tributa*’ to the King of Norway.⁵² The source notes that while Earls ruled the former, the latter were under the control of a series of ‘*reguli*’ or petty kings.⁵³ This difference may suggest that an older practice of governance in Harris may have influenced social organisation for the incoming settlers. Also worth noting is that the revenue yield, discussed above, was regarded as considerable, suggesting that the islands generally were both considered of value (although this may have been for strategic as much as agricultural reasons) and were capable of rendering substantial tribute. In turn, this points to a well settled and organised community: the Hebrides may have been a considerable asset in terms of men and ships to whoever ruled them. Furthermore, in 1299, Haakon V noted that the dues to Norway (100 marks) under the Treaty of Perth were less than half the previous dues from the Hebrides.⁵⁴ In turn, the *Chronica* of Robert of Torigni states that the Kingdom of Man and the Hebrides was held against (i.e. the holder was a vassal of) the King of Norway, for the sum of 10 gold crowns on

⁵² “*Quae quidem diversis incolis accultæ nunc in duo regna sunt divisæ; sunt enim meridiana insulae regulis sublimatae, brumales vero comitum praesidio decoratae, qui utrique regibus Norvegiae non modica persolvunt tribute*” discussed, A.O. Johnsen: ‘The Payments from the Hebrides and Isle of Man to the Crown of Norway 1153-1263: Annual Ferme or Feudal Casualty?’ *The Scottish Historical Review*, Vol 48, No. 145 (1969) p.18

⁵³ *Ibid.* p.18

⁵⁴ Knut Helle discussed *ibid.* p.18

the accession of each new Norwegian king, suggesting that the Hebrides were a well-established and reliable source of revenue.⁵⁵

The complex nature of such power exchange mechanisms and potential of population groups to provide revenue underline the probable strategic importance of the area and the subsequent necessity of keeping a sea-going populace under control in order to prevent gratuitous raiding. Alternatively, a ruler might use the same mechanism to facilitate deliberate raiding in order to reprimand transgressors against his authority, cf the revenge taken by the Norwegian king for the transgressions of Ragnvald, in the early c.13, who had sworn duplicitous allegiance to the kings of both Norway and England.⁵⁶ As Johnsen notes, however, there is a world of a difference between the demands exacted on these local rulers and any attempt at direct taxation of the populace: indeed, there is no evidence that they paid dues to anyone other than their church and/or local king.⁵⁷ However, some evidence for Norse taxation practices has survived beyond the period of Norse settlement: as Gareth Williams has noted, *Ounce-lands* and *Penny-lands* were employed as units of taxation in the Western Isles.⁵⁸ Names such as *Fivepenny Borve*, Lewis, demonstrate that the practice had the potential to impact upon place-names. However, while Williams has argued convincingly for a 20 penny-land to the ounce-land ratio in the Outer Hebrides generally, the evidence provided in the rental of 1724 (see appendix 1) is the only source available for Harris and is no way suggestive of such a practice.⁵⁹ However, this source does attest to the shifting of values over time: one entry notes that: “... *The Isle of Pabbay, being once sixteen penny lands but now only ten pennies...*”⁶⁰ As such it seems likely that the assessed value of the settlements had shifted over time, and more evidence is required to fully test Williams’ hypothesis.

⁵⁵ Ibid. p.24

⁵⁶ Ibid. p.24

⁵⁷ Ibid. p.34

⁵⁸ D.G.Williams: ‘Land Assessment and Military Organisation in the Norse Settlements of Scotland c.900-1166’ Unpublished PhD thesis (University of St Andrews 1996) pp. 43-4

⁵⁹ Ibid. p.46-7

⁶⁰ B. Lawson: *A Selection of Source Documents from the Isle of Harris 1688-1830* (Bill Lawson Publications 1992) p. 7

2.3 Valuation: Accounts, Rolls and Rentals

Legal documents and sources such as Robert Heron's 1794 account also survive: Heron's account notes that MacLeod of Harris gets £888 sterling of yearly rent from the tacks men on the Machair.⁶¹ Such revenues show that Harris was a valuable source of income for those who controlled it throughout history. The description is also useful in that it is made evident that MacLeod and Heron perceived the machair as a single 'region' of Harris and treated as such for taxation purposes, while the land itself is divided up among many tacks-men. This corroborates the evidence of rolls and rentals, which are also discussed below.

The rentals here are recorded from copies of inaccessible originals, many of which are in private hands. Values are, according to Lawson, shown in Scots merks for the 1688 rental and pounds Scots thereafter.⁶² This rental, and those up to 1779 (when the island passed out of the ownership of MacLeod of Dunvegan to MacLeod of Berneray) are problematic as sources in that they show only the tacks men, rather than further sub-leases, which, according to Lawson, were often to joint tenants, while the valuation roll is a completely different kind of document which may not show the full number of tenants of the machair.⁶³ However, these rentals are useful for a number of reasons, and show the diverse value of individual tacks, population changes and linguistic variations over the period they cover. All names and relevant information taken from this document are included in Appendix 1, and where appropriate, the gazetteer.

⁶¹ Discussed B Lawson: *Harris in History and Legend* (Birlinn 2008) p,2

⁶² See Lawson, *Sources* p.1. IMPORTANT NOTE: Lawson informed me that he had not had personal access to all of these papers and that some of the rentals were drawn from those published by MacBain in the Prc. Gael. Soc. Inv. The original Dunvegan records are not easily available to researchers, although there is every reason to believe that they still exist. Any party pursuing further analysis of this information should make every effort to secure access to the originals, as it is not possible to ascertain the accuracy of copied spellings, although clearly there has been some effort taken to preserve original orthography throughout the transmission process via MacBain and Lawson. Furthermore, I have not reproduced rentals in their entirety here for reasons of space, only those parts which are relevant to the current discussion.

⁶³ Lawson, *Sources* p.1

2.3.1 Function and Purpose

While these sources are being considered together, a glance at appendix 1 will show that they do not all follow the same format or offer the same information. In fact, the imperative behind the creation of these documents varies enormously and needs to be borne in mind when handling and comparing these sources. While the *1688 rental* is a fairly straightforward record listing personal-name, place-name and value, it is the only one of the group which is recorded in merks, rather than pounds Scots. It is also a quite different source to the sworn testimony required in the 1724 assessment: the origins of the 1724 rental lie in legal dispute between MacLeod of Dunvegan (who had just come into his majority) and his former tutor.⁶⁴ As such, the format is quite different to the 1688 record, and instead records the sworn oaths of the tacks men, witnessed by lawyers as to the yearly rent, in both money and, strikingly, in goods, from the tacks.

The result of this is a record that is in one sense less comprehensive than that in the 1688 rentals, but at the same time a strong sense comes through of which were the key tacks, and how they were assessed. In particular, the use of penny-lands as a land assessment unit is shown in no other rental. A form of national land tax, cess, is referred to in this document. The value for cess is not explicitly stated for every entry, and is sometimes included with the overall rental figure. Where it is shown, each penny land correlates to roughly £2 scots of cess (although Roderick Campbell of *North Capophaile* pays only £6 for his 3.25 penny-lands). Monetary values are given as ‘Scots money rent’.⁶⁵

A clear advantage to a rental that is also a legal deposition, like that of 1724, is the level of detail offered. Instead of ‘headline’ figures on valuations, the figures are instead broken down. Furthermore, non-monetary values are also shown. These are not only useful as evidence of payment, but they also help us to understand how the land was used. While the inclusion of *meall* demonstrates

⁶⁴ Ibid. p.1

⁶⁵ Ibid. p.5

that some of the land was put to arable use, butter and cheese point to dairy farming. The almost universal inclusion of widders (Scots term for castrated male sheep) in the machair area and on Pabbay, although not invariably elsewhere, indicates that sheep were being farmed in an organised manner on the machair well before the advent of clearances made it a much more large-scale operation.

The 1754 rental reverts to the 1688 format (also used in the 1818 and 1830 rentals) and shows a somewhat different pattern of settlement and taxation on the island. Rents have risen sharply, and the overall value of the land is more than three times what it was in the first rental, with the total value rising from £1867.6.7 in 1688 to £6302.17.0 in 1754. However, the land on the machair was becoming concentrated in fewer hands: as Appendix 1 shows, by 1754 *The Borves* were in the hands of just one individual, only for them to be divided again by 1818 between the minister at *Borvemhoir* and 19 tenants between *Borvemeanach* and *Borvebheg*

The 1813 Valuation Roll is a completely different type of document, and contrary to the name, does not show actual valuations at all, as it predates the 1854 Lands Valuation (Scotland) Act. Bill Lawson, a local Harris historian who has actively studied patterns of marriage and emigration notes that this roll is irregular in that it records both people who weren't tenants, such as a shepherd at *Druimfuind*, but proposes that the roll may only record the name of one person on behalf of all the other tenants in some of the smaller settlements.⁶⁶ For this reason, it is not possible to make conclusive comments on land-holding practices in this source. As with all the other rentals, it has not been possible to see the original of this document, which is believed to be in private hands. A further point of note is that this roll appears to have been prepared by someone without local knowledge, as there are a few irregularities that show up for parts of the island outside of this study. For example, an entry is made for *Scalpay*, but also for *Isle Glas*, the latter of which is the local name (Eilean Glas) for the

⁶⁶ Ibid. p.2

former. Whilst it is acknowledged that several islands called *Scalpay* do exist in the Hebrides, there is only one associated with Harris and therefore likely to appear on this roll. As such, caution should be taken when handling the data from this source. However, the 1830 rental was made due to Court Process against MacLeod of Harris, but follows the same format as the 1688, 754 and 1818 documents. This has survived through preservation in Court of Session Papers.⁶⁷

2.3.2 Reflections of Landholding

2.3.2.1 Valuation, Tenants and Sub-tenants

The value of individual tacks listed in the 1688 rental ranges from only 4 merks (part of *Borve More*) through to 172 merks (*Selebost*). A considerable degree of devaluation over time can be seen: even accepting that a merk = roughly 2/3 £ Scots, the value has fallen dramatically by the 1818 rental, where it is listed as having a value of £89.40.0. Moreover, while only 1 tenant, Angus Campbell, is listed in 1688, 18 are listed in 1818. Crofting began in earnest, driven in part by the demand for kelp; the collapse of which industry shortly after 1818, following the end of the Napoleonic Wars, had a devastating impact on the island's economy.

While the concentration of people on the land is understandable from an economic perspective, from a financial, and even a social one the beginning of the end is visible. Not only would it be much more difficult to collect rent from so many individuals, the chances were higher that someone would default. Note in the 1724 rental indicate that there was a good deal of tension between tenants, owners and sub-tenants: while the presence of MacLeods from *Ullinish* and *Talisker* (Skye) as tacks-men supports the idea that MacLeod of Dunvegan had initially settled the machair with his own kinsmen, it also demonstrates the friction that absentee ownership created. Both MacLeod of Dunvegan and Campbell in *Ensay* complain about the attempts of 'Tallisker and Ullinish' MacLeods to demand more money from them.⁶⁸ Sub-letting, in the context of

⁶⁷ Discussed Lawson, *Sources* p.2, Court of Session papers ref CS/96/239

⁶⁸ See appendix 1

general consolidation of parcels of land into the ownership of one individual, makes it very hard to see what such tenancies were worth: The example of in the 1724 rental shows that sub-letting seems to have been going on: both Campbell and MacLeod are listed as having interests there, but it appears that valuation and amount paid are frequently not the same, often resulting in dispute.⁶⁹ However, the 1724 settlement at *Druimfuint* is shown as productive land at this time, possession of which was worth disputing, while today the settlement has disappeared completely.

The part of *Shelebost* not in Stewart's hands shows a reduction in value from £89.4.0 in 1818 to £43.10.0 in the 1830 rental, divided among 11 tenants showing just how rapid the rate of change and decline was in the first half of the nineteenth century.⁷⁰ Across the machair, it is evident that, if not actually cleared yet in every case, the tenancy had fallen into the hands of an individual who would shortly begin that process. Following the sale of the island in 1779 by MacLeod of Dunvegan, a series of absentee landlords employed tacks-men to enforce their will and maximise profit, without regard to the populace. In many cases this was the factor, Donald Stewart, whose increasing tenure on the machair, holding *Luskyntire*, *Nisabost*, *Part Borve Vore*, (now showing lenition) *Scaristavore* and *Part Shelibost* provided leverage for him over the remaining crofters.⁷¹

The gradual increase in tenancies of varying sizes on the east coast, with rental amounts seeming to suggest the splitting of plots, suggests that either some of the cleared people made their way to the bays, or that the population was increasing for other reasons, such as the setting up of fishing stations. Certainly, the increase in tenancies in the bays does not fully account for the number of persons who have disappeared from the machair by comparison with earlier documents, and according to Lawson, (who has made extensive study of emigration on a case-by case basis, and should in no way be overlooked for his

⁶⁹ See appendix 1

⁷⁰ See appendix 1

⁷¹ See appendix 1

detailed knowledge of this subject), at least 400 people are *recorded* as having gone to Cape Breton, Canada in the 1820s and 1830s, a figure he suspects as showing less than half the actual number.⁷²

2.3.2.2 The Organisation of the Land

Names appear and disappear on these rentals for a variety of reasons. Scarasta does not appear in the rentals until 1724, by which time it is already divided into *North or Meikle Scarista* and *South or Little Scarista*.⁷³ This absence is difficult to explain, although Bald's map indicates the presence of a Church glebe there later on, in between the two settlements, so it is possible that at the earlier stage the whole of Scarasta may have been church lands. Alternatively, the possibility that the generic term employed was *staðir* (pl) rather than *staðr* (sg) might be considered.⁷⁴ The *Old Statistical Account* of 1791-9 mentions that the church has only recently been constructed, but given that tenants are listed for the area near the original chapel on the south coast of the *Uidh* at Taobh Tuath, it could be that the church-lands were always at Scarasta along with the chapel dedicated to St Bride referred to in the *Statistical Accounts* and that this was a factor, besides population shift, in the relocation of the church.⁷⁵

Nisabost is absent from the rentals until 1813, while *Horgabost* is only present until the previous record of 1754. This suggests that the two were counted as one settlement, sometimes listed by one name, sometimes by the other. Certainly the evidence provided by Bald's 1805 estate plan (see 3.3.2 below) indicates that the two fell within the same boundary by the time his map was made, and that the tack stretched right across the island. The relatively low value for such a large tack is explained by how little of it would have been suitable for farming.

⁷² Lawson, *Harris* p.10, B. Lawson: *Register of Emigrants from the Western Isles of Scotland 1750-1900 Volume 1 – Isle of Harris* (Bill Lawson Publications 1992) p.3

⁷³ See appendix 1

⁷⁴ See ch.4 below for discussion

⁷⁵ *Old Statistical Account*: accessed via <http://stat-acc-scot.edina.ac.uk/link/1791-99/Inverness/Harris/> p.342

2.3.2.3 Population Change and the Onomastic Record

What cannot be seen in the rentals is where boundaries change: while the rent amount appears relatively stable (57.14 merks for *Horgisbost* in 1688, £65 for *Nishbost* in 1818) one needs to consider the possibility that the amount of land represented under that name was actually shrinking. Certainly the number of tenants and settlements in the bays appearing in the rentals explodes in the 1818 rental: no settlements in the bays appear in the 1754 rental, but by 1818 settlements such as *Greosavay*, *Cluer*, *Kyles Stokinish*, *Leckley*, *Ardvey*, *Lickstock*, *Geocrab*, *Arslavay*, *Manish* and *Quidnish* are listed; each with several tenants taking equal or near-equal shares. The division of land suggests that these tenants are new and that there hasn't been time for one individual to acquire multiple tenancies. Given that Bald's map of 1805 shows the larger tacks, running across the island, change must have been dramatic and rapid in the period between 1805 and the 1818 rental.

The names in the bays are interesting: a large proportion of names employing ON elements, or ON elements borrowed into Gaelic, are in evidence, which suggests that these names are not 'new'. The nature of the names is worth considering though: these are all sea-focused elements: bays, rivers and headlands abound as stimulus for name coining in the bays, suggesting that the coinings may be indicative of sea-based activity in the ON period, rather than the agricultural settlements suggested by names in *-bólstaðr* and *-staðir*.

2.3.3 Linguistic Considerations

The range of languages in evidence in the local toponymy in the 1688 rental is striking: besides the major Norse settlement names like *Borve*, we have on the one hand English specifics (*Little Borve*) and on the other Gaelic (*Borve More*). In turn, *Druimphuint* is entirely Gaelic (ScG) in its construction. While the spelling throughout the text does not follow modern orthographic conventions, the recording of voicing (in personal and place names generally, including in word-internal positions, as with *Luscandir* and slenderisations (*Druimphuint* and the personal name qualifier 'oig' rather than 'og'), as well as orthographic

confusions such as ‘*Nion*’ for ‘*nighean*’, show that Gaelic was not only spoken widely in the area and informing coining practices (as we might expect), but at least understood by the party recording the rental.

The application of Gaelic, Scots and English modifiers as ON farm sites are subdivided, consolidated and re-divided throughout the period covered by the rentals creates an interesting and varied picture. The situation of Borge is particularly interesting: on the one hand, the smaller settlement goes from *Little Borge* in the 1688 rental to *Borrowbeg* in 1724. On the other, *Midle Borge* makes an appearance, and the *Borge More* of the 1688 rental becomes *Meikle Borge* by 1724, but returns to *Borge Vore* by 1830. Such examples show that the alterations to the name-forms took place in a context of lexical understanding: semantic meaning is retained. The variation from place to place, combined with linguistic shift in both directions, suggests that by this date there was a high level of Gaelic-English, or Gaelic-Scots, bilingualism amongst the inhabitants of the machair. It seems likely that it was this, rather than the means of recording the names that is responsible for the forms preserved. This rental depicts a remarkable linguistic diversity, coupled with the retention of both primary settlement names and landholding practices such as the *penny-land*. *Scarista Bheag* on the other hand shows a complex evolution from Norse generic and specific, a probable lexical loss and addition of the further (suffixed) qualifying element *bheag* in Gaelic by the 1754 rental, which treats the initial name as a feminine noun. Finally, it is contrasted with its counterpart to the north: *Meikle Scarista* (1724, 1754) has gone through a similar process, but it has a Scots qualifier affixed to the Norse name.

Language contact is a particularly interesting feature which can be examined in this document, for example ‘Eye’ appears to be an ON loan into ScG (*uidh*) realised with Scottish-English orthography in this document. On the other hand, wholly Gaelic elements (rather than loans from Norse) such as *bheag* are orthographically correct, suggesting some familiarity with written Gaelic on the part of the writer. Further points of interest from a linguistic perspective include the continued retention of the voiced dental (d, rather than t) in

Luskindar, and the introduction of a fricative /s/ into *Horgasbost* (1754). This not exhibited in any other source examined in this thesis: some sources show epenthesis, i.e. *Horagabost* in source a recorded by Gammeltoft from a list made in the 1930's and currently in private hands. In Gammeltoft's study, no cognate forms of the name were identified in Scotland, making this a particularly interesting survival.⁷⁶

A final note is required on personal names: these sources are a rich source of personal names, and can, accepting the caveat that there is a relatively small name-stock on Harris, suggest continuation of tenancy, for example the listing of people with the surname Campbell at *Selebost* (1688)/*Shellibost* (1724). Conversely, the consolidation of estates into larger entities can be equated with individuals, such as Alexander MacLeod (1754, *Luskindar*, *Shealibost* etc) and later on Stewart (1830, *Luskintyre*, *Nisabost*, *Part Borve Vore and Scaristavore*). As such it is possible to see how changes, from the emergence of crofting to the clearance period, *came* to happen, rather than simply testifying that they *did* happen.

2.4 Early Modern and Modern Periods

Despite the shortage of late medieval sources for Harris, continuing value of taxation revenue from the Hebrides into the early modern period is evident in a range of historic documents: rentals and valuations have survived from 1688 onwards and are discussed below, as are 'travel' journals and diaries containing relevant information and place-names.

Several 'travel' journals survive from this time. Some, like Martin Martin's, were designed for a popular audience, whilst William MacGillivray's diary is a chance survival of a personal effect. These contain references to a number of names, discussed below, and included in the accompanying gazetteer.

⁷⁶ Gammeltoft, *Bolstaðr* p.124

2.4.1 Dean Donald Munro: A Description of the Occidental i.e. Western Islands of Scotland.

Dean Donald Monro made his tour of the Western Isles in 1549, and several copies of his account survive. Furthermore, it is believed that his account informed the work of his colleague in the early reformed Church, George Buchanan, in his preparation of his *Rerum Scoticarum Historia*, published in Edinburgh in 1582.⁷⁷ While the account takes an unusual route (by today's standards at least) around the isles, and is hard to follow in places on account of this, a number of references to Harris are contained in the text.

Unfortunately for this present study, none of the place-names under discussion are specifically discussed within the text. However, the account should not be completely overlooked, as references to Harris itself, and the islands associated with it, again underline the agricultural fertility of the South Harris area, with several of the islands in the sound opposite the machair itself being recorded as: “*gude for corn store and fishing*”.⁷⁸ South Harris itself is described thus:

*“This south part of the cuntrie callit Haray is verie fertile and frutfull for corn, store and fisching, and tways mair of delvit nor of teillit [dug and tilled] land in it”*⁷⁹

This shows that Harris was under agricultural cultivation of a not dissimilar sort to that shown in rentals from nearly 70 years later: the topography of the island dictates that the *frutfull* area be situated along the machair. He reports that the area is noted for its sheep and salmon at this time, attesting to the presence of native sheep in the area in the period before non-native breeds were introduced during the clearances.

⁷⁷ D. Munro: *A Description of the Occidental i.e. Western Islands of Scotland* (Edinburgh 2002) p.250

⁷⁸ *Ibid* p.332

⁷⁹ *Ibid* p.337

2.4.2 Martin Martin: A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland

Published in 1703 and relating a visit in 1695, Martin's account is one of the earliest available. It contains a few forms, pronunciations and snippets of information, and casts light on how his contemporaries viewed both the island and its history. The inclusion of place-names on the east coast, such as *Stokness* and *Finisbay* is particularly significant, as it testifies to their being in common currency in the pre-clearance era. *Marvag* is specifically stated as having houses situated in it, whilst *Finisbay* and *Stockness* are simply described as lochs, with no specific reference to habitation.⁸⁰ Within the machair area, the most detailed information is given about Borge, for which he displays a remarkable amount of perception about the origins of the name, even if it is, ultimately, wide of the mark:

“There are several ancient forts erected here, which the natives say were built by the Danes ... these forts are named after the villages in which they were built, as that in Borge is called Down-Gorge, etc.”⁸¹

Martin's writing is both entertaining and informative, offering up the following custom: “*The air is temperately cold, and the natives endeavour to qualify it by taking a dose of aquavitae, or brandy ...*” We learn that the population has retained a considerable degree of pre-Reformation belief, and has retained a chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary on Pabbay, whilst the general populace, being Protestant along with their owner, but still celebrate the festivals of Christmas, Good Friday and St Michael's day (the latter of which involves a quite remarkable horseback festival).⁸²

In terms of the usage of land, it is clear that the machair area was under cultivation at this point: “*The west coast is for the most part arable on the seacoast*”,⁸³ even going so far as to detail the remarkable yields of barley (allegedly up to 14 ears from each grain) which the then proprietor, Norman

⁸⁰ Martin, *Description* pp.31-2

⁸¹ *Ibid.* p.33

⁸² *Ibid.* p.40, p.42

⁸³ *Ibid.* p.31

MacLeod had produced under the correct conditions. Furthermore, Martin records actual agricultural practices:

“It is observed in this island as elsewhere, that when the ground is dug with spades and the turfs turned upside down, and covered with sea-ware, it yields a better product than when it is ploughed.”⁸⁴

While this source yields only a few names, it tells a good deal about where Harris was settled, and how the land was used. Given the laborious nature of obtaining good agricultural results described above, it is possible to see how settlements were subdivided for reasons of management in the Gaelic-speaking period. In turn, it suggests that the Norse settlers may have also required many hands to till the land, but that this was organised in a different way: by ‘top-down’ management, perhaps organised on the basis of extended family groups, which would allow for the retention of a single identity for one *staðir* or *bolstaðr*. Reflecting back to the suggestion that the Western Isles were governed by petty kings, rather than *Jarls* presented by the *Historia Norvegiae*, (discussed in 2.2.6 above), one wonders if it might be possible that early social organisation practices such as those found in early Ireland may have been employed in the pre-Norse period. Much more detail from the archaeological record than is currently available would be required to test this hypothesis, but it is certainly an avenue for further research. The CANMORE database offers the following detail on one site at Horgabost:

“Apects [sic] of more extensive settlement, including stone clusters. Third location is possibly part of a circular enclosure. Last two locations ends of wall 11m long, east-west aligned, parallel to first building in complex.”⁸⁵

Much more detail from the archaeological record that is currently available would be required to test this hypothesis, but it is certainly an avenue for further research.

⁸⁴ Ibid. p.37

⁸⁵ <http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/en/event/971131/>

2.4.3 William MacGillivray: *A Hebridean Naturalist's Journal 1817-1818*

A quite different source, created for a totally different purpose, is provided by the personal journals of William MacGillivray. A naturalist and artist, William MacGillivray was raised at *Taobh Tuath*. While most of his journals are now lost, one of the few that does survive, for the years 1817-8, records a visit to his childhood home. MacGillivray habitually walked everywhere, including on one occasion, from Aberdeen to London. As such his view is quite literally that of a man on the ground, offering us an insight into people as well as the flora and fauna. Written in a period where we have other evidence, in the form of maps, plans, roll and rentals to corroborate the information provided, this is a source worthy of detailed examination.

The journal gives a strong sense of the social condition of the island, and offers an insight into the period of clearance on the Machair. In particular, it is set just before the clearances began in earnest on the island: according to the journal, *Luskentir* at this time was a huge farm that stretched across *Beinn Losgaintir* to *Ceandibig* on the other coast, rather than the comparatively small settlement that it is today.⁸⁶ Furthermore, the major route between North and South Harris passed over the shoulder of *Beinn Losgaintir* before travellers could turn either towards *Stioclett*, which is now in ruins, or towards *Tarbert*, which was much smaller and less significant in MacGillivray's time than it is today. This both underlines the size and significance of the original farm, and reminds us not to impose ideas about present-day settlements and transport links onto the past.

Several place-names are referred to in the text, with all of those under discussion in the present survey making an appearance. MacGillivray's spelling is inconsistent, and it is worth noting that the spellings supplied in the appendix to the print edition do not always correspond to those within the text of the journal itself. *Taobh Tuath* is variously written as *North Town North-Town and Northtown*. However, from the text itself, and the appendices to the journal provided by Robert Ralph, we can draw a range of information.

⁸⁶ W MacGillivray *A Hebridean Naturalist's Journal 1817-1818* ed R. Ralph (Stornoway 1996) p.157

For the place-name scholar and social historian, the contents and appendices of MacGillivray's journal are tremendously helpful: not only do they help us to establish a chronology for the clearance process, but perhaps even more importantly, they offer an insight into the daily lives and outlooks of people actually living in South Harris in MacGillivray's day in a way that no map ever can hope to do. The process of change in the clearance period comes through very clearly: even the presence of MacGillivray's relatives at the farmhouse of *Northtown* itself points to a society in a state of flux. As Ralph notes, the farms of South Harris had originally been under the control of cadet families of MacLeod, so the decision to let to MacGillivray shows the extent to which family ties had been forgotten. In turn, the MacGillivray's tenure was far from secure, and the later parts of the journal, particularly from April onwards, detail the owner's attempts to remove MacGillivray's family from the tenancy of the farm.

The low regard that MacLeod was held in is apparent from an incident, which MacGillivray relates, whereby the preacher at Scarista (for whom it appears he had little respect) condemns from the pulpit "...*the injustice of MacLeod and his Factor [Stewart].*"⁸⁷ MacGillivray himself has little good to say about MacLeod and his factor describing Stewart as a wretch and a coward, and calling MacLeod to account over his broken promises to his uncle. We also learn that the rent for that year was set at the considerable sum of £170, and MacLeod gives his promise that a lease will be agreed at the end of that time.⁸⁸ Posterity however has shown that, unsurprisingly, MacLeod and his scheming factor did not keep their promise, and the clearing and consolidation of Harris continued apace until virtually all of the area under discussion was under the control of Stewart. MacGillivray perceives this when he notes that Stewart's prevention of the giving *Northtown* to the MacNeils of Kyles was in all likelihood borne of his hatred of the MacNeils, but moreover, was most likely "... *a stratagem for getting it into his own hands.*"⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Ibid. p.122-3

⁸⁸ Ibid. p.121

⁸⁹ Ibid. p.121

Where the smaller townships were concerned, there appears to have been an emerging pattern of joint-tenancy. This is corroborated by the rentals for 1818 discussed in 2.3 above. Such a division may have been caused by rising rents, but would have had the effect of making the townships increasingly difficult to make pay, preparing the ground for Stewart to move in. However, it seems that the failure of the kelp industry following the Napoleonic Wars meant that tenants were no longer able to afford the rising rents, and the townships were cleared and consolidated into large sheep stations.

2.5 *Statistical Accounts and Origines Parochiales Scotiae*

2.5.1 *Old Statistical Account (1791-9)*

This text opens with a surprising nugget of information, namely: “*Till of late, this parish has been designated Kilbride, from one of the churches or cells in it so called.*”⁹⁰ The parish of Harris is divided into three in this account, with information pertinent to this study being located in the second section (the others pertaining to the islands around Harris and North Harris respectively). The account gives a positive view of Harris, referring to: “... *it’s many natural advantages, and the genius of its inhabitants ...*”⁹¹ It makes clear that both sides of South Harris were inhabited at the time of writing, and records a number of names pertinent to this study and states that; “... the names of the principal farms in this division appear to be Norwegian, e.g. Scarasta, Borough or Borge, Nisabost, Horgabost and Shelabost.” although interpretation is not attempted beyond noting that they are farms.⁹²

2.5.2 *New Statistical Account (1834-5)*

Whilst repeating a good deal of information contained within the *Old Statistical Account*, there is noteworthy material here about land use and population change. Despite the account having been written in the midst of the period of clearances on the machair, the overall population of the island is recorded as having grown, from 1969 in 1755 to more than 4000 at the time that this account

⁹⁰ J. Sinclair,(ed): *The Statistical Account of Scotland 1791-1799*, 10 (Wakefield, 1973-83) p.342

⁹¹ *Ibid.* p.343

⁹² *Ibid.* p.347

was written, in 1834-5. The clearances themselves are directly referred to, and the author states: “ *Some of the most fertile farms, possessed by small tenants, have been depopulated and converted into extensive sheep-walks.*”⁹³ The rise and subsequent decline in kelp revenues, from £7000 to £3500 is noted, as are the declining wages in the parish and the purchase of the estate for sum of £60000 by the earl of Dunmore, who we know had significant interests in the Island from at least 1876, as he is referred to as ‘proprietor’ of several estates in the *Ordnance Survey Original Object Note Books* (OSNB).⁹⁴ Annual raw goods revenues from the island are valued at £11,900 in this account. A brief attempt is made to unpick the etymology of the island’s name, which is given as ScG *Na Hardibh* and interpreted as meaning ‘the heights’. However, specific place-names within the machair area are referred to, but the account is well worth reading for its contextual information. Furthermore, the minister’s discomfort about the failure of the proprietor to ameliorate the situation of the poor comes through very strongly in the text, and corroborates the evidence of economic decline on the island laid out in the rentals.

2.5.3 *Origines Parochiales Scotiae* (1854)

This document contains a number of very helpful leads to 16th-and 17th-century documents that mention the Isle of Harris, and is worth consulting on that basis alone. However, while it is a rich source of background information about the ownership of the island, it is not a particularly fruitful source of names, other than forms for Harris itself offered at the beginning, the only name in the area under consideration that receives a specific mention is Borve.⁹⁵

⁹³ New Statistical Account: accessed via <http://stat-acc-scot.edina.ac.uk/link/1834-45/Inverness/Harris/14/155/> p.157

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* p.157

⁹⁵ *Origines Parochiales Scotiae: The Antiquities Ecclesiastical and Territorial of the Parishes of Scotland Vol II.I* (Bannatyne Club, Edinburgh 1854) p.379

3 Maps, Plans and Charts

Maps and marine charts offer a very particular perspective on names, and when handling them it is vital to not only consider the specific purpose for which they were made, such as to map an estate, show marine topography etc, but also to consider the perspective and intent behind those who made and commissioned them. On a very basic level, a marine chart shows a totally different set of information to, for example, an estate plan: the former has quite literally a sea-bound perspective and is likely to reflect names and places that are relevant to maritime navigation, whilst the latter may be more concerned with landward boundaries, settlements and land usage. Both are relevant, but the data set included in each is likely to be rather different. This chapter will examine a variety of maps and charts, from the earliest to record place-names on Harris through to the most recent Ordnance Survey edition, which provides the 'standard' forms in this discussion.

The imperatives and methodologies behind the process of map-creation will be discussed where appropriate. The recent digitisation of the Ordnance Survey Original Object Name-Books (OSNB) has made them available for the first time, and transcriptions of the entries relevant to this thesis were made as part of the research process. The contents and their implications are discussed in some depth below.

3.1 Early Maps

Several early maps cover Harris, but they all present a number of problems. As discussed above, Ptolemy refers to a number of population groups with Celtic names as early as the second century AD, but securely locating these groups is problematic. Several attempts were made in the Sixteenth century to map

Scotland, but no really successful representation was made until Blaeu's *Atlas* of 1654.⁹⁶ The Atlas provides the following description:

“Leogus et Haraia insulae ex Aebudarum numero, quae quamquam isthmo cohaereant, pro diversis habentur.” (Lewis and Harray of the numbre of the Western Yles, which two although they ioyne be a necke of land ar accounted dyvers Ylands.)⁹⁷



Figure 3-1: Pont/Blaeu (pub 1654)

Although published in 1654, as the descriptions indicated, they are drawn from the work of Timothy Pont (c.1560-c.1614). These maps do not contain any of the settlement names pertinent to this study and seems to overwhelmingly focus on island names, coastal features and hydronyms. It is difficult to be sure whether or not Pont ever visited the islands in person, and unfortunate that the only one of his manuscripts to survive for this area pertains to South Uist: the original chart may well have offered a wealth of information about the process by which Pont constructed his maps.

⁹⁶ <http://maps.nls.uk/view/00000476>

⁹⁷ <http://maps.nls.uk/view/00000476>

The only name that may have any bearing on this survey is *Howsanes*. This name is placed in an area that looks like the Taobh Tuath peninsula, and which is surrounded by islands whose names support that hypothesis, such as *Papa* (Pabbaigh) and *Ensay* (Ensaigh). The derivation is very possibly ON *húsa nes* ‘the ness of houses’.⁹⁸ Certainly, the Taobh Tuath area is of noted archaeological importance, and the site is one of only a few in the West of Scotland with evidence of habitation at multiple sites in the area from the Mesolithic period through to the present day.⁹⁹ A variety of dateable material, including a juvenile crouched burial dated to 245-406 AD, and an Iron age broch near the site of *Rubh’ an Teampuill* (NG NF 970913) provide further evidence that the area was settled, rather than occupied on a seasonal basis.¹⁰⁰ As such, it is certainly a candidate for the site of a place called *húsa nes*. However, this situation is complicated by the presence in North Harris of a settlement called *Husiness* (mod. Huisinish). A site with this name is referred to quite separately

from *Northtown* in a rental from 1688.¹⁰¹ Also on a peninsula, this site (approx. grid ref. NA986 115) has evidence of what may be early habitation in the nearby area in the form of round dwelling structures.¹⁰² It is not



Figure 3-2: Pont/Blaeu (pub. 1654)

marked with that name on this map, However, the

⁹⁸ With thanks to Dr Simon Taylor for his helpful discussion on this point

⁹⁹ *Rubh’ an Teampuill headland Harris, Western Isles of Scotland Written Scheme of Investigation for Programme of Archaeological Fieldwork* (University of Birmingham 2010)

. pp 2-3

¹⁰⁰ A. Maldonado: ‘Christianity and Burial in Late Iron Age Scotland’ unpublished PhD thesis (Glasgow 2011) p.83

¹⁰¹ Lawson, *Sources* p.3

¹⁰² <http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/en/site/336976/details/hh7+huisinis+harris/> there are extensive building remnants in the area, but very little research has been done into their date. It should be borne in mind, that, as is often the case, the archaeological record is not ‘even’ either in terms of exploration or of the detail of recording.

names of some the islands marked to the south and west do correspond to some of before concluding that this map may indicate that what is now the peninsula near Taobh Tuath was actually known as *húsa nes* at some stage, one must acknowledge that if this shows a mis-location of where Huisinish is today, that would not be out of character with the map generally. As the image below shows, a number of settlements are marked at quite some distance from where one would expect: no settlement name at all is marked where one would expect Huisinish to be, while fig 3.2 shows *Ballellen* and *Valtos* as being located on the east coast South Harris, near Loch Langavat, rather than in Lewis. Other maps reproduce the name *Howsanes* at this point, including Jansson's map of 1659, but these are clearly drawing on Blaeu as a source.¹⁰³ Herman Moll's maps from the early eighteenth century mark Harris, but not any of the settlements on it, and Roy's military survey from the middle of the same century does not extend to this area. The first map to really examine Harris and provide name-forms is Ainslie's map of 1789.

¹⁰³ <http://maps.nls.uk/scotland/detail.cfm?id=141>

3.2 Ainslie and Bald

While the existence of some sort of relationship between sources is relatively easy to establish, through examination of names and chronology, the details of such a relationship are often less clear. In the discussion below, will be demonstrated that the majority of map sources for Harris derive either from Bald's 1804/5 (fig. 3.3) estate plan or Ainslie's map of 1789 (fig. 3.4). We know from Bald's map that he was an assistant to Ainslie, although his map of Harris is much more detailed than anything produced by Ainslie, as comparison of figs 3.3 and 3.4 below shows. The two maps were produced within just a few years of each other, and were made by men known to have been colleagues, but appear to come from two completely separate surveys.



Figure 3-3: Bald's Plan of Harris 1805

Margaret Wilkes, a former head of the map collection of the National Library of Scotland (NLS) has suggested that Ainslie's age (around 60 in 1789, when his map was made) may have led him to delegate the task of surveying Harris to his 16

year-old apprentice, William Bald.¹⁰⁴ At face value, it would seem surprising for the two colleagues to have undertaken separate surveys in such a short space of time. However, there are reasons to question Wilkes' hypothesis: Bald's estate plan was required as evidence in a legal dispute and requires a far greater level of detail than Ainslie's map could offer. This alone would have necessitated a return visit to the island. However, there is reason to believe that Bald cannot have been responsible for Ainslie's map, as the spellings given for the same site are different in the two manuscripts. While the 1789 map records *Scarista* and *Nisabust*, the 1805 plan offers *Little Scarrista/Muckle Scarrista* and *Nisibost*.

Put simply, Ainslie's map records names both in different forms and in less detail. The same lack of detail is evident in landscape features. For Bald's plan, linked to a land dispute, both natural and man-made features were central to establishing area boundaries and facilitating assessments of value.¹⁰⁵ The land dispute is itself a reason for a second survey to be made, and it makes sense that a reputable surveyor, who had recently been active in the area might be approached for such a task.

In such a case, it is likely that when the first map was made, there was no expectation of more detail ever being required, and that the detailed plan of



Figure 3-4: Ainslie's Map 1789

1805 was probably necessary due to the insufficiencies of the 1789 work for the purposes of a land dispute. Clearly the two maps require to be discussed as

independent sources. In cases like Ainslie's, where his map is

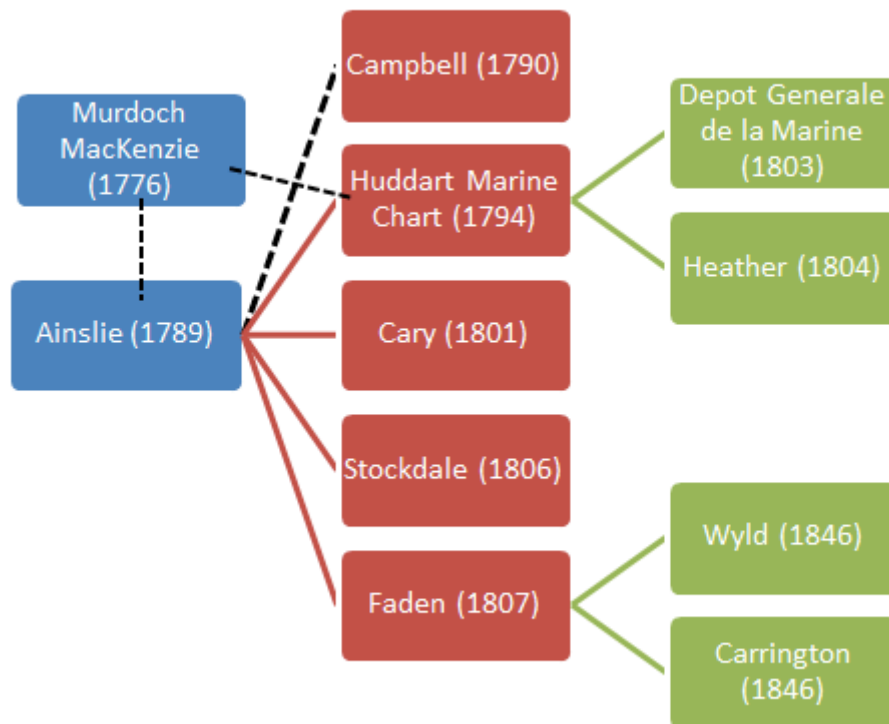
clearly the source for many others, it is much more difficult to establish whether

¹⁰⁴ M. Wilkes: 'Missing Presumed Lost' in F. MacLeod, (ed) *Togail Tir: The Map of the Western Isles* (Stornoway 1989) pp.43-48 p.45

¹⁰⁵ J Caird: 'Early 19th Century Estate Plans' in F. MacLeod, (ed) *Togail Tir: The Map of the Western Isles* (Stornoway 1989) pp.49-78 p.49

the later maps in the same group drew directly on the oldest source, or on one of the intermediate maps. As will become apparent, this has a significant impact on the Ordnance Survey sources referred to in the OSNB. While at a glance, a wide range of sources seem to be available, when derivation from Ainslie or Bald is accounted for, the range narrows considerably. Having established that the two maps should be treated as independent works originating from the same workshop, the relationship of various sources to either Bald or Ainslie's map will be discussed in detail below.

3.2.1 The Ainslie Group



Stemma 3-1: Proposed Relationship of Maps in Ainslie Group

Assessment of the influences upon Ainslie's map-making process is hampered by missing sources, as his original drawings are lost. Comparison of Ainslie's map with a surviving map by Murdoch MacKenzie (See fig. 3.5, right)



Figure 3-5: MacKenzie's Map 1776 (L) and Ainslie's Map 1789 Map (R)

may have been one of the models available for Ainslie: the detailing of the coastline is broadly similar. However, as one might expect, the marine chart is more detailed in relation to the coastline. The link cannot be conclusively proven or disproven due to the absence of the other relevant map, covering the area from Seilebost to Druim a' Phuind.

Even where publishers explicitly state relationships, further investigation is worthwhile on account of the circumstances of production of these two maps. The introduction to Thomson's atlas explicitly states that Ainslie's map was his source for Harris.¹⁰⁶ The relationship between the two sources is significant here though: Thomson's atlas (see fig. 3.6 below) clearly reproduces spellings that appear to be drawn from Bald's map of 1805, rather than the 1789 version. Given Bald's connection to Ainslie, it seems likely that when Thomson named Ainslie as a source, he was actually referring to the Bald plan.

The marine chart group connected with Ainslie's map has been discussed elsewhere, but is marked on stemma 3.1 above for ease of reference. Cary, Stockdale and Faden share a number of features with Ainslie's map. While none is an exact reproduction, the relationship between them is clear from similarities in the selection and spelling of the names shown.



Figure 3-6: Thomson's Map (1822)

¹⁰⁶ Wilkes, 'Missing' p.45



Stemma 3-2: Direct Relationships to Ainslie

In turn, the maps by Wyld and Carrington from 1846 are identical to each other for the area under discussion and seem likely to derive from Faden based on the writing of *Scarista* for *Scarista* on all three (see fig. 3.7). There is of course an important caveat to be borne in mind in relation to all such discussions, namely that the use of one map as a source



Figure 3-7: Wyld's Map (1846)

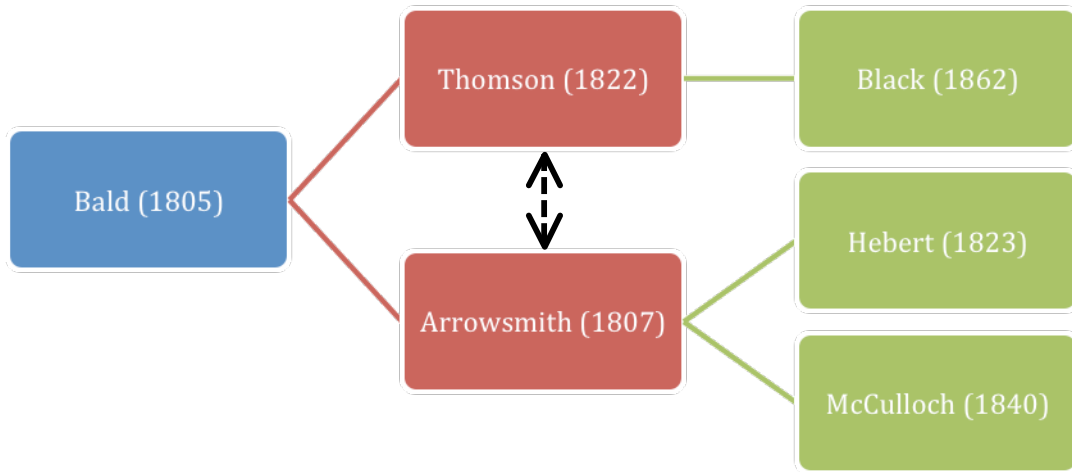
by a second cartographer in one location does not invariably mean that the entire map is a copy. The examples outlined here are intended as discussions of the area in this thesis only, unless otherwise stated.

3.2.2 The Bald Group

This section has been split into two parts. 3.2.2.1 examines the relationship between Bald's estate plan and later maps, some of which are sources referred to in the OSNB. Section 3.2.2.2 is a detailed analysis of Bald's plan: this map is the single most detailed image of the area under discussion at any point prior to

the arrival of the Hydrographic and Ordnance Surveys more than 50 years later, and it was made just before the clearances really began in earnest.

3.2.2.1 The Bald Group



Stemma 3-3: Proposed Derivations from Bald 1805

As discussed above, it seems likely that the ‘Ainslie’ map referred to in

PART OF INVERNESS SHI:		
FROM ACTUAL SURVEYS		
1777		
LEWIS	BY	CHAPMAN.
HARRIS	BY	AINSLIE.
NORTH UIST	BY	REID.
BENBECULA	BY	BALD.
SOUTH UIST & ERISKAY	BY	D ^o
BARRA	BY	MACLEAN.

Figure 3-8: Thomson’s list of Sources, 1824

Thomson’s introduction and on the maps themselves (see fig 3-8) is Bald’s 1805 plan, rather than the 1789 version. Furthermore, where the OSNB refer to ‘Johnson’s map’, it seems likely that it is Thomson’s map that is being referred to: as Wilkes has noted,

Johnson was the surveyor used by Thomson, and his name appears at the foot of all maps of the western Isles in Thomson’s Atlas.¹⁰⁷



Figure 3-9: Arrowsmith’s Map (1807)

The next map containing variant names in this group is Arrowsmith’s 1807 map. Rather than representing the evidence from a new survey, Arrowsmith’s map states that it was “Constructed from Original Materials obtained under the authority of the Parliamentary

¹⁰⁷ Wilkes, ‘Missing’ p. 45

*Commissioners*¹⁰⁸ It is evident at a glance that multiple sources were drawn upon for the compilation of the map of the Long Island: as fig 3-10 below shows, Harris is shown in much more detail than Lewis. The names recorded on Arrowsmith and McCulloch's editions preserve some of the forms used on Bald's map: a comparison of the three using the table in appendix 2 shows that Bald's recording of Seilebost as *Chillibost*, and Scarasta as *Scarrista* is apparent on the later maps too. However, the correlation is not absolute: Bald's *Horgabot* becomes *Hargabost* in the hands of Arrowsmith. It seems likely that although Bald's plan was used as a source for Arrowsmith, it was not the only source. One solution is that there is another missing map, which was a further source for Arrowsmith.



Figure 3-10: Arrowsmith 1807 (Long Island)

In terms of design, the level of coastal detail is greater than that shown in Bald's map, or indeed any other map discussed so far, including marine charts. The area marked in fig. 3-11 shows the coastline near *Scarasta* in a different way to any of the maps discussed so far. This study has examined all of the known maps held by the National Library of Scotland and so it seems likely that either Arrowsmith did some original work, as well as drawing on existing sources, or more likely, there is a further source that is at present missing.¹⁰⁹



Figure 3-11: Arrowsmith Map (detail)

As with Arrowsmith's map, *Hargabost* also appears on Hebert's 1823 map. Hebert's map is much less detailed, but acknowledges the role of the

¹⁰⁸ <http://maps.nls.uk/view/74400703>

¹⁰⁹ It should be noted that while all maps depicting the Hebrides have been examined, only those yielding names for the survey area have been included in the appendix and/ or discussed above.

parliamentary committee, and by extension, Arrowsmith's map, in its creation. However, there is so little detail on this map that it cannot be considered a key source for this project, but is included on the stemma above in order to highlight its connection with the Bald group.

McCulloch's 'geological' map of 1840 reproduced Arrowsmith's work of 1807, and acknowledges this fully on the main sheet.¹¹⁰ The remaining map, Black's map of 1862, which potentially belongs to this group, is not a straightforward source. That Black's work draws on Bald, or at least Thomson, is evident from the correlation of names shown in appendix 2, However, it also shows names not marked on any of the other maps or marine charts, such as *Cnoc Quoit*, as shown in fig. 3-12 below.

Despite the reference on the printed copy to Ordnance survey and admiralty charts as sources on the title of the map, the names included suggest a wider range of sources were drawn on: For example *Hagabost* appears here, but the only other source using this form identified to date is Thomson's map.



Figure 3-12: Black's Map (1862)

Furthermore, The OS actually draw on Black as a source, rather than the other way around. At the point Black created his map, or at least the Harris portion of it, the Hydrographic survey would have been available, and the two share some name-forms, such as *Aird Nisaboist*. However, the Ordnance survey were yet to visit Harris. As such, Black's map may be linked to Bald's original plan, via Thomson's map, as well as to the Hydrographic Survey. This example provides an example

¹¹⁰ J. MacCulloch: *A Geological Map of Scotland by Dr MacCulloch* (London 1840)

of the difficulties involved in displaying the relationships between maps: while the stemma above is helpful in showing that a relationship exists it is much harder to show the degree of such a relationship. As such, Stemma 3.3 provided above is intended as an outline illustration only.

3.2.2.2 Bald’s Map as a Source for the South Harris Machair c.1805

This map is referred to repeatedly as a source for the Ordnance Survey notebooks in the area, but care is needed: Bald was the assistant of Ainslie, whose work is referenced in the OSNB as a source. As has already been discussed, a large number of the map sources for Harris are derived from either Bald or Ainslie’s maps, but their close working relationship can result in one being confused for the other. The degree of detail on Bald’s map is a significant advance on that employed in Ainslie’s, and the professional connection should not be overstated, although the fact that Ainslie and Bald produced their maps only 5 years apart needs to be borne in mind when using them as evidence for settlements in Harris. The ‘estate plan’ referred to as an OSNB source reproduces the names on Bald’s map sufficiently well to establish that the plan that the OSNB refers to as ‘estate plan’ is in fact Bald’s.

		Arable with the Plough.		Arable with the Spade or Nature.		Wood and Pasture.		Sand and Loops.		Total.	
A.	D.	A.	D.	A.	D.	A.	D.	A.	D.	A.	D.
Rissigarry		190.	21	419.	29	339.	62			1149.	06
Borve		132.	68	347.	28	824.	47	89.	68	1464.	65
Lingay				391.	10	345.	25	370.	30	1636.	65
Rirktown				342.	82	176.	64	2.	10	521.	56
Rodel		71.	00	249.	65	483.	93			1444.	58
Strond and Killygry		239.	46	310.	87	329.	35	72.	33	4121.	01
Drymochound and Ensay		273.	28	261.	04	1395.	39	99.	40	2627.	37
North Town		232.	37	125.	56	1351.	45	39.	02	1728.	30
Little Scarrista		108.	77	18.	29	496.	30	13.	95	576.	35
Glebe		20.	30	12.	45	156.	15	3.	35	192.	05
Muckle Scarrista		145.	58	50.	41	300.	52	14.	74	711.	30
Common						977.	67			977.	67
Borve		73.	21	227.	04	1072.	02	23.	98	1406.	25
Little Borve		69.	41	162.	90	3600.	54	377.	35	4210.	20
Nisibost		27.	38	219.	31	2351.	35	132.	80	2931.	54
Chillibost		32.	50	146.	30	52.	30	41.	00	272.	30
Luskantre		65.	50	397.	15	1499.	08	67.	55	15519.	20
Sealpay Island		19.	88			1829.	63	24.	10	1308.	01
Raah		6.	20	96.	52	749.	40	77.	37	929.	49
Paible		30.	65	8.	10	708.	35			746.	50
Trj		0.	20	76.	70	147.	10	4.	83	882.	28
Forrest N ^o 1.				209.	67	829.	61	17.	90	8507.	18
ditto N ^o 2.		41.	26	117.	77	887.	19	20.	34	8006.	40

Figure 3-13: Bald Map Detail "Contents of Harris"

This ‘map’ is essentially an estate plan, made for the owner, one Alexander Hume.¹¹¹ Fig. 3-13 above shows the ‘contents of Harris’ included in the bottom right corner of the original map. The first column shows land ‘Arable with the plough’ while the second and third focus on pasture. This makes this map a quite remarkable resource: in one place it encapsulates the growing tension between (absentee) owner and tenant over centres of population that were also valuable pasture land. This slightly different agenda underlying the mapping process, is particularly useful for our examination of settlement in the area, as it is more concerned with the location of people (and therefore rental income) than, for example, an admiralty chart might be.



Figure 3-14: Bald 1805 plan: Boundaries Highlighted

Figure 3-14 shows Bald’s map with some boundaries highlighted. This reveals a number of interesting features: first of all the sheer size of some of the tacks by the time that this map was made. *Luskintire* takes up over a third of the area of south Harris, and spans the island from west to east, as do the tacks at *Nisibost* and *Borve*. While the tacks at *Scarrista* and *North Town* are smaller, they contain a relatively high proportion of good farmland.

In addition, several settlements are marked in the Bays area of the East Coast. None of them are especially large, but it is nonetheless clear from this map that, as the rental evidence suggested there were people settled there before the clearance period. Several of the settlements on the west are clearly quite large, notably at *North Town*, *South Town*, *Muckle* and *Little Scarrista* and *Borve*, and

¹¹¹ Caird, ‘Estate Plans’ p.58

B:Nisibost Area



Figure 3-16: Bald Map Nisibost area

In the second segment of the map (fig. 3-16 above), a fairly substantial settlement is shown at *Horgabot* with a much smaller one in evidence at *Nisibost*. *Horgabot* is marked as being within the boundaries of ‘*Nisibost*’, and indeed this is a point of interest about this map, as it may help to explain how *Horgabot* was treated administratively, i.e. as part of *Nisibost*. Bald’s role as a mapmaker extended to marking boundaries and indicating population centres. Both are evident to a much greater degree in his map than some of the other map sources available for the area.

today by old cairns and by a tourist pathway. This serves to remind us that despite the presence of hills and water in between, the west and east coasts were not completely cut off from each other.

In contrast with the approach taken by the Ordnance Survey, Bald pays scant attention to ‘antiquities’ in the landscape: Neither *MacLeod’s Stone* nor the chambered cairn at *Horgabot* is marked, although the dun at Borve is indicated as *duine*, perhaps on account of its proximity to a quarry. Overwhelmingly, Bald focuses on human activity in the landscape. That is not to say that natural features aren’t marked: they are. However, in some cases, as in the duplication of *Cleatt Nisibost* on the figure above, it is done with little attention to detail. Rivers, lochs and the coast are marked in reasonable detail, but it should be remembered that in many cases these form an obvious natural boundary between sites. One of the features of secondary names in this area is that they are frequently applied to subjects such as watercourses, which help to locate and/or define the primary settlement. This is helpful when trying to reconstruct the earlier landscape using names: although *Horgabot* has by this time been absorbed into *Nisibost* in terms of boundaries, the locations of rivers and lochs help us to see where the original boundaries are likely to have been. The settlement names themselves employ easily identifiable specifics to facilitate differentiation between the *bolstaðr* on the headland and the one at the nearby chambered cairn.

C: Borve, Scarrista and North Town



Figure 3-17: Bald Map: Scarrista-North Town

As well as marking a number of significant population centres, this map (fig.3-17) attests to non-agricultural activity. An asbestos quarry is clearly marked near *Borve*, which perhaps provided another source of employment for local people before the area was cleared for sheep. There are some difficulties with the map at this point, which demonstrate why perhaps the Ordnance survey didn't use it to the extent that one might have expected: While *Scarrista* is divided into *Muckle* and *Little*, *Borve* is marked in three ways: as *Borve*, as *L. Borve* and as *M. Borve*. The problem here is that there are no less than three Germanic languages potentially present: The original coining language of *Borve*, Old Norse, is modified by, variously, Scots and English. The use of abbreviations for settlements around *Borve* is potentially confusing. We know from rental records and other sources that *Borve* is often split into three, but which is which here? *M. Borve* could be *Mid Borve* or *Muckle Borve*. *L. Borve* is most likely 'Little *Borve*', but the designation of a third site simply as *Borve* without modification makes for a potentially complicated situation. 'Mid' seems a more likely solution given that *Borve* itself is marked and one would expect this to be the largest settlement.

The glebe, or church lands, separates the two parts of *Scarista*, but interestingly, the value of the land is also entered onto the reckoning sheet discussed above, perhaps reflecting a statutory obligation to provide one. It is clear from the boundary markings that the division of *Scarista* was a relatively recent happening, as was the creation of the glebe (which, as the *Statistical Accounts* show, reflected a relatively recent relocation of the parish church). Common grazing land to the east of these sites is marked here, showing that at the point of coining, *Scarista* was probably a *stad̄ir* of considerable size. In contrast, the *North Town* area is relatively self-contained, and its geographical positioning facilitates this. Although the presence of a considerable hill in the middle of the tack has implications for land use, there is plenty of good land in the area, and as archaeological excavations have shown, there is ample evidence for thousands of years of settlement and cultivation in the area.

To conclude discussion of this source, it remains to say that it is absolutely invaluable for identifying where the original boundaries might have lain: despite the later subdivisions, the retention of the settlement name in features such as streams points the way. The boundaries that were contemporary to the writer were drawn deliberately for the purpose of asserting ownership and assessing value, but their very presence helps the viewer to observe subdivision and change. By comparing these boundaries with natural features, it is possible to form a hypothesis of where the boundaries might have been at the point of coining versus where they have moved to over time. For example, in the case of *Scarrista*, several artificial boundaries have been imposed by way of subdivision, but the area as a whole is bounded by water, from the shore on one side, along to the sands that divide it from *North Town*, but also by small rivers, streams and other inlets, making a quite natural boundary for the area.

3.3 Marine Charts

3.3.1 Charts Drawing on Ainslie

As figure 3-18 shows, the *Depot Generale de la Marine* map of 1803 is very clearly derived from Huddart 1794, to the point that it is to all intents and purposes a copy of it. Huddart is clearly part of the Ainslie group, as discussed in 3.2.1 above. Matters of derivation are not black and white though: examination of the Heather map of 1804 shows that it may well have *drawn* on the Huddart chart, as they mark broadly the same items as other maps in the Ainslie group.

Huddart 1794

Depot Generale de la Marine 1803



Figure 3-18: Huddart and Depot Generale de la Marine

Heather's map also preserves the same settlement names and many of the spellings with only small variations. For example, Heather gives *Luskender* while Huddart has *Luskinder*. This raises some considerations: first of all, one might well expect maps from approximately the same



Figure 3-19: Heather's Chart 1804

period to share stylistic features. Likewise, they may identify the same settlements, as these are likely to have been the key sites at the time all of the maps were made. That is not to say though that they did not draw on each other to some degree, and the central point that these maps require careful treatment

as they present, broadly, the same evidence is still valid. Rather awareness of these factors is needed when using them as evidence. As the stemma showing sources for the OSNB 3.4.1 shows, what seems like an overwhelming amount of evidence for one name may in fact represent either a cluster of map making activity over a short period, or actual interdependency of sources.

3.3.2 Hydrographic Survey

The Hydrographic survey chart of 1860 is much more detailed, and a good deal is

known about its creation.

It is later in date, and reflects the skills and resources

available to the two

highly

experienced

naval captains who undertook the work: Captains Thomas and Otter. Captain Thomas's early contribution to the study of Harris place-names and antiquities is discussed in 4.1.2 below. Captain Otter was also a highly capable man, and was in fact responsible for the Scottish survey.¹¹³ His survey of the wider area began in 1846 in Stornoway, with his chart of the harbour. By 1860, he had both experience and contacts in the islands.¹¹⁴ The survey covering the machair area was undertaken in 1860, approximately 3 years after Captain F.W.L Thomas had joined the project. While it is likely that Huddart and Heather's charts were available to the men, it is clear from examination of the map that this survey represented genuine innovation in the maritime mapping of the Western isles. As

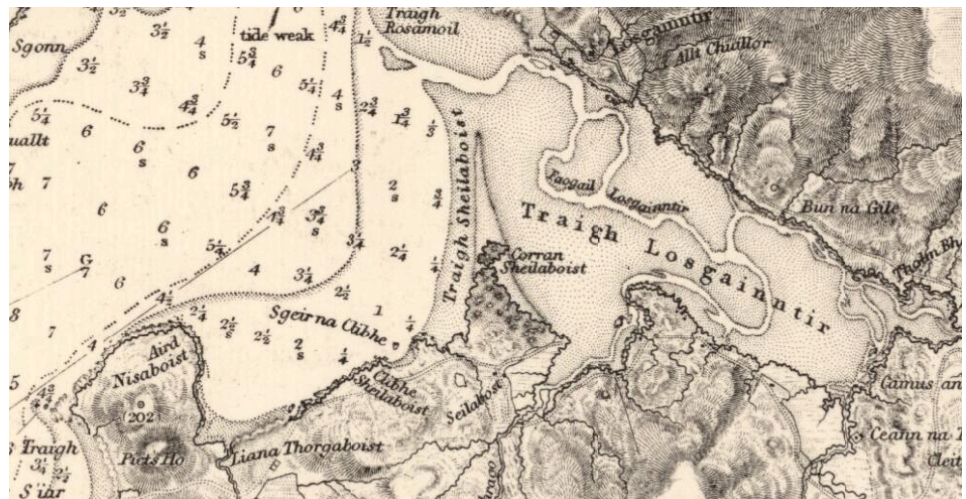


Figure 3-20: Hydrographic Survey 1: Losgainntir Area

¹¹³ G MacLean and F. Macleod: 'Captain Otter and Captain Thomas' in MacLeod, F (ed) *Togail Tir: The Map of the Western Isles* (Stornoway 1989) pp.117-22

p.117

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* p.117

such, it is not appropriate to include the Hydrographic survey as a derivative of one of the earlier charts: it is clearly original. At the same time, it is likely that the earlier charts were part of the broader body of evidence used by Thomas and Otter, a classic example of the dangers and difficulties associated with studying source derivation.



Figure 3-21: Hydrographic Survey 2: Nisaboist Area

The Hydrographic survey is so detailed that it is necessary to split the original map into four sections in order to reproduce it effectively here. It is remarkable for a number of reasons, not least of which is the sheer level of detail that is preserved. Rivers are fully marked, and details down to walls in some cases are shown. Not only are a large number of names not recorded elsewhere shown here, but the orthography is heavily Gaelicised.

The inclusion of names not shown on other maps is of particular interest when one considers that this map predates the work of the Ordnance Survey in the area. *Monadal* and *Allt Milleadh Mna* appear only on this map (see fig.3-22). *Monadal* is listed only on this chart at this time, and seems to show another ON name that was still in use in the area. Its omission from rolls and rentals is perhaps explained by the fact that it does not appear to be a settlement, although as Doreen Waugh has demonstrated, the presence of the ON element *Dalr* does not always preclude settlement.¹¹⁵ *Allt Milleadh Mna* is recorded in the OSNB as a variant of *Abhuinn Scarasta Mhor*, but the source listed is 'Admiralty chart', so this, along with the corroboration provided by the spellings

¹¹⁵ D.Waugh: 'Caithness: Another Dip in the Sweerag Well' in A. Woolf, (ed): *Scandinavian Scotland: Twenty Years After* (St Andrews 2009) pp.31-48

recorded of names such as *Seilabost*, provides support to the hypothesis that ‘Admiralty chart’ referred to in the OSNB is in fact the Hydrographic survey. *Allt Milleadh Mna* is of itself interesting with a literal derivation of ‘Stream of a Woman’s Ravishing.’ Given that the name isn’t recorded elsewhere, and the known presence of Hebridean crew, such as the pilot John MacDonald on the survey ship, this perhaps records a local name for the site.¹¹⁶

These local inputs, as well as the presence of the Hydrographic survey in the area shortly after the period of the clearances makes this map an invaluable source offering a detailed view of the settlement situation. Borge makes an interesting case in point: we know that the clearance history of the area around Borge was particularly complex. *Borge* appears to have been subdivided into smaller settlements, with Gaelic and English elements applied to them, a practice which was clearly established by 1688, as the rentals for that year record *Little Borge*, and *Borge More*.¹¹⁷ The land was first cleared in 1839, as a result of the pressure brought to bear by the tacksman Stewart, who held the land on either side and refused to renew his lease unless he was given Na Buirgh as well.¹¹⁸ The Inverness Courier of July 1839 records that troops from the mainland were deployed to enforce the eviction, attesting to how little support Stewart had on the island.¹¹⁹

In 1847, Borge was resettled by a new owner, only to be cleared again around 1853.¹²⁰ The Hydrographic survey map clearly shows a reasonable number of buildings at *Borgh Bheag*, *Borgh Mheadhanoch* and *Borgh Mhor*. However, evidence from the Highlands and Islands commission shows that the reality of life in the area was far less stable than the ‘snapshot’ image provided by a map suggests: John MacLeod of *Aird Asaig* gave evidence to that commission in 1884,

¹¹⁶ MacLean, ‘Captain Otter’ p.120

¹¹⁷ See appendix 1

¹¹⁸ Lawson, *Harris* p.14

¹¹⁹ Discussed *Ibid* p.15

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* p.16

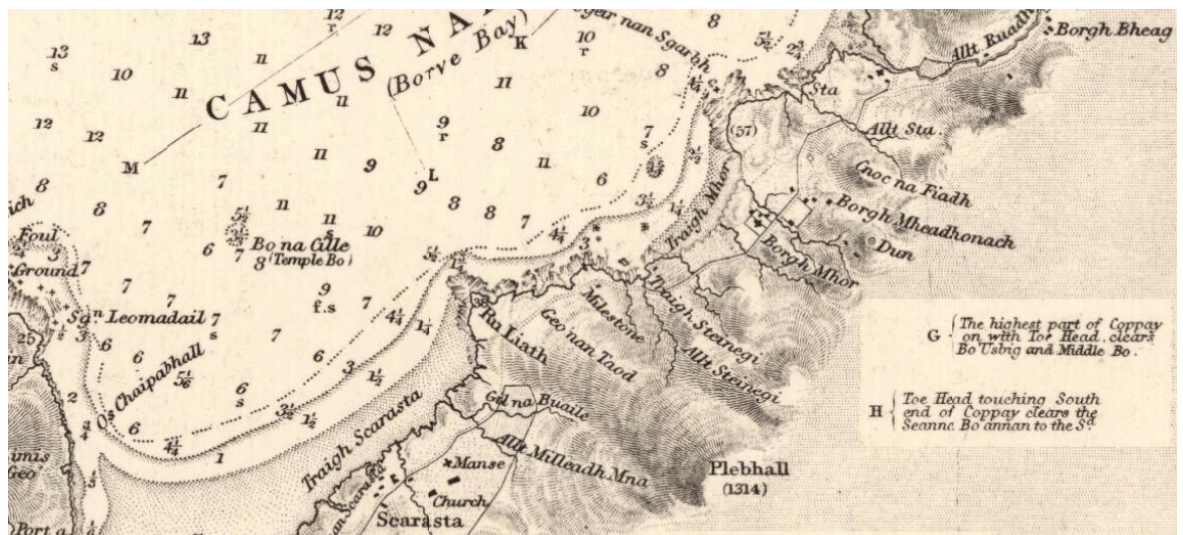
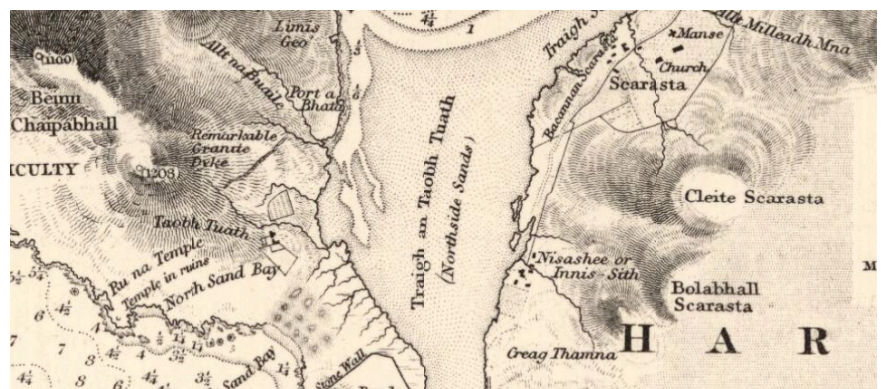


Figure 3-22: Hydrographic Survey 3: *Borgh Area*

which reported that tenants were forced from one place to another within the *Borve* area before finally being forced off the land completely.¹²¹

This reflects a shortcoming in the use of maps as evidence, rather than a deficiency in Capt. Thomas's recording process: the changes in the settlement happened so recently that one might well expect the buildings there to be in a reasonable state of repair, and not suitable for labelling as ruins. In addition, the principal concern of the survey was the production of a marine chart, not the recording of human settlement. Captain Thomas's connections with the island, and correspondence with Carmichael (discussed 4.1 below) explain how he came to have such detailed knowledge, but that he went to the effort to mark it on a marine chart is testament to his passion for the island's history.

Indeed, there is strong correlation between the forms he discusses in his 1876 article and the forms that appear on the map.



A particularly noteworthy example Figure 3-23: Hydrographic Survey 4 *Taobh Tuath Area*

¹²¹ Highlands and Islands commission discussed Ibid. p.17

is *Torgabost* shown in fig 3.21 above, which only appears in his article and on this map. The specific discussion of Thomas's work below details much of his methodology, but his application of his historical knowledge to these maps illustrates both his capability as a marine surveyor and as a scholar as well as the resources that were made available to him to permit such a detailed charting of the area. *Taobh Tuath* appears in its Gaelic form for the first time (see fig. 3-23), showing the earlier settlement to have been west of the present site of *Northton*. On the Hydrographic Survey chart, the settlements to the south and east referred to in earlier records have disappeared.¹²² Despite this, the name has become fossilised to a degree: it is now only the 'North' town in the sense that it is on the north slope of the nearby mountain. The settlements *South Town* and *Druimafuint*, which provided an alternative relative location for a 'North Town' have disappeared from the map.

One final, but very significant point to note about the Hydrographic survey is its relationship with the Ordnance Survey. The Ordnance Survey were active in Ross and Cromarty, including the Isle of Lewis, between 1848-52, at least partly on the instigation of the owner, Matheson, whose authority comes through so clearly in the Lewis volumes of the OSNB series. The records of the Hydrographic department of the Ministry of defence actually list the OS maps as a source.¹²³ However, it is important to note that Caird's assertion that the OS maps were used as evidence in the Lewis survey cannot be universally applied: In the parts of Lewis that the



Figure 3-24: Hydrographic Survey: North Lewis 1849

¹²² Northton today is located further east, around the original site marked *Druim a' Phuind*

¹²³ MacLean and MacLeod, 'Captain Otter' pp.117-8 As MacLean et al note, a comparison of the treatment of the two areas would be most worthwhile

Hydrographic survey visited first, for example the area around Stornoway and the North Minch, they sometimes covered the area at either around the same time, or even before the Ordnance survey. For example, the Hydrographic Survey surveyed the North Minch, from Stornoway to the Butt of Lewis in 1849 (see fig. 3-24), but the corresponding Ordnance Survey 1st edition maps for Lewis were the result of surveys taking place between 1848-1853. As such, the OS surveys may have been sources for some parts, but not for others. The 1849 map shows a quite different approach to that taken by the time the survey reached Harris over a decade later, and marks only the most basic landward features. The Harris surveyors benefitted both from greater experience, but also from the likely presence of Capt. Thomas, reflected in the increased attention to detail in relation to antiquities and settlements evident on the Harris map, compared with Otter's map of the North Minch 11 years earlier. Harris, which was at that time part of Inverness-shire, was not surveyed until 1876-8. The result of this is that whilst some Ordnance Survey material was available for part of the Hydrographic survey's work in Lewis, the OS had yet to visit Harris at all. As such, the job of the surveyors was considerable, and the production of this map marked a huge leap forward in the cartography of Harris. The 6in/mile 1st ed. maps of Harris record much less detail than the Hydrographic charts, not only in terms of coastal features, which one might expect, but also in terms of labelling settlements and geographical features. It is also worth noting that no 25in/mile map of Harris was made, apart from for the settlement at Tarbert.

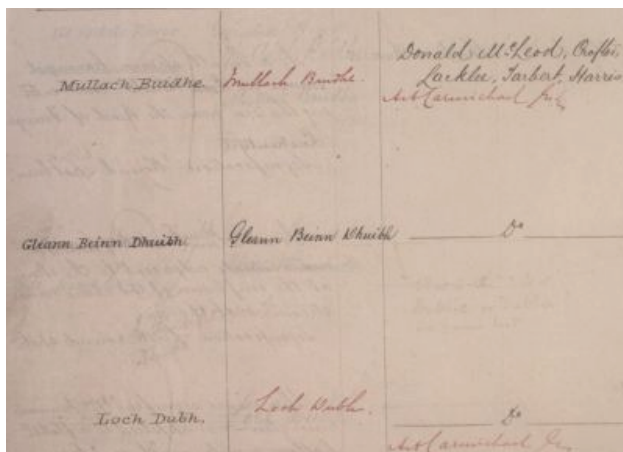
3.4 The Ordnance Survey

This chapter will examine the processes and imperatives behind the Ordnance Survey's (OS) work in Harris, which took place from 1876-8. The newly digitised name-books are discussed in depth in 3.4.1, with relevant entries transcribed and included in appendix 3. Section 3.4.2 will explore the development of the OS maps from earliest edition through to the present day. Alexander Carmichael's involvement with the project will be discussed in chapter 4.

3.4.1 The Ordnance Survey Original Object Name-Books

This section will examine the evidence of the Ordnance Survey Original Object Name Books from a range of perspectives: first of all, evidence and alternative forms for each of the key settlements has been extracted and recorded. It should be noted that I have not recorded every name, only those that contain the name of the settlement within them. Other names in close proximity have been examined, but will be discussed only where they are appropriate as evidence in order to control the size of this project. Having collected the name sources from the OS material, some analysis is then given on the treatment of names and variant spellings within the source, as well as on informants where appropriate. Names will be dealt with in a North-South order, starting at Luskentyre in the north and ending at Druim a' Phuind/ Drimophuind in the south. A.A. Carmichael is the most frequently cited individual person for these names, but a distinctive pattern emerges as to how his evidence is handled, and a separate section following the name discussion will explore this in more depth.

3.4.1.1 OSNB Orthographic Preferences and Problems



The OSNB and 1st edition maps show an overwhelming preference for names with non-Gaelic orthography, although forms with Gaelic spellings provided by Carmichael are corroborated by other reliable sources, including the tremendously detailed work of

Figure 3-25: OSNB Inverness-shire Outer
Heb. Vol 4/p.262

another government agency, the Hydrographic survey. While it is known that the two surveys did not work together, although they were in the Western Isles at the same time, the OSNB do refer to the Admiralty Charts, but frequently reject the forms they propose. On the one hand, the survey engaged the help of individuals such as A.A. Carmichael for the specific purpose of commenting on the Gaelic forms and proposing derivations in a manner that is not applied to the non-Gaelic names. However, in the 1st edition maps, Gaelic orthography is largely rejected: *Beinn Losgainntir* is ignored in favour of *Ben Luskentyre*.

Close examination of the notebooks helps us to see how this came to be. Figure 3-25 shows landscape features on or near to Ben Luskentyre.¹²⁴ In these examples, the *only* forms offered were Gaelic forms, and so an anglicised version could not be favoured in such instances and the Gaelic form was used. Furthermore, those names were being collected so that they could be used to effectively label the map, and place-name collection was not the primary objective of the exercise. It appears that Carmichael's contributions may have come after the name-books were drafted and so in many cases it is unclear whose authority is accepted here, as several of the authorities are marked either by a single line, 'ditto' mark or in some other manner liable to be rendered invalid by a later amendment. This is a problem throughout these notebooks, and even signs and symbols that would normally indicate that the same source as for the previous entry was used are used in an inconsistent and confusing manner. Any future examination of OSNB sources named in this thesis should be sure to make direct reference to the original source.

The level of detailed examination applied to names in the machair area is inconsistent and it seems likely that the surveyors took more time and trouble over places where they found people: Nisabost and Horgabost are both treated very briefly, but in both cases, no actual settlement is described. While at *Borve*, the settlements evident in earlier evidence had disappeared, the

¹²⁴ OSNB Inverness-shire Outer Hebrides Vol.4. p.262 <http://www.scotlandspplaces.gov.uk/digital-volumes/ordnance-survey-name-books/inverness-shire-os-name-books-1876-1878/inverness-shire-outer-hebrides-volume-04/262#zoom=2&lat=471.39999&lon=1777&layers=B>

presence of substantial farms, with some (although probably not many) people present, drew the surveyors to lavish more attention on them. This is an important distinction to bear in mind when handling these sources; as such a perspective is a potential source of distortion.

The Gaelic elements here cause significant trouble and confusion for the Ordnance Survey, and their treatment is very unsystematic indeed, often on account of a name-form from one source being preferred in one instance, for example the numerous confusions of *mòr/mhòr* and *beag/bheag* evident in appendix 3, while in the next, a form is taken from a completely different source, written at a different time and using different orthographic conventions.

3.4.1.2 Linguistic Patterns and Distinctive Features

In terms of language, no attempt is made to propose an etymology for *Luskentyre*, or any of the Settlement-names coined in ON. This reflects the broader practice observed in the Harris OSNB volumes of the OS not seeking out etymologies for coinings in languages other than the one spoken in the area, i.e. Gaelic.

Names involving ‘Seilebost’ are spelt much more consistently than those for Luskentyre, although the same broad tendency to prefer anglicised over Gaelic spellings is also in evidence. In five of the six instances provided here, a Gaelic element is added to *Seilebost*, creating an existing-name construction. Sometimes the element involved is English as in *Seilebost River* but this is notable in its relative inconsistency with other hydronyms in the area, which overwhelmingly opt for a Gaelic modifier. Even in this instance, Carmichael does offer ‘*Abhuinn Seilebost*’ as an alternative, but ‘Seilebost River’ is chosen as the final form. The introduction of a Gaelic element into secondary names employing the settlement name is remarkably consistent: Table 1 below includes only names that are well attested. *Bothan Buirgh* for example is excluded, on the grounds that Carmichael was probably asked to provide a Gaelic form, rather than that he argued for its use. Even with such exclusions, the extent of this practice across the area is notable.

Table 3-1 Gaelic Elements in Secondary Names

Primary settlement name	Number of secondary names employing settlement name	Number of secondary names applying Gaelic modifier to existing names
Luskentyre	3	3
Seilebost	6	5
Horgabost	2	2
Nisabost	3	3
Borve	3	2
Scarista	4	4
Taobh Tuath/Druim a' Phuind	3	3

The forms offered for *Seilebost* (see appendix 3) are also worthy of closer examination. Linguistically, the alternative forms here exhibit a number of points of interest. The first of these relates to the word-initial 's'. This is written as 'sh' by Carmichael and in the Admiralty Chart but 'ch' by Johnston's map, Black's map and a source referred to as an 'Old estate plan' identified earlier in this chapter as Bald's estate plan. As discussed in sections 3.2 above, and in 3.4.3 below, there is extensive interdependency between the sources used, and the apparent prevalence of 'Ch' forms are in fact all ultimately derived from Bald's plan. However, it should not be ignored, as it may reflect an alteration of sound in Harris Gaelic from /s/ to /tʃ/. This is supported by

evidence from a source in private hands, but cited by Gammeltoft, which records the same sound, but in a document from c. 1930.¹²⁵

3.4.1.3 Social Change Reflected in the OSNB

Several settlement names, such as Horgabost are not given listings as settlements in the OSNB. Horgabost had been cleared well before the OS arrived in Harris, but even earlier sources such as Bald's estate plan mark *Horgabost* within the bounds of Nisabost (itself absent as a settlement listing in these books). Thus a gradual process of depopulation and land consolidation becomes very evident, even in a source such as this, which is not concerned in the least with population movements as a primary intention.

The apparent absence of the original settlement site here from the name books is absolutely fascinating, yet completely overlooked by the OS, reflecting the fact that it was primarily their job to reflect the world as it was at the point of survey, not as it had been, particularly where change had been relatively recent. Antiquities have the dual advantage of being inert, unlike population groups. They also speak of a more distant past rather than more contentious recent history. Cleared villages would have been of little interest to the OS on either count. While *Horgabost* itself is listed as a possible form, under '*Gleann Horgabost*,' the surveyor avoids making separate entry for *Horgabost*, even though the estate map clearly shows that a settlement was once there. It is, by its absence, a form of proof that any meaningful settlement had disappeared at this point (although it is a township once again at the time of writing), as well as demonstrating the degree to which the OS books represent a historic 'snapshot' of the time at which they were compiled.

Borve has similarly disappeared; surviving in a number of names which reflect later human activity, from the subdivision of crofts in *Borvemore* and *Borvebeg*, or, ironically, in the name *Borve Lodge*: a name applied to a building created for, and used by an English-speaking absentee landlord. *Borvemore* and *Borvebeg* are both described as fairly substantial farms, in a good state of

¹²⁵ Gammeltoft, *Bólstaðr* p.145

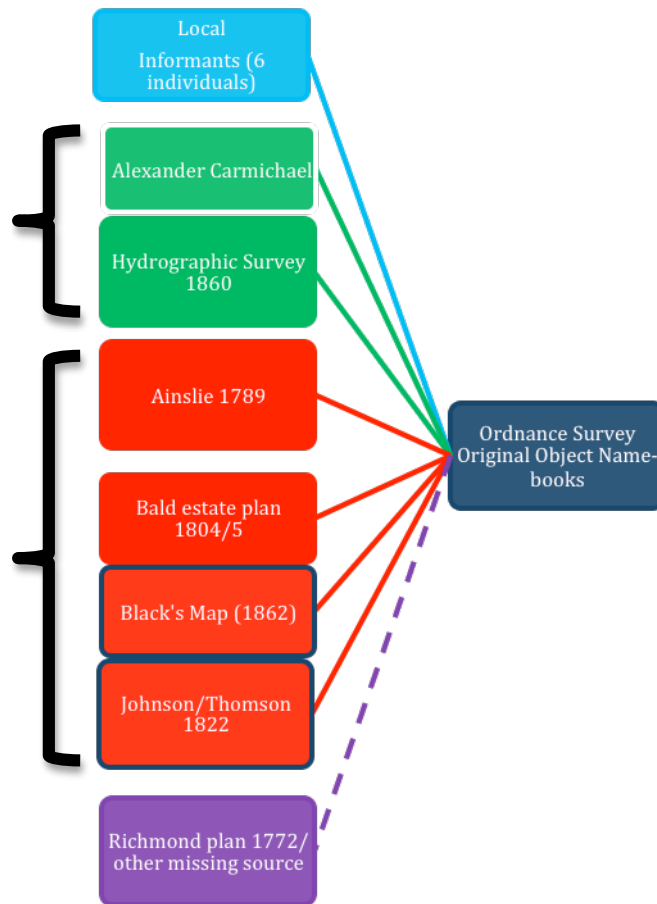
repair, but while Bald's estate plan of 1805 shows that there were small hamlets at *Borve* [mor] and *Borvebeg*, the description in the name books shows that these hamlets had disappeared.¹²⁶ Nowhere in this discussion is the antiquity responsible for the name '*Borve*' (a prehistoric Dun) discussed, possibly because it sits someway off the main route way that the surveyor would probably have followed. By examining the name-forms shown in appendix 3 here, we can see the evidence of activity over a remarkably period, by people who spoke at least 4 languages: Old Norse, Gaelic, Scots and English.

3.4.2 The Ordnance Survey Maps

As part of the sources survey for this project, a large number of Ordnance Survey maps were examined, and the settlement names recorded. These are available in appendix 3. This section will deal with how the 1st edition maps were created, and how the sources for those maps related to each other, as well as examining the evolution of OS maps to the present day, noting changes to conventions and practice.

¹²⁶ See appendix 3

3.4.2.1 Sources and Source-interdependencies



Stemma 3-4 Inter-relationships between OSNB Sources

As stemma 3-4 shows, while a simple count of the sources used in the OS notebooks for settlements on the South Harris machair apparently shows a wide variety, close examination of dependency and interdependency of sources shows that many sources share a derivation. Estate plans are referred to in an inconsistent manner, and although it is sometimes clear that Bald's 1804/5 plan is meant, some entries are simply labelled 'Old estate plan'. When comparison is made with Bald's map, it is clear that there is at least one other estate plan being used: an 'old estate plan' is given as a source for *Traigh Chillibost*, *Horgabost* and *Nishishee*. The first of these doesn't appear on Bald's 1804/5 plan at all, while the others use a different spelling to that on Bald's map. There are relatively few estate plans of Harris surviving, but one other is known about: Richmond's plan of 1772, which was produced in support of a legal

dispute.¹²⁷ The reference to an ‘old’ plan in the name-books leads one to believe that it is likely to be older than Bald’s plan. Furthermore, some of the forms recorded as from the ‘old estate’ plan do not match: The OSNB attributes *Horgabost* to such a plan, but the form on Bald’s plan is clearly written *Horgabot*, suggesting that a different source was used.¹²⁸ While it has not been possible to obtain a copy of Richmond’s plan, it is at present the only other known plan for the Isle of Harris and is therefore highly likely that this is the item in question.

3.4.2.2 Orthographic Conventions and Changes

The OSNB demonstrate that a range of sources and informants were drawn upon in the creation of the first edition maps, and Carmichael’s surviving correspondence shows that the decisions made by the OS did not always meet with his approval.¹²⁹

Despite this, the names recorded on the maps were subject to very little change until fairly recently. Small amendments are evident, for example the 1903 6in/mile second edition

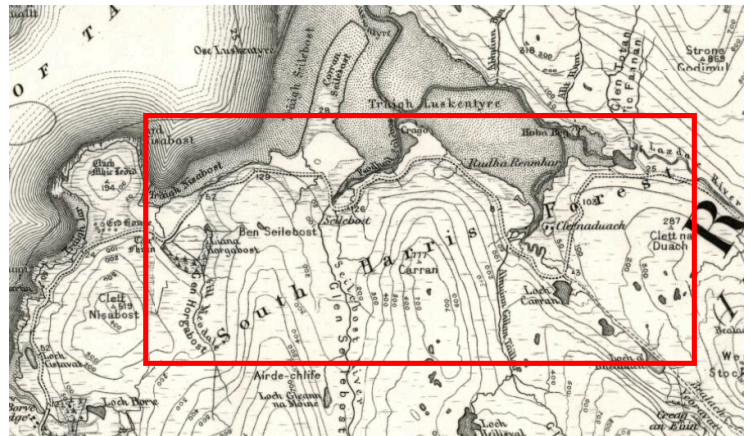


Figure 3-26: South Harris "Forest" 1in/Mile 3rd ed. (1911)

map (sheet XVIII) corrects the recording of *Seilebost River* so that the text runs north-south, rather than south-north as in the first edition, and is consistent with other labels on the map. However, it is clear that the names on OS maps were subject to reasonably regular review, as some names, for example *South Harris Forest* are not listed in the OSNB, and only appear in later editions of the map.

¹²⁷ Caird, *Estate Plans* p.57

¹²⁸ See appendices 2 and 3. While *Horgabot* looks very like an error on Bald’s plan, it is nonetheless clearly written and cannot be mistaken for *Horgabost*.

¹²⁹ http://maps.nls.uk/os/6inch/os_info3.html visited 04/09/2014

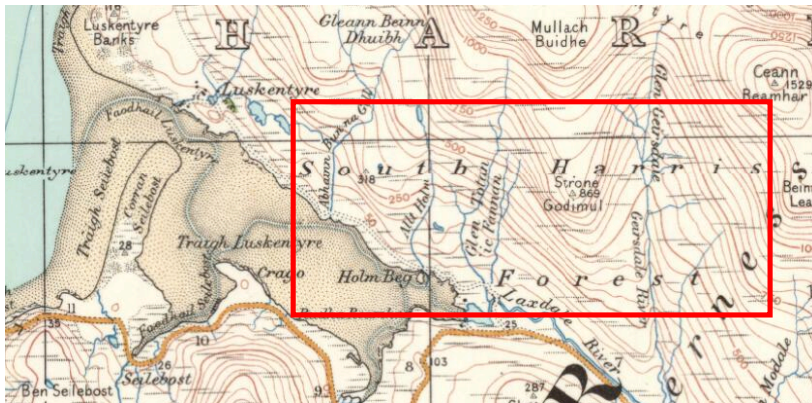


Figure 3-27: South Harris Forest Pop.ed. 1931

South Harris ‘Forest’ is a particularly problematic name: it doesn’t appear on the 1st edition map at all, only emerging on the 1in/mile 3rd edition (1911).¹³⁰ On fig 3-26, it is marked as running

from *Glen Horgabost* to the *Laxdale* river, but, as shown in fig. 3.27, it has been relocated to the *Luskentyre* side of the estuary by pop ed, sheet 18 (1931).¹³¹

There is a further difficulty with this label, namely the apparent absence of trees. This can be explained through interpretation of ‘forest’ in this context as a deer-hunting park, rather than actual woodland. In Gaelic, such hunting ‘forests’ are denoted by the term *frìth*, which is never applied to woodland.¹³² Translation from Gaelic to English generally results in designation as *forest* though. The ‘re-Gaelicisation’ of the names in more recent OS editions has proved most useful for re-establishing this distinction. However, the 1996 1:10000 sheet 18 unfortunately gave this as this as *Coille Ceann a deas na Hearadh* as did various editions of Western Isles tourist board maps from the same period.¹³³ A *coille*, unlike a *frìth* is always used to denote woodland. However, following the formation of the *Gaelic Names Liaison Committee* in 2000, which eventually developed into *Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba*, such issues were resolved and the most recent edition map now employing, correctly, *frìth*.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ <http://maps.nls.uk/view/74490632>

¹³¹ <http://maps.nls.uk/view/74400535>

¹³² Cf. E. Dwelly: *The Illustrated Gaelic-English Dictionary* (Glasgow 1994) pg.456

¹³³ With thanks to Dr Simon Taylor, University of Glasgow and Mrs Kate Langley, Rhenigadale, for their assistance in locating these out-of-print editions. It seems likely that the tourist map was drawing on the OS form: given the high levels of Gaelic speakers in the W.Isles, it seems unlikely that such an error would occur in a purpose-made map.

¹³⁴ Refer to map at <http://www.gaelicplacenames.org/aboutus.php> visited 01/09/14

Orthographical corrections take a variety of forms in these maps, from the very simple, as with *Seilebost River* above, to problematic translations like *frith*. In between these extremes lie amendments to names that are intended to increase consistency and transparency. One such example is provided by settlements using *Scarasta* as an element. In early OS maps, these are marked with inconsistent lenition: *Scarastavore* but *Scarastabeg* appear on most editions until 1in/mile pop ed, sheet 18 (1931) at which point lenition is consistently applied, albeit not with conventional Gaelic orthography at this point, and *Scarastabeg* becomes *Scarastaveg*.¹³⁵

As discussed in relation to earlier maps and charts, an understanding of the intended purpose behind map-creation is central to interpreting them as sources. Very broadly speaking, names disappear on these maps for three main reasons. Firstly, the actual settlement might disappear, secondly the scale of the map may mean that some micro-toponyms are missed off for reasons of space, and finally, the intended use may further influence such choices.

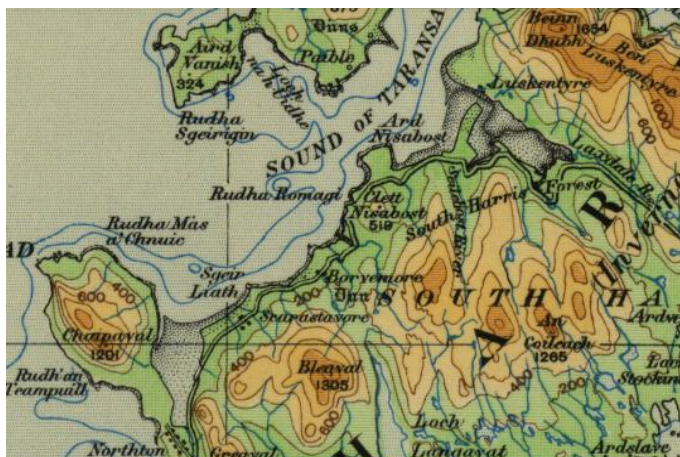


Figure 3-28: 1in/Mile Pop.ed. (1923)

Although their original purpose was military use, OS maps are now the standard map series in use in the British Isles. As such, their usage has evolved over time, and various scales, offering a varied degree of details are available. The production of ‘popular’ series maps, such as the one shown in fig 3-28 is worthy of particular discussion.

¹³⁵ <http://maps.nls.uk/view/74400535>

While scale is of course a consideration, it may not be the only factor under consideration: While the larger scale OS maps, such as the 1st ed 6in/mile show considerable detail, this map focuses on settlements, hills, and some (but not all) antiquities. As Bald's estate plan shows, watercourses in the area frequently represent a natural boundary between one settlement and another, and are named accordingly. Bald's map was particularly concerned though with boundaries and valuations, whereas this map is intended for a much wider readership, and as such focuses on roads and hills as orientation features. In this map, rivers are marked as landscape features, but in no way highlight boundaries.

By examining maps over an extensive period, it is possible to see which settlements have been removed. *Drimophuind* is marked in the first and second 6in/mile maps, but subsequent maps cease to record the name, even though we know from MacGillivray's journal and from rental evidence that there was historically a settlement at this site. Often, as with *Horgabost* and *Nisabost*, the secondary names, which may initially have applied to boundary features, survive after the settlement itself. On the most recent map, only *Clett Druim a' Phuind* is shown, with no sign that the settlement had ever existed. Likewise, *Abhainn Nisishee* is shown, but the site of the former settlement is unlabelled.

4 South Harris Settlement-names

This chapter will examine the early attempts by Capt. Thomas and MacIver to interpret the Harris names, Carmichael's impact, both as advisor to the OS and as a friend to Capt. Thomas, as well as Thomas's own contributions to knowledge (4.1). This will be followed by detailed analysis of the name elements that appear in the gazetteer with reference to relevant commentary from place-name scholars who have examined either a particular element, or who have conducted a survey in the Hebrides (4.2). The gazetteer itself is included as 4.3 for ease of reference.

4.1 Place-name Studies in Harris

4.1.1 A.A. Carmichael

Carmichael's surviving correspondence, as well as the numerous entries in the relevant OS name books for Harris which are attributed to him, attest to his considerable involvement as an 'authority' for the OS. Such 'authority' status at the compilation stage was by no means a guarantee of acceptance in the final map versions though.

Despite his own criticism in correspondence with the OS of their orthographic practices, where he criticises their alteration of some Gaelic names as '*rendering them unintelligible*' Carmichael was the 'local authority' for a number of entries in the OS name books in Harris, the Uists and Barra. Carmichael undertook the work for free, and indeed went to some considerable trouble. This surviving correspondence, preserved in the Carmichael Watson collection of the University of Edinburgh clearly defines Carmichael's role in the OS process.

" ... I am nearly done of the Ordnance Survey correcting, and drich work it has been to me. The system pursued by the Ordnance Survey in regard to taking up place-names is altogether erroneous. Non-Gealic speaking men go about among non-English speaking people to take down Norse-Gaelic names with their English meanings! These lists then are sent to the district office...[where] there is a Gaelic writer who is expected to write down the names correctly. And finally the lists are sent down to the 'local

authority' who is asked but is 'not expected to do more than give his opinion' of this precious nonsense ... And in point of fact, I am myself the one local authority as far as known to me who has done more than simply sit and home and 'give an opinion'. I have gone to the locality and in every instance corrected the place-name from the living voice on the spot... I have gone to all this trouble and expense without either asking or expecting payment, but simply from a desire to have the work correctly done and thereby benefit posterity."¹³⁶

Clearly, there was a world of difference between how the Ordnance Survey regarded his role, namely as a verifier of sorts, and how he himself, quite naturally as a collector and folklorist, saw it. Carmichael however, did not let his concerns go unvoiced, as this correspondence with the Ordnance survey, surviving in the collections of the National Library of Scotland shows:

*"... I found that many of [the] place-names which I was at so much pains and expense in collecting were entire [sic] left out that some names on the old maps were left unaltered and that some were altered in form thus lending the meaning different.. I took the liberty of drawing the attention of the Dir G of the OS to these alterations and the reply was that names were omitted to save expence [sic] that old names were left out as they were obviously incorrect & [so] as to avoid confusion and that the final mode of spelling rested with the Inspector General."*¹³⁷

The impact of the OS practices on the Harris notebooks fortunately renders few names totally unintelligible, although the alteration of Carmichael's *Abhuinn Seilebost* to *Seilebost River* is a little problematic. As discussed in chapter 3, it is a disruption to the system found elsewhere in the region. These others use Gaelic names, which have a greater semantic range than English *river*. For example, some watercourses are designated *Allt*, others *Abhuinn* and so on.¹³⁸

One important aspect of Carmichael's work as an onomastician has been to date largely overlooked: Carmichael corresponded warmly with Capt. F.W.L. Thomas, as surviving letters in the Carmichael-Watson collection show.¹³⁹ Unfortunately, this part of the collection was not fully digitised at the point this thesis was written, but further investigation of this correspondence would certainly reveal

¹³⁶ M. Robson: 'The Living Voice' in MacLeod, F (ed) *Togail Tir: The Map of the Western Isles* (Stornoway 1989) pp.97-104 p98

¹³⁷ Unpublished letter, reproduced at http://maps.nls.uk/os/6inch/os_info3.html

¹³⁸ See appendix 3

¹³⁹ D. U. Stiùbhart *The Life and Legacy of Alexander Carmichael* (Islands Book Trust 2008) p.127

a great deal about the relationship between Carmichael, Thomas and the OS. However, examination of the name-forms provided by both men to the OS, Carmichael in his role as a local authority, and Thomas as the likely creator of the Hydrographic Survey chart covering the machair area shows a considerable correlation.¹⁴⁰

However, the agreement is not so absolute that one could propose that Carmichael edited Thomas's Gaelic names for him. *Torgabost* on the admiralty chart is distinctively Thomas's work, as discussed in 3.3.2 above, and he is on occasion responsible for a completely different name-form, such as *Allt Milleadh Mna* (vs Carmichael's *Abhuinn Scarasta Mhor*) recorded in the OSNB.¹⁴¹ As Stiùbhart suggests, Carmichael would doubtless have been an invaluable source for Thomas's Hydrographic Survey, given his dual roles as civil servant and folklorist. In turn, Carmichael's acknowledgement of his friend's contributions in his submissions to *PSAS* attests to the two-way nature of the exchange.¹⁴² However, the OSNB show that although Carmichael was a potential influence for Thomas, he was not his sole source. There is a sense of irony to the fact that the relationship between Thomas, Carmichael and the OS is revealed principally through the rejection of the forms offered by the two men to the Ordnance Survey.

4.1.2 F.W.L. Thomas

Captain Thomas's interest in Hebridean place-names may well be linked to his presence in the area for the purpose of marine charting. Writing in *PSAS* in 1876, he makes some remarkably pertinent observations about the difficulties of representing Norse and Gaelic names in an English-speaking context:

“Why write the Gaelic forms on the Government maps and charts? or, Why not write the Gaelic names in Gaelic orthography and the converse with the Norse? Well, up until this time, who could tell which were the Norse?”

¹⁴⁰ Transcribed in appendix 3

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² Stiùbhart, *Life and legacy* p.127

and the effect of writing the Gaelic names in vulgar English is to render them unintelligible."¹⁴³

Of course, as someone involved in the process of map compilation, he was well aware of the difficulties of balancing purpose with accurate wider representation. His remarks on the general difficulty of representing coinings with an origin in one language, which has been modified in another and which is being shown on a map for use principally by speakers of neither of those languages are very perceptive. Thomas signals an awareness of linguistic considerations and geographical distribution: he attempts discussion of the treatment of Norse elements in Gaelic-speaking contexts, particularly the shift from word-initial *H-* in ON to *T* in Gaelic, which explains the presence of *Torgabost* on the 1860 survey map.¹⁴⁴ While he contextualises Hebridean names, noting they almost universally have equivalents in the Northern Isles, he also argues that the origins of the Hebridean names are 'closer to Icelandic' than their Northern cousins, although he observes that there are only two *-bólstaðr* names recorded in *Landnámabók*, compared with a much wider distribution in the Northern and Western Isles.¹⁴⁵

Capt. Thomas's methodology is set out in detail in his 1876 article, and it appears that he undertook a study that was quite remarkable for the time in which it was written. His work was reasonably well known at the time, and was explicitly drawn on by MacBain in his study of the Highlands and Islands.¹⁴⁶ Drawing names from Lewis and Harris rentals, he tabulated them took down every variant form that he could find, from a range of authorities, then mapped them against rentals from Orkney and Shetland, finally examining *Landnámabók* and an Icelandic valuation roll. In total, he claims to have mapped over 12000 names.¹⁴⁷ While the table is not reproduced in his article, it is possible that it remains in the library of the *Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* through whom he

¹⁴³ F.W.L. Thomas: 'Did the Northmen Extirpate the Celtic Inhabitants of the Hebrides in the 9th Century?' *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* (April 1876) p.474

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p.473 see chapter 3.3.2 above for further discussion

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* p.475

¹⁴⁶ A. MacBain: *Place-names: Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (Stirling 1922) pp.80-4

¹⁴⁷ Thomas, 'Northmen' p.474-5

published much of his work. While, as discussed in chapter 2 above, there are inherent risks in dealing with early sources without applying critical analysis, the basic approach taken by Capt. Thomas is not a world away from the approach taken by place-name scholars today. Indeed, it could be argued that to an extent his work foreshadowed that of Gammeltoft's *The Place-name Element Bolstaðr in the North Atlantic Area* although of course Gammeltoft's work builds on a wider foundation of toponymic and linguistic scholarship. It would appear that Capt. Thomas is an individual whose contribution to Hebridean name-studies has been somewhat overlooked, and his work certainly would merit further investigation. In particular, his discussion of *Luskentire* as potentially a Gaelic name is explored in 4.2 below.

Thomas states that one of his key sources for Harris is a 'proved rental' of 1830.¹⁴⁸ However, while the name-forms in the rental do match with those in his account, names such as *Horgibost* are also discussed. This does not appear in the 1830 rental, but given Thomas's local contacts and his knowledge of the area, it seems highly likely that he would have had access to sources to fill in the gaps about settlements he knew to have existed.

4.1.3 Donald Maclver

Early place-name studies for Harris are few, but in 1934 a headmaster from Babyle, Donald Maclver, published a small book via the Stornoway gazette press. While the methodological approach to, and analysis of many of his names are suspect, it is, nonetheless one of the few studies covering the machair area which was compiled specifically to examine place-names other than the OS notebooks, (to which Maclver does not appear to have had access). It is at the very least worth consulting for the names that it preserves. It has become fashionable to condemn early studies, and indeed, Oftedal damns "amateurs like D. Maclver, whose chief merit is their keen interest in the topic ..." with faint praise.¹⁴⁹ While the layout of his volume is problematic, and shortcomings of

¹⁴⁸ Thomas p.474

¹⁴⁹ M. Oftedal. *Village Names of Lewis* p.3

this study are many, particularly his shortcomings in philology, for an early attempt, there are points to commend it too, notably his use of local informants:

*“... For North and South Harris, I had the help of two Clergymen, natives of the districts ... who guided me pleasantly over the land and seas of that pleasant country ...”*¹⁵⁰

Luskentyre provides an ideal small case study of his handling of material. The derivation is (almost certainly incorrectly) given as Gaelic, and, he proposes, derived from “*Lios, leus or Losg ‘burning heather’, kin ‘headland’ and tire: ‘land’.*”¹⁵¹ Maclver’s derivation of *kin* as ‘headland’ rather than simply ‘head’ is obviously incorrect, and is a prime example of the shortcomings of his study. He also fails to develop on alternative interpretations of *lios*, skipping straight to a folk-etymology. However, his inclusion of a folk etymology about the use of the settlement as a beacon site is worthy of comment: the difficulty of this name has led to a number of such tales about it, one example of which is recorded in the archive of the School of Scottish Studies, Edinburgh.¹⁵²

4.2 Elements employed in Harris Settlement-names

4.2.1 Dating the Settlement-names: The Norse Names

The gazetteer (4.3 below) provides the following settlement names:

Borve (ON)

Druim a’ Phuind (ScG)

Horgabost (ON)

Luskentyre (? possibly ScG)

Nisabost (ON)

North Copophaill (ENG/ON)

Scarasta (ON)

Seilebost (ON)

¹⁵⁰ Maclver, p.1

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* p.42

¹⁵² <http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/46091/1>

South Copophaill (ENG/ON)

South Town (ENG)

Taobh Tuath/ Northton (ScG/EN)

Of these names, the majority are Old Norse, but the proportion is not as high as the 4:1 ration suggested by Capt. Thomas.¹⁵³ Settlements in ON *-bólstaðr* are not divided into smaller parts, and this is perhaps reflective of the relatively small size of the Harris examples. *Borgh* and *Scarasta* however have been subject to later subdivision, although if, as Nicolaisen suggests, the name *Scarasta* derives from pl. *-staðir* and not singular *-staðr*, the name may always have indicated a group of settlements, rather than an individual one.¹⁵⁴ The later subdivisions employ these forms in existing-name constructions, modifying the ON settlement-name with a Gaelic adjective, usually *mòr* or *beag*, but in the case of Borve, *meadhanoch*. As appendix 1 (rolls and rentals) shows, these modifications have historically fallen into and out of use in a manner reflective of landholding practice in the area.

4.2.1.1 Dating the Norse Names

In terms of dating, both *-bólstaðr* and *-staðir* may be relatively early coinings. However, a degree of caution is needed, particularly with the *-bolstaðr* names. While Nicolaisen has observed that some of the Orcadian settlements in *-bolstaðr* could be very early, this is based in part on their size and cannot be said to be true of the Harris examples.¹⁵⁵ Similarly, the hypothesis that *-bolstaðr* sites had



Figure 4-1: Bald's Map 1805

¹⁵³ discussed <http://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/research-enterprise/cultural/centre-for-nordic-studies/publications/11JS5011012Macniven16.pdf>

¹⁵⁴ W. Nicolaisen *Scottish Place-names: their Study and Significance* (John Donald 1976, this ed. 2001) p.119

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p.119

approximately half the value of *staðir* ones is not borne out in Harris, although it must be acknowledged that the comparison rests solely on the evidence of one rental from 1724.¹⁵⁶

In this rental, the value of *Scarasta* adds up to 7 pennylands, and the area around *Taobh Tuath* totals at least 6.25.¹⁵⁷ On the other hand *Horgabost*, which may incorporate *Nisabost*, (discussed Ch 2.5 above) is rated only 2.5 penny-lands and *Seilebost* is worth only 2. Given that *Bald's* map marks *Luskintire* as such a large tack in 1805, the valuation of only 3 penny-lands, compared to the relatively smallholdings at *Scarrista*, seems puzzling. However, one must remember that very little of the land held at *Losgaintir* would have been good farmland, while the relatively small *-bolstaðr/-staðr/-staðir* settlements were on good land. Similarly, as *Bald's* map shows, while at the time of his mapping the settlements at *Scarasta* were relatively small, but the majority of it was usable as farmland. As such, it seems reasonable to propose that the best land for farming (i.e. those in *-bólstaðr* and *staðir* on Harris) would be the earliest to be settled, and that while the early dating hypothesis based on size applied to Orkney cannot be said to apply here, the relative value and high-quality of the land points to early settlement. *Rixson* has argued that these elements are secondary, but he did so in a context that expressly excluded the Hebridean material.¹⁵⁸ While the small size of these settlements suggests that they may have been secondary in the sense of not settled by the leading elites, they are still amongst the best farmland in the area and as such candidates for examples of early coining.

From a linguistic perspective, the development of the element *-bolstaðr* in particular is thoroughly discussed by *Gammeltoft*.¹⁵⁹ *Gammeltoft's* summary of the Scottish development of these generics highlights a number of interesting points. He notices a general loss of the final consonant(s) *d(r)*, and attributes this to the word-initial stress of Germanic languages, which leaves this ending

¹⁵⁶ See appendix 1

¹⁵⁷ This is excluding some data in which the proportion of land in the area listed is unclear)

¹⁵⁸ *D. Rixson: 'The Shadow of Onomastic graffiti' JSNS 4 p.131*

¹⁵⁹ *Gammeltoft, Bolstaðr pp.82-96*

vulnerable to attrition.¹⁶⁰ This by itself is not sufficient grounds for dating, although it has clearly happened in the Harris examples. This could easily have evolved once the names were in-situ, and it is not necessary to rely on the dating of this process in Norway in order to evaluate the situation in Harris. Furthermore, the change could have occurred as a result of contact with Gaelic, which tends to erode consonant clusters, especially where they are word-final as is the case here. The medial 'l' is likewise potentially in a weak position at the start of a cluster of three consonants, and thus is vulnerable to loss, although it is worth noting that some of the Ilay forms apparently exhibited 'l' until relatively recently.¹⁶¹ The shortening of a stem vowel when followed by a consonant cluster in ON appears to be reflected in the Hebridean examples, and Gammeltoft proposes that this practice of vowel alteration become established in Norway between 1100-1350, but later in the Northern Isles.¹⁶²

As discussed in 2.2.4 above, dating the exact point at which Gaelic began to gain influence in the Hebrides is problematic. One linguistic consideration which may help to date the names is the total loss of the 'ðr/ðir' in Harris: examples from the Northern isles of *-bolstaðr* often occur with a supporting svarabhakti vowel intruding before a final r to create a syllable, e.g. names in *-bister* a development which can be traced to written sources dating to the c.13.¹⁶³ This process is not evident in any of the Harris examples, suggesting the loss took place early, hinting that Norse influence, at least onomastically, was on the wane in Harris before the secession of the Hebrides to Scotland in 1266 and that the Harris *-bost* settlement names were established well before this date.

In fact, there is strong evidence to suggest a lengthy period in which Gaelic and Norse co-existed to some degree. While the islands were formally ceded in the Treaty of Perth, *OPS* suggests that the islands remained very much part of the Lordship of the Isles until this was finally ceded to the crown in 1493.¹⁶⁴ In such

¹⁶⁰ Ibid p.94

¹⁶¹ Ibid, p.94

¹⁶² Ibid p.93

¹⁶³ Ibid p.95

¹⁶⁴ OPS p.377

a context, a Norse-speaking populace is unlikely to have disappeared overnight, but rather the circumstances would have been ripe for Gaelic and ON to exist side-by side for some time, with Gaelic enjoying increasing status, as suggested by Clancy.¹⁶⁵ While this suggests both that the form *-bost* could have been arrived at quite early on, but also that existing-name constructions using Gaelic to modify ON which show a loss of lexical sense, like *Aird Nisaboist* are likely to be quite late, perhaps closer to the 1688 rental than previously imagined. However Gammeltoft's assertion that monosyllabic reflexes of *bólstaðr* in the Hebrides were disyllabic until recently seems hard to apply to the Harris record, given the (admittedly date-limited) attestations all suggest monosyllabic *-bost*.¹⁶⁶ As such, we can be sure that the ON farm-names in Harris were coined before 1200, and that they may well be as early as the first settlements by Norse-speakers in the area.

4.2.2 The Gaelic Names

4.2.2.1 Early Names?

As discussed in Cox, there are a number of difficulties in establishing early names.¹⁶⁷ Ch. 2.1.2 above discussed the evidence for Early Gaelic speakers in the area provided by *papar* names, but other examples of potentially early names in the area are hard to date. Furthermore, a general absence of references to settlements in Harris is evident in normally fruitful sources, such as *RMS*, *RPS* etc.¹⁶⁸ *Losgaintir* is discussed below, leaving one name which may be early. *Kilbride* is attested in only one source, the *Old Statistical Account*. That source informs us: "*Till of late, this parish has been designed Kilbride from one of the churches of cells in it...*"¹⁶⁹ *Cill* names are often prime candidates for

¹⁶⁵ See T. Clancy: 'Gaelic in Medieval Scotland: Advent and Expansion' Rhys Lecture, 2009 published in *Proceedings of the British Academy* 167 (2010) pp.349-392. See also 2.2.4 above for discussion

¹⁶⁶ Gammeltoft, *Bólstaðr* pp.95-6

¹⁶⁷ R. Cox: 'Notes on the Norse impact on Hebridean Place-names' *Journal of Scottish Name Studies* 1 (2007) p.143

¹⁶⁸ No reference was found to any settlement in South Harris in these sources, and most references to various forms of Harris, including those given in *OPS* either simply gave the whole island as part of a list of property or represented a personal name form. That said, exploration of such sources may well be beneficial for the investigation of the name *Harris* itself both as a personal and a place-name, which was outside the scope of this thesis.

¹⁶⁹ *OSA* p. 376

confusion and can sometime represent forms such as *coille* ‘wood’ etc.¹⁷⁰ However the presence of a saint’s name, ‘Brigit’, or ‘Bride’ places this in the sphere of a likely *cill* site. Trying to postulate an early date on the basis of a single attestation is an obviously risky enterprise, but it is worth noting that the cult of Brigit was strong in early Ireland, with several attestations in western Scotland likely to be early in date and so the possibility cannot be entirely ruled out that this was an early site.¹⁷¹ Again, further archaeological investigation would be advantageous: local history has it that there are some very old carved gravestones buried in the churchyard of the present church at Scarasta.¹⁷²

4.2.2.2 Losgaintir - A Problematic Name

Of the apparently Gaelic settlement names, none are as straightforward to interpret as the ON examples above. It cannot even be totally certain which language *Losgaintir* was coined in: the word-initial stress is suggestive of a Germanic origin, and it seems clear that the specific element is fronted. Capt. Thomas and the (less reliable) Maclver both suggest ScG derivations for the name, however Carmichael’s contributions to the OSNB simply correct the spelling and do not attempt a derivation. Attempted derivations are shown in almost all of the Gaelic names, or names with Gaelic in the OSNB, and Carmichael’s own note-books record a folk etymology about *Losgaintir*. It is striking that this derivation was omitted from the OSNB, and suggests that Carmichael did not believe it was a Gaelic name.¹⁷³ The most detailed attempt at analysis is provided by Capt. Thomas’s 1876 article which suggests the derivation is:

*“...probably for lios-cinntire, either the flowery (luxuriant) land's end; or the lis-headland; from lios= a garden; also a fort; and cin-tire a headland.”*¹⁷⁴

If the Gaelic derivation suggested by Capt. Thomas is correct, it would be an interesting name. The relative scarcity of *lios* in names as a specific element

¹⁷⁰ Nicolaisen, *Scottish Place-names* p. 166

¹⁷¹ W.J Watson: *Celtic Place-names of Scotland* p.274

¹⁷² Lawson, *Harris* pp.18-19

¹⁷³ <http://www.carmichaelwatson.lib.ed.ac.uk/cwatson/en/cataloguehierarchy>

¹⁷⁴ Thomas, ‘Northmen’ p. 501

means that comparative material is in short supply: *Luss*, Loch Lomond is one potential example in simplex form and it appears with a diminutive suffix in *Lusragán*.¹⁷⁵ Given the wealth of underexploited archaeological material in the Losgaintir area discussed in 2.1.1 above, the derivation from ‘fort’ is not implausible. Certainly Losgaintir’s position on the machair, lying at the foot of one of the highest hills, easily accessible from the machair, but beside an estuary whose formation (with a corresponding spit of land on the other side at *Corran Seilebost*) facilitates defence makes it a reasonable candidate site.

Of still greater interest is the *-kintyre* element. While an alternative ON specific is provided by *Ljós*, ‘light’, no such alternative suggests itself for *-kintyre*.¹⁷⁶ As an element, *-kintyre* has a lot to recommend itself in this context: geographically speaking, it is entirely plausible, as it is both a headland and the end of the machair area. Gaelic derivation does inevitably raise questions of date though: the name *-kintyre* is attested in Argyll as early as the 8th Century in Adomnán’s *Life of Columba*, where it is literally translated into Latin as *Caput Regionis*.¹⁷⁷ The revelation in the *Old Statistical Account* that an earlier name for the parish of Harris was *Kilbride* (4.2.2.1 above) and the presence in the area of *-papar* names (2.1.2) means that early Gaelic speakers in the area cannot be completely ruled out.

However, an alternative possibility is that this name might represent a Gaelic translation of an ON one. This is hard to prove beyond speculation, and there are no early forms that suggest anything other than *Losgaintir*, but the use of *-tir* could, at a stretch, represent a translation of ON *-land*. Marwick has suggested that *-land* names appear to be early primary settlement names, to which *-bolstaðr* settlements were sometimes secondary, although this has been challenged in recent years, with Rixson arguing for a much wider range of applications.¹⁷⁸ Certainly, the relative remoteness from the other settlements argues against Marwick’s hypothesis that *-land* names are often fairly central to

¹⁷⁵ Watson, *CPNS* p.450

¹⁷⁶ http://www.ling.upenn.edu/~kurisuto/germanic/oi_cleasbyvigfusson_about.html

¹⁷⁷ Watson, *CPNS* p.92

¹⁷⁸ Marwick, *Orkney Farm Names* p.29 Rixson, ‘Graffiti’ pp.136-7

the settled area, and the broader range of applications proposed by Rixson is required to make it fit. However, it is not possible to suggest more than the most tenuous of possibilities on so little evidence, and it is likely that the ON name for the site shall remain unknown.¹⁷⁹

4.2.2.3 A ‘Late’ Gaelic Name

Taobh Tuath is the Gaelic name applied to the settlement at the opposite end of the machair, but presents a completely different range of challenges. Despite the remarkable range of archaeological evidence for continuous habitation, name-forms are hard to come by.¹⁸⁰ The earliest attestation is as *Northtown* from the 1688 rental, corroborating the evidence of maps from the Bald group.¹⁸¹ Of the early maps, Blaeu 1654’s *Howsanes* is a likely mislocation of the settlement *Huisinish* in North Harris and is discussed in 3.1 above. The Ainslie group provide *Turva* however, and this is a much more difficult matter to resolve. No obvious solution presents itself from either language. However, this form is restricted solely to the Ainslie group.

The wider attestations in both English and Gaelic exhibit a number of interesting features: While the settlements at Borgh and Scarasta are subdivided using the original settlement name in an existing-name construction, a number of small settlements with a variety of names are to be found in the Taobh Tuath area. Northtown, Southtown, Druimfuint and North Copophaill (for *Ceapabhal*, the nearby hill) all appear in the 1688 rental. All names operate on a basis of relative positioning: the -towns to the north and the south of the hill, and a settlement on the North slopes of the hill itself all derive their names in some way from the location on the hillside combined with the English habitative element *-town*. The exception is *Druimfuint*, whose derivation ‘The Ridge of the Pound’ may suggest that this was a site that was originally part of another farm but which has retained a name indicating its original purpose upon subdivision. This however has clearly happened in a Gaelic-speaking context, and it is

¹⁷⁹ Marwick, *Orkney Farm Names*, p.29

¹⁸⁰ For discussion of early inhabitants see 2.1.1

¹⁸¹ See appendix 2

interesting that the practice of using an existing-name construction noted for the ON farmsteads has not been employed here. The present name, Taobh Tuath (although *Northton* is still in common use, particularly among English-speakers), first appears in the record with the Hydrographic survey of 1860. It is worth noting that the OSNB do not record any form of *Taobh Tuath* whatsoever for the settlement, but apply it to the North-side sands. Even usage widely refers to the settlement as *Northtown*, and Carmichael, who provides a Gaelic form for the sands does not amend the settlement name, suggesting that he saw *Taobh Tuath* as indicating an area, rather than a settlement.¹⁸²

It is clear that Capt. Thomas used Gaelic names on his survey wherever possible, and the recent policy decisions of the Ordnance Survey may be responsible for the presence of Taobh Tuath on recent maps. However, the lack of early forms, and difficulty of interpreting *Turva*, which might be ON, leads one to question if *Taobh Tuath* was ever used in a habitative sense before recent times. As such, it seems that this is a much more recent Gaelic settlement name, and that the original meaning may have been more locative, the north ‘side’ of the hill, rather than specific to the settlement. It is only with the relatively recent changes to population in the area (the current settlement is somewhat east of the original), coinciding with the decline of the other settlements in the area which has led to this form becoming fixed at that site, while on-the-ground usage still favours *Northton* over *Taobh Tuath*, perhaps on account of the increasing number of monoglot English speakers in the area.

4.2.3 Existing Name Constructions

One issue that makes calculation of proportions of ON/ScG names difficult is the use of ON names in existing-name constructions by Gaelic speakers, as they are ‘coined’ in Gaelic, but contain ON names, although the lexical sense on the ON element has often clearly been lost, for example *Dun Borgh*. In terms of date, such constructions obviously post-date the Norse settlement, and the tendency to exhibit a loss of semantic sense suggests that coining took place well after Norse speakers had left the area. References to existing-name constructions are

¹⁸² See appendix 3

relatively simple to track down so long as they apply to settlements, for example the numerous examples offered in appendix 1. However, the recording of secondary names is much less consistent: valuations tend not to mention them. With such names, it is actually more interesting to examine how long the primary name survives, and where, rather than how far it can be traced back. The most common Gaelic elements in existing name constructions in the OSNB are:

Abhuinn

Aird

Beinn

Faadhail

Gleann and

Tràigh.¹⁸³

These elements are exhibited in many of the maps displayed in figures throughout this thesis, although few of these maps offer a high level of detail in relation to hydronyms, particularly those applied to rivers. These features are significant though: they apply to permanent features in the landscape and as such will have provided reliable reference points throughout their history. Such names

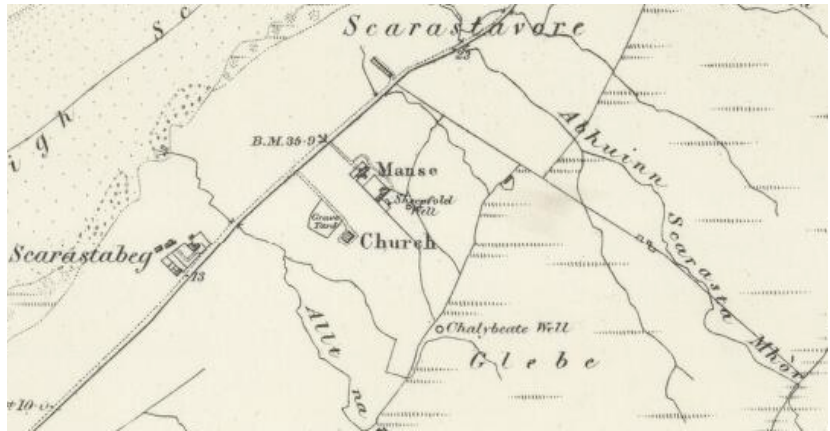


Figure 4-2: Bald's 1805 Map (detail)

may in fact have employed the settlement name in their construction on the basis that they have a role in defining the area's boundaries. For example, while Bald's map (fig. 4.2) marks *Horgabot* and *Nisibost* within the same boundary, two rivers can be seen: the northern-most one has *Nisibost* to the south and *Horgabot* to the north, dividing the two settlements and effectively confining *Nisibost* on the headland which gives it its name, as to the south of the

¹⁸³ See appendix 3

watercourse there is a confluence with a second stream which effectively cuts off the settlement from its neighbours. In turn, the boundary with *Borve* to the south follows this second watercourse. The two on the 1st edition 6in/mile map (at Seilebost and Scarasta)



certainly **Figure 4-3: 1st ed. 6in/Mile Ordnance Survey Sheet XVII** seem to perform a (1881) boundary function (see fig.4.3).¹⁸⁴ In the case of Scarasta, this lends weight to the hypothesis that the derivation may have been from the plural *staðir* rather than *staðr*: while *Na Buirigh* appears frequently as *Borve* simplex, Scarasta only does so in maps in the Ainslie group, which show very little detail.

4.2.4 Local features

Although the corpus of names examined here is of course very small, nonetheless a few local features emerge. In existing-name constructions, the term *faodhail* (ford) is applied to Losgaintir, Seilebost and Taobh Tuath. However, a search of attestations in the OSNB shows a strong correlation of the name with machair areas. Such wider comparative research would certainly be an avenue worth pursuing. Personal names in place-names are a further area worthy of study, and the Harris examples also present some anomalies: while Nicolaisen suggests that personal name specifics are common in ON farm names, they do not appear to be present in any of the examples present on Harris.¹⁸⁵ Two of the three -

¹⁸⁴ This example has been chosen because the corresponding sheets covering Nisabost, Horgabost and Seilebost are spread over 3 different sheets!

¹⁸⁵ Nicolaisen, *Scottish Place-names*, p.125

bólstaðr names have clear local features to provide the specific elements, whilst *Seilebost* is likely to come from ON *Selja* ‘willow’.¹⁸⁶

Place name	County	Parish
Faodhail A' Chinn Ear	Inverness-shire	North Uist
Faodhail An Taobh Tuath	Inverness-shire	Harris
Faodhail Bhan	Argyll	Ardnamurchan
Faodhail Ceann Na Hutrait	Inverness-shire	North Uist
Faodhail Dhubh	Argyll	Ardnamurchan
Faodhail Luskentyre	Inverness-shire	Harris
Faodhail Na Dise	Inverness-shire	North Uist
Faodhail Nan Caorach	Inverness-shire	North Uist
Faodhail Seilebost	Inverness-shire	Harris
Faodhail Shivinish	Inverness-shire	North Uist
Loch Faodhail	Argyll	Lismore And Appin
Tob Na Faodhail	Ross And Cromarty	Uig
Tob Na Faodhail	Ross And Cromarty	Uig

Table 4-1 Faodhail attestations in the OSNB

4.3 Gazetteer

The gazetteer is included within the thesis for ease of reference. Please refer to the appendices as appropriate.

¹⁸⁶ See 2.2.4 above

4.3.1 Borve/Na Buirgh

NG03355 94517

The Borves 1754

Borve Ainslie Group 1789-1846¹⁸⁷ Black, 1862

Little Borve Rental 1688, Roll 1813,

*L. Borve (Bald Group)*¹⁸⁸

Borrowbeg Rental 1724

Borvebheg Rental 1818

Borve, Borogh OPS 1854

Borve Beg (OSNB informants) 1878)

Borogh-beag Carmichael (1878)

Borgh beag Hydrographic Survey (1860)

Midle Borve Rental 1724

Mid Borve Rental 1813

Borvemeanach Rentals, 1818, 1830

Borve More 1688 Rental

Meikle Borve 1724 Rental

Borvemhoir 1818 Rental

Borve Vore 1830 Rental

Borogh-Mor (Carmichael 1878)

Borgh Mhor (Hydrographic Survey 1860)

Borvebeg Burn 1878 (OSNB)

Borve Lodge 1878 (OSNB)

Little Loch Borve 1878 (OSNB)

This is a simplex name, probably derived from ON *borg* ‘fort’, and almost certainly named for the nearby broch. Extensive division, consolidation and re-division throughout 19th century is evident in sources and this is discussed in Chapter 2 above. Unusually, Borve was cleared in 1838, later re-settled and then cleared again in 1847. Existing name constructions involving this element in South Harris use ScG *Mòr/Beag/Meanach* with inconsistent lenition. Carmichael’s forms, as elsewhere, show epenthesis. Secondary names mark frequently watercourses, which may be suggestive of boundary markings.

¹⁸⁷ See appendix 1. All maps show same form

¹⁸⁸ Exc. Black 1862

4.3.2 Horgabost

NG 04485 96287

Horgisbost 1688 Rental

Horgibost 1724 Rental

Horgasbost 1754 Rental, Richmond estate plan?¹⁸⁹

Horgabot Bald 1805

Hargabost Arrowmith group 1807-1840.¹⁹⁰

Hagabost Thomson group¹⁹¹ 1822-62

Horgabost OPS 1854

Torgabost Hydrographic survey 1860

Horgabost Bartholomew 1902

Glen Horgabost OSNB 1878 (unknown)

Gleann Horagabost 1878 Carmichael

Liana Horgabost Carmichael 1878

Liana Horgaboist Hydrographic Survey 1860

The likely derivation of this name is ON *horgr* ‘grave’ and there is a suitable chambered cairn nearby to account for this specific element. The generic is *-bólstaðr* giving ‘farm of the grave (site).’ This settlement is shown at all in Ainslie group, and it is possible that many sources for taxation and revenue counted it with Nisabost for that purpose.¹⁹² Given incorrectly by MacIver as ON *Torg* ‘market’ Capt. Thomas proposes *Torgabost* as the correct form, by which means we can establish he was likely to be responsible for the Hydrographic survey map. Secondary names employ Gaelic elements taken from topographical features.

¹⁸⁹ Drawn from appendix 3.

¹⁹⁰ See appendix 2.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² See ch.2.3 above for further discussion.

4.3.3 Losgaintir

NG 07395 99147

Luscandir 1688 Rental

Luscandir 1724 Rental

Luskindar, 1754 Rental

Lusk. 1789-1846 Ainslie group¹⁹³

Luskinder 1794-1803 Huddart group

Luskintire Bald 1805, Black 1862

Luskenture Arrowsmith group 1807-40

Luskentyre 1813 and 1868 rolls OSNB informants 1878

Luskyntire 1818 Rental

Luskentir MacGillivray 1818

Luskintyre 1830 Rental

Ben Luskentyre OSNB 1878

Beinn Losgainntir Carmichael 1878

Faodhail Luskentyre OSNB 1878

Faodhail Losgainntir Carmichael 1878

Tràigh Luskentyre OSNB 1878

Traigh Losgainntir Carmichael 1878

This name has a difficult and complex derivation discussed in more detail in chapter 4.2.2 above. Existing interpretations have included ScG *lios*- ‘plant’ with an alternative from *lios*- of ‘fort’ proposed by Capt. Thomas. If this name is ScG, generic is likely *-kintyre*’ headland, but this is an extremely problematic name. Secondary names again mark permanent topographical features. *Faodhail* is a secondary name of interest and is also discussed 4.2.2 above.

¹⁹³ Excl. Huddart stem – see appendix 2

4.3.4 Nisabost

NG 046665 96547 (approx: settlement no longer exists)

Nisabust Ainslie 1789 and Huddart branch 1794-1804

Nisibost Bald Group 1805-40

Nisebost 1813 Roll

Nishbost 1818 Rental

Nisabost 1830 Rental, OPS 1854

Aird Nisibost Hebert 1823

Ard Nisabost OSNB 1878

Àrd Niseboist Carmichael 1878

Aird Nisaboist Hydrographic survey 1860

Clett Nisabost OSNB 1878

Cleite Nisaboist Hydrographic survey 1860

Traigh Nisabost OSNB 1878

Tràigh Niseboist Carmichael 1878

The likely derivation of this name is 'Farm of the Ness' which is composed of ON *-bolstaðr* as a generic element with ON *-nes* providing a specific. The absence of early forms is partially explained by apparent combination with Horgabost in some records, discussed in Chapter 2.3 above.

4.3.5 Scarasta

NG 01605 93727

Scarista Ainslie Group 1789-1846, Black 1862

Scarasta OPS

North or Meikle Scarista 1724 Rental

Meikle Scarista 1754 Rental, Thomson 1822

Muckle Scarrista Bald 1805

Mickle Scarrista Arrowsmith branch 1807-40

Scarasta More 1813 Roll

Scaristamhoir 1818 Rental

Scaristavore 1830 Rental

Scarastavore OSNB 1878

Scarasta Mhor Carmichael 1878

South or Little Scarista 1724 Rental

Scarista Bheag 1754 Rental

Little/Litt.Scarrista Bald group 1805-40

Scarasta Bheag 1813 Roll

Scaristabheg 1818 Rental

Scarastabeg 1878 OSNB informants

Traigh Scarasta 1878 OSNB informants

Tràigh Scarasta 1878 Carmichael

Allt-Milleadh Mna Hydrographic Survey 1860

Abhuinn Scarasta Mhor OSNB informants/Carmichael 1878

This name is of ON origin, employing *-staðr* as the generic element. The specific is less clear: Capt. Thomas proposes personal name + *-staðr* but see also chapter 4.2.1 for discussion of the possibility of pl. *-staðir*. Settlements employing *Scarasta* appear sub-divided throughout rentals, not even emerging in records until 1724, although the name itself clearly dates to the Norse period several hundred years earlier. Part of *Scarasta* is marked as church land in some sources, including Bald's Map and the 1st Edition 6in/Mile Ordnance Survey. There is an unusual alternative form *Allt Milleadh Mna* 'Stream of a woman's ravishing' for *Abhuinn Scarasta Mhor*, which is discussed in chapter 3.3.2 above.

The sole attestation for this form is drawn from the Hydrographic Survey, suggesting it may reflect an actual event or a folk etymology.

4.3.6 Seilebost

NG 06865 96707

Selebost 1688 Rental,

Shellibost 1724 Rental,

Shelabost 1791-9 OSA, 1854 OPS

Chillibost Bald group 1805-40,

Seilibost 1813 valuation roll, *Shelebost* 1818 rental,

Shelibost 1830 rental,

Seilabost 1860 Hydrographic Survey (detailed),

Seilibost 1902 Bartholomew,

Faadhail Seilebost OSNB 1878

Traigh Chillibost Bald 1805

Traigh Seilabost Hydrographic Survey 1860

Tràigh Seilebost OSNB informant 1878

Corran Seilabost Hydrographic Survey 1860

Corran Seilebost OSNB informant 1878

Beinn Sheileboist Hydrographic Survey 1860/Carmichael 1878

Ben Seilebost OSNB 1878

Glen Chillibost Bald 1805, Black 1862

Glen Seilebost OSNB 1878

Glen Sheileboist Carmichael 1878

Seilebost River OSNB 1878

Abhuinn Seilebost Carmichael 1878

Suggested derivation: ‘Farm of the Willow’ from ON *seljr* applied to the generic *-bólstaðr*. The forms provided for Seilebost are reasonably consistent across time, but the apparently large number of attestations should take into account the likely interdependencies discussed in the main thesis. Unlike Borge and Scarista, but in common with the other *-bólstaðr* names, *Horgabost* and *Nisabost*, it does not seem to have been subjected to subdivision later on, perhaps reflecting the relatively small size of the settlement. The Ordnance Survey did not attempt etymologies for the known Norse names, and so no potential explanations are forthcoming from that source. However, both MacIver and Capt. Thomas made attempts on it, and successfully identify the

generic element as *bólstaðr*. Capt. Thomas offers simply renders it ‘farm’ in English. Maclver’s offers ‘family household’.

Regarding the specific element, a variety of explanations are proposed: Capt. Thomas’s suggestion of derivation from O.N. *Skel* is unlikely. It is possible to see why he, as someone who had visited the area in question might arrive at such an etymology though as the site in question is beside an extensive sandy beach. On the other hand, this beach is a nearby feature, rather than something actually on the - *bólstaðr* site and in addition is one of several similar beaches in the area. As such it seems unlikely that -*skel* would be a suitable specific element as it doesn’t sufficiently distinguish it from other settlements near to ‘shelly-beaches’. Maclver proposes alternatives derived from *heljr* ‘cave’ or *hella* ‘flat stone’. However none of the written forms support this though: although lenition of ‘s’ in Gaelic can cause the initial sound to soften to ‘h’, several of the recorded spellings are provided from non-Gaelic sources, which would almost certainly have recorded such a name as beginning with ‘h’. *Chillibost* is provided on occasion, but some of the sources depend on each other and the form probably arises from the Bald map. O.N. *seljr* ‘willow’ is a possible option offered by Gammeltoft, supported by a cognate form from Orkney *Sellebister* and discussed in chapter 2.1.1 above.¹⁹⁴ Secondary names are discussed in chapter 4.2.2 above.

¹⁹⁴ Gammeltoft, *Bolstaðr* p.145

4.3.7 Taobh Tuath

NF98785 89917 (modern) NF 9823591647 (approx. site c. 1688)

Howsanes Blaeu 1654 (uncertain attestation, likely mislocation of *Huisinis*)¹⁹⁵

Turva Ainslie Group 1789-1846¹⁹⁶

Northtown Rental 1818, OSNB informants 1878 Bald¹⁹⁷

Northton 1868 Valuation roll

Taobh Tuath Hydrographic Survey 1860

Tràigh an Taobh Tuath (Northside sands) Hydrographic Survey

Tràigh an Taoibh Thuath OSNB/Carmichael

This name is discussed in greater depth in chapters 4.2.2 and 3.1, but presents an interesting paradox: on one hand, this is known to be the oldest continuously inhabited site in the Western Isles, and one of the oldest in Scotland, yet it has one of the youngest names. The current OS map for of Taobh Tuath appears for the first time on Capt. Thomas's Hydrographic survey of 1860. Thomas opted overwhelmingly for Gaelic names and forms on his map, and while the presence on his crew of Gaelic speaking staff is acknowledged, it is interesting to note that Carmichael does not provide a Gaelic form for the settlement, only for the sands nearby. There is not one attribution of Taobh Tuath as a settlement rather than as a locative description relative to the adjoining hill, that can be traced to an informant in these sources. The name of course is a direct translation of *North Town*, but *taobh* in Gaelic has a wider semantic range, and so can be used to indicate 'side'. The early presence of other tenants in very close proximity, for example those at *North Copophaill* discussed below, is likely to have meant that *Taobh Tuath* would have been insufficiently specific to identify the separate farm at North town. The name has gained use recently (indeed, it is used in this thesis) but this could be driven in part by its presence on OS maps and also by the disappearance of the other settlements: there is now no question as to which settlement *Taobh Tuath* is, even though the name hints that there were previously others.

¹⁹⁵ See chapter 3.1 for discussion

¹⁹⁶ This is the only name marked on the peninsula and it is not even certain that it refers to a settlement

¹⁹⁷ All maps in bald group use Northtown, or Nth. Town, probably to accommodate factors of scale: there is no reason to believe that this particular name is derived from any other source than the Bald map given the otherwise very high correlation shown in appendix 2.

4.3.8 South Town

NF9698591677 (approx.)

Southtown 1688 Rental, MacGillivray

S. *Town* Arrowsmith 1807, Thomson 1822, McCulloch 1840

Southtown MacGillivray 1818

This settlement no longer exists: While the 2007 OS Explorer 455 (1:25000) marks *Taobh Deas*, no settlement, or even ruins are marked on the map. The Hydrographic survey does not mark the settlement, although it does mark the nearby ruins of the church. As with *Taobh Tuath* this name is a relative designation of locality, indicating its relative position to the south of the hillside, and possibly also to the other settlements on the north slopes of Ceapabhal.

4.3.9 Ceapabhal Area

North Capophaile (NF 97705 93477) and South Capophaile (NF 96495 92477)

These names are attested only in the 1688 and 1724 rentals. However, given the high valuation given to North Town by the 1830 rental, it is possible that these had been absorbed into a single farm, or at least come under the management of a single owner. Both sites contain the ON name for the hill on which they are situated, which has ON *-fjall* as a generic, with a specific suggested by Capt. Thomas: *kúpaðr*- ‘bowl, cone’ so ‘cone (shaped) hill’ which certainly fits with its appearance.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁸ Thomas, ‘Northmen’ p.486

4.3.10 Druim a' Phuind

NF 99905 89277 (approx.)

Druimphuint 1688

Druimfuint 1724

Druimaphond 1754

Drymohoind Ainslie group exc. Huddart branch

Drymochoind Huddart Branch

Druimfuind 1813 Roll

Drimophuind OSNB 1878

Druim a' Phuind Carmichael 1878

Clett Druim a' Phuind 1878 Carmichael/OSNB

Abhuinn Druim a' Phuind 1878 Carmichael

This ScG name has a relatively straightforward derivation of 'Ridge of the Pound', composed of generic *druim* 'ridge, spine' and specific *phuind* 'pound, animal pen' suggesting that at some stage, this site was part of a larger farm, probably that at Taobh Tuath. Attestations are fairly consistent, with no ON forms attested supporting the likelihood that this represents the division of a farm after the end of the Norse-speaking period. It is worth noting that it is not marked on the very detailed Hydrographic survey map, which suggests that the settlement was already in decline by this date.

5 Conclusions

In making final remarks on the evidence presented in this thesis, it seems logical to review the evidence on a chapter-by-chapter basis. The discussion of medieval sources in Chapter 2 acknowledged the difficulty of handling material written at a later time than the events described (see 2.2.3). However, the place-name evidence examined here supports the principle of settlement suggested by the saga material. The significant number of farm-names, and their location on some of the best land on Harris, suggests that settlement there was fairly early, and indeed fairly dense. As later historical accounts suggest, this was not the easiest land to work, and requires intensive labour even though it is likely to have been the best available.

The preponderance of settlement names on the west side of the island is contrasted with the sea-focused terminology deployed on the east side, where generics in ON *-vágr* and *-nes* abound. Where *-nes* appears on the west, it is used as a specific element to locate a farm-name on an obvious geographical landmark as *Nisabost*. Both the agricultural nature and density of the ON names on the machair argues against a ‘scorched earth’ approach on the part of the Vikings, as do the names themselves. The employment of ON *borg* ‘fort’ to a likely broch site, and *horgr*, to an existing chambered cairn suggests that the Norse didn’t simply appear out of nowhere, wipe out the inhabitants and settle down: they had some idea not only of what was there, but what it was used for, and they applied their own terminology to what they found.

While Gaelic terms are often employed in existing-name constructions and as such do not always show awareness of the semantic sense of the ON form, the manner in which they are applied, often to likely boundary markers, such as rivers suggests that the broad boundary pattern from the Norse period was maintained. The rate at which the land is subdivided and re-consolidated, only to be divided again in these rentals mean that one cannot necessarily extrapolate that Gaelic and Norse did not exist side by side for an extended

period: such sub-division is clearly going on throughout the period for which we have documentary evidence, and has to be taken as evidence of coining in action rather than historic forms. Furthermore, the retention in some form of the penny-land system is another aspect of Norse heritage being retained in a later Gaelic-speaking environment, which suggests a period of co-existence.

Only by examining sources closely and in a comparative manner is it possible to see the potential for difference between a long-standing lexical loss of a Norse name early in the Gaelic-speaking period and a relatively recent consolidation and re-division. A similar situation applies to maps: as demonstrated in chapter 3, the degree of interdependency in these sources is very high. That is not to unduly criticise the cartographers: often, as in Thomson's case, they acknowledge where they got their material. In others, a range of sources are drawn upon and it may not be obvious where the interdependencies lie and indeed how extensive they are. Black's 1862 map is one such example: it is certainly not wholly derivative of Bald's or Thomson's maps in the way that Arrowsmith's and McCulloch's maps were clearly related, but the influence is there and awareness is vital when cataloguing apparent historical attestations. What appears to be an overwhelming body of evidence for one form is undermined if they all ultimately derive to some degree from a shared source.

This becomes a pressing issue when examining the apparently broad range of evidence presented in the Ordnance Survey Original Object Name Books. This discussion revealed some particularly surprising information. While the older maps actually exhibited a high degree of interdependency, the two government mapping agencies working in the Outer Hebrides at approximately the same time had virtually no impact on each other. The Hydrographic survey presents a remarkable level of detail as well as extensive use of Gaelic orthography, in a manner that one may not perhaps expect from a government agency. Carmichael's struggles to persuade the OS to accept his Gaelic forms are much better documented, and his relative fame compared with Captain Thomas in the Gaelic-speaking world means that his views have been better known.

This thesis has shown that Captain Thomas was the driving force between the Hydrographic Survey chart covering this area: comparison with his published output through the *Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* identifies name forms, such as *Torgabost* which are only found in his work. Even more remarkably, he may have had an impact on the mapping process of Gaelic names by being the first source to designate *Northtown* as *Taobh Tuath*.

The surviving correspondence between the two men is worthy of investigation as soon as it becomes available, as it is clear that they made an early and significant contribution to the study of Hebridean place-names. A particular feature is their apparent use of informants for name-forms. If, as Carmichael's correspondence (discussed 4.1.1) suggests, he returned to the informants named by the OS workers and corrected the spellings, the extent of epenthesis that his forms of Borgh '*Borogh*' and Horgabost '*Horagabost*' show, reflects pronunciation on the machair itself. These forms are important, and the forms collected by Gammeltoft from a 1930's source which was inaccessible to this study also shows the intrusion of /ə/ to break up the consonant cluster.¹⁹⁹ This is an avenue worthy of further research by a competent linguist, and the relatively late settlement clearances on the machair have had an impact on dialect surveying: while Cathair Ó Dochartaigh's *Survey of the Gaelic Dialects of Scotland* includes information from Harris, none of his informants come from the machair area, and even if they had done so, the relatively recent resettlement of the area has implications for how 'local' such forms could be considered to be.²⁰⁰

Finally, this thesis has highlighted a number of avenues for future research. An approach using archaeological material on a comparative basis would offer a wealth of information about where various population groups settled in relation to each other over time. This would be potentially advantageous when weighing the evidence of potentially early forms. Should some of the circular-walled

¹⁹⁹ Gammeltoft, *Bólstaðr* p.124

²⁰⁰ See map provided on inside cover of C. Ó Dochartaigh: *Survey of the Gaelic Dialects of Scotland* 5 volumes (Dublin 1994)

enclosures that are so prevalent, but so under-explored, in the area prove to date from the early medieval period, rather than the pre-historic, this could have serious implications for how we interpret the names. Likewise, a more detailed understanding of what Norse settlement actually looked like would help to contextualise our theories on how the land was used. The work of Capt. Thomas is certainly worthy of more attention than it currently gets, and the intimation in his 1876 article that he deposited a comparative chart containing over 12,000 names in the library of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland should certainly be investigated. Examination of the currently unavailable correspondence between Thomas and Carmichael could potentially illuminate the strong correlation between the forms Carmichael provided as a 'local authority' for the OSNB and the forms recorded in Thomas's survey. Last but not least, the very small corpus presented here was dictated by the scope of the project: a survey over a wider area, ideally by a scholar with a stronger background in linguistics than the author of this thesis, is likely to yield a good deal more comparative material, allowing contextualisation of Harris, both in the Western Isles and beyond.

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