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COMANN AINMEAN-ÀITE NA H-ALBA

On its way from Laxo Voe, on the east side of Shetland's Mainland, to Whalsay, the ferry passes Hamera Head on the north side of Dury Voe. Hamarr in Old Norse, similarly to its Old English cognate hamor, could be used to name features of the landscape as well as referring to a common domestic implement. With its flat-topped, sheer-sided, blunt-ended projections, Hamera Head shows particularly clearly this metaphorical linkage. The list of place-name elements compiled by the Shetland Place-Name Project notes hamar or hammer in place-names as being a 'steep rock, rocky wall'. Jakob Jakobsen in his pioneering 1897 publication on 'The Dialect and Place-Names of Shetland' described haamar in Shetland as "a hammer-shaped crag, a jutting out rock or stretch of rocks, most often in the side of a hill".

FROM THE COMMITTEE

There have been suggestions that some Society members, outwith the academic community but hoping to make their own contribution to place-names research, would value the opportunity to join in 'training days'. The committee is more than happy to take this idea further, but would first like to know more from potential participants about what they would be looking for from such events.

There are practical points to be considered, such as how far would people be able to travel, and for how long a day's session.

Should it be assumed that participants would already have a fair knowledge of the historical, linguistic and geographical background that they would work with? Or is there a need for advice in these fields, such as problems with the interpretation of Older Scots or medieval Latin?

Would it be a fair guess that the greatest needs would be for information about how to gain access to, and how best to use, sources for place-name material such as early maps and medieval to early modern documents – not least in keeping up with the increasing availability of digitised and PDF material accessible online?

Is there a need for guidance on technological aspects, such as recent advances in computer mapping, or more 'traditional' techniques such as sound recording of local speech?

Any requests and suggestions can be made to the committee through the Convener's e-mail address, Carole.Hough@glasgow.ac.uk.

HEBRIDEAN PLACE-NAMES AND MONASTIC IDENTITY IN THE *Vita Sancti Columbae*

The *Vita Sancti Columbae* (VSC), composed *c.* 700 AD by Adomnán (*c.*628-704), ninth abbot of Iona, is exceptionally important for the study of early medieval place-names in Western Scotland. There are over 200 specific place-name references in the *Vita*, and the Hebridean island-names and island place-names make up nearly half of the toponyms recorded. The research presented in this paper introduced a different approach: place-names were analysed alongside textual content, thus revealing more information about the the author, his audiences and their perspective of the place-names at the time of the text's composition.

The island-names and related place-names discussed in the paper are listed below:[1]
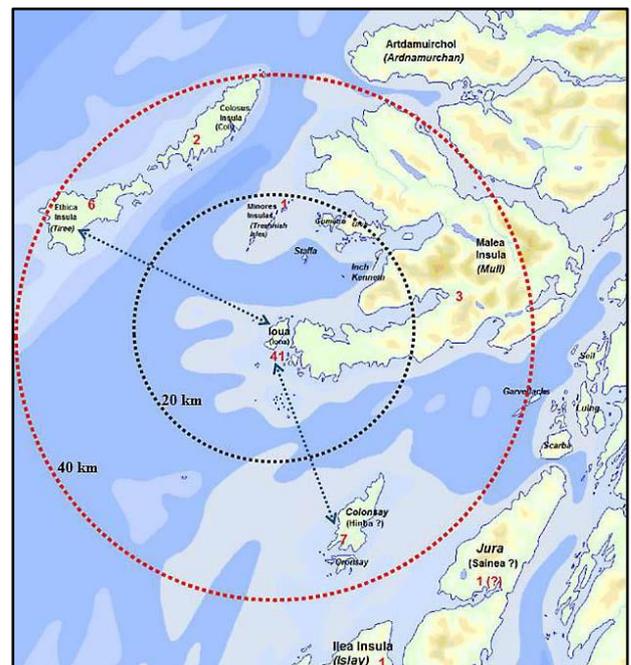
Iona's immediate sphere of influence in the Inner Hebrides. This map illustrates the most frequently mentioned island-names in VSC in comparison with Iona. The an island-name is specifically recorded in VSC are numbered on the island in red. Most of the island-names in VSC were located within a 40 km (25 mile) radius of Iona.

Ioua Insula (Iona): recorded forty-one times, and forms the setting for the majority of the chapters, even where not mentioned by name.

[1] References are to Adomnán, *Vita Sancti Columbae*, ed. & trans. A. O. & M. O. Anderson, *Adomnán's Life of Columba* (Oxford, 1991).

i.30 'hill that at a little distance overlooks this monastery' (Cnoc Mór)

ii.44, iii.16 *colliculo angelorum* (probably Cnoc an t-Sithein)

ii.4 *munitio magna* (Dun Í)

iii.23 *monticellum monasterio supereminentem* (Cnoc nan Càrnan)

i.37 *Cuul Eilne* (Gleann Cùil Bhùirg or Bol Leithne)

i.37, ii.28, iii.16, iii.23 *occidentalem Iouae insulae campulum* (Machair)

Ethica insula/terra (Tiree)

i.19 *Aethicum pilagus* (the sea between Iona and Tiree)

i.36 *Artchain* (unidentified, monastery of St Findcháin)

ii.15 *Campus Lunge* (Columban monastery, probably located near Soroby)

Minores insulae (Treshnish Isles)

Malea insula (Mull)

ii.13 *Delcros* (possibly on the Ross of Mull)

Colosus insula (Coll)

Egea insula (Eigg)

Scia insula (Skye)

i.33 *dobur Artbranni* (possibly in the region of Bracadale)

Airthrago (Shona)

Ilea insula (Islay)

Oídech/terrulae Aíthche (possibly Texa)

Rechru (Rathlin Island)

i.5 *Coire Breccain* (whirlpool, modern Sloc na Mara)

Elena insula (unidentified)

Longa insula (unidentified)

Sainea insula (unidentified)

Ommon insula (unidentified)

Hinba insula (likely identified with Colonsay, Oronsay or both)

iii.23 *Muirbolc már*

The Strand between Colonsay and Oronsay, identified as a strong candidate for Adomnán's Muirbolc Már: *above, seen from Dùn Cholla on Colonsay; above right, from Oronsay towards Colonsay.*

Hinba is the second most widely attested island-name. After extensive research, I have concluded that *Hinba* is likely to be identified with Colonsay, and perhaps both Colonsay and Oronsay. The place-name *Muirbolc már* 'great sea-bag' is comparable with other *muirbolc* place-names (e.g. Kentra Bay, Adomnán's *muirbolc paradise*, and Murlough Bay, Co. Down, both characterised as being nearly empty of water when the tide is out, exposing sands). *Muirbolc már* should be identified with The Strand. Furthermore, if we compare the frequency with which Adomnán records the island-names it becomes apparent that the most frequently attested are within a 25 mile (40 km) radius of Iona.

The Hebridean island-names provide the opportunity to examine how Adomnán and the Iona community perceived their maritime landscape. The prominence of Iona in the *Vita* cannot be underestimated, and it is clear that Adomnán was describing events from an Iona perspective. The most frequently attested island-names were within a relatively short distance of Iona and were visible to and from Iona. Columban daughter-houses were also located on *Hinba* and *Ethica*. If the proposed locations of the early foundations on these islands are correct, then they would have faced Iona, and this may have been symbolic. The sites on *Ethica* and *Hinba* served important functions in the regimented structure of monastic life: they were foundations for monks and penitents (i.30, ii.39, i.21), and *Hinba* was also a place for anchorites (iii.23). Anchorites held a high status in early Irish ecclesiastical society. In the *Hibernensis* the anchorite is depicted as leading a contemplative existence, often confined to cells. In order to lead such a life, anchorites had to be maintained and supported, and therefore anchorites were associated with a larger community. It would also have been crucial for the abbot of Iona to

visit the penitential sites, which may explain their close relation on neighbouring islands. These sites were distinct and separated from the mother-church by open waters, and this is significant. From the *Vita* it is clear that penitents were not allowed to carry out their sentence on Iona. In one instance (i.22) a penitent who had committed a terrible sin was not allowed to 'set foot' upon Iona, but had to wait for Columba on Mull. The saint did not wish for the sinner to profane the holy ground of Iona. This explains the location of penitential foundations on nearby islands: they had to be close enough to Iona for support and spiritual guidance, but separate to preserve the sanctity of Iona.

Adomnán's anticipated audiences certainly conditioned his use of place-names. His primary audience was the *familia Columbae*, and the Columban brethren in the Hebrides would have been familiar with these island places. One purpose of the *Vita* is the recording of the social memory inherited by those who identified themselves with the *familia Columbae*. The *Vita* is not only a product of this community but it is a biography of it, and the place-names were integral to this biography and would have continued to be significant.

Within the narrative there are many lessons and moral codes intended to promote veneration to St Columba that Adomnán's primary audience could interpret in association with their local landscape. In iii.8, for example, Columba repels a hoard of demons wishing to assail Iona into *Ethica*, but spared his monastery at *Campus Lunge*. This demonstrates that the saint guarded his foundations from spiritual and physical harm. The sacredness of Iona is also highlighted in i.22 mentioned above. This episode implies that Columba could foretell the immoral actions of others, and this could have been guidance for the brethren not to sin, especially on Iona. 'Place' is often an integral aspect of Columba's prophecies. This element of the saint's character makes him a powerful patron, in that he could foretell an event and provide his followers with the 'place' where the danger lay and where his prophecy would be fulfilled (cf. i.19). Columba also assisted senior clerics outside of the *familia Columbae* when they were traveling in the Hebrides (i.4, i.5), implying that Columba could protect saints who were his equals. The saint also had the power to punish sinners, and some prophecies associated with divine retribution are fulfilled on island-sites (ii.23, ii.24, i.36).

Adomnán also consciously promotes Columba's ecclesiastical foundations: this is reflected through the inclusion of personal names of contemporary holy men who were also church founders, and a general absence of place-names associated with them. Place-names in hagiography can often have political connotations. Columba travelled to Skye with his monks in two chapters (i.33 and ii.26), which might imply that he was travelling with an entourage to found churches, or simply ministering to the local population. The context of i.33 provides a Christian origin-legend for the name *Dobur Artbranani* and Columba's association with a cairn. Similarly, in iii.16 the origin of *Colliculo Angelorum* is attributed to a miracle associated with St Columba. Adomnán provides the Columban origin of these names, and naming features in the landscape is a way in which people remember and relate to sites within their environment.

Biblical exegesis is another place-name interpretation. Many of the Iona place-names associated with the saint are hills where Columba would retreat to meditate or converse with angels. These habits of the saint are Biblical connections, particularly to Exodus, where Moses goes atop Mount Sinai to receive instructions from God. The analogy between Scripture and the landscapes of Iona and *Hinba* in particular indicate that Adomnán attempted to interweave Biblical parallels into these landscapes through places associated with the saint. This technique would have strengthened early Christian identity to specific places.

The *Vita Sancti Columbae* provides many insights into the interpretations of island-names and place-names in the early medieval period. When closely analysed, we are able to picture the relationship between these islands and the early Columban community. Through examining the names in context we are also able to ascertain how members of the *familia Columbae* in the Hebrides related to their environment. The legends and history of their patron saint was an integral part of *their* history, and this shared history provided them with a unified monastic identity. The island-names demonstrate the importance of Iona and Columban houses in the Hebrides to the *familia Columbae*, and how this monastic family built and interwove a living tradition into their island-landscape, one based on the life and miracles of St Columba.

Dr Kelly Kilpatrick (including photos)

EILEAN Ì NAN SÌTHEAN UAINE

*'Eilean Ì nan sìthean uaine,
bidh na bàird gu bràth a' luaidh air'.*

'Iona of the green hills, the bards will forever sing in its praise': the first lines of a song by John Campbell, born in 1905 by the grassy western shore of Iona. Johnnie Chailein – as he was known – was the last of the old-style local bards in these parts, taking his place in a line of poets and songmakers reaching back to the monks of the Columban familia.

Carried in this lineage were two key things: the Gaelic language, spoken daily on this island from the time of Colmcille up to, and well into, the 20th century; and the land and sea, from which islanders in any age have had to survive – whether monk or pilgrim, craftsman or farmer. And stored *in* this landscape are place-names – given at one time or another to every hill and hollow, rock and gully. The naming of a place is tied fast to the life and culture of its inhabitants; and so these names, too, are monuments – an enduring record, not merely on maps, but held in the collective memory. On Iona they also demonstrate a line of continuity from the Early Christian church, through the Benedectine period and into the modern crofting community.

The traveller to Iona today steps ashore at a small bay called **Port Ronain**. But to the right lies an even smaller bay which, however, recalls a big and illustrious past: **Port Adomnan**, named for the 9th Abbot of Iona, himself also a saint and a great scholar whose *Life of Columba* allows us vivid glimpses of early monastic life in these islands. And this spot has a second name, **Port a' Chroisein**, the bay of the little cross. A man named John MacInnes told folklorist Alexander Carmichael that his father, when a boy in the 1760s, saw a sculpted cross at the head of that bay – Adomnan's Cross, a beacon of artistic splendour to welcome the pilgrim and lift the spirit.

From the ferry leaving Iona: Port Ronain is immediately right of the slipway, with Cnoc Mòr behind. (Photo WP)

The Sound of Iona, looking from Cnoc Mòr towards Mull. (Photo Kelly Kilpatrick)

To the left of the modern slipway is **Port nam Mairtear** – the bay of those martyred for their faith or, perhaps, as local guide Alexander Ritchie believed, a place whose name derived from the Old Irish word *martra* or relics. For it was very likely from there that the precious relics of Colmcille were put on board a vessel, to be taken away for safekeeping – to rest, in time, in Kells and in Dunkeld. Those gone before echo down the ages at Port nam Mairtear; Iona's War Memorial stands here, for good reason. Long ago, bodies brought for burial – whether West Highland nobility or islanders who had died far from home – were landed at this bay, to be laid first on the little mound called the **Eala** and then carried along the cobbled pathway that began here and ends at the Abbey – **Straid nam Marbh,** the street of the dead.

Clan Chiefs came to Iona in life too, nine of them famously summonsed in 1609 by the Bishop of the Isles. On this sacred isle they had to swear an oath assenting to the Statutes of Iona, an event that would in time weaken the close link between a chief and his people and critically undermine the use of the Gaelic language among his descendants. Local tradition claims that they gathered, with their retinues, on **Iomair nan Achd**, the ridge of the Acts – an otherwise odd name in an agricultural landscape – and what a ceilidh that may have been. Ironically, given the later repercussions, this makeshift camp lay just north of the Abbey, in full view of what had been a brilliant centre of Gaelic art and learning.

And out across the landscape stories from a myriad generations intertwine. A 7th century bard wrote of Colmcille and his men 'blown in boats over brine' to reach Iona where, finally, they scraped ashore on its south-west tip, at **Port a' Churaich**, the Port of the Coracle. Walk up from that pebbly bay and you can pick out signs

of much later life too: the green patch of **Gàradh Eachainn Òig**, an enclosure once cultivated by 'young Hector'; or, sunk in the heather, the stone foundations of **Taigh Iain MacIlleathain**. Here, in 1746, John Maclean lay in hiding as a lad ran to warn him that redcoat soldiers were on their way. He had piloted a ship to Barra, with arms and money for the cause of Prince Charles Edward Stuart.

From those southern hills – full of cattle folds, caves and shielings, many with a name and tale attached – you come down to the sandy turf of the **Machair**. Adomnan called this 'the little western plain' where Colmcille came to bless the brethren in the fields not long before he died. Just above the shoreline is **Lòn nam Manach** – meadow of the monks – and tucked in behind **Dùn Bhuirg** is **Goirtean Beag**, little cornfield, still a patchwork of rig and furrow. The Dun's name tells us that it was the stronghold of an Iron Age community some 500 years before the first monks arrived.

The Machair was, and is, a place for play as well as for labour. **Cnoc na Maoile Buidhe** remained significant for one islander, remembering a scene from his boyhood half a century before. This hillock marked the northern goalposts for the last, epic, shinty match held on New Year's Day in 1881. Everyone was there; they tussled fiercely for hours; it was a draw! Another part of our shared culture, for did shinty not come to Scotland with Colmcille himself?

And at the Machair gate is the most famous of Johnnie Chailein's 'green hills' – **Sìthean Mòr**, the big fairy mound, where music of the wee folk might be heard and the unwary enticed inside to dance, so the tale goes, for a whole year. Here too, on the feast day of St Michael, the islanders used to race their horses sunwise around the hill, in a joyful ritual of dedication. And for Adomnan it was *colliculus angelorum*, the Angels' Knoll, where Colmcille was seen conversing with the citizens of heaven. A serene spot, witness to both mirth and miracle.

We cannot forget water, vital to island life, whether to drink or upon which to sail. In the north-west lies **Tobar na Gaoithe Tuath**, the well of the north wind; local folk kept this deep rock pool clear of weed and, when needed, would recite a chant over it to bring seafarers a favourable wind. Not far away is **Lòn a' phoit dhuibh**, the meadow of the black pot, indicating another kind of water, the water of life – a

whisky-still was said to be sunk there, hidden from the eyes of the excisemen. And, between the Abbey and the seashore, listen for the gurgling of **Tobar a' Cheathain**. Who Ceathan was we do not know, but this well of spring water named after him was prized by earlier generations. An old rhyme said, of those in poor health or near to death: *'S cha mho dh' iarr e ri òl, ach uisge mòr a Cheathain* – nor did he wish to drink anything, but the good water of Ceathan.

As the tides ebb and flow, so do the people of Iona. The early monks, and the medieval craftsmen, bequeathed the riches of their prayers, poems, manuscripts and marvellous stone carving. These illuminate Iona down to this day.

Others left only their name, **Croit Eachern** for example. This is a plot of ground inside the former monastery vallum, where the Iona Community's shop stands today. A family of MacEacherns lived here, herding cattle for the neighbouring crofters. But, when the potato crop failed in the 1840s bringing hardship and sickness, they took ship for Canada and never returned.

Another, recalled simply as Seamas MacPhàdraig (James son of Peter), sent home a song. From the West Indies he wrote in verse of a longing to set foot again at Port Ronain on Iona, and of the ripples white as gulls on the surface of Loch Staonaig. But he was too far away, beyond the setting sun: *Tha mi seo ann an Demerara, Fada thall air cùl na grèine.*

So, we return to the poets. For the great Argyll bard, Duncan Bàn MacIntyre, Iona was *ionad naomha*, a saintly place – beloved by many for the light of faith kindled there by Colmcille and his successors. For Johnnie Chailein, the island was special in other ways too, not least for itself. His song *Eilean Ì* has one verse consisting almost entirely of place-names, the landmarks he knew as a boy:

Ceann na Creige, Uamh Spùtach, Stac an Aonaich is Druim Dhùghaill,

Tha na Habhann air a chùlaibh, Faradh os an cionn gan dìon.

And he ends by bidding farewell to the place of his childhood, and asking simply: Who would not love Iona?

Soraidh bhuam gu tìr mo gràdhsa, Far an robh mi òg nam phàisde

Saoghal buan do na tha'n tàmh innt', Cò nach tugadh gràdh do dh' Ì ?

E. Mairi MacArthur (written for the occasion of the visit to Iona by the Irish President, Michael D Higgins, on 20 July 2013)

WARDS, FOLDS AND HAUGHS: AN INVESTIGATION OF SOME ABERDEENSHIRE FIELD-NAMES

Introduction

Field-names in Scotland are part of the oral tradition. They are no longer required for any official farm administration and tend to be used by the older members of the community. As they are minor names they do not appear on Ordnance Survey maps and their use is in decline. Yet there are some scattered written records, mainly estate maps from the 'improvement' era (c. 1750-1800s).

Work on field-names in Scotland to date has largely been carried out by the Scottish Field-name Survey which was based at the University of Edinburgh. This is a fantastic resource, although the coverage of the country is incomplete and the extent to which each area is covered is variable.

Field-name collection in England by the English Place-Name Survey has also demonstrated how valuable these names are. Work began on this topic in 1933 when field-names were first included in the Northamptonshire volume. Since then, the English Place-Name Survey has included more and more field-names in each successive volume. This gave rise to *A History of English Field-Names* and *English Field Names, A Dictionary* by John Field (1972, 1993). Yet this work relied upon written sources, primarily Tithe Award maps. Unfortunately, no such extensive written records exist in Scotland.

Method

Therefore, I created a new methodology, drawing on the discipline of Sociolinguistics as well as more traditional onomastic methods, to collect a corpus of field-names. Traditional onomastic methods state that "early forms could be said to be the basic currency of the toponymist, and generally speaking the earlier the form, the more valuable the coin… what they mean as words is not necessarily important for their everyday usage" (Taylor & Márkus 2012: 134) and "it cannot be too often repeated that modern forms of names are not a reliable basis for explanation; early forms must be hunted out" (Field 1972: x). However, field-names show that modern name forms can be just as interesting and useful as historical ones.

Sociolinguistic interviews were used as the primary data collection tool. Labov (1966); Milroy (1980) and Eckert (2000) have all demonstrated the success of this approach. The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended and the Ordnance Survey Explorer 2007 map was used as a visual prompt.

In the research communities, a dialect known as the Doric is spoken. Kynoch states that "its richest manifestation has always been found in the rural hinterland, where the language has recorded and labelled all the trappings of everyday life in what was a largely farming and fishing community." He adds that "there is not one monolithic form of Doric but a multiplicity of forms, differing to a greater or lesser degree here and there" (2004: v). This is important because one of the communities interviewed was north of the city of Aberdeen, and one of them was to the South. Therefore, it could be expected that the dialect would manifest itself in different ways in each community.

The Data

In total, data was collected from 79 farms. 1227 head-forms of field-names are included in the corpus, although the number rises to 1518 if variant forms are included. Most were collected from the oral interviews, although some of the data is in written format if the participants declined to be recorded. Most of the data is modern, that is to say, the names have been used within living memory. However, there is also some historical data taken from farming diaries and estate maps and papers.

The historical forms demonstrate how apt this category of names is to change. This happens for a number of reasons such as field enclosure, change of ownership, changes in the prominent features and administration purposes. For a more detailed account see Burns (Forthcoming).

For example, the agricultural revolution in Scotland meant that a number of farming terms went out of use:

"A whole series of words, like faugh, fauld, ward, in everyday use under the old conditions became obsolete; while the word park, which previously had meant an enclosed reserve, was adopted in the dialect to mean any enclosed field" (Alexander 1952: xxxix). A number of examples of this can be seen in the data, including Nether Ward (1841) which becomes

Front House, and Upper Ward (1841) which changes to Bottom Half Portstown.

Yet, "the idea that all field-names enjoy but a short life must be resisted, and the following examples show that survival through seven or even eight centuries is by no means impossible: Bambrick (Warton, Lancs): *Baunebrec* c 1230 ('bean hill')" (Field 1972: xv). The field-names from the north-east do not date as early as some of the English examples, and indeed some of the oldest names in the corpus include the element *fold* (or *fauld*): 'the part of the *outfield* which was manured by folding cattle upon it' (http://www.dsl.ac.uk/). Examples include The Long Fold; The Well Fold Field; Well Fold; Yules Fold (Yiles Fold 1710); Broom Fold (1710); Cairnfold (1710); Clayfolds (1710).

A number of theoretical issues were encountered when constructing the corpus from spoken data. One of the most challenging was selecting a head form. This was difficult because of the number of variants that were used during interview and also the number of potential spellings available. Field-names which included the element *haugh* represent a good example of this. In the corpus, this element appears frequently and was given by farmers as *haugh, hauch, haughie, hauchie*. All are acceptable forms of the word, so which one should be selected? Questions such as this will be considered throughout the project, and the challenges of representing oral data in written format will be met.

Alison Burns (based on a talk given at the SPNS conference in Aberdeen, drawing on data from a current PhD project at the University of Glasgow.)

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PLACE-NAME LORE IN BANFFSHIRE

I have long been interested in so-called minor names, the names given to fields, fords, pools, wells, stones, rock outcrops, antiquities, etc., and three years ago I moved from Derbyshire to a house in Strathavon, or A'anside as it is more informally known locally. Discovering by chance that the first occupant of my house in the late seventeenth century had been the Gaelic poet Sìlis na Ceapaich, whose earliest poem is packed with the names of local farms (whose tenants she warns her teenage daughter against), confirmed me in my determination to make a study of such minor names as were to be found within a 10-mile radius of the house, and especially those names which came with 'onomastic' tales attached, purporting to explain them.

I like to flatter myself that I am not just an 'armchair' onomastician, but even from my computer-chair, thanks to the wonders of the internet, I soon discovered that there are some remarkable resources now available online. The National Library, for example, makes freely available the first edition 6-inch-to-the-mile Ordnance Survey maps for the whole of Scotland (1860s in my area). It was while poring over the map showing the Braes of Glenlivet that I noted a *Clach Neart* – which my rudimentary Gaelic was able to translate as 'Stone of Strength' (whatever that meant!) – and the first edition 25-inch-to-the-mile map pinpointed the stone precisely. With the help of a local farmer I was able to rediscover this traditional 'lifting-stone' still *in situ*, though it had dropped off the last 25-inch map – weighing in on his scales at 280 pounds – and with the help

of Peter Martin, who is compiling a book on this forgotten aspect of Gaelic folk-life, found some Scotsmen hardy enough to be able – in the traditional formula – to 'put wind between the stone and the ground' (*chuir e gaoth a' clach thogail 's an talamh*)!

Other resources include the government-run *scotlandsplaces* website – this site includes under its umbrella the National Archives of Scotland, from which I discover that an astonishing number of highly detailed 18th century estate maps survive for my area, many so detailed that they even give field-names – and Canmore, the invaluable RCAHMS site, with a description and location of every known place of any historic or archaeological interest. On the modern OS map there is an outcrop (with 'solution hollows' on its top) on the side of Meall Gaineimh called *Clach Bhan*, first appearing on one of Pont's pioneering late 16th century maps as *Clachban*. A century ago Milne noted that "An absurd story attached to the stone assumes that *bhan* is the genitive plural of *bean*, 'woman', making *Clach Bhan* mean the 'Stone of Women',￼" whereas he favoured the second element being the colour adjective *ban*, 'white or light-coloured'. Be that as it may, the 'absurd story' certainly goes back as far as the Old Statistical Account of 1794:

Till of late, this stone used to be visited by pregnant women, not only of this, but from distant countries, impressed with the superstitious idea, that by sitting in these seats, the pains of travail would become easy to them, and other obstetrical assistance rendered unnecessary.

The relevant OS Name Book (also available online but as a subscription service – £15 per quarter) repeats the story, and agrees that *The name means the Wives' Stone*. If anything, one might think that the rigours of climbing to such a relatively remote and elevated spot might be more inclined to induce labour prematurely, rather than ease it at full term! There is another rock of the same name also overlooking the Avon some 4 miles north as the crow flies – but this one is agreed to mean the White Stone, and no story is known to be attached to it. Uncharacteristically, the Canmore web-site has here got the two sites mixed up.

A few weeks ago I invited a local builder round to help me in my continuing struggle to maintain Shilis's house and, having seen my piece in our local newsletter on the *Clach Neart*, he asked me if I was familiar with the "Clach an Jonah" – at least, that's what I heard him say – he is no more

a Gaelic-speaker than I am! Having explained to me that it was a rock on which the Devil's hoof-print was to be seen, and only a few hundred yards from his house – I turned to the online version of Edward Dwelly's Gaelic-English Dictionary – which unlike 'Dwelly' in book-form, is also an English-Gaelic version of his monumental lexicon – and asked it to find me all the Gaelic words for English *devil*. On the strength of that, I reconstructed the name as *Clach an Donais*, and google informs me that there is a rock of that name on Tiree – whether its name has the same origin I have yet to discover, but I don't mind betting it has! Anyway, brushes in hand, the two of us set off for the rock in question – which lies beside one of the few short stretches of General Wade's Military Road that the modern A939 doesn't follow – and were rewarded with a sight of the Devil's hoof-print – so it seems the Oral Tradition is alive and well and living in Scotland!

But "back to basics." Water. No-one who has ever turned on a tap and found nothing coming out will have trouble understanding the veneration of natural springs. *Rag-wells* as they are known in England, *clootie-wells* in Scotland (most famously at Munlochy), are part of this phenomenon. Noting a *Tobar nan Ròineag* on the 6-inch map, I reached for my Dwelly, who gives two senses to the word *ròineag*: 'single small hair,' and 'small quantity of wool…'. Battening on the latter signification, I immediately decided we were dealing here with an example of a *clootie-well*, that is, a well around which small pieces of wool (and cloth) were left tied to adjacent trees, as part of the ritual of taking the water – a customary practice attested as long ago as 1618, when *Christ's Well* at Mentieth was described as *all tapestried about with old rags*. But turning to the relevant Ordnance Survey Name Book, I read the following unusually expansive entry :

A spring well near the farm house of Dell. Signifying the Well of the Hairs. On referring this name to the Examiner he gives the following additional remarks. "This well had its name from the popular belief that a horse hair may be endowed with motion, if not life, by immersing it in water for a certain time, the experiment used to be tried in this well; such is the current explanation I have invariably got of this name…"

Unaware of any such popular experiments, in 1905 Milne translated the name as "well with hair-like vegetation < *roineag*, gen pl of *roineag*, 'hair'."

The synod which met at Elgin in 1634 was informed by the moderator of the presbytery of Aberlour that many of the 'loose' people of that presbytery, especially of the parishes of Aberlour and Inveravon, convened at a well called *Tapper Donigh* in Kilnmaichlie (in the latter parish) on four sundry Sabbaths, where there was nothing but abuse and profanation of the Sabbath – a particular irony, of course, as the Gaelic name means 'Well of Sunday' or the 'Sabbath'. The first edition of the 6-inch map marks a *Chapel Well* at Chapelton of Kilnmaichlie (opposite Drumin Castle) and this may be the very *Tapper Donigh* to which resort was forbidden in the 17th century, for at the same site are the foundations of what is reputed to be an ancient Catholic church – there were still old headstones visible in its graveyard in 1794 (OSA), and the adjacent steep-sided bank of the Avon is still known as *Craig an Donich*, which the OSNB entry translates as "Craig of the Chapel," quite rightly noting that in earlier Gaelic, *donich* could mean 'church, chapel,' as well as 'Sunday' – i.e. 'the Lord's house,' as well as 'the Lord's day.'

One of the instructions to the Presbytery of Dingwall from the Commission of Auldearn in 1649 was to compel parishioners *to refraine from goeing to wells on the Lordes day*, and there is evidence to show that the "four sundry Sundays", alluded to by the moderator of Aberlour, were the first Sundays in each quarter of the traditional Celtic year, the first in the months of November, February, May and August, and especially the two latter, around Beltane and Lammas. Similarly, particular Sundays were also favoured for visits to St. Fergan's well (near Kirkmichael), especially the first Sunday in May and Easter Sunday. In my area, the first edition of the 6-inch map marks a *Tobar na Sabaide* (Well of the Sabbath), just south of Grantown – a beautiful sylvan spring, seemingly quite forgotten.

One of the instructions issued to the First edition OS field-examiners was to ascertain whether any well they recorded was regarded as a *holy* well. As might be expected, several wells in my area were, and bear the name of some – usually obscure and very local – saint. Such a saint is Luag or – with hypocoristic prefix – *Mo-luag*. There was a croft named after him at Raitts in Badenoch, and he was the patron of churches at Mortlach, Clatt and Tarland in Aberdeenshire, as early as the twelfth century. There was also a chapel and well dedicated to him near Clova in the same county, though – inevitably -- both

were assimilated to the far better known St. *Luke*. Lachlan Shaw, the eighteenth-century historian of Moray, states that Luag was patron of Cromdale too, and marked on the 1st ed 6" OS map at Boat of Cromdale is a *Tobar Ma Luaig*. It is a small, natural spring, close to the River Spey, and was, until recently, used by the occupants of the Boat of Cromdale, as a water supply. It has since silted up, and appears as a damp patch of sand, through which a small trickle of water seeps. "Was it regarded as a holy well?" one of the OS revisers has asked in the Name Book – but answer came there none. Given the saintly connexion, however, it seems certain that it was.

Malcolm Jones (from his talk at the May 2013 conference)

AIDAN MACDONALD M.A. (Cantab), M.Litt. (Oxon), F.S.A. Scot., 1941-2013

The archaeologist and early medieval historian Aidan MacDonald died on 4th June 2013. What follows is in no way a full obituary, but rather a short tribute, focussing on his toponymic work, and a first attempt at presenting a full bibliography. Most of the following biographical details are taken from his Groam House Lecture publication (1992). He was brought up in Cambridge, studied first at Cambridge, then completed a two-year post-graduate diploma in Celtic Studies at Oxford. His first publications (1968 and 1970) were a direct product of his work at the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments of the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works in Edinburgh. He was involved in research work for a number of years, being attached to the School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh. From 1978 until his retiral in 2000 he worked as a lecturer in Archaeology at University College Cork, and made his home in the town of Carrigaline (*Carraig Uí Leighin*), 14 km south of Cork. He had strong family connections with Cromarty, where he inherited a house, where he spent most of his time in the vacations, and which, in his Groam House Lecture publication, he also describes as his home.

Over his long career, Aidan made a unique and enduring contribution to our understanding of the early medieval insular world. A brief glance at his bibliography shows that he had a special interest in Iona, and the way in which this pre-eminent early ecclesiastical and political power-

house interacted with the material world. He also had a nuanced and sophisticated approach to place-names, and early on recognised their importance as a way of understanding the pre-documentary age of Scottish political, social and ecclesiastical history. Between 1973 and 1979 he wrote articles on three ecclesiastical place-name elements which continue to exercise scholars today: *annat*, *cill* and *papar*, the last of which, Old Norse *papar*, has inspired a whole project, the Papar Project (see *http://www.paparproject.org.uk/*). His series of articles in the *Bulletin of the Ulster Place-name Society* (later *Ainm*) on various elements in Scottish place-names, such as *dùn*, *lios* and *ràth*, written at a time when the study of place-names was seen as more peripheral by the archaeological community than it is today, deserve to be far better known than they are. Aidan had in fact agreed to revise them for publication in the *Journal of Scottish Name Studies*, and this is a project I would still very much like to see come to fruition. While his discussion of individual names can often be augmented and refined in the light of more recent findings, his basic argument, that Pictish substrate influence can be identified in the usage and application of Gaelic elements in the place-names of eastern Scotland, remains valid and worthy of extensive and robust testing.

Aidan MacDonald is the kind of scholar whose work will increase, rather than decrease in relevance and value as the present renaissance of interest in early medieval Scotland continues to flourish. SPNS members who attended the November 2011 conference in Dingwall will remember his talk 'Curadan-Boniface Revisited'. Because of his poor health, he asked for a chair to sit on while he was speaking, and the only one that could be found was a grand, wooden, throne-like arm-chair, a *cathedra* worthy of Boniface himself. It was a most fitting platform for what may well have been the last time this unique scholar gave a public lecture.

As a token of just how highly his scholarship is regarded, former colleagues at University College Cork are in the process of bringing to publication his last work, a book on Iona and the shrine of Columba 800-1200.

A Bibliography of Aidan D. S. MacDonald

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I am most grateful to Cormac Bourke, Isabel Henderson and Máire Herbert for help in compiling this tribute and bibliography. If anyone is aware of any of his publications not included here, please let me know.

Simon Taylor <simon.taylor@glasgow.ac.uk>

PLACE NAMES OF BEAULY, THE AIRD AND STRATHGLASS

Plans are afoot for a new place name publication deriving from the 2001-2 AHRB Project by Barbara Crawford and Simon Taylor on "The Southern Frontier of Norse Settlement in North Scotland". The focus of that investigation was to identify and locate names of Norse origin in the Beauly, Strathglass and Aird area of Inverness-shire, in the hope of shedding more light on the extent and nature of Norse influence in this area. In the event, very little of Norse, or possibly Norse, origin was found to add to the southernmost certain example (Eskadale) which is located in that area, but a wealth of mainly Gaelic names were recorded and a valuable resource produced in the resulting Survey of the Place Names of Beauly, the Aird and Strathglass. The Survey has since been available online (http://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/beauly/) but it was always the hope that funding would be found to publish the survey in book form with the aim of making it more accessible to the general public both within the area and generally.

What is intended is an approximately 400 page book which, though not necessarily hard back would be robust enough to take out into the field. The data would be updated and arranged alphabetically by the three pre 1975 parishes covered by the survey: Kilmorack, Kiltarlity and Convinth, and Kirkhill. The book would also contain Simon Taylor's detailed Introduction, which would also have the maps provided in the present online Word version. An appendix would reprint for a wider audience the article: Crawford, Barbara E., and Taylor, Simon, 2003,

'The Southern Frontier of Norse Settlement in North Scotland: Place-Names and History', *Northern Scotland* 23, 1-76, which presents Barbara Crawford's Historical Introduction. The online pictures, showing various locations in the study area, would, it is hoped, be included in the book. Once estimates have been obtained funding will be applied for.

Working on the project are Simon Taylor, Jake King and Ron MacLean who at this stage will welcome any suggestions from members for additional material or corrections. All corrections and additions to the data on the website should be sent to Simon Taylor (email address as above).

Ronald MacLean

In Europe from northern Norway to the Balkans, road signs with names deemed alien by militant guardians of linguistic uniformity are notoriously liable to fall victim to ethnic, religious or political grudges and prejudices.

No surprise then to read that at Vukovar in Croatia, site in 1991 of a massacre by Serb militiamen, an attempt at reconciliation by providing signs with names in Cyrillic script as used by Serbs, as well as Roman as used by Croats, has been frustrated by destruction of the signs; perhaps more remarkable that the introduction of Gaelic to trunk road signs in Caithness has apparently been found so offensive that nothing less than blasting with a shotgun would suffice as punishment or deterrent.

GAELIC PLACE-NAMES WORKSHOP AT ULVA PRIMARY SCHOOL, MULL

This pilot workshop on Monday 13 May 2013, organised under the auspices of the Gaelic on Mull (GOM) project, a schools and community cohesion initiative exploring Gaelic language and culture on the island, was held in Ulva Primary in the parish of Kilninian & Kilmore (KKE). The school has a roll of eleven pupils, eight of whom were present on the day. The morning session involved discussion on the value of place-names in understanding history, language and landscape, on place-name formation and on some of the sources available for the local area, including the available online mapping. Before lunch, the pupils were invited to talk about the place-names in their own individual areas and some of the stories surrounding them.

Two common toponymic elements in the area are G *dùn* and G *cill* and in the afternoon a field trip was organised to nearby Dùn nan Gall (NM433431), a broch situated on the northern shoreline of Loch Tuath, north-west of the ruined chapel and burial ground of Kilbrennan (NM439428). The well-preserved mural stair of this impressive feature, surveyed in 2007 by Euan Mackie (Canmore ID 22058), stimulated discussion of its elements and its well-preserved mural stair provided excellent shelter from the spring hail showers!

(Photo: Alasdair Satchel)

The walk back from the broch provided an opportunity to investigate some of the structures of the ruined settlement of Ballygown and discussion of that name. There was even time at the end of the day for pupils to produce their own colourful representations of some of their favourite place-names of the area in paint!

The aim of the GOM project team is for the pilot workshop at Ulva to be developed and delivered to pupils at primary-school level in schools throughout the island in the coming months. I would like to thank the following people for the organisation of the Ulva Primary workshop and for advice on its initial development:

Alasdair Satchel, Project Coordinator, GOM project
Heather Waller, Head Teacher, Ulva Primary School, and Schools Coordinator, GOM project
Fiona Blakey, Cultural Coordinator, CAST (Argyll & Bute Council's Creative Arts Schools Team), and Cultural Coordinator for GOM project
Ruth Reid, Head Teacher, Rhunahaorine Primary School
Dr Simon Taylor, Research and Teaching Associate, Celtic & Gaelic, University of Glasgow

Alasdair Whyte, PhD Candidate, Celtic & Gaelic, University of Glasgow

In the Beginning was the Name
Selected Essays by Professor W.F.H. Nicolaisen

Published by the Scottish Place-Name Society, June 2011. 393 pages; price £12.00 plus P&P. ISBN: 978-0-9565172-2-7; printed by Shetland Litho, Lerwick.

Professor W.F.H. Nicolaisen has been an influential figure in name research on both sides of the Atlantic for the past half-century. In recognition of his achievements, the Scottish Place-Name Society has published this eclectic selection of essays. Essays on place-names from all parts of Scotland predominate but there are also essays which demonstrate Professor Nicolaisen's much wider interests in names from different parts of the world, names in literature and names in folklore. There is a full bibliography of all Professor Nicolaisen's publications at the end of the book.

For further information on how to order this comprehensive book please see the Scottish Place-Name Society website:
http://www.spns.org.uk/IBWNorderform.html

Nicolaisen Essay Prize

Some of the profits from sales of 'In the Beginning was the Name' are being used to fund an annual Student Essay Prize of £75 in honour of our Honorary President, Professor Bill Nicolaisen. Students are invited to submit original work of around 5,000 words on any onomastic topic by the deadline of 31 December. Submissions should be sent electronically to the Society's Convener, Carole Hough, at carole.hough@glasgow.ac.uk. The winner will also be invited to give a paper at an SPNS conference.

Grants of up to £125 for students of onomastics to attend conferences are still available from the **CULTURAL CONTACTS FUND** – information from http://www.spns.org.uk/News09.html#Cultural_Contacts_Fund or the current coordinator of the steering committee, Professor Carole Hough: carole.hough@glasgow.ac.uk

Cultural Contacts in the North Atlantic Region: The Evidence of Names

edited by Peder Gammeltoft, Carole Hough and Doreen Waugh (Lerwick, 2005; ISBN 0-9551838-0-4)

To clear remaining stocks, the price of this volume has now been reduced from £10.00 to £5.00, plus £2.50 postage and packing (UK only).

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The Place-Names of Fife,
by Simon Taylor with Gilbert Márkus

The fifth and final volume is now out. It includes discussion, an elements glossary, bibliography and appendices, and complements the four previous volumes on West Fife, Central Fife, St Andrews and the East Neuk, and North Fife. Orders for previous volumes as well as for Vol 5 can be made by telephone to the publisher Shaun Tyas at 01775 821542, by e-mail to pwatkins@pwatkinspublishing.fsnet.co.uk, or by writing (with cheque to 'Shaun Tyas') to 1 High Street, Donington, Lincolnshire PE11 4TA.

Normally £24 per volume, inc. UK p&p, but **£22 to SPNS members**.

JOURNAL OF SCOTTISH NAME STUDIES 6

Available free online at

http://www.clanntuirc.co.uk/JSNS/JSNS6.html

List of contents in Scottish Place-Name News No. 34

HOW MANY INCHES IN THE FORTH?
Rock- and Island-names in a Language Contact Zone

*A pictorial summary of **Simon Taylor's** talk at the Aberdeen conference. (Charts from NLS website* http://maps.nls.uk.*)*

The 81 features counted in East Lothian (ELO), Midlothian (MLO) and Fife include all non-tidal islands, rocks and skerries, besides the only tidal islands, **Cramond Island** and **Eyebroughy**. There are 81 altogether, of which 45 are in Fife and 36 in the Lothians. Of the total, nine are reasonably habitable: the **Bass Rock**, **Craigleith**, **Cramond Island**, **Inchcolm**, **Inchgarvie**, **Inchkeith**, **Inchmickery** and the **Isle of May**.

From John Adair's map '… for the Use of Seamen … the Frith of Forth …', 1703

The Firth of Forth has had many names, the oldest recorded being *Bodotria*. (About 80 AD, Tacitus, *Agricola*: '*Clota et Bodotria …*' – Clyde and Forth.) W J Watson suggested a formation on the same root as in Gaelic *bodhar* 'deaf', thus 'silent, sluggish one'. Andrew Breeze proposes emendation to **Boudra*, later **Bodra*, 'dirty one' (see Spring 2006 issue of Scottish Place-Name News). G R Isaac's opinion is that the underlying form is too doubtful to allow interpretation.

The name **Forth** seems to be quite separate: 'co *Foir<t>hiu*', *Lebor Bretnach* x 1057; 'rí *Forthe* na

fledól', 'king of the Forth of the carousing', x 1120. Watson offered an underlying Celtic *uo-rit-ia* 'slow-running one'. A description of Scotland compiled in the 1180s (*De Situ Albanie*) noted that its names were in Gaelic *Froth,* in British/Welsh *Werid,* and in French *Scottewatre*, as it divided the kingdoms of the Scots and English.

The 13th century Old Norse *Orkneyinga Saga* calls the firth *Myrkvafjörðr*, the *myrkvi* probably being the notorious haar rather than darkness.

Cramond Island a.k.a. Levery

A charter of 1182-3 (Inchcolm Charters no. VI) records a grant that gave Inchcolm Abbey 'the island … in front of the harbour of *Caramund* (Cramond)'. A later copy of a document of 1207 (Inchcolm Charters no. IX) names it *Leverith*. In the 15th century *Scotochronicon*, it is *Levery,* referring to an offer to Alexander III, about 1280 x 1286, by some rich Lombards of inward investment in developing new trading settlements, in return for special privileges. (The offer was turned down.)

A British word *leverith*, closely related to Welsh *llefrith* 'milk, fresh milk', suggesting good grazing for dairy cattle on the island? (Breeze, Andrew, 1999, 'Some Celtic Place-Names of Scotland ...', *Scottish Language* 18, 34-51).

Inchcolm

The 15th century copy of Inchcolm Charter no. 1 (1162 x 1169) gives alternative names '(church of) *Sancti Columbe de Insula*' and *Insula Emonia*. In a document of 1330 it is *Colmeshynche. Inchcolme* appears on a chart of 1583. *Emonia* probably derives from Old Gaelic *emon* 'twin', referring to the formerly twin islands joined only at low tide. (Gilbert Márkus in *Innes Review* 55, 1-9.) **Port**

Haven on the nearby mainland shore (*Portevin* 1440s) probably means 'harbour of Emonia / Inchcolm.

The likely reason for the naming of the island after Columba is that it offered shelter on a route between Iona and Lindisfarne after the foundation there of a daughter religious community by Aedán in the early 630s.
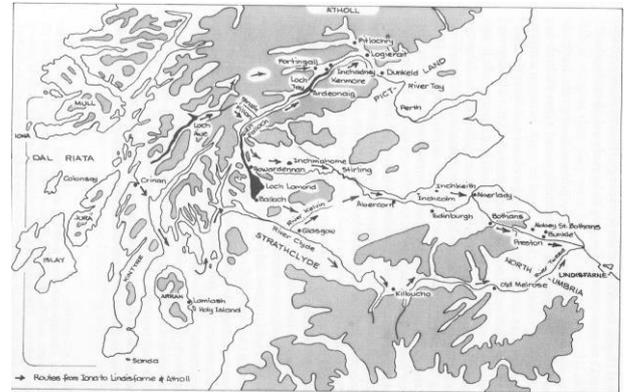

From Taylor 1999, '7th-c. Iona Abbots in Scottish Place-names' in Spes Scottorum: Hope of the Scots *ed. Broun and Clancy.*

Inchkeith

Inchkeith may be named after *Coeddi/Ceti,* Bishop of Iona, who died in 712. He was commemorated in place-names in Atholl, but his name is English; compare *Ceadda* (Chad, bishop of Mercia, who died in 672. In a 12th century life of St Serf, Sts Serf and *Edheunanus* (Adamnán) met '*ad insulam Ked*'.

The **Norse island names** in the firth are **Fidra** (certain), **May** (probable) and possibly **Bass** and (**Inch)mickery**.

Fidra

Futheray 1449. Old Norse *fuð-ar* 'backside, anus' + *ey* 'island' (cf Furness, Cumbria, *Fotherey* c.1327 + *nes)* 'Toilet island'??

Isle of May *a.k.a.* May Island

Fratr\<es\> de *Mai* 1140 x 1153; Sancto Yðernino de *Mai* 1140 x 1159; í *Máeyjum,* í *Máeyjar* c. 1200, *Orkneyinga Saga.* 'Gull islands' or a 'Plain'? Old Norse *má* 'gull + *ey* 'island'; but possibly a Norse re-interpretation of Gaelic *magh* 'plain'?

Bass Rock

Several possibilities. *Bas*, c. 1200, c. 1420. Coates (2009) tentatively suggests a proto-Semitic (e.g. Phoenician) origin; compare unexplained *Batz* island (*Enez Vaz*) off Roscoff, Brittany (earlier *Battha*, *Baz*). Or Old Norse *báss* 'stall in a cowshed', 'cowshed', or Scots *buss* 'a ledge of rocks projecting into the sea' or *boss/bos* 'projection, a round mass'?

Inchmickery

Mickry 1630, \<M\>*ickery* 1642, *Muckrie* 1683, *Micre Inch* 1710, *Mickry Isle* 1828, *Mickery* and *Inchmickery* OS Name Book 77, 1850s. Of Old Norse origin, ending in *ey* 'island'?

A farmyard in the Firth ...

The **Cow & Calves** rocks (Cramond parish) were *Muckrieston* 1683 and *Stone* 1703. But the **Oxcars** (Aberdour) were already *Oxscaris* in 1621. Other farmyard names include the **Lamb** (off North Berwick), **Haystack** south-west of Inchcolm (*Haystake* 1642) and perhaps **Bass** and *Levery*. At the other animal extreme the *Scotochronicon* records that an English flagship was wrecked on 1335 on rocks called *le Wolffis* ('the Wolves').

... and an unlikely place of detention?

John Marr's 'East Coast' c. 1734 (in left column) has *Prison* for **Car Craig** close to Inchcolm. *Carkry* 1642, *Carcraig* 1683, *Carkry* 1753, *Carcraig* 1775: evidently it has been seen as Latin *carcer* 'prison' and duly translated.