Scottish Gaelic Sannda and Its Aliases
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§1 Introduction
The Scottish Gaelic names Àbhainn, Sannda and An Spàin all denote the small island that lies off the southern tip of Kintyre, within the parish of Southend. The following article looks at the history and etymology of these forms.¹

§2 Avona Porticosa
Francis Groome’s *Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland* (1884, 93) describes Aven as ‘a modern provincial abbreviation of “Avona Porticosa”, the ancient name of the island Sanda in Southend parish, Argyllshire.’ Of the island’s natural harbour, his 1896 edition states that:

> [It] was a common station of the Scandinavian fleets during the contests for the possession of Kintyre and The Hebrides. The island, in this connection, was then called Avona Porticosa – a name which it still retains, in the abbreviated form of Avon, among the Highlanders; but it figures, under its more proper name of Sanda, in the more ancient record of Adamnan’s *Life of Columba*.

Francis Groome, *Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland*, 1896, 318

Similar descriptions go back to the late 18th century:

SANDA, an island, in the parish of Southend, district of Cantyre, county of Argyll; containing 11 inhabitants. This is a small island, lying near the outer extremity of the peninsula of Cantyre, and measuring about a mile and a half in length and half a mile in breadth; its name is of Scandinavian origin, and signifies ‘Sand Island.’ It possesses a good natural harbour, although between the island and the main land the sea is extremely turbulent and dangerous, and for two or three months in the year the place cannot be approached by a small boat. Sanda was a common station for the Scandinavian fleets during the contests so long carried on for the possession of Cantyre and the neighbouring islands.


¹ A version of this article was presented at the Scottish Place-Name Society’s one-day conference at the University of Glasgow on the 7th November 2009.
The island of Sanda, separated from the main land by a channel three miles across, is of irregular form, about four miles in circumference, and being covered with good pasture, serves the purpose of a large sheepfarm. It has passed, at different times, under different names, though its present appellation is considered the most ancient, on the authority of Adomnan, Abbot of Iona, who wrote the life of St. Columba in the year 680. During the visits of the Scandinavians to these coasts, and their attacks upon the district for the possession of Cantyre and the adjacent islands, Sanda, according to the historian Buchanan, was an important station for their fleets; when the Danish fleet assembled here the isle was called Avona Porticosa, and by the natives it is still termed Aven. The sound is much frequented for its anchorage by small vessels sailing up the Frith of Clyde, which has about twelve fathoms of water at three miles from the shore.

At the time [Sanda] was the rendezvous of the Danish fleet, it was called Avona Porticosa; and is still called Aven by the Highlanders. Sanda, however, is the more ancient name, as appears from the life of St Columba, written by Adomnan, Abbot of Iona, in the year 680. New Statistical Account, 1834–45, Vol. 7: Argyll, Southend, 415

[Sanda’s] ancient importance, as the station of the Scandinavian fleets during the contests for the possession of Cantyre and the neighbouring islands, is well known; and the anchorage is still frequented by the smaller classes of vessels which navigate the Clyde.

John Macculloch, A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland, 1819 II, 440

In former days, this anchorage was of more importance than it is now; Sanda having been a common station for the Scandinavian fleets during the contests so long carried on for the possession of Cantyre and the neighbouring islands. The name Avona and Avon, by which it was known, is a corruption of the Danish Hafn, a haven.

John Macculloch, The Highlands and Western Isles of Scotland, 1824 II, 68–69

Sunda island, above a mile and a half in length, and half a mile in breadth, is noted as the place of rendezvous for the Danish fleet, in their descents on those coasts: hence it was called Avona Porticosa...

James Playfair, A Geographical and Statistical Description of Scotland, 1819 II, 7

Not far from this rock is the island of Sanda, above a mile and a half in length, and half a mile in breadth, famed as the place of rendezvous for the Danish fleet, in their excursions to these coasts. Hence it went under the name of Avona Porticosa, and is still sometimes called Aven. Sanda, however, is the more ancient, as well as the more common name as appears from St Columba’s life by Adomnan.


The salient elements within these accounts are that the primary name of the island is Sanda §3, meaning ‘sand’; the island offers good anchorage or harbourage, which was formerly used by the Scandinavians; the island was previously known as Avona Porticosa, or Avon (Aven) for short. The form Sanda, however, is seen as the older name, ‘as appears from St Columba’s life’ (SAS); and Macculloch takes the name Avon to be from the Danish word ‘Hafn, a haven’.

A considerable degree of interdependence is apparent between these descriptions, but all would appear to go back ultimately, although not necessarily directly, to George Buchanan’s description of 1582:

‘From the Promontory of Kintyre a little over a mile lies Avona, i.e. “well supplied with a harbour”; having got that name from the anchoring of ships, because, when the Danes held the islands, their fleets would set course for it.’

2 Sutton 2009, §32: A promontorio Cantiera paullo plus mille passus abest Avona, id est portuosa. Id cognomen adepta ab statione navium, quod cum Dani insulas tenebant, ad eam classes eorum cursus dirigebant (<http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/scothist/1lat.html#I.32>); ‘From the promontory of Cantyre, a little more than a mile, lies Avona, now Sanda, called Portouusa, i.e., fit for a port. It got that name from being a road for ships, for when the Danes possessed those islands their fleets directed their course thither for shelter’ (<http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/...>
Buchanan’s *portuosa* is Lat. *portúōsa* f. adj. ‘full of harbours, or well supplied with a harbour’ and is an attempt at giving the meaning of *Avona*, according to its folk etymology. The *Avona Porticosa* of later descriptions is thus explained as a truncation of Buchanan’s ‘Avona, id est, portuosa’, as was correctly deduced by John MacMaster Campbell (1924, 11) in his essay, ‘The Island and House of Sanda’.

Buchanan’s own version may be based upon Dean Donald Monro’s description of 1549:4

Avyn. Befor the south poyn of the promontory of Kyntyre, lyes be ane myle of sea, ane ilye neire ane myle lange, callit the ilye Avyn, quhilk ilye is obtained that name fra the armies of Denmark, quhilkis armies callit it in their leid Havin, it is inhabit and manurit, and guid for shippis to lay one ankers.

Donald Monro, *Description of the western isles of Scotland*, called Hybrides ... 1549, 1774, 6

‘Avyn. To the extent of one sea mile off the southern promontory of Kintyre lies an island nearly a mile long called the Isle Avyn, which island obtained that name from Denmark’s armies, which armies called it Havin in their language; it is inhabited and fertile and good for ships to lie at anchor.’5

4 scotist/1eng.html#l.32>). Aikman (1827, 43) translates: ‘Little more than a mile from the promontory of Cantyre lies Avona, [now Sanda,] that is Portuosa, full of havens, a name affixed on account of its being a naval station; for, when the Danes had possession of these islands, it was the general rendezvous for their fleets.’

5 A particularly debased form of Buchanan’s *Avona Portuosa*, whose development (presumably based upon both a mistranscription and a supposed etymology) defies reconstruction, occurs in an anonymous description of the first half of the 17th century: “And eastward from Dunawardie two mylls off the land there is ane litle Chappell ... (from ‘Ane Description of Certaine Pairs of the Highlands of Scotland’ in Mitchell 1907–08 II, 144–92: 187; Mitchell (ibid., xxiii) notes that ‘Sibbald says in his Repertory of Manuscripts, p. 22, that this was a communication to Robert Gordon, and Bishop Nicholson says that it was “by a Native”).

This is the view of R.W. Munro (2002, 291).

An almost identical version is printed in MacFarlane’s *Geographical Collections*.

Our oldest source, however, is John of Fordun (1384 x 1387, Skene 1871–72 I, xiv).6 His list, *de insulis Scotiae*, includes:

Insula Awyne, ubi cella Sancti Anniani, ibique pro transgressoribus refugium.

Walter Goodall’s 1759 edition [Edinburgh College Library MS]: *Joannis de Fordun Scotichronicon* I, lib. ii, cap. x, 45

‘The Isle of Awyne, where the chapel of St Adomnán is, and where there is a refuge for transgressors.’

In other MSS, this reads:

Insula Awryne, ubi capella sancti Sannani, ibique pro transgressoribus refugium.7


‘Avyn. Befor the south poyn of the promontory of Kyntyre lyes be ane myle of sea, ane ilye neire ane myle lange callit the ilye Avyn quhilk ilye is obtinitt that name fra the armies of Denmark, quhilkis armies callit it in their leid Havin. It is inhabit and manurit and guid for shippis to lay one ankers.’ (Donald Monro, *A Description of the western isles of Scotland by Mr. Donald Monro, quho travelled through maney of the westerne isles of Scotland*).

While Buchanan is known to have used John of Fordun as a source for his own history (Innes [1729] 1885, 201–15), this was not the case in his preliminary description of Scotland. Thomas Pennant (1772, 218 and note) summarises both Buchanan and Monro: ‘Sandra, or Avyn, or island of the harbours’.

7 *Averyne* (Sandy), where is the chapel of Saint Sannan, and a sanctuary for transgressors” (Skene 1871–72 II, 39; Skene writes *Averyne* in his notes (p. 386)). Skene gives a footnote to two other MS readings (including Trinity College’s) of the saint’s name, but not of the place-name (ibid I, 43). In his (later) edition of *Vita Columbae*, however, Skene (1874, cxlviii) quotes Goodall’s 1759 edition: ‘Insula
Of equal importance is the title of a c.1644–51 description of the island (see Appendix), which contains our earliest genuinely Gaelic form of the name:

Insulae Sandae seu Avonae, Hibernice Abhuinn, Brevis Descriptio. R. P. fratri Edmundi mac Cana
‘A short description of the Island of Sanda, or Avon, in Irish Abhuinn, by the Reverend Father, Brother Edmund MacCana’

The latest of our early forms are Robert Gordon c.1636–52 (map of Kintyre: Cantyre) Yl. Aven or Sanda and Blaeu 1654 (surveyed by Timothy Pont between 1583–96) Aron or Sanda. In addition to his map’s Aven, Blaeu’s texts give Latinised Avona and Avena. For the modern form and etymology of this name, see §5.

Awn ...’, as above. The editors of Origines Parochiales Scotiae (II, 9) translate ‘Isle Awnyn’, also following Goodall’s edition.

8 The editors of Origines Parochiales Scotiae (I, 9) state that Timothy Pont gives ‘Yl Avon or Sanda’; however, although Yl. occurs frequently in island names given by Pont, this is not the case in this instance on the map that I have had access to: Stone 1991, Plate 19, and NLS <http://www.nls.uk/maps/atlas/blaeu/page.cfm?id=81>. Martin Martin (1703, 228) gives ‘The Isle Aven’. KAS (1938, 5) gives forms cited in Origines Parochialis Scotiae: Aven, Avon, Avona Porticosa, adding, ‘Old Name for Sanda’.

9 Blaeu’s description (f. 119) of Sanda is taken directly from George Buchanan: ‘A promontorio Cantyre paulo plus mille passus abest Avena / Passus mille, sua naves statione receptans; // Dirigeret cum Dani insulas tenebant, ad eam classe Promontorium etiam Avena vide in tabula Kanteræ abscessit Avena / Passus mille, sua naves statione receptans; // Dirigeret cum Dani insulas tenebant, ad eam classe Promontorium etiam Avena vide in tabula Kanteræ’.

10 For the modern form and etymology of Sandey, see §3. Sandey is given in error in Gammeltoft 2006, 77.

§3 Sandey
The island is known as Sandey in Hákon Hákonsson’s Saga, written shortly after King Hákon’s death in 1263:

Eftir þat sigldi Hakon konungr vndan Melansey ok laa vm nottina vndir Hersey ok þadan vndir Sandey ok seu til Satirismula ok kom vm naatti-na nordr vndir Gudey. þadan sigldi hann vt i Jlarsund ok laa þar .ij. nætr.

Similarly, in Magnus Barefoot’s Saga, in Heimskringla, written c.1230 of events about the turn of the 11th century (1093–1103):

Vitt bar snjallr á sletta Sandey konungr randir

Linder and Haggson’s edition:
‘Saga Magnús konungs berfœtts’, Heimskringla, §10

Vitt bar snjallr a sletta Sandey konungr randir

Finnur Jónsson’s edition:
[Magnus Barefoot’s Saga], Eirspennill, Chap. 7, 118

10 In 1264–65 by Sturla Dórnason (Pulsiano and Wolf 1993, 259).
11 The reference HSH.326 Sandey in Gammeltoft 2006, 67, 77 is expanded in error as in the Eirspennill redaction.
12 Bremner 1923, 251 (after Dasent [1894] 1997 II, chap, 326, p. 362): ‘After that king Hacon sailed away from Holy Island, Lamlash, and lay during the night off Arran and then off Sanda and so to the Mull of Kintyre and came during the night northwards off Gigha; then he sailed out into the Sound of Islay and lay there two nights.’

13 An older version occurs in Morkinskinna, 317 §132: ‘Vitt beirt snār asletha / Sandey konungr randir’.
14 The reference MSB.9 Sandey is given in error in Gammeltoft 2006, 77.
‘The valiant king bore far the shields upon the plain of Sansey\textsuperscript{15}

Campbell (1924, 11) notes – without expansion – that ‘[t]he island is on occasion written of as Sanderey’,\textsuperscript{16} taking it to be an ‘elaboration of the shorter name’ and echoing Paterson and Renwick’s (1900, 203) ‘Another name for Sanza is Sanderey, which may mean Sand eyr ey, Sand beach island …’ However, these assertions appear to be the result of confusion with a superficially similar name or names in the Outer Hebrides: Captain Thomas (1880, 365) states that ‘[i]n 1202 Olaf was in Sanday (Sandarey, Barra; or Sand (Sandar), North Uist).’\textsuperscript{17} Thomas’s reference is to Hrafn’s Saga:\textsuperscript{18}

\begin{quote}

\textit{Peitr lágvi við Suðreyjar i góðu lægi nökkurar nætr. Pá réð fyrir Suðreyjum Óláfr konungr.}

\textit{‘Hrafns Saga’ (Helgadóttir 1987, 21–22)}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Collectanea de Rebus Albanicis}, 1847, 348: ‘The valiant king bore far and wide / The shields upon the plain / Isle of Sandey.’

\textsuperscript{16} So KAS 1938, 29.

\textsuperscript{17} Thomas’s view is repeated in the form of a letter published posthumously by Vigfussen in his \textit{Icelandic Sagas} (1887, xxxvii note 1) and cited verbatim in Tjomsland 1951, 59–60. (Vigfussen (ibid., xxxviii) refers to Thomas’s 1880 article as ‘Proc. Antiq. Scot. Vol. XI’, in error for ‘... XIV’.)

\textsuperscript{18} Specifically to Vigfusson’s edition of Hrafn’s Saga (1878 II, 292, Chap. 11): ‘Þessu næst kómu þeir skipi sínu í góða höfn við ey þá, er Sandey heitir, ok þar reistu kaupmenn hafnarmark. Svá segir Grímr:

\begin{quote}

Hér hefir beitt at brattri
Bótólfr skipi fljótu,
áðr fell sær um söðir,
Sandeyju, skæ branda.

Reisti sjálfr, ok sýsti,
snarr félægri harra
hafnarmark, fyrir hrefnis
happsverk gota sterkan.

Peitr lágvi við Suðreyjar í góðu lægi nökkurar nætr. Pá réð fyrir Suðreyjum Óláfr konungr.

\textit{‘Hrafns Saga’ (Helgadóttir 1987, 21–22)}
\end{quote}
‘After that they came into a good harbor on an island called Sandey, and there the merchants raised a harbor mark.

‘Grim said:

Here Botolf has brought the swift ship to the steep Sandey
After the strong waves powerfully washed the sides of the ship.
The brave companion of kings himself raised the harbor mark
And performed a good deed for the strong ship.

‘They lay at anchor off the Sudreys for some nights. King Olaf ruled the Sudreys at this time.’

(Tjomsland 1951, 28–29)²

Apart, however, from Olaf’s connection with Lewis – which, in Thomas’s view (loc. cit.) ‘probably included the whole Long Island or Outer Hebrides’ – there is no reason to associate Hrafn’s Saga’s Sandey with either the Barra or Uist name. Thomas’s Sandarey is ScG Sanndraigh, an island lying between Vatersay and Pabbay, south of Barra. His North Uist Sandar is a speculative plural (Norse) form, i.e. ‘[the] sands’: the name survives in Eng. Clachan Sands (NF873765), OS1882 Clachan Sanda, and ScG Clachan Shannnda, which Iain Mac an Tàilleir (Mac an Tàilleir, s.n. Clachan Sands) translates as ‘The churchyard of Sanda’, which is “sand river”, from Norse. However, besides there being no river at the location, ScG [sâûNdâ]²² is genitive of *Sannd, from ON Sand acc. ‘[the] sand’. Certainly, ScG Sanndraigh is not derived from ON Sand-ey ‘sand-isle’, which consists of the stem form of sandr m. ‘sand’ and ey f. ‘island’, and which yields ScG Sanndalgh off Canna in the Small Isles and Sannda off Kintyre (see below).²³

²¹ A translation of the prose element is also found in Anderson 1922 II, 359: ‘Next, they came into good harbourage, beside an island that is called Sandey and there the merchants raised a harbour mark … They lay beside the Hebrides, at anchor, for some nights. King Olaf ruled then over the Hebrides.’

²² Lenited in the context of ScG Clachan Shannnda [k¹lAaxan ‘hâûNd]a (Eairdisidh MacGilleathain, Solas); as opposed to a ScG *[sâûNd], for ON Sand-a ‘sand-river’. Clesasy and Vigfusson (1874 s.v.) note the frequent use of Icelandic sandr (sg) and sandar (pl.), as well as compound forms, in local place-names in Iceland. On the west of North Uist, unrelated OS 1881 Sandary (NF7367) is a shieling name in ON –argt nt.; so also Horsary and Loch Dsvary, to the west of Sandary.

²³ The ScG reflex of ON -ey ‘island’ in island names in the southern Inner Hebrides is usually -e [-a]. ScG Sanndraigh (Blaeu 1654 Sandrera, Monro [1549] 1774, 30 Sandey, [1549] 2002, 324 idem) is probably from ON Sand-eyrrey ‘[the] island of the sand-(gravel)bank’, with gen. sg. of eyr f. ‘(gravel)bank’, which is suitable topographically.

Hrafn’s Saga’s Sandey, then, is likely to refer to one of these two islands: Sanndaigh Canna or Sannda Kintyre. Alan Anderson tentatively suggests Sanndaigh (1922 II, 787).²⁴ Guðrún Helgadóttir (1987, 76) goes further, supporting the identifiication by noting the suitability of the island as a place of residence for a Highland chieftain (whom Hrafn and his company call upon).²⁵ However, a similar, perhaps better, case could be made on this basis in conjunction with Kintyre’s Sannda. Nor is the saga evidence incontrovertible. At the start of their summer journey from Iceland to Norway, Hrafn and his companions spend a long time at sea, before getting a favourable wind. Eventually, they are driven southwards until they come across birds from Ireland and are finally carried to Scotland, where they lie fyrir Stauri ‘off [the] Staurr’.²⁶ A southerly gale drives them in a sea so strong it is like nothing experienced even undan Hvarfinu á Skotlandi ‘off Cape Wrath in Scotland’. They avoid shipwreck via miraculous intervention and proceed through the Hebrides, Hrafn acting as pilot, until they arrive at Sandey. The same voyage is recounted, although in far less detail, in Bishop Gudmund’s Saga (Vigfusson 2002, 324 idem).
1905, 613): a north-westerly wind drives the company southwards to Hirtrí (St Kilda), after which they continue south by Ireland, sailing south of Ireland until they come up against stormy weather. Having made appropriate vows, the storm abates and they are able to sail directly to Norway. From the detail of these two accounts, it would appear that neither Sanndaigh Canna nor Sannda Kintyre can be ruled out entirely.

Kintyre’s Sannda appears in Latin in texts at the beginning and end of the 17th century: in Retours, (Argyll 21) 1619 20 solidatis terrarum insulae de Sanda and (Argyll 93) 1695 20 solidatias terrarum insulae de Sanda; and in a number of documents relating to the Franciscan mission to Scotland in the early part of the century: in Edmund MacCana’s description of the island (see Appendix) c.1644–51 (gen.) Insula Sanda, (nom.) Insula Sanda, Sanda; in a letter from Patrick Hegarty to Hugh de Burgo (Giblin 1664, 33) 1624 in Sandam insulam; in a report by Cornelius Ward (ibid., 50) 1625, or soon after, in Sandam insulam; and in a report by Cornelius Ward (ibid., 149) post 1631 Sanda insula.

In addition to Blaeu 1654 and Gordon c.1636–52 (see above), map forms include Moll 1745 Sanda I., Roy 1747–55 Sanda I, van Keulen c.1780 Sana I., Thomson 1820 Island of Sanda and OS 1869 Island Sanda.

Scots/Eng. Sannda25 and Sanda Island26 are, of course, from ScG Sannda, Kintyre Gaelic /Sannda/ (Holmer 1962: 17, recorded 1937/38),27 a loan-name from ON Sand-e (see above). The Norse name presumably refers to the nature of the north-facing bay, opposite Kintyre, which is sandy.28

Hamish Haswell-Smith’s (2004, 5) suggested derivation from ‘ON sandtang [leg. sand-tang] “sandspit”’ is unlikely from a topographical point of view and is formally impossible from a phonological one.

The notion that the name Sannda goes back to Adomnán §2 begins with the first Statistical Account. It is unclear, however, since the name in any form is not mentioned in Vita Columbae, how the idea developed.29

§4 An Spain

Campbell (1924, 11) comments that ScG An Spain [leg. An Spáin, with ScG spáin ‘spoon’) or Scots/Eng. The Spoon ‘is known to the people on the south of Arran’ – from where the eastern end of Sannda resembles the bowl and the western end the handle of an upturned spoon – while Duncan Colville (KAS 1938, 29 and 31) notes that An Spáin [sic] or Spoon Island is ‘[s]aid to be used by mariners for Sanda Island’, for ‘Sanda resembles a spoon when seen from Pladda or Ireland’ (p. 31).30 Whether the Gaelic or English form here came first is perhaps open to question.

§5 Abhainn

While Avona Porticosa §2 is a ghost name,31 Buchanan’s Avona is a latinised form of MacCan’s c.1644–51 Abhuinn (MS Abhuin, see Appendix), modern Abhainn.32

25 Martin 2009, 31: ‘It ought to be Old Scandinavian Sandey, sandy island, but it is hard to see why such a name would be bestowed on a rocky island, unless it could relate to the sandy seabed at the approaches to the harbour on the north side of the island.’ For an aerial view, see Google Earth (<http://earth.google.co.uk/): Sanda, UK.

26 At any rate, the island is probably unlikely to have borne a Norse name during the seventh century.

27 Which has otherwise not been identified with certainty. Anderson and Anderson (1991, lxiv) suggest possibly Colonsay; Dr Reeves and Wentworth Huysse suggest Shuna (cited in Campbell loc. cit.).

28 Martin 2009, 31: ‘Chlansman’ air tir air eilean Shanna (‘the first Clansman was aground on the island of Sannda’). Less appropriately, Skene (1871–72 II, 39) writes Sanday and the website <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanda Island> gives Gaelic Sanndaigh (for the final syllable, see note 21, above). ON -nd is treated in Scottish Gaelic as an (originally geminate) unlenited non-palatalised (ndl – velarised dental nasal – plus stop. The preceding stressed vowel is lengthened (diphthongised) in this environment in most Scottish Gaelic dialects, e.g. Sanndaig [sândítíːk] (Lewis; Cox 2002 s.n.) (O’Rahilly 1976, 49–52; Ó Baoill 1990, 131; Cox 2000, 213–16), the exceptions being the dialects of Argyllshire, Arran, East Perthshire and parts of Aberdeenshire (Grann 2000, 53–54, 138; SGDS, e.g. items 163, 196, 329).

29 E.g. Fraser-Macintosh 1895, 36: ‘The island of Sanda, of old Avon ...’.

30 E.g. Holmer 1957, 49.

31 capella sancti Sanniani (Skene 1871–72 I, 43; Wolfenbüttel MS).

32 Skene (1871–72 II, 386) concludes the dedication is to Senchan; the editors of Origines Parchiales Scotiae (II, 9 and note 12) to Ninian. Edmund MacCana (c.1644–51) is clear that the chapel was dedicated to St Ninian and that the sons of a most holy man, Senchan, were buried there (see Appendix).

33 Pladda lies just off the south-east coast of Arran. (There is no connection between the name An Spáin and Uri Geller, famous for his spoon bending, who early in 2009 bought The Lamb, an uninhabited lump of volcanic rock in the Firth of Forth (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/edinburgh_and_east/7883836.stm> – accessed 28/10/09).)

34 Parallel to the term ghost word – a word that has entered the language through the perpetuation, in dictionaries etc., of an error (Collins) – the term ghost name refers to a name that has entered the nomenclature through the perpetuation, in written or oral sources, of an error.
Scottish Gaelic “abhainn” which means a river’ (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanda_Island>). However, because (a) there are no rivers on the island and (b) because the Gaelic term for the stream (i.e. race or current) of the description is sruth — off the Mull of Kintyre, specifically Sruth na Maiste.<sup>32</sup> Formally, the derivation would also be ruled out phonologically because of the mismatch between the long stressed vowel of the place-name, on the one hand, and the short vowel of the appellative, on the other, but see the discussion on vowel length below §10.

§8 ScG **abhainn** ‘oven’

Haswell-Smith (2004, 8) notes that ‘[t]he central valley [in the island] traps the heat as it is sheltered from all the prevailing winds.’ The valley is now

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35 Although this has not prevented the supposed lexical sense of the name of the island being extended to ‘current’ in the case of ‘Ahuinn (le courant)’ (<http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanda_%28%C3%89cosse%29>).

36 Literally ‘the stream of A’ Mhaol (‘the null’) (cf. The Sea of Moyle). Specifically between Kintyre and Sanda, this is ‘Tiompanach, The. The name given to the swift current in the Sound of Sanda’ (KAS 1938, 32), ScG An Tiompanach (Dömhnall Iain MacAonghais, Scrp: ‘an sruth aig ceann an iar an eilein’ (‘the current at the western end of the island’, pers. comm.). Tiompan is used occasionally of hills, e.g. Tiompaig [‘Thiumpâig] of a headland or bluff (Lewis; Cox 2002, 381), Maosil an Tiompan (Loch Broom; Watson 1976, 247), Knocktpomin (Dumfries and Galloway; Watson 1924, 144), Màn an tiompan (Gilles 1906, 218) and possibly Tiompan (Skye; Forbes 1923, 435), and derives, via OG tîmpân ’tymbrel, drum; some kind of stringed instrument’, from Lat. tympanum (DIL). John Purser (pers. comm.) assures me that tiompan refers historically only to a stringed instrument in Scottish Gaelic tradition (see also Purser 2007, 35). In place-names, however, the sense of hill may have arisen via biblical usage: while the Old Testament was translated into Gaelic – published between 1783–1801 – from Hebrew which uses Hebrew tôph ’tymbrel, tambourine’, Gaelic tiompan acc. sg. (Job 21:12; Psalms 81:2), tiompan dat. sg. (Psalms 149:3; 150:4) and tiompanas–dat. pl. (Exodus 15:20, Judges 11.34, 2 Samuel 6:5, 1 Chron 13:8) are used consistently for the Latin Vulgate’s tympanum acc. sg. (Job 21:12; Psalms 81:2), tympano dat. sg. (Psalms 149:3, 150:4) and tympanon dat. pl. (Exodus 15:20, Judges 11.34, 2 Samuel 6:5, 1 Chron 13:8), all of which are rendered timbrel in the King James Version. Cormac’s 10th-century definition, or rather etymology, of tiompan reads, ‘Tímpán .i. tim (.i. bocc [added from another MS]) .i. sail, bán , bhr anú bís inri. Uil quasi simpian a symphonia ión behindiu.’ (Meyer 1994, 109 §1258) (‘Tímpán, i.e. plant (i.e. soft), i.e. [like] willow + [?]bright, i.e. it is made of copper, or like tîmpán from symphonia, i.e. from the sweetness of sound.’). Whether *An Tiompanach (e. tiompan = suffix of place (Cox 2002, 60)) is a transferred name and once referred to a headland or nearby hill is unknown; alternatively, it may have referred to eddies or whirlpools in the current, in the same way that ScG coire ‘cauldron’ has been used in a similar sense elsewhere, e.g. Coire Bhreacain. However, its use of the name as the posterior = ‘Dreasaich. [‘Scythe lore: keep your body bowed (arched) and stick your bottom out. Tiumpan = posterior = rear.’] (Alexander Carmichael’s fieldwork notes (Stiuibhart 2009, 142)).
called *Lag nan Gàidheal* ‘the hollow of the Gaels’ (OS 1869 *Lag nan Gaelt*; KAS 24, idem), but we might speculate that it was once called ‘the oven’. It is not known what the Southend Gaelic form of the Gaelic word for ‘oven’ was, but were it anything like Jura Gaelic *òbhan* [ˈo̞vən] (with a non-nasal stressed vowel (George Jones, pers. comm.), as opposed to, for example, Lewis Gaelic *Àbhainn* [ˈa̞vən]), it might conceivably have developed into *Àbhainn*. However, such a name would be relatively recent and would be more likely to occur along with its article. For these reasons, ScG *àmhainn*, or similar, may be excluded from further consideration.

§9 ON *hófr* ‘hoof’ or ON *háfr* ‘bag-net’ *Àbhainn* might derive from an Old Norse form with a suffixed article, e.g. ON *Hófinn* acc. ‘the hoof’, with *hófr* m., 43 or ON *Háfinn* acc. ‘the bag-net’, with *háfr* m., 44 either of which might have been applied, on account of its shape, to the central valley, or perhaps even the bay itself. With loss of initial *h*, and with or without *o* ~ *a* alternation, either form might yield *Àbhainn*.

§10 ON *hófn*

Mono implicitly and Macculloch explicitly, however, take the name to be from ‘Danish *havni*/*hafni*’ (i.e. ON *hǫfn* ‘haven, harbour’). 45 Indeed, one of the most significant physical features concerning the island is the bay, which offers protection from both south-westerlies and strong tidal currents (South na Maolé §7, and An Tionpanach note 42), affording safe anchorage and a beach where boats can be dragged clear of the water. ON *hófn* f. ‘haven’ is, therefore, a natural candidate for a derivation of *Àbhainn*. 46 ON *hǫfn* occurs in several place-names in the Hebrides, e.g. *Tannabhagh* (Lewis), *Tammnairagh* (Lewis and the Summer Isles), *Na Hamhín* (Eriskay and Mull) and *Port na h-Abhainn(e)* (earlier *Port na h-Abhann*; Islay) (Cox 2008). As in *Port na h-Abhainn(e)*, though, we should expect a short stressed vowel here, which would nominally rule out *hǫfn*’s candidacy. 47

43 Cf. Mod. Norwegian *Havne* and *Hestehoven* (More og Romsdal; id. 269358 and 261897, respectively <http://www.edd.uio.no/perl/search/search.cgi>.

44 A word borrowed into Scottish Gaelic (Oftedal 1956, 106).

45 So KAS (1938, 19): ‘Havin. Name given to Sanda by the Scandinavians.’

46 In spite of the evidence from John of Fordun to Groome §2, there is no justification for saying that ‘The Norse sometimes referred to Sanda as ‘Haven’ because it provided a reasonable offshore haven or harbour for boats’ (Haswell-Smith 2003, 3).

47 The diphthongisation in *Tammnairagh* and *Na Hamhín* is due to the vocalisation of the Early Gaelic nasal fricative *mh* [ʊ̞] < ON *mj* (ibid., 54–55).

Lengthening of short stressed vowels, however, has been recorded in the Gaelic dialect of Kintyre. Neil MacDougall of Carradale was recorded by Derick Thomson in 1951 for the Linguistic Survey of Scotland (for whose Gaelic results, see the *Survey of the Gaelic Dialects of Scotland* (SGDS)). The resulting tapes were transcribed by Anthony Dilworth – point 36 throughout – who marks a degree of lengthening in some originally (and, elsewhere, normally) short stressed vowels: half-long, with several examples before *-r*, in *arbhár* (SGDS item 54), *břadan* (120), *carbád* (153), *farsiung* (399) and *marbh* (602); long in *faśdáidh* (400); but short in *aran* (53) and short before the nasal labio-dental fricative in *amharc* (36) 48 and *sgamhan* (758). Due to a misunderstanding – as Cathair Ó Dochartaigh, SGDS editor, explains (ibid. I, 85) – MacDougall was also interviewed using the Survey’s questionnaire by Fred MacAulay in 1954. Ó Dochartaigh remarks that there are a number of ‘striking differences’ between Dilworth’s and MacAulay’s transcriptions. Some of these, he continues, ‘may be due to the quality of the tape recording used for point 36 [which was rather poor], others to the fact that [Dilworth] had been working on dialects of the north-centre mainland and was not familiar with Kintyre Gaelic.’ For all of the above items (although *faśdáidh* was not recorded), MacAulay – point 37 throughout – gives short vowels.

Anthony Dilworth, however, also transcribed tapes for the Survey – point 38 throughout – of John Taylor of Muasdale, recorded by Derick Thomson that same year. Of the nine items above, four show greater lengthening in Muasdale, one greater lengthening in Carradale (point 36) (Fig. 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SGDS item</th>
<th>Stressed-vowel quantity in Carradale (pt 36) and Muasdale (pt 38)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 abhainn</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 amharc</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53 aran</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54 arbhár</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120 břadan</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>153 carbád</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>399 farsiung</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400 faśdáidh</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>602 marbh</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>758 sgamhan</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

48 Point 36 has a bilabial rather than a labio-dental fricative.
The same phenomenon is recorded in the *Linguistic Atlas of the Survey of Irish Dialects (LASID)*, for which Colm Ó Baoill undertook fieldwork in 1961; indeed, the following examples of lengthening of short stressed vowels (Fig. 2) derive from his interview with the same Neil MacDougall that had been interviewed for *SGDS* in 1951 and 1954. The list is not intended to be exhaustive but illustrative of the fact that there is a tendency to lengthening, at least with this speaker.

**Stressed-vowel lengthening in Carradale, Kintyre, in *LASID* data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>LASID</em> item</th>
<th>Stressed-vowel quantity in <em>LASID</em> IV, 212–17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 tarbh</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2, 3 crodh</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 bainne</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 tabhann</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 agad</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39 feasgar</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42 cartadh</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44 uisge</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125 gairm</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>138 coileach</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>139 briste</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>178 marcachd</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>205, 206, 208 cat</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>209 craiceann</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>212 losgadh</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>220 a-nis</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>239 boireannach</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>242 cleachdte</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>246, 248 teanga</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>265 deusachadh</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>339 litir</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>340 goirid</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The same phenomenon occurs with Ó Baoill’s informant from Muasdale, Neil Thomson (Fig. 3).49

49 Some similar traits are found in the responses of Neil Thomson’s cousin, George Thomson, also interviewed by Colm Ó Baoill for the Linguistic Survey, e.g. short and half-long 558, 559, 560 reachtad; half-long 544 cidim; half-long and long 576, 577, 578 losgadh; long 576 ochd.

Yet, apparently, no trace of such a phenomenon appears in Nils Holmer’s study of Kintyre Gaelic, for which he undertook fieldwork in 1937 (Holmer 1957, vii), which included interviews with both Neil MacDougall (Ca 1) (Holmer 1962, 4), and Neil Thomson (La 12) (ibid., 3) – unless it be in his note 2 on p. 36 (ibid.): having discussed the glottal stop between vowels in Kintyre Gaelic, Holmer turns to the question of syllabification and syllable limits, adding, ‘Some people even make a short stop before the syllable-ending consonant, as teine ı̈/te:n/ ‘fire’ ..., coileach ı̈/k’i:lax/ ‘rooster’ ..., gealach ı̈/g’arax/ ‘moon’ ..., sileadh ı̈/s’i:lax/ ‘drizzling’ ...’ (The symbol ı̈/ in Homer’s transcription here signifies a slight narrowing, but not occlusion, of the vocal chords, resulting in ‘a reduction in intensity of a preceding vowel’ (ibid., 35), rather than a half-long vowel, as it does in this article, in *SGDS* (I, 113) and *LASID* (I, xxiii).) We may speculate that what was a sporadic, weak glottal stop after stressed vowels in the more southerly dialect of Kintyre developed during the middle of the 20th century into (sporadic) lengthening of the stressed vowel. From the evidence above, it appears that the development could occur in open syllables (crodh, math), before voiceless (cat, litir) and voiced stops (obair,
Glottalisation & lengthening of stressed vowels in Kintyre & Arran in SGDS data (Fig. 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SGDS item</th>
<th>pts 31–35 (Arran), 36–39 (s. Kintyre), 40–42 (Gigha + n. Kintyre)</th>
<th>short</th>
<th>half-long</th>
<th>long</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 abhainn</td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>40 41 42 36, 38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 amharc</td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>39 41 42 38, 33, 35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53 aran</td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>39 41 42 38, 33, 35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54 arbar</td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>40 41 42 36, 38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120 braidan</td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>38 40 41 42 36, 38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>153 carbad</td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>39 40 41 42 36, 38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>399 farsuing</td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>39 40 41 42 36, 38, 40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400 fasaidh</td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>40 41 36, 38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>601 marbh</td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>39 40 41 42 36, 38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>690 radan</td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>39 40 41 42 36, 38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>726 sabhalt†</td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>39 40 41 42 36, 38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>727 sagart</td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35</td>
<td>36 37 38 39</td>
<td>40 41 42 38‡</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>758 sgamhain</td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35</td>
<td>36 37 38 39</td>
<td>40 41 42 38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

† (-bh-: 36 [²], 38 [w], 42 zero, elsewhere [v])
‡ examples occur with both short and half-long stressed vowels

Key: Bold = stressed vowel with glottal stop.
Points where absent were not recorded.

51 Yet the question of the differences in vowel length in Neil MacDougall's speech as recorded by Anthony Dilworth and Fred MacAulay remains unresolved: Dilworth's lengthened vowels are not matched by glottal stops in MacAulay's transcriptions. Dilworth's examples of lengthening are supported independently by Colm Ó Baoill's transcriptions, which begs the question whether MacAulay may have unconsciously normalised apparently irregular vowel lengths in his own material. Fred MacAulay (1925–2003), from Solas, North Uist, took a diploma in phonetics at Edinburgh before working on the Linguistic Survey between 1951–54, taking up a full-time post as fieldworker in 1952. Anthony Dilworth had already heard Kintyre Gaelic, among many other dialects, as a student, before joining the Linguistic Survey as a fieldworker in 1954, with which he continued for three years. Of the transcription process, he recalls the excellent sound-editing facility, with its capacity to isolate and/or compare words or sequences of words, provided by Tony Anthony in the Department of Phonetics at Edinburgh: 'Bha an t-inneal-èisteach a rinn Tony Anthony ann a Roinn nam Fonclait Sfochadh dh'fhàsadh iad searbh den chùis oir bha tòrr cheisteach ann. Bha e comasach tu an urrainn a bhith ag iarraidh air seann sluagh faclan a' cheisteachan a ràdh ach a dhà no trí tursan air neò d'fhàsadh iad searbh den chuis oir bha tòrr cheisteach ann. Bha e comasach cuideachd an aon fhacal o dheifir àiteachan a chur air lùib teip agus coimeas a dhèanamh eatarra.' (pers. comm.). Although Heinrich Wagner comments in the introduction to LAsID IV (p. viii) that Ó Baoill, 'having gained some further experience in the field of Scottish Gaelic phonetics, ... is now not pleased with some of his transcriptions which were partly made from tape ...', the general picture of lengthening in stressed vowels remains.

The evidence, then, suggests that the incidence of glottal stops before consonants and pausa and lengthening of stressed vowels are in more or less complementary distribution within the area as a whole. Lengthening may initially have been a development from a stressed vowel + glottal stop; in general, however, it may have been a parallel, but alternative development more or less restricted to southern Kintyre. (Indeed, a stressed vowel following a weak glottal stop may have occasionally been perceived as a half-long or long vowel by fieldworkers.)

While this feature of lengthening may have had its focus within southern Kintyre, it would be wrong to restrict the area of lengthening entirely to southern Kintyre. Ó Baoill's informant from Tarbert in northern Kintyre, Mary MacKinnon, also shows signs of the same development, e.g. half-long 48 achadh, 63, 66 goirt, 87 olann; short and long 89 lomadh (for lomadh); and short, half-long and long 61, 66, 68, 73 bainne (LASID IV, 212). On the other hand, she appears to use glottals stops more often than Carradale or Muasdale informants, e.g. 54, 55, 56 blegann, 72 soitheach, although it is difficult to make comparisons between one informant and another due to differences in the substance and volume of data-sets. Similarly, LASID data...
for Arran (also recorded by Colm Ó Baoill) shows a tendency, albeit a less pronounced one, for lengthening short stressed vowels (Fig. 5).

Sporadic stressed-vowel lengthening in Arran in LASID data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LASID item</th>
<th>Stressed vowel quantity in LASID IV, 212–17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 tarbh</td>
<td>short, half-long, long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 reci</td>
<td>Arran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 bainne</td>
<td>Arran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 tabhann</td>
<td>Arran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 agad</td>
<td>Arran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44 uisge</td>
<td>Arran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 thainig</td>
<td>Arran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125 gairm</td>
<td>Arran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>138 coileach</td>
<td>Arran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>139 брістe</td>
<td>Arran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>178 marcachd</td>
<td>Arran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>205, 206, 208 cat</td>
<td>Arran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>209 creiceann</td>
<td>Arran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>242 cleachdte</td>
<td>Arran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>339 littir</td>
<td>Arran</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, unless Holmer simply failed to record examples of lengthened short vowels (cf. his Rathlin abhainn [óin] [óin] (with hiatus, Holmer 1942, 156), as opposed to LASID’s I, 280 lengthened form, [óan] (point 67)), the negative evidence of his description of Kintyre Gaelic would suggest that the development of sporadic lengthening of short-stressed vowels in southern Kintyre may post-date George Henderson’s Abhainn (1910) and Watson’s Êibhinn and Eubhainn (1926). If so, we should look for an alternative cause for the lengthening of the stressed vowel in Abhainn.

There may be an alternative. Like most folk etymologies, ours may contain an element of truth, and the conflicting claims of a connection with both ON hófn and ScG abhainn may indeed have some basis in fact.

On the one hand, the relative importance of Sannda’s harbour within the area is highlighted consistently in early descriptions by reference to the Norse use of the harbour and their naming it Hófn. This scenario is supported by the topography of the island’s anchorage and the nature of Sruth na Maoile; by the fact that the island is a stepping-stone between Ireland and Scotland, and between Arran and Gigha and Islay;52 and by the frequency with which the Norse element hófn occurs in Norse loan-names throughout the Suðreyjar. From this perspective, ON hófn is the perfect candidate for the derivation of Abhainn. On the other hand, the place-name is traditionally said to be synonymous with the Scottish Gaelic term abhainn ‘river’.

We know little of the Gaelic dialect of Southend, i.e. of the Mull of Kintyre and Sannda. Holmer remarks that in his time – 1937 – the dialect ‘hardly survives’; ‘it was different from the north Kintyre dialect, and more like Irish’ (Holmer 1962, 1–2), but the little we do know appears to add nothing to the discussion on vowel length (ibid., 2 and 106–07). Yet, we can be certain that, as part of a linguistic continuum,53 the dialect of Southend would have held affinities with both Ireland and Scotland.

In an East Ulster Irish context, lengthening of the stressed vowel in abhainn ‘river’ occurs through vocalisation of the intervocalic fricative.54 Thus LASID (I, 280) records Rathlin [óain] (point 67), Ormeath [óan] (point 65) and Inishowen [óin] (point 68). Although this is in contrast to Holmer’s Rathlin [óin] [óin] (1942, 156, in which the superscript dot (‘) indicates hiatus55), it is possible that Southend Gaelic abhainn was pronounced something like *[au] or *[aw] with a half-long or long stressed vowel after vocalisation of the fricative,56 and this is supported by the Ulster form of the name, [íin] ‘óin’,57 with a half-long stressed vowel.

On this count, it is conceivable that ScG Abhainn derives from ON Hófn /hóβn/, via Early Gaelic *Abban *aβn/, dat. *Abhain *aβn/, with a short

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52 The island is described as ‘within dangerously easy reach of Clann Dómhnail [Islay] and their Mac Aoidh allies [Kintyre and Bute]’ (Forte 2008, 211).
53 See, for example, Ó Baoill 1978 and 2000.
54 This phenomenon is unconnected to the lengthening of stressed vowels in Kintyre and its environs discussed above.
55 In Rathlin the hiatus is not so clearly marked as in Scotland: cumhang “narrow” may arise with uan “lamb” (loc. cit.).
56 In Mid-Argyllshire, the fricative has generally been replaced by hiatus, in Islay generally by a glottal stop (see SGDS II, 3), and it is curious that Holmer (1938, 116) records [óan] in Islay.
57 Brian McLaughlin, whose family was from Carnlough (in sight of Sannda), eight miles north of Larne, as told to him by his father, who reported that his own grandmother (Margaret McLaughlin, c.1840–1933, from Slanesallagh, four miles from Carnlough) had told him that this was Sannda’s proper name. Margaret’s mother, Catherine’s, family seems to have been engaged in transporting salt from Carrickfergus to Scotland. Catherine may have been a Gaelic speaker: she was born close to the Glens of Antrim and her father, Para Bán ‘fair Pará’, was nicknamed Brochan Scallt (paltry porridge), apparently in reference to his employment during the Great Famine (1845–49) in the distribution of what was considered to be poor quality Indian meal. (Brian McLaughlin, pers. comm.)
stressed vowel (cf. John of Fordun’s late 14th-century Scots form, *Avoyn). Later the bilabial fricative develops into a labio-dental fricative in Scottish Gaelic, viz. *Àbhainn */ǎvən/, dat. *Àbhainn */əvɨn′/. We may assume that this dative form was homophonous, or nearly so, with the local pronunciation of *abhainn ‘river’, which thus gave rise to the folk etymology that the name meant ‘river’ – although the sense had to be altered to ‘stream’ and the currents of Sruith na Maolé, in order for the etymology to be credible. If this is so, neighbouring communities (e.g. Arran */əvən/ (Holmer 1957, 49; §5, above)58) appear to have adopted the long stressed vowel of */əvɨn′/, while preserving the labio-dental fricative of earlier */əvɨn′/.

Meanwhile, radical *Àbhainn may survive in George Campbell Hay’s Tarbert form,59 *Àbhann (rad. an latha thogas Àbhann ‘when we set course on Sanda’, Byrne 2000 I, 424 (also 277, 316), dat. i ˈseːlədθ ˈmɑːh ə ˈabhən as out she sails from Sanda, 425), whose development was presumably on the analogy of the development of *Abhainn > *Àbhainn.50

§11 Conclusion

Of the various possible derivations of *Àbhainn discussed above, ON Hofn seems contextually to be the most likely. The historical phonology for the development of *Àbhainn from ON Hofn, however, is not entirely clear. Our knowledge of the Gaelic dialect of Southend in very limited. There is evidence that some lengthening of short stressed vowels took place in southern Kintyre and there is evidence to suggest that lengthening was in more or less complementary distribution with the development of a glottal stop in similar environments in neighbouring areas, although the sporadic nature of the lengthening may suggest that the development was one of free variation. On the face of it, the lack of comment on lengthening of short stressed vowels in Holmer’s description of Kintyre Gaelic suggests that the phenomenon was a developing one during the 20th century, one which may be too late to account for lengthening in *Àbhainn. Alternatively, lengthening of *Àbhainn to *Àbhainn may have paralleled the development of the appellative abhainn ‘river’ > *a’ainn in the local Gaelic dialect, assuming that this was the same as that which took place in Ulster, cf. Rathlin [ɔːːn] ‘river’. If so, while neighbouring dialects, by virtue of the presence of a long stressed vowel, have in effect re-borrowed the name, they have preserved earlier intervocalic -bb-, perhaps on account of the long-standing folk etymological connection with abhainn ‘river’. It remains to be seen, however, whether further evidence will come to light which can support one or other of these hypotheses.

It is possible, then, although not certain, that we here have two different Norse names: one for the island itself, ON Sandey (yielding ScG Sannda), and one for the harbour, ON Hofn (yielding ScG Àbhainn). One can suppose that in general the latter might have held greater significance for shipping as, in times of need, boats would have set course for the haven, Àbhainn, rather than the island, Sannda, and this may help explain why Àbhainn, as opposed to Sannda, survives in Arran Gaelic. While the onomastic meaning of Àbhainn transfers to the island in Gaelic usage – outing use of Sannda in some communities, acquiring equivalent sense in others – it is the original island name that is borrowed into Scots/English, hence Sannda, a fact which presumably reflects administrative usage. The shape of the island as seen from the sea gives rise to a third form, An Spáin. If ScG Àbhainn ever had a hold in modern Scots/English usage, it has been eclipsed by the English form of An Spáin, Spoon Island.61

In the early part of the 20th century, it is probable that Sannda, Àbhainn and An Spáin belonged to different user groups (Cox 1990, 46–48): Sannda to the islanders themselves and to the people of Kintyre – Eng. Sannda to officialdom; Àbhainn to the fishing communities of Kintyre and Arran; and An Spáin or Spoon Island to the people of south Arran and to a principally non-fishing, boating community.

Phonetic note

[] enclose phonetic transcriptions, whose symbols represent actual pronunciation.

/ / enclose phonemic transcriptions, whose symbols represent contrastive units of sound within the dialect or language concerned.

ScG [d] is devoiced; [t l n n̆] are dentals; [l n] are velarised; both [ ] and / / indicate palatal consonants.

61 There are parallels, albeit that the islands concerned are larger than Sannda. Na Hamhn on Eriskay (ON Eiríks-vi ‘Eirik’s isle’), Na Hamhn and Na Hamhun on Mull (ON Myf), as well as Port na h-Àbhann (< *Abhann) on Ioslay (ON Il), all from ON Hofn (Cox 2008, 51–55).
62 E.g. <https://www.ourscotland.co.uk/clydeislands/>.
Scottish Gaelic Sannda and Its Aliases

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Appendix

A Description of Sanda
by the Rev. Father Edmund MacCana

Introduction
On the 4th of January 1619, as missionaries for the revival of Catholicism in the Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland, two Irish-speaking priests from Ulster, Patrick Brady and Edmund MacCana, along with laybrother John Stuart, travelled from the Irish Franciscan College of St Anthony at Louvain, arriving in Scotland about the middle of March. Patrick Brady chose the Highlands as his territory; Father MacCana concentrated on the Isles (Giblin 1964, ix–xii). ‘Towards the end of 1620, [MacCana] was arrested and kept in prison for two years, after which he was banished and ordered not to enter England or Scotland again under pain of death’ (ibid., x). Appointed by Pope Urban VIII in 1623 (Stevenson 1980, 53), MacCana was one of four missionaries to go from Louvain to Scotland in 1624: ‘[h]e definitely laboured on the mission, but it is not possible to say how long he actually stayed there, and of the four missionaries least of all is known about his activities’ (Giblin 1964, xi).

It is uncertain when MacCana wrote his description of *Sannda*. The editors of *Origines Parochiales Scotiae* (II, 820 note 5) date the MS to c.1600, so also Campbell (1924, 3: ‘presumed to be dated circa 1600’), while Reeves (1864, 133) suggests ‘the early part of the seventeenth century’. These dates may be too early. On the 15 July 1624, Patrick Hegarty ‘explained the meaning of the sacred vestments to the islanders, and preached to them; they had been instructed in the elements of the faith four years before by another Irish Franciscan, but had seen no priest since then’ (Giblin 1964, 32–33). It is likely that this other Franciscan was Edmund MacCana. His description, then, which we may infer from its contents was not written on *Sannda*, may date at the earliest from c.1621–22 and the period of his imprisonment in Scotland. Nevertheless, as indicated above, MacCana returned to Scotland in 1624, and, although it is not clear when he left the country again, the Franciscan mission to Scotland lasted until c.1637 (ibid., xv). However, reference within the description to MacCana’s poor recollection (*quorum mihi... memoria non suppetit*...) and to ‘this war’ (*ante hoc bellum*) may indicate an even later date, perhaps some time between 1644–1651 and the Wars of the Three Kingdoms.63 This accords with William Reeves’s (1854, 44) dating of MacCana’s *Itinerarium in Hibernia ex relatione R. P. Fratris Edmundi MacCana*, which ‘appears from internal evidence to have been written shortly after 1643, and to have been intended as a topographical contribution to the antiquarian store which the Irish Franciscans of Louvain had, with such laudable zeal, been for years accumulating in the service of their beloved country.’

The manuscript (Plates 1–2)
The MS is housed in Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, 5301–20 fos 276–77, and is cited in the following:


Skene (1874, clxvii): ‘Father Mac Cana’s MS account of the island states that in Irish it is called *Abhuinn*, Latinized *Avonia*.

van Den Gheyn (1907, 49), in his catalogue of MSS in Bibliothèque royale de Belgique: ‘[4641 (5301–20)] 12. (F. 140–41 [leg. 276–277]) Insulae 63 *cogadh sa na tri Rioghachtaithe* ‘this war of the three Kingdoms’ (Gille-Criost MacBheatha – Christopher Beaton – writing in what is now known as the Book of Clanranald during the 1690s or early 1700s (Cameron 1892, 176; Bannerman 1998, 16–17)).
Sandae seu Avonie Hibernie [sic] Abhyn brevis descriptio R. P. fratris Edmundi Mac Cana.'


Transcription
While the original has been edited for punctuation and capitalisation, and abbreviations expanded silently, deletions have not been reproduced. On the few occasions where characters against the right margin, having been obscured by the binding process, are no longer visible, recourse has been made to Charles Mac Donnell’s transcription in Reeves 1864, 133–34. Diacritics have been ignored and allographs (e.g. ù, ñ, ì, ì) rationalised.

[fo. 276]
Insulae Sandæ seu Avoniae, Hibernice Abhuinn. Brevis Descriptio. R. P. fratris Edmundi mac Cana


[fo. 277]
Sub mediam noctem juvenis expirat. Omnes Deum laudant; sancta corpora deinceps religiosius venerantur. Hinc discendum quantam habeant rationem et curam sanctorum Deus optimus maximus, quorum sacrilegam irrisionem et contemptum impius Calvinus, novus evangela, intulit, aut potius intruxit. Magnum hoc miraculum excitavit in animis spectatorum et ex ipsis audientium, etiam a nostra religione aversorum, sanctorum hominum reverentiam. In illa insula fuit repertum brachium Sancti Ultani, quod, thecæ argenteæ inclusum, ante hoc bellum religiosè servabatur a viro generoso ex inclyta Mac Donellorum familia. Fons est ibi non procul a sacello perennis aquæ, miraculis, ut insulani et multi ex continenti mihi dixere, nobilis. Frequentabatur quidem meo tempore ab accolis circumquæ, maxime ab iis in quorum animis aliquæ reliquiæ prædicæ religionis residebant. Sunt multa alia mira et jucunda quæ homines mihi fide dignissimi de hoc loco retulerunt, quorum mihi et memoria non suppetit et temporal excludor. Illis sacris cineribus hoc quod sequitur rude epitaphium cum ibi essem posui; atque ad illud sacrum sepulchretum tertio sacris misteriis cum magna animi mei recreacione sum operatus.


64 MS Abhuinn.
65 MS Senchanii.
66 Inserted interlinearly above multis celebrata trophæis are the words genuit quo Scotia major.
'Insulae Sandae seu Avoniae Hibernie Abhuin brevis descriptio R. P. fratris Edmundi Mac Cana', MS 5301–20, fo. 276, reproduced here with the kind permission of Bibliothèque royale de Belgique.
Richard A.V. Cox

Sanda tibi cedit, veterum celebrata Camœnis,
Bettiginum gaze, ripa beata Tagi.
Hos igitur sacros cineres devotus adora,
Quisquis in Hebrigenum littor a tuta venis.

[The following lines have been added as a footnote]
Corpora bis septem, septem conduntur in urnis,
Ut natu gemini, sic videantur humo.

Translation

A short description of the Island of Sanda, or Avon, in Irish Abhuinn, by the Reverend Father, Brother Edmund MacCana.

[fo. 276]
‘Sanda is an island to the west in the Scottish sea, separated by a mile from the mainland of Kintyre; in circumference it is just over a mile. The soil is agreeable and, if cultivated, would be prolific in crops and fruits. In it is a chapel consecrated to St Ninian, to whose monastery in Galloway the whole island belongs. Adjoining this shrine is the ossuary or burial place of the fourteen sons of a most holy man, Senchan, an Irishman, who were renowned for their sanctity. It is surrounded by a low stone wall, in which are seven large polished stones, by which the most sacred bodies are covered, in the middle of which stands an obelisk higher than a man’s stature (as it now occurs to my memory). No mortal enters that enclosure with impunity. What the islanders have told me is charming: a hen, having entered the place, laid its eggs and hatched them; the chicks, when they were old enough to come out, all appeared with twisted necks – a remarkable sight! One of the older inhabitants of the islands, and father of nearly all the rest, also related to me this amazing story which I append. Angus MacDonell, Lord of Kintyre and of the Island of Islay (whom I myself saw once), entered the island one time, a large crowd in attendance, among whom were the principal youth of Kintyre. When, as it happened, the lord and other nobles were discussing serious matters, the youths, as is their wont, exercised themselves at a game of shinty [‘ball and sticks’]; a ball hit by a caman stroke flew over into the sacred cemetery, before it could be caught by a hand of the opposing youths. The young man, mindful of the place’s religious significance, entered it using only one foot and only one hand to extract the ball. He is taken to task by the natives because he had violated the dignity of the holy place; and they declare that his crime will not go unpunished. Nevertheless, he continues that game with his companions. The game being finished, and the night approaching, he goes to the guests’ lodging, and seats himself at the fireplace; great pains suddenly break out throughout the foot which he had put into the cemetery. The islanders indicate the divine vengeance is for lack of piety. The foot swelled to an astonishing extent, thus inflated by divine wrath until it equalled a horse’s in size.

‘During the middle of the night the youth expires. All praise God, and subsequently they venerate the sacred bodies with greater devotion. Hence it is learnt to what extent the most good and most high God keeps the reckoning and care of his saints, whose sacreligious mockery and contempt unholy Calvin, the new Evangelist, has introduced, or rather intruded, into the world. This great spectacle kindled in the minds of the spectators, and even among those who just heard about it, even those who had turned away from our creed, a reverence for holy men.

‘In that island the forearm of Saint Ultan was found, which, enclosed in a silver case, was carefully preserved before this war by a nobleman of the renowned family of the MacDonells. There is a perpetual water spring there not far from the chapel, known for miracles, as the islanders and many from the mainland have told me. Indeed it was frequented in my own time by neighbours on all sides, especially by those in whose minds any vestige of the old religion remained. There were many other wonderful and delightful things that men most worthy of confidence reported to me about this place, which for me both memory fails and time excludes.

‘When I was there I placed over those sacred ashes the rough epitaph which follows, and at that sacred cemetery I thrice performed the sacred mysteries with great refreshment of mind.

‘Fourteen bodies, throughout the world revered,
Of Senchanius born blessed Sanda holds.
Ireland, the mother of divine teachers, once
Begat the saints whom Scotland’s soil covers.
Scotland the minor, famed for its many memorials, 
Holds these beloved pledges in a mother’s embrace. 
Sanda, renowned for its ancient poetry, yields to you, 
Treasures of Mount Bettigo, blessed shores of the River Tagus. 
O faithful one, entreat these sacred ashes, then, 
you who comes to the safe shores of the Hebrigenae.

[Footnote]
‘Fourteen bodies, preserved in seven urns, 
as they were twins at birth, so are they seen in the earth.’

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68 Bettigo in India (Ptolemy, e.g. Lib. VII, cap. 1 §33, ἀπὸ τοῦ Βηττιγίου ῥοὸς (Nobbe 1843–45 II, 148) ‘from the mountain of Βηττιγίον’) and the Ταγος in the Iberian Peninsula (Ptolemy, Lib. II, cap. 5 §4, Τάγου ποταμοῦ ἐκβολαι (Nobbe, ibid. I, 80) ‘the mouth of the river Τάγος’) may be being used here to represent natural wonders of the world.

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