Scottish Gaelic Sannda and Its Aliases
Cox, Richard A.V.

Published in:
The Journal of Scottish Name Studies
Publication date:
2010

The Document Version you have downloaded here is:
Early version, also known as pre-print

Link to author version on UHI Research Database

Citation for published version (APA):
§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 Aven 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:

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.

Robert Fribarn’s edition:

George Buchanan, Rerum Scoticarum Historia, 1727, 22

‘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 Cantera 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/scot.hist/1lat.html#I.32>); ‘From the promontory of Cantyre, a little more than a mile, lies Avona, now Sanda, called Portoouisa, 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 thereto for shelter’ (<http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/...>)}
Buchanan's *portuosa* is Lat. *portuosa* 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

Avoyn. Befor the south poyn of the promontory of Kyntyre, lyes be ane myle of sea, ane ilye neire ane myle large, callit the ilye Avoyn, 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 ships to lay one ankers.

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

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

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

Insula Awyn, ubi cella Sancti Adamnani, ibique pro transgressoribus refugium.

Walter Goodall's 1759 edition [Edinburgh College Library MS]:

*Joannis de Fordun Scotiachronicon* I, lib. ii, cap. x, 45

'The Isle of Awyn, where the chapel of St Adomnán is, and where there is a refuge for transgressors.'

In other MSS, this reads:

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

Thomas Hearne's 1722 edition [Trinity College, Cambridge MS]:

*Joannis de Fordun Scotiachronicon*, lib. ii, cap. x, 81

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

William F. Skene's 1871–72 edition [The Wolfenbüttel MS]:

*Joannis de Fordun: Chronicna Gentis Scotorum* I, lib. ii, cap. x, 43

'Avoyn. Befor the south poyn of the promontory of Kyntyre lyes be ane myle of sea, ane lyle neire ane myle large callit the lyle Avoyn quhilk Iyle 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 ships to lay one ankers.' (Donald Monro, *A Description of the westerne isles of Scotland by Mr. Donald Monro, quho travelled through maney of the landsyde of it, next to Cantyre is a verie good harborie. On the east end of it is the Sheep Illand where the Romans did call in the tyme of Julius Cæsar, Porta Eosa Avona. Upon the Landsyde of it, next to Kintyre lies an island nearly a mile long called the Isle Awyn, which island obtained that name from Denmark's armies, which armies called it Haven in their language; it is inhabited and fertile and good for ships to lie at anchor."

John MacMaster Campbell (1924, 11) in his essay, 'The Island and House of Sanda.'

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

Thomas Hearne's 1722 edition [Trinity College, Cambridge MS]:

*Joannis de Fordun Scotiachronicon*, lib. ii, cap. x, 81

William F. Skene's 1871–72 edition [The Wolfenbüttel MS]:

*Joannis de Fordun: Chronicna Gentis Scotorum* I, lib. ii, cap. x, 43

*A Description of the western isles of Scotland by Mr. Donald Monro, quho travelled through maney of the landsyde of it, next to Cantyre is a verie good harborie. On the east end of it is the Sheep Illand where the Romans did call in the tyme of Julius Cæsar, Porta Eosa Avona. Upon the Landsyde of it, next to Kintyre lies an island nearly a mile long called the Isle Avoyn, which island obtained that name from Denmark's armies, which armies called it Haven in their language; it is inhabited and fertile and good for ships to lie at anchor."

John MacMaster Campbell (1924, 11) in his essay, 'The Island and House of Sanda.'

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

Thomas Hearne's 1722 edition [Trinity College, Cambridge MS]:

*Joannis de Fordun Scotiachronicon*, lib. ii, cap. x, 81

William F. Skene's 1871–72 edition [The Wolfenbüttel MS]:

*Joannis de Fordun: Chronicna Gentis Scotorum* I, lib. ii, cap. x, 43

*A Description of the western isles of Scotland by Mr. Donald Monro, quho travelled through maney of the landsyde of it, next to Cantyre is a verie good harborie. On the east end of it is the Sheep Illand where the Romans did call in the tyme of Julius Cæsar, Porta Eosa Avona. Upon the Landsyde of it, next to Kintyre lies an island nearly a mile long called the Isle Avoyn, which island obtained that name from Denmark's armies, which armies called it Haven in their language; it is inhabited and fertile and good for ships to lie at anchor."

John MacMaster Campbell (1924, 11) in his essay, 'The Island and House of Sanda.'

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

Thomas Hearne's 1722 edition [Trinity College, Cambridge MS]:

*Joannis de Fordun Scotiachronicon*, lib. ii, cap. x, 81

William F. Skene's 1871–72 edition [The Wolfenbüttel MS]:

*Joannis de Fordun: Chronicna Gentis Scotorum* I, lib. ii, cap. x, 43
Scottish Gaelic Sannda and Its Aliases

§ 3. SANNDA

The island is known as Sannda in Hákon Hákonsson’s Saga, written shortly after King Hákon’s death in 1265: 10

Eftir þat sigldi Hakon konungr randir Melansey ok laa vm nottina vndir Hersey ok þadan vndir Sandey ok sua til Satirismula ok kom vm naattina norðr vndir Gudey. þadan sigldi hann vt i Jlarsund ok laa þar .ij. næt. Vigfusson and Unger’s edition:

‘Hákonar Saga hins gamla’, Flateyjarbók III, 227, §28 11

‘After that King Hakon 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.’ 12

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 slêtta Sandey konungr randir

Linder and Haggson’s edition:

‘Saga Magnús konungs berfœtts’, Heimskringla, §10 13

Vitt bar snjallr a slêtta Sandey konungr randir

Finnur Jónsson’s edition:

[Magnus Barefoot’s Saga], Eirspennill, Chap. 7, 118 14

10 In 1264–65 by Sturla Bóðarson (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 Malas-isle (Lamlash), and lay for a night under Arran, and thence under Sandisle, and so to the Mull of Cantire, and came in the night north under Gudey. And thence he sailed out into the Islay-sound, and lay there two nights.’ Munch (1859, 446) translates into Norwegian: ‘Derefter seilede Kong Haakon fra Melasø og laa om Natten under Ærra; derfra seilede han under Sandø og forbi Santíresmulen og kom om Natten nord til Gudey. Ærra sigldi hans vt i Jlarsund ok laa þar .ij. næt. Derfra seilede han til Jlarsund, hvor han laa i to Nætter ...’
13 An older version occurs in Morkeinsksiena, 317 §132: ‘Vitt ber snær a˚lætta / Sandey konungr randir’
14 The reference MSB.9 Sandey is given in error in Gammeltoft 2006, 77.
Campbell (1924, 11) notes – without expansion – that ‘[t]he island is on occasion written of as Sanderey’,\(^{16}\) taking it to be an ‘elaboration of the shorter name’ and echoing Paterson and Renwick’s (1900, 203) ‘Another name for Sanda is Sanderey, which may mean Sand eyrr 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 Sandey (Sandarey, Barra; or Sand (Sandar), North Uist).’\(^{17}\) Thomas’s reference is to Hrafn’s Saga:\(^{18}\)

‘The valiant king bore far the shields upon the plain of Sandey’\(^{15}\)

Pessu næst kómu þeir skipi sínu í göða höfn við ey þá, er Sandey heitir, ok þar reistu kaupmenn hafnarmark. Svá segir Grimr:

Hér hefir beitt at brattri
Bótolfr skipi fljótu,
áðr fell sær um süðir,
Sandeyjú, skæ branda.

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

Peit lágu við Sudreyjar í göðu lægi nökkurar nætr. Pá rød fyrir Sudreyjum Ólafr konungr.

‘Hrafn’s Saga’ (Helgadóttir 1987, 21–22)

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

\(^{16}\) So KAS 1938, 29.

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

'After that they came into a good harbor on an island called Sandey, and there the merchants raised a harbor mark.

'Th rough the 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 Ólaf ruled the Sudreys at this time.'

(Tjomsland 1951, 28–29)

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 Sannday is a speculative plural (Norse) form, i.e. ‘[the] sands’: the name survives in Eng. Clachan Sands (NF873765), OS 1882 Clachan Sandy, and ScG Clachan Shannda, 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 Sannda from ON is likely to refer to one of these two islands: Sanndraigh Canna or Sannda Kintyre. Alan Anderson tentatively suggests Sanndaigh (1922 II, 787). Guðrún Helgadóttir (1987, 76) goes further, supporting the identification by noting the suitability of the island as a place of residence for a Highland chieftain (whom Hrafn and his company call upon). 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 fyrr Stauri ‘off [the] Staur’.

Sanderay, [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.

22 Anne Tjomsland (1951, 59–60) supports Captain Thomas in placing Sandey in the Outer Hebrides (cf. note 17, above).

23 Power 2005, 12, and Jesch, forthcoming, also identity Sandey with Sanndaleigh Canna.

24 Which is taken to be The Point of Stoor in Assyt (Anderson loc. cit.; Tjomsland 1951, 26), although other features may have borne a such a Norse name. John MacKay (1890, 121) derives Stoor from either Gaelic or Old Norse. Scots/Eng. Stoor is in fact from ScG Stòr, which in turn is a loan-name from ON Staur(acc. m. ‘the stake’ (cf. Watson 1906, 367–68; Henderson 1910, 351), in reference to the rock stack, Scots/Eng. The Old Man of Stor; cf. a similar rock formation in Skye, ScG Bod Stòir ‘the penis of Stòrr’, which has been sanitised as ScG Bodach Stòir, now Bodach an Stòrr under the influence of Scots/Eng. The Old Man of Stor (Dwelly s.n. Stoor, Old Man of: ‘Bod Stòr [source: W.J. Watson] (euphemistically Bodach Stòr)’; note also Marwick 1923, 261: ‘Professor Watson informs me that the Old Man of Storr in Skye is a mere euphemism; the real name is Bod Stòr—the phallus of Stòrr’). The Assynt ScG name has now acquired the article – An Stòr (Mac an Tàilleir, s.n. Stoor) – presumably under the influence of Scots/Eng. The Old Man of Stor, which is rendered Bodach an Stòr in Gaelic, so also Rubha an Stòir for Rubha Stòir (cf. <http://www.ambaile.org.uk/gd/item/item_writtenword.jsp?item_id=43320>: Bodach an Stòirr under the influence of Scots/Eng. The Old Man of Storr; cf. a similar rock formation in Skye, ScG Bod Stòirr ‘the penis of Stòrr’; which has been sanitised as ScG Bodach Stòrr, now Bodach an Stòrr under the influence of Scots/Eng. The Old Man of Stor (Dwelly s.n. Stoor, Old Man of: ‘Bod Stòr [source: W.J. Watson] (euphemistically Bodach Stòr)’; note also Marwick 1923, 261: ‘Professor Watson informs me that the Old Man of Storr in Skye is a mere euphemism; the real name is Bod Stòr—the phallus of Stòrr’). The name has now acquired the article – An Stòr (Mac an Tàilleir, s.n. Stoor) – presumably under the influence of Scots/Eng. The Old Man of Stor, which is rendered Bodach an Stòr in Gaelic, so also Rubha an Stòir for Rubha Stòir (cf. <http://www.ambaile.org.uk/gd/item/item_writtenword.jsp?item_id=43320>: Bodach an Stòirr under the influence of Scots/Eng. The Old Man of Storr; cf. a similar rock formation in Skye, ScG Bod Stòirr ‘the penis of Stòrr’; which has been sanitised as ScG Bodach Stòrr, now Bodach an Stòrr under the influence of Scots/Eng. The Old Man of Stor (Dwelly s.n. Stoor, Old Man of: ‘Bod Stòr [source: W.J. Watson] (euphemistically Bodach Stòr)’; note also Marwick 1923, 261: ‘Professor Watson informs me that the Old Man of Storr in Skye is a mere euphemism; the real name is Bod Stòr—the phallus of Stòrr’).
1905, 613): a north-westerly wind drives the company southwards to Hirtir (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 Samhandaigh 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 insula de Sanda and (Argyll 93) 1695 20 solidatas terrarum insula 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 Sandae*; (nom.) *Insula Sandae, Sannda*; in a letter from Patrick Hegarty to Hugh de Burgo (Giblin 1964, 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 P.*, van Keulen c.1780 *Sana I.*, Thomson 1820 *Island of Sanda* and OS 1869 *Sanda Island*.

Scots/Eng. *Sand*25 and *Sanda Island*26 are, of course, from ScG *Sann* and *Sanda Island* (Holmer 1962: 17, recorded 1937/38),27 a loan-name from ON *Sanda*, (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 *sändtanga* [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 *Sanna* 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 Campbell (1924, 10–28 E.g. Fraser-Macintosh 1895, 36: 'The island of Sanda, of old Avon ...'. 29 E.g. Holmer 1957, 49.

72 Richard A.V. Cox 73

11) surmises that the connection was made through a misidentification with Adomnán's *Sainne*;30 this seems plausible. Additionally, a conflation of John of Fordun's note on the dedication on the island – *cella Sancti Adamnani* (Goodall 1759 I, 45; Edinburgh College Library MS (which Reeves 1857, 87 quotes)); *capella Sancti Anniani* (Heare 1722, 81; Trinity College, Cambridge MS)31 – with the island's name (although it is not (Lat.) *Sanda* but *Avyn, Auvyn*, respectively, that John mentions) may have aided the misidentification.32

§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 *Sann* 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 'for a name to be used by mariners for Sanda Island', 'for *Sanda* resembles a spoon when seen from Pladda or Ireland' (p. 31).33 Whether the Gaelic or English form here came first is perhaps open to question.

§5 *Abhainn*

While *Avona Porticosa* §2 is a ghost name,34 Buchanans's *Avona* is a latinised form of MacCanas's c.1644–51 *Abhuinn* (MS *Abhuin*, see Appendix), modern

30 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.

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

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

33 *Sanndaig* (Skene 1871–72 I, 43; Wolfenbüttel MS).

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

35 Pladda lies just off the south-east coast of Arran. (There is no connection between the name *An Spán* and Uri Gelser, 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).)

36 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.

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

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

39 *Sanndaig* (Skene 1871–72 I, 43; Wolfenbüttel MS).

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

41 Pladda lies just off the south-east coast of Arran. (There is no connection between the name *An Spán* and Uri Gelser, 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).)

42 Parochiales *An Spàin* (Skene 1871–72 II, 386; Wolfenbüttel MS).
ScG Àbhuinn (e.g. Dwelly, s.n. Sanda Id.); cf. Kintyre Gaelic dol do dhìbh’Àbhuinn ‘going to Sanda’ (Henderson 1910, 180)\(^{35}\) and Arran Gaelic tha tigh solus ann an Àbhuinn [ha: tej solas an do nevin]/\(^{36}\) ‘there is a lighthouse on Sanda Island’ (Holmer 1957, 49), the pronunciation of which is reflected in W.J. Watson’s orthographic representations (1926, 91) of Arran Gaelic, viz Éibhinn and Eubhainn.\(^{37}\)

Without offering any grounds, Watson (1926, 91) states that ‘[t]he pre-Norse name of Sanda is preserved in Gaelic as Àbhuinn’. As for Àbhuinn being pre-Norse, nowhere places it for certain earlier than John of Fordun (1384 × 1387, §2), although there are no internal (i.e. linguistic) dating criteria that prevent it being older. Watson does not state explicitly whether he thought Àbhuinn was Gaelic in origin or not.

§6 Adomnán’s Ommon

Skene’s (1874, 328) tentative suggestion\(^{38}\) that John of Fordun’s Auvyn (supposing an original Old Gaelic lenited -b- -[β]-) is connected with Adomnán’s Ommon (with geminate -mm-) (Reeves 1857, lib. i, cap. 36, p. 70; Skene 1874, lib. i, cap. 29, p. 136) is disposed of correctly by Watson (1926, 91) on phonological grounds.\(^{39}\)

§7 EG abhuinn, ScG abhainn ‘river’

It has been suggested that Àbhuinn is simply ScG abhainn f. ‘river’.\(^{40}\) Campbell (1924, 11: Àbhuinn [sic]) implies that this was a local folk etymology for the name: ‘the explanation rendered is the geographic fact that, as it is expressed by Dean Monro’ [rather by the anonymous author of ‘Ane Description of Certaine Pairs of the Highlands of Scotland’ (note 3, above)], ‘[t]he streame runns so swiftlie that no shipps can remaine near it, except they be within the harborie’ (Mitchell 1907–08 II, 187). The derivation is ruled out topographically, 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\(^{41}\) — off the Mull of Kintyre, specifically Sruth na Maolie.\(^{42}\)

\(^{35}\) KAS (1938, 16 and 29) gives Eilean Abhainn, noting (p. 2) that ‘grave and acute accents in a number of Gaelic words are omitted in printing’ – in fact, lengthmarks appear to have been omitted from the printing process entirely in this publication.

\(^{36}\) In which solas (solas) fails to show genitive inflexion.


\(^{38}\) A suggestion quoted by Fowler (1894, 47 note 4) in his edition of Columba’s life.

\(^{39}\) Ommon remains unidentified (Sharpe 1995, 298 note 160; Anderson and Anderson 1991, lxxv).

\(^{40}\) E.g. Haswell-Smith (2004, 5); further, ‘the name’ could also be a reference to the Scottish Gaelic “abhainn” which means a river (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanda_Island).

\(^{41}\) Although this has not prevented the supposed lexical sense of the name of the island being extended to ‘current’ in the case of ‘Abhuan (le courtant)’ (http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanda_%28%C3%88cosse%29).

\(^{42}\) Literally ‘the stream of A’ Mhoaol (the null)’ (cf. The Sea of Mayle). 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 (Dönhall Iain MacAonghais, Scarp: ‘an sruth aig ceann an iar an eile’ (‘the current at the western end of the island’, pers. comm.). Tiompan is used occasionally of hills, e.g. Tiompaos [“Tümpan] of a headland or bluff (Lewis; Cox 2002, 381), Maol an Tiompaoin (Loch Broom; Watson 1976, 247). Knocktimplen (Dumfries and Galloway; Watson 1924, 144), Màn an tiompaoin (Gilles 1906, 218) and possibly Tiompan (Skye; Forbes 1923, 435), and derives, via OG tímpan ‘tambrel, 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 tîm’rēl, tambourine’). Gaelic tiompan acc. sg. (Job 21:12; Psalms 81:2), tiompan dat. sg. (Psalms 149:3, 150:4) and tiompanachadh 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 tympanach dat. pl. (Exodus 15:20, Judges 11.34, 2 Samuel 6:5, 1 Chron 13:8), all of which are rendered tímbriel in the King James Version. Cormac’s 10th-century definition, or rather etymology, of tîom’pán reads, ‘Tîmpán i. tim. (i.e. bosc [added from another MS]). i. sail, bán i. umar bín inti. Uel quasi simpian a simpionia ión bindius.’ (Meyer 1994, 109 §1258) (“Tîmpán, i.e. pliant (i.e. soft), i.e. [like] willow + [?]bright, i.e. it is made of copper, or like tîmpán from simpionia, i.e. from the sweetness of sound.”). Whether *An Tiompanach (e. tîmpán + 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 coir ‘cauldron’ has been used in a similar sense elsewhere, e.g. Coire Bhrasaide (Cox 1998, 26–28). For the semantic extension of tiompan, cf. Eolas an Speidaidh / Cum bogha air do chorp / ‘S cum a mach do thiumpan. / Tiompan = the posterior = Deireadh. [’Scythe lore: keep your body bowed (arched) and stick your bottom out. Tiompan = posterior = rear.’] (Alexander Carmichael’s fieldwork notes (Stiùbhart 2009, 142).
called Lag nan Gàidheal ‘the hollow of the Gaels’ (OS 1869 Lag nan Gaed; 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 ìbhan [‘òivn] (with a non-nasal stressed vowel (George Jones, pers. comm.)), as opposed to, for example, Lewis Gaelic àmhainn [‘àvin’], 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 háf ‘bag-net’
Àbhainn might derive from an Old Norse form with a suffixed article, e.g. ON Háfrinn acc. ‘the hoof’, with hófr m., or ON Háfrinn acc. ‘the bag-net’, with háf m., 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 a ~ a alternation, either form might yield Àbhainn.

§10 ON hòfn
Monro implicitly and Macculloch explicitly, however, take the name to be from ‘Danish havin/hafn’ (i.e. ON hófn) ‘haven, harbour’. 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 Mòile §7, and An Tiompanach 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. ON hòfn occurs in several place-names in the Hebrides, e.g. Tannabhagh (Lewis), Tammaraigh (Lewis and the Summer Isles), Na Hamhn (Eriskay and Mull) and Port na h-Àbhainn(e) (earlier Port na h-Abhann; Islay) (Cox 2008). As in Port na h-Àbhainn(e), though, we should expect a short stressed vowel here, which would nominally rule out hófn’s candidacy.

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 arbhar (SGDS item 54), brodjan (120), carbhad (153), farsuing (399) and mabh (602); long in fásdaidh (400); but short in aran (53) and short before the nasal labio-dental fricative in amharc (36) 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 fásdaidh 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 ábhaíann</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 amhrac</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53 aran</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54 arbhar</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120 brodjan</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>153 carbhad</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>399 farsuing</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400 fásdaidh</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>602 mabh</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>758 sgamhan</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

43 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 Fig. 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LASID item</th>
<th>Stressed-vowel quantity in LASID 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 reic</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 tábhann</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 mart</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 úisce</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125 gairm</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>138 colleach</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>139 briste</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>178 marachd</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>205. 206, 208 cat</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>209 críceann</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>212 losgdh</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 Íeanga</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>265 deasachadh</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>339 lítr</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 a’achadh; half-long 544 cios; half-long and long 576, 577, 578 lasgdh; long 576 o’chd.

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 /t’e:n/ ‘fire’ ..., cóileach /ko’lax/ ‘rooster’ ..., goirid /’gorid/ ‘drizzling’ ...’ (The symbol / 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,
...
for Arran (also recorded by Colm Ó Baoill) shows a tendency, albeit a less pronounced one, for lengthening short stressed vowels (Fig. 5).

<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 taisge</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 briste</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 craiceann</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* [o’in] [o’inn] (with hiatus, Holmer 1942, 156), as opposed to LASID’s (I, 280) lengthened form, [o’àn] (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 *Eibhinn* 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 *høfn* 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 *Høfn*. 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 *høfn* occurs in Norse loan-names throughout the Sudreyjar. From this perspective, ON *høfn* 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 [o’ìn] (point 67), Ormeath [o’àn] (point 65) and Inishowen [o’àn] (point 68). Although this is in contrast to Holmer’s Rathlin [o’in] [o’àn] (1942, 156, in which the superscript dot (‘) indicates hiatus55), it is possible that Southend Gaelic *abhainn* was pronounced something like *[a’inn]* or *[a’ai:in]* 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, *[i:n]* ‘oin’,57 with a half-long stressed vowel.

On this count, it is conceivable that ScG *Abhainn* derives from ON *Höfn* /høβn/, via Early Gaelic *Abhan* *taβan/, dat. *Abhain* *taβi:n/, with a short

---

52 The island is described as ‘within dangerously easy reach of Clann Dömhnail [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: cumhach “narrow” may rhyme 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 [v’n] 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 Bann ‘fair Para’, was nicknamed Brochan Scallta (‘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, *Avyn). Later the bilabial fricative develops into a labio-dental fricative in Scottish Gaelic, viz *Abhainn */a'vain/, dat. *Abhainn */a'vain'/ (cf. Monro 1549 *Avyn, Mac Cana 1621–22 *Abhinn, SAS 1791–99 *Aven) but is vocalised in Southend Gaelic, as in the case of intervocalic -bb- in abhainn in East Ulster Irish, with compensatory lengthening of the stressed vowel yielding *Abhainn */a'ain/, dat. *Abhainn */a'ain'/. 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 Sruth na Maoile, in order for the etymology to be credible. If this is so, neighbouring communities (e.g. Arran /e:vin/ (Holmer 1957, 49; §5, above)\(^58\)) appear to have adopted the long stressed vowel of */a'ain/, while preserving the labio-dental fricative of earlier */a'vin*/.

Meanwhile, radical *Abhan may survive in George Campbell Hay’s Tarbert form,\(^39\) Abhann (rad. an latha thogas Abhann ‘when we set course on Sanda’, Byrne 2000 I, 424 (also 277, 316), dat. i i ‘seiladh mach o Abhann ‘as out she sails from Sanda’, 425), whose development was presumably on the analogy of the development of *Abhainn > *Abhainn.\(^60\)

§1.1 Conclusion

Of the various possible derivations of Abhainn discussed above, ON Hofn seems contextually to be the most likely. The historical phonology for the development of Abhainn 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 Abhainn. Alternatively, lengthening of *Abhainn to Abhainn may have paralleled the development of the appellative abhainn ‘river’ > *a'inn in the local Gaelic dialect, assuming that this was the same as that which took place in Ulster, cf. Rathlin [o:an] ‘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 Sannda (yielding ScG Sannda), and one for the harbour, ON Hofn (yielding ScG Abhainn).\(^61\) 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, Abhainn, rather than the island, Sannda, and this may help explain why Abhainn, as opposed to Sannda, survives in Arran Gaelic. While the onomastic meaning of Abhainn transfers to the island in Gaelic usage – ousted use of Sannda in some communities, acquiring equivalent sense in others – it is the original island name that is transferred into Scots/English, hence Sandy, a fact which presumably reflects administrative usage. The shape of the island as seen from the sea gives rise to a third form, An Spàin. If ScG Abhainn ever had a hold in modern Scots/English usage, it has been eclipsed by the English form of An Spàin, Spoon Island.\(^62\)

In the early part of the 20th century, it is probable that Sannda, Abhainn and An Spàin belonged to different user groups (Cox 1990, 46–48): Sannda to the islanders themselves and to the people of Kintyre – Eng. Sandy to officialdom; Abhainn to the fishing communities of Kintyre and Arran; and An Spàin 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 N’s] are dentals; [l N] are velarised; both [?] and \(/\) indicate palatal consonants.

\(^{61}\) There are parallels, albeit that the islands concerned are larger than Sanda: Na Hamhn on Eriskay (ON Eiriksey ‘Eirik’s isle’), Na Hamhn and Na Hamhun on Mull (ON Myñ), as well as Port na b-Abhann (< *Abhann) on Islay (ON Il), all from ON Hofn (Cox 2008, 51–55).

\(^{62}\) E.g. <https://www.ourscotland.co.uk/clydeislands/>.
Acknowledgements

My sincere thanks to Thomas E.V. Pearce for checking my translations of George Buchanan and Edmund MacCana and for his helpful comments on them; Angus Martin and Tom Schmidt for references; George Jones, Dòmhnall Iain MacAonghais, Eairdsidh MacGilleathain and Brian McLaughlin for forms; Cairistiona Cain, Librarian at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, for help in tracking down sources; Bibliothèque royale de Belgique for permission to reproduce Edmund MacCana’s MS (Plates 1–2); John Purser for his discussion of tiompan; Anthony Dilworth for his reminiscence on his work at the Linguistic Survey of Scotland; and to Colm Ó Baoill, Mícheál Ó Mainnín and Seòsamh Watson for reading an earlier draft of this article and for their helpful suggestions.

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 Sanda. 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 Sanda, 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:


Smith (1854, 217): ‘Insulæ Sandæ, seu Auoniae, Hibernicé ABHUIN, brevis descriptio, R. P. fris Edmundi Mac Cana.’

Origines Parochiales Scotiae II, 1855, 820, note 5: ‘MS. in the Burgundian Library at Brussels, circa 1600, entitled Insulæ Sandae seu Auoniae Hibernice Abhuinn Brevis Descriptio, by Friar Edmund M’Cana.’

Skene (1874, clxviii): ‘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]) Insulæ

63 cogadh sa na tri Rioghachtaibh ‘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)).
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. <u, v> < i, j>) rationalised.
‘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.

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 sacrilegious 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 MacDonnells. 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. 68
O faithful one, entreat these sacred ashes, then,
you who comes to the safe shores of the Hebrigenae. 69

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

References
Adomnán: see Reeves 1857; Fowler 1894; Skene 1874; Anderson and Anderson 1991; Sharpe 1995.
Anderson, Alan Orr, 1922, Early Sources of Scottish History AD 500 to 1286, 2 vols (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd).
Blau, Joannes, ‘Cantyre Chersonesus, Cantyr a Demie-yland’, and ‘Vistus

68 Bettigo in India (Ptolemy, e.g. Lib. VII, cap. 1 §33, ἀπὸ τοῦ Βηττιγώ ὄρους (Nobbe 1843–45 II, 148) ‘from the mountain of Bettaguy’) and the Тагус in the Iberian Peninsula (Ptolemy, Lib. II, cap. 5 §4, τὰ γου ποταμοῦ ἐκβολῆς (Nobbe, ibid. I, 80) ‘the mouth of the river Tago’) may be being used here to represent natural wonders of the world.

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. 68
O faithful one, entreat these sacred ashes, then,
you who comes to the safe shores of the Hebrigenae. 69

[Footnote]
‘Fourteen bodies, preserved in seven urns,
as they were twins at birth, so are they seen in the earth.’
References
Adomnán: see Reeves 1857; Fowler 1894; Skene 1874; Anderson and Anderson 1991; Sharpe 1995.
Anderson, Alan Orr, 1922, Early Sources of Scottish History AD 500 to 1286, 2 vols (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd).
Blau, Joannes, ‘Cantyre Chersonesus, Cantyr a Demie-yland’, and ‘Vistus
Gaelic *uinneag* “window” and Related Questions’, *Scottish Gaelic Studies* XX, 212–21.


Fowler, J.T., 1894, *Adamnani Vita S. Columbae, edited from Dr. Reeves’s text* ... (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

Fraser-MacKintosh, Charles, 1895, *The Last MacDonalds of Isla* (Glasgow: Celtic Monthly Office).

Fribarn 1727: see under George Buchanan.


Henderson, George, 1910, *The Norse Influence on Celtic Scotland* (Glasgow: James Maclehose).


John of Fordun: see under Walter Goodall, Thomas Hearne and William Skene.
Jones, George, 2000, 'Beagan mu'n Stad Ghlotsach ann a Gàidhlig Ceann a Deas Earraghadheil', Scottish Gaelic Studies XX, 201–11.

Jönsson, Finnur: see Eirspennill.


Linder, N., and H.A. Haggson: see Heimskringla.


Mac Cana, Edmund: see Appendix.

Macculloch, John, 1819, A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland including the Isle of Man ... Vol. II (London: Printed for Archibald Constable and Co. Edinburgh; and Hurst, Robinson, and Co. Cheapside, London).

Macculloch, John, 1824, The Highlands and Western Isles of Scotland ... Vol. II (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, Paternoster Row).

MacFarlane, Walter: see Arthur Mitchell.


MacMaster Campbell: see Campbell.


Martin, Angus, 2009: The Place Names of the Parish of Southend, compiled by Duncan Colville, revised and supplemented by Angus Martin (1st pub. in 1938 by KAS, q.v.; Campbeltown: Kintyre Antiquarian & Natural History Society).

Martin, Martin, 1703, A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland [1695] (1st pub. 1703; 2nd ed. 1716; repr. 1884, 1934; facsimile copy in Michael Robson, Curiosities of Art and Nature: The new annotated and illustrated edition of Martin Martin's classic A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland, Port of Ness: The Islands Book Trust, 2003).


Monro, Donald, [1549] 1774, Description of the Western Isles of Scotland, called Hybrides; by Mr Donald Monro High Dean of the Isles, who travelled through the most of them in the year 1549 [printed in the year 1773] (Edinburgh: William Auld).

Monro, Donald, [1549] 2002, A Description of the Occidental i.e. Western Isles of Scotland, in Martin Martin, A Description of the Western Isles of Scotland Circa 1695 and A Voyage to St Kilda with Donald Monro, A Description of the Occidental i.e. Western Isles of Scotland, with Introductions by Charles W.J. Withers and R.W. Munro (Edinburgh: Birlinn; 1st pub. 1999), 289–339. [This is from a different MS to the 1774 edition.]

Morkinskinna: Morkinskinna, ed. Finnur Jönsson (København: Håskóli Islands, 1932).

Munch, P.A., 1859, Norges konge-sagaer fra de ældste tider indtil anden halvdeel af det 13de aarhundrede effer Christi fødsel I (Christiania: Feilberg)[1695].


Murchison, Thomas M., ed., 1960, Prose Writings of Donald Lamont (Edinburgh, Oliver and Boyd for the Scottish Gaelic Texts Society).


Nobbe, Carolus Fridericus Augustus, 1843–45, Claudii Ptolemaei Geographia 3 vols (Lipsiae sumptibus et typis Caroli Tauchniti).


Ó Baill, Colm, 1978, Contributions to a Comparative Study of Ulster Irish and Scottish Gaelic (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, The Queen's University of Belfast).


O’Rahilly, Thomas F., 1976, Irish Dialects Past and Present (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies; 1st pub. 1932).


OS: Board of Ordnance 6°: 1 mile map, 1869, 1881, 1882.


Playfair, James, 1819, A Geographical and Statistical Description of Scotland ... Vol. II (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable and Co.; London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, and Hurst, Robinson and Co.).


Vigfusson, Guðbrandr, and C. R. Unger: see *Flateyjarbok*.


