§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 Sanna, 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.
Richard A.V. Cox

Scottish Gaelic Sannda and Its Aliases

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 sheep-farm. 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.

Ibid.: s.n. Southend

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:

A promontorio Cantiera paullo plus mille passus abest Avona, id est, portuosa; id cognomen adepta ab statione navium, quod, cum Dani insulas tenebat, 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 tenebat 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 Portuossa, 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. *portùosa* 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 Portuosa* 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:

Avoyn. Befor the south poyn of the promontory of Kyntyre, lyes be ane myle of sea, ane ilye neire ane myle lange, 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.'

scotish/1eng.html#I.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.'

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 Pairts 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). His list, *de insulis Scoecia*, includes:

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

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

*Johannis 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 Aweryne, ubi capella sancti Sannani, ibique pro transgressoribus refugium.

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

*Johannis de Fordun: Chronica 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 ilye neire ane myle lange callit the ilye Avoyn quhilk Iyle is obtinatit 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 said yeults ... 1549*, 2002, 301).

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 Avoyn, or island of the harbours'.

*Averyne (Sanday)*, where is the chapel of Saint Sannian, 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, cxdviii) 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 Avoniae, Hibernice Abhuinn, Brevis Descriptio. R. P. fratris 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. Avon or Sanda* and Blaeu 1654 (surveyed by Timothy Pont between 1583–96) *Avon or Sanda*. In addition to his map’s *Avon*, Blaeu’s texts give Latinised *Avona* and *Avena*. For the modern form and etymology of this name, see §5.

Avyn ...’, as above. The editors of *Origines Parochiales Scotiae* (II, 9) translate ‘Isle Awyn’, 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 Avon’. 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 Cantera paulo plus mille passus abest Avona, id est, portuosus: id cognomen adepta ab statione navium: quod cum Dani insulas tenebant, ad eam classem eorum cursus dirigebant’, although he adds in italics, ‘*Avenam vide in tabula Kanteræ*’ (NLS: <http://www.nls.uk:8080/StyleServer/calcrgn?cat=Maps&item=/00000478.index&style=maps.xsl&wid=700&hei=500&browser=win_ie&plugin=false>), which Cunningham translates as, ‘A little more than a mile from the promontory of Kintyre is Sanda Island, that is with a harbour; the name is taken from an anchorage for ships; because when the Danes held the islands, their fleets directed their course to it. See *Avon on the map of Kintyre*.’ (NLS: <http://www.nls.uk/maps/atlas/blaeu/page.cfm?id=974>). Also in Blaeu’s atlas, the form *Avena* (f. 9v; not *Avenna* as in Gammeltoft 2006, 77) occurs in Andreæ Melvini Scotiæ Topographia, Andrew Melville’s *Topography of Scotland*, a long poem to Prince Henry Frederick, at this point evidently based upon Buchanan’s own text: ‘A promontorio Canteira abscessit Avena / Passus mille, suae naves statione receptans; // Dirigeret cum cursum ad eam olim Danica classis.’ (NLS: <http://www.nls.uk/maps/atlas/blaeu/BlaeuAtlas-LatinText.pdf>), which Cunningham translates as ‘A mile distant from the promontory of Kintyre is Sanda, receiving ships in its anchorage, since once the Danish fleet directed its course to it.’ (NLS: <http://www.nls.uk/maps/atlas/blaeu/page.cfm?seq=12>). *Avona* and its variants are omitted from later maps.

§ 3 SANNDA

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

Eftir þat sigldi Hakon konungr vndan Melansey ok laa vm nattina vnndir Hersey ok þadan vnndir Sandey ok sua til Satirismula ok kom vm nattina nordr vnndir Gudey. þadan sigldi hann vt i Jlarsund ok laa þar .ij. nætr.

Vigfusson and Unger’s edition:

‘Hákonar Saga hins gamla’, *Flateyjarbók* III, 227, §281

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.’

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 slétt
Sanndey konungr randir

Linder and Haggson’s edition:

‘Saga Magnúss konungrs berfœtts’, *Heimskringla*, §10

Vitt bar snjallr a slétt Sandey konungr randir

Finnur Jónsson’s edition:

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

10 In 1264–65 by Sturla Bónarson (Pulssiano and Wof 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 thane 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 seilte Kong Haakon fra Melosø og laa om Natten under Herø; derfra seilte han under Sandø og forbi Santresmule og kom om Natten nord til Gudø. Derfra seilte han til Jlarsund, hvor han laa i to Nætter ...’


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 Sandey’

Campbell (1924, 11) notes – without expansion – that ‘[t]he island is on occasion written of as Sanderey’, 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: Captian Thomas (1880, 365) states that ‘[i]n 1202 Olaf was in Sanday (Sanderey, Barra; or Sand (Sandar), North Uist).’ Thomas’s reference is to Hrafn’s Saga:

Peit lágu við Suðreyjar í göðu lægi nokkurar nættr. Pá réð fyrr Suðreyjum Ólaf konungr.

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

Grím said:

Here Bótólfr 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 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 Sandar is a speculative plural (Norse) form, i.e. ‘[the] sands’: the name survives in Eng. Vatersay and Pabbay, south of Barra. His North Uist or Uist name. Thomas’s – there is no reason to associate Hrafn’s Saga’s Sandar (Tjomsland 1951, 28–29) for ON Sand-ey ‘[the] island’ in island names in the southern Inner Hebrides

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-ey. 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 Shatanda [kʰtlaxan ‘hâNdâ] (Eairdsidh MacGilleathain, Solas); as opposed to a ScG [‘sâNdâ], for ON Sand-a ‘sand-river’. Cleasby 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 n.; so also Horiary and Loch Dhuary, to the west of Sandary.

23 The ScG reflex of ON -ey ‘island’ in island names in the southern Inner Hebrides is usually -a [a]. ScG Sanndraigh (Blaeu 1654 Sandrera, Monro [1549] 1774, 30

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).22 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).23 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 fjørir Stauri ‘off [the] Stauri’.24 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

Sandarey, [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 Sanndaigh Canna.

24 Which is taken to be The Point of Stoor in Assynt (Anderson loc. cit.; Tjomsland 1951, 26), although other features may have borne 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(in) acc. m. ‘(the) stake’ (cf. Watson 1906, 367–68; Henderson 1910, 351), in reference to the rock stack, Scots/Eng. The Old Man of Stoor: cf. a similar rock formation in Skye, ScG Bod Stòir ‘the penis of Stòrr’, which has been sanitised as ScG Bodach Stòrr; now Bodach an Stòir under the influence of Scots/Eng. The Old Man of Storr (Dwelly s.n. Storr, Old Man of: ‘Bod Störr [source: W.J. Watson] (euphemistically Bodach Stòrr’; 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 Storr—the phallus of Storr’). The Assynt ScG name has now acquired the article – An Stòr (Mac an Tàilleir, s.n. Stoer) – presumably under the influence of Scots/Eng. The Old Man of Stoor, which is rendered Bodach an Stòir 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 Stòrr, Rubha an Stòir). The difference between ScG stòr (Skye) and ScG stòr (Assynt), if orthographic forms represent an (historical) difference in pronunciation, arises as follows: ON staurr nom. yields ScG stòrr; ON staur acc. yields ScG stòr (cf. ScG sgòd < ON skaut nt. (Cox 2002, 297)). Formally, gen. sg. of ScG stòr is stòir, although this falls together in sound with stòrr through assimilation of non-palatalised and palatalised unlenited rr, hence written forms in (gen. sg.) stòr; the gen. sg. of ScG stòr is stòir; furthermore, ScG written forms may be confused with Scot/Eng. forms in storr.
11) surmises that the connection was made through a misidentification with Adomnán’s *Sainnea*; this seems plausible. Additionally, a conflation of John of Fordun’s note on the dedication on the island – *cella Sancti Adamnanii* (Goodall 1759 I, 45; Edinburgh College Library MS (which Reeves 1857, 87 quotes)); *capella Sancti Annianii* (Hearne 1722, 81; Trinity College, Cambridge MS) – with the island’s name (although it is not (Lat.) *Sanda* but *Awig, Awyne*, respectively, that John mentions) may have aided the misidentification.

§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 *Sanna* 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). 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 Buchanan’s *Avona* is a latinised form of MacCaná’s c.1644–51 *Abhainn* (MS *Abhuin*, see Appendix), modern *Sanda*. 28 Martin 2009, 31: ‘It ought to be Old Scandinavian *Sænde*, 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.

29 At any rate, the island is probably unlikely to have borne a Norse name during the seventh century. 50 Which has otherwise not been identified with certainty. Anderson and Anderson (1991, lxiv) suggest possibly Colonsay; Dr Reeves and Wentworth Huyse suggest Shuna (cited in Campbell loc. cit.).

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

31 *sannda* [‘spoon’] or Scots / Eng. *Spoon* Island

32 *Sanndaigh*}

33 capella Sancti Annae

34 capella Sancti Annae

35 capella Sancti Annae

36 capella Sancti Annae
Scottish Gaelic *Abhainn* (e.g. Dwelly, s.n. *Sanda Id.*); cf. Kintyre Gaelic *dol do dh’Abhuin* ‘going to Sanda’ (Henderson 1910, 180) and Arran Gaelic *tha tiğh solus ann an Abhainn* [‘tej solas an d ëitein’]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, *Eibhinn* and *Eibhainn*.37

Without offering any grounds, Watson (1926, 91) states that ‘[t]he pre-Norse name of Sanda is preserved in Gaelic still as *Abhainn*’. As for *Abhainn* being pre-Norse, nothing 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 *Abhainn* was Gaelic in origin or not.

§6 ADOMNÁN’S *OMMON*

Skene’s (1874, 328) tentative suggestion38 that John of Fordun’s *Awyn* (supposing an original Old Gaelic lenited -b- -[β]-) is connected with Adomnán’s *Ommun* (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 SCG *ABHUINN, SCG *abhainn* ‘river’

It has been suggested that *Abhainn* is simply SCG *abhainn* f. ‘river’.40 Campbell (1924, 11: *Abhainn* [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 ‘An Description of Certaine Pairs of the Highlands of Scotland’ (note 3, above)], ‘[t]he streeame 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 Maol*.

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 *AMHAÍNN* ‘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

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

42 Literally ‘the stream of *A Mhoil* (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* (Dönhall Iain MacAonghais, Scarp: ‘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. *Tiompas* [*t*³sim³p³*ý* *m³p³] of a headland or bluff (Lewis; Cox 2002, 381), *Maol an Tiompaín* (Loch Broom; Watson 1976, 247), Knocktipmen (Dumfries and Galloway; Watson 1924, 144), *Màm an tiompain* (Gilles 1906, 218) and possibly *Tiompán* (Skye; Forbes 1923, 435), and derives, via OG *tìm*p³ (‘timbrel, drum; some kind of stringed instrument’, from Lat. *týmpānum* (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*p³ (‘timbrel, tambourine’), *Gaileach tiompan* acc. sg. (Job 21:12; Psalms 81:2), *tiompan dat. sg. (Psalms 149:3, 150:4) and *tiompanachd* dat. pl. (Exodus 15:20; Judges 11.34, 2 Samuel 6:5, 1 Chron 13:8) are used consistently for the Latin Vulgate’s *týmpānum* acc. sg. (Job 21:12; Psalms 81:2), *týmpānum dat. sg. (Psalms 149:3, 150:4) and *týmpāni* dat. pl. (Exodus 15:20; Judges 11.34, 2 Samuel 6:5, 1 Chron 13:8), all of which are rendered *tìm*p³ in the King James Version. Cormac’s 10th-century definition, or rather etymology, of *tìm*p³ reads, ‘Tímpán .i. tim (.i. bocc [added from another MS]) .i. sail .i. umar .i. ëit .i. umar ñi .i. ìmh .i. ìmh .i. ìmh .i. ìmh’, i.e. from the sweetness of sound. Whether *An Tiompanach* (e. *tìm*p³ + 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 *oíre* ‘cauldron’ has been used in a similar sense elsewhere, e.g. Coire Bhreacain (Cox 1998, 26–28). For the semantic extension of *tiompan*, cf. *Eolais an Speadaidh* / *Cùm bhaigh air do chròb / S cum a mach do thìompan*. *Tiompan = the posterior = Dìorasadh. [‘Scythe lore: keep your body howed (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 Gaël; 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 [ˈiːvən] (with a non-nasal stressed vowel (George Jones, pers. comm.), as opposed to, for example, Lewis Gaelic àmhainn [ˈaːvən]), 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 Háfinn acc. ‘the hoof’, with hófr m., or ON Háfinn acc. ‘the bag-net’, with háfrr 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 o ~ a alternation, either form might yield Àbhainn.

§10 ON Hófn

Monro implicitly and Macculloch explicitly, however, take the name to be from ‘Danish havin/hafni’ (i.e. ON hófn) ‘haven, harbour’.54 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 Maöile §7, and An Tìonpanach 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.55 ON hófn occurs in several place-names in the Hebridies, e.g. Tannabhagh (Lewis), Tàmhnaraigh (Lewis and the Summer Isles), Na Hamhinn (Eriskay and Mull) and Port na h-Àbhainn(e) (earlier Port na h-Àbhan; Islay) (Cox 2008). As in Port na h-Àbhan(e), though, we should expect a short stressed vowel here, which would nominally rule out hófn’s candidacy.56

53 Cf. Mod. Norwegian Havn and Hestehøven (Møre og Romsdal; id. 269358 and 261897, respectively <http://www.edd.uio.no/perl/search/search.cgi>).
54 A word borrowed into Scottish Gaelic (Oftedal 1956, 106).
55 So KAS (1939, 19): ‘Havin. Name given to Sända by the Scandinavians.’
56 In spite of the evidence from John of Fordoun to Groome §2, there is no justification for saying that ‘The Norse sometimes referred to Sända as ‘Havn’ because it provided a reasonable offshore haven or harbour for boats’ (Haswell-Smith 2003, 3).
57 The diphthongisation in Tàmhnaraigh and Na Hamhinn is due to the vocalisation of the Early Gaelic nasal fricative mb [β] < ON f[β] (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 arbhar (SGDS item 54), bradán (120), carbad (153), farsuing (399) and marbh (602); long in fasdaithd (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 fasdaithd 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 lengthening in Carradale</th>
<th>Muasdale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>short</td>
<td>half-long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 abhainn</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 amharc</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53 aran</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54 arbhar</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120 bradán</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>153 carbad</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>399 farsuing</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400 fasdaithd</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>602 marbh</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>758 sgamhan</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

43 Point 36 has a bilabial rather than a labio-dental fricative.
Stressed-vowel lengthening in Muasdale, Kintyre, in *LASID* data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LASID 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>608, 609, 629 <em>achadh</em></td>
<td>Muasdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>650 <em>coisich</em></td>
<td>Muasdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>620, 655, 663 <em>coirc</em></td>
<td>Muasdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>656 <em>seagal</em></td>
<td>Muasdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>701 <em>marbh</em></td>
<td>Muasdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>710, 934 <em>math</em></td>
<td>Muasdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>710 <em>obair</em></td>
<td>Muasdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>750 <em>botal</em></td>
<td>Muasdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>766, 767 <em>fisgadh</em></td>
<td>Muasdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>768 <em>teanga</em></td>
<td>Muasdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>772, 773, 734, 1013 <em>dhachaigh</em></td>
<td>Muasdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>742 <em>agam</em></td>
<td>Muasdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>750 <em>botal</em></td>
<td>Muasdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>751, 752 <em>deoch</em></td>
<td>Muasdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>757, 773 <em>bochd</em></td>
<td>Muasdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>791 <em>marbhadh</em></td>
<td>Muasdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>766, 767 <em>fisgadh</em></td>
<td>Muasdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>780 <em>marbhadh</em></td>
<td>Muasdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>782, 976, 1043 <em>goirid</em></td>
<td>Muasdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>977 <em>loch</em></td>
<td>Muasdale</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 /tɛn/ ‘fire’, coileach /koˈle/k/ ‘rooster’, gairm /gɛr/ ‘moon’, sileadh /siˈle/ ‘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, xxii).) 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 (*croib, math*), before voiceless (*cat, litir*) and voiced stops (*obair,
According to the SGDS data (Fig. 4), lengthening of short stressed vowels is mainly restricted to southern Kintyre; outwith southern Kintyre, lengthening occurs only in one instance: amharc in Arran. Glottal stops, which occur only in short reflexes of stressed vowels, not in half-long or long varieties, are found mostly outwith southern Kintyre: 25% in northern Kintyre (nine out of 36 examples) and 10.77% in Arran (seven out of 65). Of the four examples in southern Kintyre (which represent 8% of the 50 examples), two are from point 37, Carradale, and two from point 39, Killeen and Kilmore (about two and a half miles north of Muasdale), all recorded by MacAulay.

Glottalisation & lengthening of stressed vowels in Kintyre & Arran in SGDS data  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SGDS item</th>
<th>pts 31–35 (Arran), 36–39 (s. Kintyre), 40–42 (Gigha + n. Kintyre)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SGDS</strong></td>
<td><strong>item</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 <em>abhainn</em></td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 <em>amharc</em></td>
<td>32 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53 <em>aran</em></td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54 <em>arbhach</em></td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120 <em>bradan</em></td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>153 <em>carbad</em></td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>399 <em>farsuing</em></td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400 <em>fasdaidh</em></td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>601 <em>marbh</em></td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>690 <em>radan</em></td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>726 <em>sabhal</em>†</td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>727 <em>sagart</em></td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>758 <em>sgamhan</em></td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35</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.

50 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-innseal-éisteach a rinne Tony Anthony ann an Roinn nam Foteinseach air mhath dha-irteadh’ (pers. comm.). Although Heinrich Wagner comments in the introduction to *LASID* IV (p. vii) 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 pause 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.51)
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></td>
<td>short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 tarbh</td>
<td>Arran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 recic</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 tha'nig</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 litir</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:inn] (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 *Éibhinn* and *Eubháin* (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 Maolé*; by the fact that the island is a stepping-stone between Ireland and Scotland, and between Arran and Gigha and Islay; and by the frequency with which the Norse element *høfn* occurs in Norse loan-names throughout the Suðreyjar.

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, 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. Thus *LASID* (I, 280) records Rathlin [o:inn] (point 67), Ormeath [o:inn] (point 65) and Inishowen [o:inn] (point 68). Although this is in contrast to Holmer’s Rathlin [o’in] [o’inn] (1942, 156, in which the superscript dot (‘) indicates hiatus5), it is possible that Southend Gaelic *abhainn* was pronounced something like *[a:in]* or *[a: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, *[ìn]* ‘oin’,57 with a half-long stressed vowel.

On this count, it is conceivable that ScG *Abhainn* derives from ON *Høfn* /høßn/, via Early Gaelic *Abban* *(a)Baınn*, dat. *Abhain* *(a)Baınn*, with a short

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52 The island is described as ‘within dangerously easy reach of Clann Dòmhnaill [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 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 [a:in] 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 Para’, was nicknamed Brochan Scafla (‘pastry porridge’), apparently in reference to his employment during the Great Famine (1845–49) in the distribution of what was considered to be poor quality Irish meal. (Brian McLaughlin, pers. comm.)
stressed vowel (cf. John of Fordun’s late 14th-century Scots form, *Aven). Later 
the bilabial fricative develops into a labio-dental fricative in Scottish Gaelic, 
 viz *Àbhainn */'avyn/, dat. *Àbhainn */'àvin/, (cf. Monro 1549 *Aven*, Mac 
Cana 1621–22 *Abhainn*, SAS 1791–99 *Aven*) but is vocalised in Southend 
Gaelic, as in the case of intervocalic -bb- in *abbainn* in East Ulster Irish, with 
compensatory lengthening of the stressed vowel yielding */'[a:vin]/, dat. 
*Àbhainn */'atìn/. We may assume that this dative form was homophonous, 
or nearly so, with the local pronunciation of *abbainn* ‘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 */'avin/ (Holmer 1957, 49; §5, above)59) appear to have adopted the 
long stressed vowel of */'atìn/, while preserving the labio-dental fricative of 
eltier */'avin/.

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

59 The reflex */e/ may occur for */a/ in Arran and, to a lesser extent, in Kintyre; see Holmer 
1957, 49, and 1962, 41.

39 During his formative years, Hay learnt Gaelic from his maternal great-aunts in Tarbert, 
Kintyre, and from local fishermen (Martin 1984, 48–71; Byrne 2000 II, 3–6).

50 EG *abainn*, a form derived from *ab* as a fem. n-stem (*DIL*, s.v.; *Vendyres*, s.v.), dat. *abainn*, 
so modern nominativised *abbainn.*

for lengthening in *Àbhainn*. Alternatively, lengthening of *Àbhainn* to *Àbhainn* 
may have paralleled the development of the appellative *abbainn* ‘river’ > *àtainn* 
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 *abbainn* ‘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 *Sandle* (yielding ScG *Sannda*), and 
one for the harbour, ON *Hofn* (yielding ScG *Abhainn*). 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 – ousting use of *Sannda* in some communities, 
acquiring equivalent sense in others – it is the original island name that is 
borrowed into Scots/English, hence *Sanday*, 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 *Àbhainn* 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, Àbhainn* and 
*An Spàin* belonged to different user groups (Cox 1990, 46–48): *Sannda* to 
the islanders themselves and to the people of Kintyre – Eng. *Sanday* to officialdom; 
*Àbhainn* 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 pro- 
nunciation.

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

ScG [d] is devoiced; [d t N N’] are dentals; [L N] are velarised; both [l] and 
/l/ indicate palatal consonants.

61 There are parallels, albeit that the islands concerned are larger than *Sannda, Na Hamhna* 
on Eriskay (ON *Eiriksey* ‘Eirik’s isle’), *Na hamhna* and *Na Hamhan* on Mull (ON *Myl*), 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/>.
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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 Francisan, 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 Edmnudi 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, 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]) Insulae 63 cogadh sa na tri Rioghachttaibh ‘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 Avoniae 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. <u, v> < i, j>) rationalised.

[fo. 276]

Insulae Sandæ seu Avoniæ, Hibernice Abhuinn. 64
Brevis Descriptio. R. P. fratris Edmundi mac Cana

Insula Sanda est in oceano Scotico ad occasum, uno milliari a Kinntiriae continent sejuncta; complectitur in circuitu unum magnum milliare. Solum jucundum, fructuum ac frugum, si coleretur, ferax. In ea est ædicula S. Ninniano sacra, ad cujus canoebium in Galvadia tota insula spectat. Conjunctum huic ædicula est ossarium sive sepulchretum quattuordecim filiorum sanctissimi viri Senchanii Hiberni, sanctitate illustrium. Saxeo murulo septum, in quo sunt septem grandia et polita saxa, quibus sanctissima corpora teguntur, in quorum medio stat obeliscus, altior hominis statura (ut mihi jam suggerit memoria). Nemo mortalium impune ingreditur illum murulum. Lepidum est quod mihi retulerunt insulani: gallinam id loci ingressam ova peperisse et exclussisse; pullos, cum jam praætate egredi poterant, omnes intortis collis – insigni spectaculo – processisse. Retulit mihi etiam grandior natura insulanorum, et ferme omnium pater, hoc prodigium quod subscribo. Ængussius Mac Donellus, Kenntiriæ ac Insulæ Ilæ dinasta (quem ipse jam olim vidi), ingressus est aliqua insulam, multa comitante caterva, inter quos fuit præcipes Kinntiriae juvenum. Cum forte dinasta ac ceteri nobiles de rebus seriis tractarent, juventus, ut solet, se pilæ ac clavarum ludo exercebat; pila vi clavæ impulsa, priusquam ab adversa manu juvenum excipi posset, altius in sacrum sepulchretum volavit. Juvenis, memor loci

64 MS Abhuiinn.
‘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.

Sanda tibi cedit, vETERum celeBTRAta Camenis, 
Bettiginum gaza, ripa beata Tagi. 
Hos igitur sacros cnieres devotus adora, 
Quisquis in Hebrigenium littura 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.

[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 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 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 Senchanus born blessed Sanda holds. 
Ireland, the mother of divine teachers, once 
Begat the saints whom Scotland’s soil covers.

67 A sometimes inflated translation is given by the Rev. Father Butler in Campbell 1924, 3–4, a heavily truncated one in Origines Parochiales Scotiae II, 820.
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, ἀπ’ τοῦ Βηττίγιο θρόνος (Nobbe 1843–45 II, 148) ‘from the mountain of Βηττίγιο’ and the Τάγος in the Iberian Peninsula (Ptolemy, Lib. II, cap. 5 §4, Τάγου ποταμού ἱσθάλει (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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