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

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

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

Francis Groome, Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland, 1896, 318

Similar descriptions go back to the late 18th century:

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

Samuel Lewis, A Topographical Dictionary of Scotland, 1846: s.n. Sanda

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 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:

‘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 Canteria paullo plus mille passus abest Avona, id est portuosa. Id cognomen adepta ab statione navium, quod cum Dani insulas tenebant ad eam classes eorum cursus dirigebant (http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/scothist/1lat.html#I.32): ‘From the promontory of Cantyre, a little more than a mile, lies Avona, now Sanda, called Portouusa, i.e., fit for a port. It got that name from being a road for ships, for when the Danes possessed those islands their fleets directed their course thither for shelter’ (http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/
Buchanan’s *portuosa* is Lat. *portūōsa* 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: 3

Avoyne. Befor the south poyn't of the promontory of Kyntyre, lyes be ane myle of sea, ane ilye neire ane myle lange, callit the ilye Avoyne, quhilk ilye is obtained that name fra the armies of Denmark, quhilkis armies callit it in their leid Havin, it is inhabite and manurit, and guid for shippis to lay one ankers.

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

‘Avoyne. To the extent of one sea mile off the southern promontory of Kintyre lies an island nearly a mile long called the Isle Avoyne, 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.’

Our oldest source, however, is John of Fordun (1384 x 1387, Skene 1871–72 I, xiv). 5 His list, *de insulis Scoiae*, includes:

- *Insula Awyn, ubi cella Sancti Adomnanii, ibique pro transgressoribus refugium.*

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

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

‘The Isle of 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.*

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

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

‘Avoyne. Befor the south poyn't of the promontory of Kyntyre lyes be ane myle of sea, ane ilye neire ane myle lange callit the ilye Avoyn quhilk Iyle is obtenite that name fra the armies of Denmark, quhilkis armies callit it in their leid Havin. It is inhabite and manurite and guid for shippis to lay one ankers.’ (Donald Monro, *A Description of the Western Isles of Scotland* by Mr. Donald Monro, qubo travellit through mane of them in Anno 1549 in Mitchell 1907–08 III, 262–302: 265). From a different MS: ‘Before the south poyn't of the Promonterie of Kintyre lyis be ane myle of sea ane Ile neireist ane myle lang callit the Ile of Avoyn, quhilk Ile has obtenite that name fra the Armes of Denmark, quhilk Armes are callit in their leid Havin, inhabite and manurite, gude for schippis to ly on ankeris’ (Monro [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 Tennant (1772, 218 and note) summarises both Buchanan and Monro: ‘*Sannda, or Avyn, or island of the harbours*’.

*Aweryne* (Sanday), where is the chapel of Saint Sannian, and a sanctuary for transgressors* (Skene 1871–72 II, 39; Skene writes *Aweryne* 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
§3 Sandey

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 nottina vndir Hersey ok þadan vndir Sandey ok sua til Satirsimula ok kom vm naattina norðr vndir Gudey. þadan sigldi hann vt i Jlrsund ok laa þar þij. 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 Sando 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 sletta Sandey konungr randir

Linder and Haggson's edition:

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

Vitt bar sniallr a sletta Sandey konungr randar

Finnur Jónsson's edition:

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

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. 8 In addition to his map's Avon, Blaeu's texts give latinised Avona and Avena. 9 For the modern form and etymology of this name, see §5.

Awyn ...’, 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 Parochialit Socitiae: 'Aven, Avon, Avon Porticoa', adding, 'Old Name for Sanda'.

9 Blaeu's description (f. 119) of Sanda is taken directly from George Buchanan:

‘A promontorio Canteira paulo plus mille passus abest Avona / Passus mille, sua naves statione receptans; // Dirigeret cum Dani insulas tenebant, ad eam classes’

The reference MSB.9 Sandey is given in error in Gammeltoft 2006, 77.

10 In 1264–65 by Sturla Bónarson (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 Cantyre, 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 Melasø og laa om Natten under Herø; derfra seilte han under Sandø og forbi Santíresmulen og kom om Natten nord til Gudey. Derfra seilte han til Jlrsund, hvor han laa i to Nætter ...’

13 An older version occurs in Morkinskinna, 317 §132: ‘Vitt ber snar aslæta / Sandey konungr randir’.

14 The reference MB.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: Captain Thomas (1880, 365) states that ‘[i]n 1202 Olaf was in Sanday (Sandarey, Barra; or Sand (Sandar), North Uist).’

Thomas’s reference is to Hrafn’s Saga:

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

Hér hefir beitt at brattri Bótólfr skipi fljótu, áðr fell sær um súðir, Sandeyju, skæ branda.
Reistí sjálfr, ok sýsti, snarr félagi harra hafnarmark, fyrir hrefnis happsverk gota sterkan.
Peit lágu við Sudreyjar í góðu lægi nókkurar nætt. Pá rēð fyrir Sudreyjum Óláfr konungr.

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

15 Collectanea de Rebus Albinicis, 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 Vigfussen in his Icelandis Sagas (1887, xxxvii note 1) and cited verbatim in Tjomsland 1951, 59–60. (Vigfussen (ibid., xxxvii) refers to Thomas’s 1880 article as ‘Proc. Antiq. Scot. Vol. XI’, in error for ‘... XIV’.)
18 ‘Hrafn’s 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)\(^{19}\)

Apart, however, from Olaf’s connection with Lewis – which, in Thomas’s view (loc. cit.) probably included the whole Long Island or Outer Hebrides – there is no reason to associate Hrafn’s Saga’s Sandey with either the Barra or Uist name. Thomas’s Sandarey is ScG Sanndraigh, an island lying between Vatersay and Pabbay, south of Barra. His North Uist Sandar is a speculative plural (Norse) form, i.e. ‘[the] sands’: the name survives in Eng. Clachan Sands (NF873765), OS1882 Clachan Sanda, and ScG Clachan Sannda, 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 Sand-ey, Sanndaey, Sanndarey, Clachan Sanda, Sandary, Sandey, Clachan Shannda, Sanndaigh, Sanndraigh and Its Aliases

Hrafn’s Saga’s Sandey, then, is likely to refer to one of these two islands: Sannndaigh 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 fjirr Stauri ‘off [the] Staurr’.\(^{24}\) 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 (Vigfussen Sandrey, [1549] 2002, 324 idem) is probably from ON Sand-eyrayr ‘[the] island of the sand-(gravel)bank’, with gen. sg. of eyr f. ‘(gravel)bank’, which is suitable topographically.

\(^{19}\) A translation of the prose element is also found in Anderson 1922 II, 359: ‘Next, they came into good harbour, beside an island that is called Sandey, and there the merchants raised a harbour mark … They lay beside the Hebrides, at anchor, for some nights. King Olaf ruled then over the Hebrides.’

\(^{20}\) Lenited in the context of ScG Clachan Shannda (k)laxan ḥānnda (Eairdisidh MacGilleathain, Solas); as opposed to a ScG *laxan ḥānnda, 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 –argi nt.; so also Horsary and Loch Dumary, to the west of Sandary.

\(^{21}\) The ScG reflex of ON -ey ‘island’ in island names in the southern Inner Hebrides is usually -ar [-a]. ScG Sanndraigh (Blaeu 1654 Sandrera, Monro [1549] 1774, 30

\(^{22}\) 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 Assyt (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) storr’ (cf. Watson 1906, 367–68; Henderson 1910, 351), in reference to the rock stack, Scots/Eng. The Old Man of Storr; cf. a similar rock formation in Skye, ScG Bod Stòir ‘the penis of Stòr’, which has been sanitised as ScG Bodach Stòir; now Bodach an Stòir under the influence of Scots/Eng. The Old Man of Storr (Dwelly, s.n. Storr, 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 Storr—the phallus of Storr’). The Assyt 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 Stoor, which is rendered Bodach an Stòr in Gaelic, so also Rubha an Stòir for Rubha Stòir (cf. <http://www.ambaile.org.uk/gol/item/item_writtenword.jsp?item_id=43320>: Bodach an Stòr, Rubha an Stòr). The difference between ScG stòrr (Skye) and ScG stòr (Assynt), if orthographic forms represent an (historical) difference in pronunciation, arises as follows: 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.) stòir; 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 Sainne; 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_ (Hearne 1722, 81; Trinity College, Cambridge MS) – with the island's name (although it is not (Lat.) _Sanda_ but _Avyn_, _Avyne_, respectively, that John mentions) may have aided the misidentification.\(^{32}\)

§4 **An Spán**

Campbell (1924, 11) comments that ScG _An Spán_ [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 _Sanna_ 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,\(^{34}\) Buchanan's _Avona_ is a latinised form of MacCanà's c.1644–51 _Abhuinn_ (MS _Abhùin_, see Appendix), modern

\(^{28}\) Martin 2009, 31: 'It ought to be Old Scandinavian _Søndey_, 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.

\(^{30}\) Which has otherwise not been identified with certainty. Anderson and Anderson (1991, lxxiv) suggest possibly Colonsay; Dr Reeves and Wentworth Huyshe suggest Shuna (cited in Campbell loc. cit.).

\(^{31}\) _capella sancti Sanniani_ (Skene 1871–72 I, 43; Wolfenbüttel MS).

\(^{32}\) Skene (1871–72 II, 386) concludes the dedication is to Senchan; the editors of _Origines Pherothiscæ Scotiae_ (II, 9 and note 12) to Ninian. Edmund MacCanà (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).

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

\(^{34}\) Parallel to the term _GHOST word_ – a word that has entered the language through the perpetuation, in dictionaries etc., of an error (_Gollum_ – the term _GHOST NAME_ refers to a name that has entered the nomenclature through the perpetuation, in written or oral sources, of an error.

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1905, 613): a north-westerly wind drives the company southwards to **Hírrir** (St Kilda), after which they continue south by Ireland, sailing south of Ireland until they come up against stormy weather. Having made appropriate vows, the storm abates and they are able to sail directly to Norway. From the detail of these two accounts, it would appear that neither _Sanndaigh_ Canna nor _Sanna_ Kintyre can be ruled out entirely.

Kintyre’s _Sanna_ appears in Latin in texts at the beginning and end of the 17th century: in *Retours*, (Argyll 21) 1619 20 _solidatis terrarum insulae de Sanda_ and (Argyll 93) 1695 20 _solidatass terrarum insulae de Sanda_; and in a number of documents relating to the Franciscan mission to Scotland in the early part of the century: in Edmund MacCana’s description of the island (see Appendix) c.1644–51 (gen.) _Insula Sânnde_, (nom.) _Insula Sânnde, Sânnde_; in a letter from Patrick Hegarty to Hugh de Burgu (Giblin 1964, 33) 1624 in _Sandum insulan_; 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 _Sanna 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. _Sandē_ and _Sanda Island_ are, of course, from ScG _Sanna_ and Kintyre Gaelic _/sànda/_ (Holmer 1962: 17, recorded 1937/38), a loan-name from ON _Sand-ey_ (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 sandtange_ [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–

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22 E.g. Fraser-MacIntosh 1895, 36: ‘The island of Sando, of old Avon ...’.

23 E.g. Holmer 1957, 49.

27 (Lenited) genitive in Murchison 1960, 64: ‘chaidh a’ chèud “Chlansman” air tir air eilean Shànda’ (the first _Clanman_ went aground on the island of Sanda). Less appropriately, Skene (1871–72 II, 39) writes _Sánday_ and the website http://wen.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanda__ Island_ gives Gaelic _Sàndaigh_ (for the final syllable, see note 21, above). ON _-nd_ is treated in Scottish Gaelic as an (originally geminate) unlenited non-palatalised _-n_ – a velarised dental nasal – plus stop. The preceding stressed vowel is lengthened (diphthongised) in this environment in most Scottish Gaelic dialects, e.g. _Sàndaig_ [ˈs̪aːn̪d̪ˠaɪk] (Lewis; Cox 2002 s.n.) (O’Rahilly 1976, 49–52; Ó Basáill 1990, 131; Cox 2000, 213–16), the exceptions being the dialects of Argyllshire, Arran, East Perthshire and parts of Aberdeenshire (Grann 2000, 53–54, 138; SGDS, e.g. items 163, 196, 329).

29 Martin 2009, 31: ‘It ought to be Old Scandinavian _Søndey_, 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.

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

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

32 _capella sancti Sanniani_ (Skene 1871–72 I, 43; Wolfenbüttel MS).

33 Skene (1871–72 II, 386) concludes the dedication is to Senchan; the editors of _Origines Pherothiscæ Scotiae_ (II, 9 and note 12) to Ninian. Edmund MacCanà (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).

34 Pladda lies just off the south-east coast of Arran. (There is no connection between the name _An Spán_ and Uri Geller, famous for his spoon bending, who early in 2009 bought _The Lamb_, an uninhabited lump of volcanic rock in the Firth of Forth (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/edinburgh_and_east/7883836.stm> – accessed 28/10/09).)
Scottish Gaelic "abhainn" which means a river (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanda_Island>).
called Lag nan Gàidheal ‘the hollow of the Gaels’ (OS 1869 Lag nan Gaél; 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 ãbhan ['ávən] (with a non-nasal stressed vowel (George Jones, pers. comm.), as opposed to, for example, Lewis Gaelic òmhainn ['ävən]), it might conceivably have developed into Äbbainn. However, such a name would be relatively recent and would be more likely to occur along with its article. For these reasons, ScG òmhainn, or similar, may be excluded from further consideration.

§9 ON hòfr ‘hoof’ or ON hāfr ‘bag-net’
Äbbainn might derive from an Old Norse form with a suffixed article, e.g. ON Hòfn acc. ‘the hoof’, with hòfr m., or ON Hāfrn acc. ‘the bag-net’, with hāfr 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 Äbbainn.

§10 ON hòfn
Monro implicitly and Macculloch explicitly, however, take the name to be from ‘Danish havin/hafni’ (i.e. ON hōfn) ‘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 Maolie §7, and An Tiontanachach note 42), affording safe anchorage and a beach where boats can be dragged clear of the water. ON hōfn f. ‘haven’ is, therefore, a natural candidate for a derivation of Äbbainn. ON hōfn occurs in several place-names in the Hebrides, e.g. Tàinnabhach (Lewis), Tàmbharaigh (Lewis and the Summer Isles), Na Hamhain (Eriskay and Mull) and Port na b-Abhann(e) (earlier Port na h-Abhainn; Islay) (Cox 2008). As in Port na b-Abhainn(e), though, we should expect a short stressed vowel here, which would nominally rule out hōfn’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 arbhair (SGDS item 54), bradan (120), carbad (153), farsuing (399) and marbh (602); long in fasdaidh (400); but short in arain (53) and short before the nasal labio-dental fricative in amharc (3648) 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 fasdaidh was not recorded), MacAulay – point 37 throughout – gives short vowels.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SGDS item</th>
<th>Stressed-vowel quantity in Carradale (pt 36) and Muasdale (pt 38)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 abhainn</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 amharc</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53 arain</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54 arbhair</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120 bradan</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>153 carbad</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>399 farsuing</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400 fasdaidh</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>602 marbh</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>758 sgamhan</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

43 Cf. Mod. Norwegian Høvøn and Hesthøvøn (Møre og Romsdal; id. 269358 and 261897, respectively (<http://www.edd.uio.no/perl/search/search.cgi>).
44 A word borrowed into Scottish Gaelic (Oftedal 1956, 166).
45 So KAS (1938, 19): ‘Havin. Name given to Sanda by the Scandinavians.’
46 In spite of the evidence from John of Fordun to Groome §2, there is no justification for saying that ‘The Norse sometimes referred to Sanda as ‘Havn’ because it provided a reasonable offshore haven or harbour for boats’ (Haswell-Smith 2003, 3).
47 The diphthongisation in Tàmbharaigh and Na Hamhain is due to the vocalisation of the Early Gaelic nasal fricative mh [ɾ] < ON /f/ (ibid., 54–55).
48 Point 36 has a bilabial rather than a labio-dental fricative.
The same phenomenon is recorded in the *Linguistic Atlas of the Survey of Irish Dialects* (LASID), for which Colm Ó Baoill undertook fieldwork in 1961; indeed, the following examples of lengthening of short stressed vowels (Fig. 2) derive from his interview with the same Neil MacDougall that had been interviewed for *SGDS* in 1951 and 1954. The list is not intended to be exhaustive but illustrative of the fact that there is a tendency to lengthening, at least with this speaker.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>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>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 talbhann</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 uisce</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125 gairm</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>138 colteach</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>139 briste</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>178 marcach</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>205, 206, 208 cat</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>209 craicenn</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>212 losadh</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>220 a-nis</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>239 boireannach</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>242 cleachdte</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>246, 248 teanga</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>265 deasachadh</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>339 litir</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>340 goirid</td>
<td>Carradale</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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* [ˈteɪ.nə] ‘fire’, ... *coalch* [ˈko.ˈlaχ] ‘rooster’ ...; *gealach* [ˈɡə.ləχ] ‘moon’ ...; *sileadh* [ˈsɪ.ləχ] ‘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*).
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>2 abhainn</td>
<td>short 31 32 33 34 35 half-long 37 39 long 40 41 42 36, 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 amharc</td>
<td>32 34 36 37 39 40 41 42 38 31, 33, 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53 aran</td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35 36 39 41 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54 arbar</td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35 37 39 40 41 42 36, 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120 bradan</td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35 37 38 39 40 41 42 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>153 carbad</td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35 37 39 40 41 42 36 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>399 farsuing</td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35 37 39 40 41 42 36, 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400 fasdaidh</td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35 39 40 41 36, 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>601 marbh</td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35 37 39 40 41 42 36 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>690 radan</td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35 37 39 40 41 42 36, 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>726 sabhal†</td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35 37 39 40 41 42 36, 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>727 sagart</td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 38‡</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>758 sgamhan</td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35 36 37 39 40 41 42 38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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

51 Yet the question of the differences in vowel length in Neil MacDougall’s speech as recorded by Anthony Dilworth and Fred MacAulay remains unresolved: Dilworth’s lengthened vowels are not matched by glottal stops in MacAulay’s transcriptions. Dilworth’s examples of lengthening are supported independently by Colm Ó Baoill’s transcriptions, which begs the question whether MacAulay may have unconsciously normalised apparently irregular vowel lengths in his own material. Fred MacAulay (1925–2003), from Solas, North Uist, took a diploma in phonetics at Edinburgh before working on the Linguistic Survey between 1951–54, taking up a full-time post as fieldworker in 1952. Anthony Dilworth had already heard Kintyre Gaelic, among many other dialects, as a student, before joining the Linguistic Survey as a fieldworker in 1954, with which he continued for three years. Of the transcription process, he recalls the excellent sound-editing facility, with its capacity to isolate and/or compare words or sequences of words, provided by Tony Anthony in the Department of Phonetics at Edinburgh: ‘Bha an t-inneal-èisteach a rinn Tony Anthony ann a Roinn nam Foneataigh fir mhath dh’-rìreadh. Dh’haodadh tu an aon fhacal no sreath a chluinninn uair aige agus bhia sin a’ toirt cothrom dhut na fuimean a gribhaidh ann am foneataigh air do shocair gu math ceart. Bha chinneadh tu an urrainn a bhith ag iarraidh air seann sluagh faclan a’ cheisteachain a ràdhach a dhà no tri tursan air neol dh’hùsaidh iad searbh den chuis oir bha tòrr cheistean ann. Bha e comasach cuideachd an aon fhacal o dheiridh òiteachan a chur air luib teip agus coimeas a dhèanamh eatarra.’ (pers. comm.). Although Heinrich Wagner comments in the introduction to LASID IV (p. viii) that Ó Baoill, ‘having gained some further experience in the field of Scottish Gaelic phonetics, ... is now not pleased with some of his transcriptions which were partly made from tape ...,’ the general picture of lengthening in stressed vowels remains.

The evidence, then, suggests that the incidence of glottal stops before consonants and 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)

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

### Sporadic stressed-vowel lengthening in Arran in LASID data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LASID item</th>
<th>Stressed vowel quantity in LASID IV, 212–17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 tarbh</td>
<td>Arran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 reci</td>
<td>Arran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 bainme</td>
<td>Arran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 tabkann</td>
<td>Arran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 agad</td>
<td>Arran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44 'uisge</td>
<td>Arran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 'hainig</td>
<td>Arran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125 gaimrn</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 craicemn</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>in] (with hiatus, Holmer 1942, 156), as opposed to LASID’s (I, 280) lengthened form, [o>an] (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 *Eubhaínn* (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 *hòfn* 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 *Hòfn*. 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; and by the frequency with which the Norse element *hòfn* occurs in Norse loan-names throughout the Suðreyjar. From this perspective, ON *hòfn* 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>in] (point 67), Ormeath [o>an] (point 65) and Inishowen [o>an] (point 68). Although this is in contrast to Holmer’s Rathlin [o>in] [o>in] (1942, 156, in which the superscript dot (◦) indicates hiatus54), 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, and this is supported by the Ulster form of the name, *[i>in]*, with a half-long stressed vowel.

On this count, it is conceivable that ScG *Abhainn* derives from ON *Hòfn* /hɔβn/, via Early Gaelic *Abban* *'h*aβn/, dat. *Abhain* *'h*aβin/, with a short vowel.
stressed vowel (cf. John of Fordun’s late 14th-century Scots form, Auvyn). Later the bilabial fricative develops into a labio-dental fricative in Scottish Gaelic, viz. *Abhan */ávín/, dat. *Abhain */ávín’/. Cf. Monro 1549 Avey, Mac Càna 1621–22 Abhin, 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 *Abhan */ávín/; dat. *Abhain */ávín’/. 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 */évín/ (Holmer 1957, 49; §5, above)39) appear to have adopted the long stressed vowel of */ávín’, while preserving the labio-dental fricative of earlier */évín’/.

Meanwhile, radical *Abban may survive in George Campbell Hay’s Tarbert form,40 Abban (rad. an latha thogas Abhan when we set course on Sannda’, Byrne 2000 1, 424 (also 277, 316), dat. i ‘s i ‘sioadh mach o Abhann ‘as out she sails from Sannda’, 425), whose development was presumably on the analogy of the development of *Abhain > *Abhainn.50

§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’ > *ăainn 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 Sanna), 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, 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 – 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 Sanna, 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 Späin, Spoon Island.62

In the early part of the 20th century, it is probable that Sannda, Abhainn and An Späin belonged to different user groups (Cox 1990, 46–48): Sannda to the islanders themselves and to the people of Kintyre – Eng. Sanna to officialdom; Abhainn to the fishing communities of Kintyre and Arran; and An Späin 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; [d t l N N’] are dentals; [l N] are velarised; both [l] and / / indicate palatal consonants.

61 There are parallels, albeit that the islands concerned are larger than Sannda. Na Hamhn on Eriskay (ON Eirksey ‘Eirik’s isle’), Na Hambh and Na Hamhun on Mull (ON Mjol), as well as Port na b-Abhan (< *Abhann) on Islay (ON Íl), 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 Franciscan, but had seen no priest since then’ (Giblin 1964, 32–33). It is likely that this other Franciscan was Edmund MacCana. His description, then, which we may infer from its contents was not written on Sannda, may date at the earliest from c.1621–22 and the period of his imprisonment in Scotland. Nevertheless, as indicated above, MacCana returned to Scotland in 1624, and, although it is not clear when he left the country again, the Franciscan mission to Scotland lasted until c.1637 (ibid., xv). However, reference within the description to MacCana’s poor recollection (quorum mihi ... memoria non suppetit ...) and to ‘this war’ (ante hoc bellum) may indicate an even later date, perhaps some time between 1644–1651 and the Wars of the Three Kingdoms. This accords with William Reeves’s (1854, 44) dating of MacCana’s Itinerarium in Hibernia ex relatione R. P. Fratris Edmundi MacCana, which ‘appears from internal evidence to have been written shortly after 1643, and to have been intended as a topographical contribution to the antiquarian store which the Irish Franciscans of Louvain had, with such laudable zeal, been for years accumulating in the service of their beloved country.’

The manuscript (Plates 1–2)

The MS is housed in Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, 5301–20 fos 276–77, and is cited in the following:


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

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 Ríoghachtaithe ‘this war of the three Kingdoms’ (Gille-Críost 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)).
Sandæ seu Avonie Hibernie [sic] Abhyn brevis descriptio R.P. fratris Edmundi Mac Cana.'

Campbell (1924, 3–4): ‘A short description of the Island of Sanda, or Avon – in Irish Abhuinn by the Reverend Father, Brother Edmund McCana.’

**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]

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


[fo. 277]

Sub mediam noctem juvenis expirat. Omnes Deum laudant; sancta corponia deinceps religiosius venerantur. Hinc discendum quantam habeat rationem et curam sanctorum Deus optimus maximus, quorum sacrilegam irrisionem et contemptum impius Calvinus, novus evangelista, orbi intulit, aut potius intrusit. Magnum hoc miraculum excitavit in animis spectatorum et ex ipsis audientium, etiam a nostra religione aversorum, sanctorum hominum reverentiam. In illa insula fuit repertum brachium Sancti Ultani, quod, thecae argenteæ inclusum, ante hoc bellum religiosè servabatur a viro generoso ex inclyta Mac Donellorum familia. Fons est ibi non procul a sacello perennis aquæ, miraculis, ut insulani et multi ex continenti mihi dixere, nobilis. Frequentabatur quidem meo tempore ab accolis circumquæ, maxime ab iis in quorum animis aliquæ reliquiæ præcæ religionis residebant. Sunt multa alia mira et jucunda quæ homines mihi fide dignissimi de hoc loco retulerunt, quorum mihi et memoria non suppetit et tempore excludor.

Illis sacris cineribus hoc quod sequitur rude epitaphium cum ibi essem posui; atque ad illud sacrum sepulchretum tertio sacris mysteriis cum magna animi mei recreacione sum operatus.


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64 MS Abhuiñ.

65 MS Senchanii.

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

The Journal of Scottish Name Studies 4, 2010, 61–102

'Insulae Sandae seu Avoniae Hibernie Abhuin brevis descriptio R. P. fratris Edmundi Mac Cana', MS 5301–20, fo. 277, reproduced here with the kind permission of Bibliothèque royale de Belgique.

The Journal of Scottish Name Studies 4, 2010, 61–102
Sanda tibi cedit, veterum celebreta Camœnis,  
Bettiginum gaze, ripa beata Tagi.  
Hos igitur sacros cineres devotus adora,  
Quisquis in Hebrigenum littorar tuta venis.

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

Translation

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

[fo. 276]

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

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

[fo. 277]

‘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.

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. 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.’

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

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