Scottish Gaelic Sannda and Its Aliases

Richard A.V. Cox
Sabhal Mor Ostaig

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

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

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

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

Similar descriptions go back to the late 18th century:

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


1 A version of this article was presented at the Scottish Place-Name Society’s one-day conference at the University of Glasgow on the 7th November 2009.
The island of Sanda, separated from the main land by a channel three miles across, is of irregular form, about four miles in circumference, and being covered with good pasture, serves the purpose of a large 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 tenebant, ad eam classes eorum cursus dirigebant.

Robert Fribarn’s edition:

George Buchanan, Rerum Scoticarum Historia, 1727, 22

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

2 Sutton 2009, §32: A promontorio 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/scrothist/1lart.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. *portuosa* f. adj. ‘full of harbours, or well supplied with a harbour’ and is an attempt at giving the meaning of *Avona*, according to its folk etymology. The *Avona 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 1549:4

Avoyn. Befor the south poynct of the promontory of Kintyre, lyes be ane myle of sea, ane yle neire ane myle lange, callit the yle Avoyn, quhilk yle 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

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

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

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

Walter Goodall’s 1759 edition [Edinburgh College Library MS]:  
*Johannis de Fordun Scotichronicon*, I, 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 Aweyne, ubi capella sancti Sannani, ibique pro transgressoribus refugium.7

William F. Skene’s 1871–72 edition [The Wolfenbüttel MS]:  
*Johannis de Fordun: Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, I, ii, cap. x, 43

‘Avoyn. Befor the south poynct of the promontory of Kyntyre lyes be ane myle of sea, ane lyle neire ane myle lange callit the lyle Avoyn quhilk lyle is obtincit 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, *A Description of the Western Isles of Scotland by Mr. Donald Monro*, quho travelled through maney of the westerne isles of Scotland in Anno 1549, 2002, 301).

1 Aikman (1827, 43) translates: ‘Little more than a mile from the promontory of Cantyre lies Avoyn, [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.’

2 A particularly debased form of Buchanan’s *Avona Portuosa*, whose development (presumably based upon both a mistranscription and a supposed etymology) defies reconstruction, occurs in an anonymous description of the first half of the 17th century: ‘And eastward from Dunawardie two mylls off the land there is ane litle Chappell ...’ (from ‘Ane Description of Certaine Pairs of the Highlands of Scotland’ in Mitchell 1907–08 II, 144–92: 187; Mitchell, ibid., xxiii) notes that ‘Sibald 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”’).

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

4 An almost identical version is printed in MacFarlane’s *Geographical Collections*.
Of equal importance is the title of a 1644–51 description of the island (see Appendix), which contains our earliest genuinely Gaelic form of the name:

Insulae Sandae seu Avonae, Hibernice Abhuinn, Brevis Descriptio. R. P. 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.

§3 Sanda

The island is known as Sanda in Hákon Hákonsson’s Saga, written shortly after King Hákon’s death in 1263:10

Eftir þat sigldi Hakon konungr vndan Melansey ok laa vm nottina vndir Hersey ok þadan vndir Sandey ok sua til Satirisimula ok kom vm naattina nordr vndir Gudey. þadan sigldi hann vt i Jlarsund ok laa þar .ij. nætr.

Vigfusson and Ungur’s edition:

‘Hákonar Saga hins gamla’, Flateyjarbok III, 227, §28111

‘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 snjallrá á sletta Sandey konungr randir

Linder and Haggson’s edition:

‘Saga Magnús konungs berfœtts’, Heimskringla, §1013

Vitt bar snjallr a sletta Sandey konungr rand

Finnur Jónsson’s edition:

[Magnus Barefoot’s Saga], Eirspennill, Chap. 7, 11814

10 In 1264–65 by Sturla Bóðarson (Pulsiano and Wolf 1993, 259).
11 The reference HSH.326 Sandey in Gammeltoft 2006, 67, 77 is expanded in error as in the Eirspennill redaction.
12 Bremner 1923, 251 (after Dasent [1894] 1997 II, chap. 326, p. 362): ‘After that king Hacon sailed away from Malas-isle (Lamlash), and lay for a night under Arran, and thence under Sadisle, 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 seilde Hong Haakon fra Melasø og laa om Natten under Here; derfra seilde han under Sandø og forbi Santíresmølen og kom om Natten nord til Gudø. Derfra seilde han til Jlarsund, hvor han laa i to Nætter ...’
13 An older version occurs in Morkinskinna, 317 §132: ‘Vitt ber snár asletta / Sandey konungr randir’.
14 The reference MSB.9 Sandey is given in error in Gammeltoft 2006, 77.
‘The valiant king bore far the shields upon the plain of Sandey’

Campbell (1924, 11) notes – without expansion – that ‘[t]he island is on occasion written of as Sandererey’, 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:

\[
\text{\`{H}essu n\'{e}st k\'{o}m\'{u} þeir skipi s\'{i}n\'{u} i g\'{o}\d{{\text{a}}} h\'{o}f\'{n} vi\d{{\text{d}}} ey \`{h}\'{a}, er Sandey heitir, ok \`{h}ar reistu kaupmenn hafnarmark. Sv\'{a} segir Gr\'{i}mr:}\n\]
\[
\text{H\'{e}r hefir beitt at brattri B\'{o}\text{"{o}lfr skipi f\'{j}\text{"{o}tu}, \\ `\text{"{a}d}r fell s\'{a}r um s\'{u}\d{{\text{d}}}, Sandeyju, sk\'{e} branda.}\n\]
\[
\text{Reisti sj\'{a}lfr, ok s\'{y}sti, snarr f\'{e}l\'{a}gi harra hafnarmark, fyrir hrefnis hapsverk gota sterkan.}\n\]
\[
\text{Peit l\'{a}gu vi\d{{\text{d}}} Su\d{{\text{a}}}reyjar i g\'{o}\d{{\text{u}}} leg{\text{"{i}}} n\'{o}kkurar n\'{a}tt. P\'{a} r\'{e}d fyrir Su\d{{\text{a}}}reyjum \O\text{"{l}}\text{"{a}f}r konungr.}\n\]

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

15 Collectanea de Rebus Albanicis, 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 Icelandica Sagas (1887, xxxvii note 1) and cited verbatim in Tjomsland 1951, 59–60. (Vigfussen (ibid., xxxviii) refers to Thomas’s 1880 article as ‘Proc. Antiq. Scot. Vol. XI’, in error for ‘... XIV’.)
18 Specifically to Vigfussen’s edition of Hrafn’s Saga (1878 II, 292, Chap. 11): ‘\`{P}eituvk\'{e}t k\'{o}m\'{u} þeir i g\'{o}\d{{\text{a}}} h\'{o}f\'{n} vi\d{{\text{d}}} ey \`{h}a er Sandey heitir, ok \`{h}ar reistu kaupmenn hafnarmark. Sv\'{a} sag\'{i} Gr\'{i}mr: \`{H}er hef\'{i}r beitt at brattri B\'{o}\text{"{o}lfr skipi f\'{j}\text{"{o}tu}, (\`{a}d\'{e}r fell s\'{a}r um s\'{u}\d{{\text{d}}}, Sandeyju sk\'{e} branda: / Reisti sj\'{a}lfr, ok s\'{y}sti, snarr f\'{e}l\'{a}gi harra, hafnarmark fyrir hrefnis, hapsverk gota sterkan. \`{P}eit l\'{a}gu vi\d{{\text{d}}} Su\d{{\text{a}}}reyjar i akkeri legi n\'{o}kkurar n\'{a}tt. P\'{a} r\'{e}d fyrir Su\d{{\text{a}}}reyjum \O\text{"{l}}\text{"{a}f}r konungr.’
‘After that they came into a good harbor on an island called Sandey, and there the merchants raised a harbor mark.

‘Grím said:

Here Bótólf 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. Vatersay and Pabbay, south of Barra. His North Uist or Uist name. Thomas’s – there is no reason to associate Hrafn’s Saga’s view (loc. cit.) ‘probably included the whole Long Island or Outer Hebrides’

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 fyrir 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 Sandar). [1549] 2002, 324 idem) is probably from ON Sand-eyrar ‘[the] island of the sand-(gravel)bank’, with gen. sg. of eyr f. ‘(gravel)bank’, which is suitable topographically.

23 Anne Tjomsland (1951, 59–60) supports Captain Thomas in placing Sandey in the Outer Hebrides (cf. note 17, above).
24 Power 2005, 12, and Jesch, forthcoming, also identity Sandey with Sanndaigh Canna.
22 Which is taken to be The Point of Stoer in Assynt (Anderson loc. cit.; Tjomsland 1951, 26), although other features may have borne such a Norse name. John MacKay (1890, 121) derives Stoer from either Gaelic or Old Norse. Scots/Eng. Stoer is in fact from ScG Stòr, which in turn is a loan-name from ON Staur(in) acc. m. ‘[the] stak’ (cf. Watson 1906, 367–68; Henderson 1910, 351), in reference to the rock stack, Scots/Eng. The Old Man of Stoer; cf. a similar rock formation in Skye, ScG Bod Stòir ‘the penis of Stòrr’, which has been sanitised as ScG Bodach Stòir; now Bodach an Stòir under the influence of Scots/Eng. The Old Man of Stoer (Dwelly; s.n. Stör, Old Man of; ‘Bod Storr [source: WJ. Watson] (euphemistically Bodach Stòir’); 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 phallos of Storr’). The Assynt ScG name has now acquired the article – An Stòr (Mac an Taileir, s.n. Stoer) – presumably under the influence of Scots/Eng. The Old Man of Stoer, which is rendered Bodach an Stòir in Gaelic, so also Rubha an Stòir for Rubha Stòir (cf. <http://www.ambaile.org.uk/gdl/item/item_writtenword.jsp?item_id=43320>: Bodach an Stòirr, Rubha an Stòir). The difference between ScG stòr (Skye) and ScG stòrr (Assynt), if orthographic forms represent an (historical) difference in pronunciation, arises as follows: ON staurr nom. yields ScG stòrr (cf. Guðrún Helgadóttir 1987, 76); ON staur acc. yields ScG stòr (cf. ScG sgòd < ON skaut nt. (Cox 2002, 324 idem) is probably from ON Sand-eyrar ‘[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 harbourage, beside an island that is called Sandey. And there the merchants raised a harbour mark ... They lay beside the Hebrides, at anchor, for some nights. King Olaf ruled the Hebrides then over the Hebrides.’
20 Lenited in the context of ScG Clachan Shannda [k̚l̚axan ‘hâ[r]nda] (Eairisdh MacGilleathain, Solas); as opposed to a ScG ‘[u̞r]nda’, for ON Sand-a- ‘sand-river’. Cleasby and Vigfusson (1874 s.v.) note the frequent use of Icelandic sandr m. ‘sand’ and ey f. ‘island’, and which yields ScG Sanndaigh off Canna in the Small Isles and Sannda off Kintyre (see below).21
21 A translation of the prose element is also found in Anderson 1922 II, 359: ‘Next, they came into good harbourage, beside an island that is called Sandey. And there the merchants raised a harbour mark ... They lay beside the Hebrides, at anchor, for some nights. King Olaf ruled then over the Hebrides.’
23 The ScG reflex of ON -ey ‘island’ in island names in the southern Inner Hebrides is usually -a [-a]. ScG Sanndaigh (Blaeu 1654 Sandera, Monro [1549] 1774, 30...
1905, 613): a north-westerly wind drives the company southwards to Hírrír (St Kilda), after which they continue south by Ireland, sailing south of Ireland until they come up against stormy weather. Having made appropriate vows, the storm abates and they are able to sail directly to Norway. From the detail of these two accounts, it would appear that neither Sanndaigh Canna nor Sannda Kintyre can be ruled out entirely.

Kintyre’s Sannda appears in Latin in texts at the beginning and end of the 17th century: in Retours, (Argyll 21) 1619 20 solidatis terrarum insulae de Sannda and (Argyll 93) 1695 20 solidatas 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) (1644–51 (gen.)) Insula Sandæ, (nom.) Insula Sandæ, insula; in a letter from Patrick Hegarty to Hugh de Burgu (Giblin 1964, 33) 1624 in Sandam insulam; in a report by Cornelius Ward (ibid., 50) 1625, or soon after, in Sandam insulam; and in a report by Cornelius Ward (ibid., 149) post 1631 Sanda insula.

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

Scots/Eng. Sande25 and Sanna Island26 are, of course, from ScG Sannda, Kintyre Gaelic /sannda/ (Holmer 1962: 17, recorded 1937/38),27 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 Sannda goes back to Adomnán §2 begins with the first Statistical Account. It is unclear, however, since the name in any form is not mentioned in Vita Columbae, how the idea developed.29 Campbell (1924, 10–

11) surmises that the connection was made through a misidentification with Adomnán’s Sainne30 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 Annniani (Heare 1722, 81; Trinity College, Cambridge MS)31 – with the island’s name (although it is not (Lat.) Sanda but Avyn, Avynce, respectively, that John mentions) may have aided the misidentification.32

§4 An Spain

Campbell (1924, 11) comments that ScG An Spain [leg. An Spain, with ScG spain ‘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 Spain [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).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 MacCan’a c.1644–51 Abhuimm (MS Abhùin, see Appendix), modern

25 Martin 2009, 31: ‘It ought to be Old Scandinavian Sandey, sandy island, but it is hard to see why such a name would be bestowed on a rocky island, unless it could relate to the sandy seabed at the approaches to the harbour on the north side of the island.’ For an aerial view, see Google Earth (<http://earth.google.co.uk/>): Sanda, UK.
26 At any rate, the island is probably unlikely to have borne a Norse name during the seventh century.
27 Which has otherwise not been identified with certainty. Anderson and Anderson (1991, lxiv) suggest possibly Colonsay; Dr Reeves and Wentworth Huyshe suggest Shuna (cited in Campbell loc. cit.).
28 capella sancti Sanniani (Skene 1871–72 I, 43; Wolfenbüttel MS).
29 capella sancti Sanniani (Skene 1871–72 I, 43; Wolfenbüttel MS).
30 Martin 2009, 31: ‘it is unlikely that Adomnán would have mentioned a name that was not (Lat.) recorded in any form’.
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 Originés Pecrochide Scotiae (II, 9 and note 12) to Ninian. Edmund MacCan’a (c.1644–51) is clear that the chapel was dedicated to St Ninnan 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 Spain and Uri Geller, famous for his spoon bending, who early in 2009 bought The Lamb, an uninhabited lump of volcanic rock in the Firth of Forth (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/edinburgh_and_east/7883836.stm> – accessed 28/10/09).)
34 Parallel to the term GHOST word – a word that has entered the language through the perpetuation, in dictionaries etc., of an error (Collins) – the term GHOST NAME refers to a name that has entered the nomenclature through the perpetuation, in written or oral sources, of an error.
Scottish Gaelic "abhainn" (e.g. Dwelly, s.n. Sanda Id.); cf. Kintyre Gaelic *dol do dh'abhuin 'going to Sanda' (Henderson 1910, 180) and Arran Gaelic *tha tigh solus ann an Abhuinn [i.e. tej solas an a nevin] 'there is a lighthouse on Sanda Island' (Holmer 1957, 49), the pronunciation of which is reflected in W.J. Watson's orthographic representations (1926, 91) of Arran Gaelic, viz Eibhinn and Eibhainn.32

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, nowhere places it for certain earlier than John of Fordun (1384 x 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 *Auen (supposing an original Old Gaelic lenited -b- -[β]-) is connected with Adomnán's Ommon (with geminate -mm-) (Reeves 1857, lib. i, cap. 36, p. 70; Skene 1874, lib. i, cap. 29, p. 136) is disposed of correctly by Watson (1926, 91) on phonological grounds.39

§7 SCG Abhainn, 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 'Ane Description of Certaine Pairs of the Highlands of Scotland' (note 3, above)], '[t]he streame runns so swiftlie that no shipps can remaine near it, except they be within the harborie' (Mitchell 1907–08 II, 187). The derivation is ruled out topographically,

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

32 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').

33 Literally 'the stream of a Mhoel ('the null') (cf. *The Sea of Mayle). Specifically between Kintyre and Sanda, this is 'Tiompanach, The. The name given to the swift current in the Sound of Sanda' (KAS 1938, 32), SCG An Tiompanach (Dönhall Iain MacAonghais, Scarp: 'an sruth aig ceann i an iar an eilein' ('the current at the western end of the island', pers. comm.). Tiompan is used occasionally of hills, e.g. Tiompan *[ti*ompan] of a headland or bluff (Lewis; Cox 2002, 381), Maoil an Tiompain (Loch Broom; Watson 1976, 247), Knocktimpen (Dumfries and Galloway; Watson 1924, 144), Màn an tiompain (Gilles 1906, 218) and possibly Tiompan (Sky; Forbes 1923, 435), and derives, via OG timpán 'timbrel, drum; some kind of stringed instrument', from Lat. timpanum (DIL). John Purser (pers. comm.) assures me that tiompan refe(s) 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 *timpel, tambourine*, Gaelic tiompan acc. sg. (Job 21:12; Psalms 81:2), tiompan dat. sg. (Psalms 149:3, 150:4) and tiompanaidh dat. pl. (Exodus 15:20; Judges 11:34, 2 Samuel 6:5, 1 Chron 13:8) are used consistently for the Latin Vulgate's *tympanum* acc. sg. (Job 21:12; Psalms 81:2), *tympano* dat. sg. (Psalms 149:3, 150:4) and *tympani* dat. pl. (Exodus 15:20, Judges 11:34, 2 Samuel 6:5, 1 Chron 13:8), all of which are rendered *timbrel* in the King James Version. Cormac's 10th-century definition, or rather etymology, of *timpán* reads, 'Timpán .i. tim (.i. bocc [added from another MS]) .i. sail .i. umæ bīs inti. Uel quasi simpān a simphonia .i. ōn bindius.' (Meyer 1994, 109 §1258) 34 Formally, the derivation would also be ruled out phonologically because of the mismatch between the long stressed vowel of the place-name, on the one hand, and the short vowel of the appellative, on the other, but see the discussion on vowel length below §10.

8 SCG ABHAINN 'oven'

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 Mhoel ('the null') (cf. *The Sea of Mayle). Specifically between Kintyre and Sanda, this is 'Tiompanach, The. The name given to the swift current in the Sound of Sanda' (KAS 1938, 32), SCG An Tiompanach (Dönhall Iain MacAonghais, Scarp: 'an sruth aig ceann i an iar an eilein' ('the current at the western end of the island', pers. comm.). Tiompan is used occasionally of hills, e.g. Tiompan *[ti*ompan] of a headland or bluff (Lewis; Cox 2002, 381), Maoil an Tiompain (Loch Broom; Watson 1976, 247), Knocktimpen (Dumfries and Galloway; Watson 1924, 144), Màn an tiompain (Gilles 1906, 218) and possibly Tiompan (Sky; Forbes 1923, 435), and derives, via OG timpán 'timbrel, drum; some kind of stringed instrument', from Lat. timpanum (DIL). John Purser (pers. comm.) assures me that tiompan refe(s) 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 *timpel, tambourine*, Gaelic tiompan acc. sg. (Job 21:12; Psalms 81:2), tiompan dat. sg. (Psalms 149:3, 150:4) and tiompanaidh dat. pl. (Exodus 15:20; Judges 11:34, 2 Samuel 6:5, 1 Chron 13:8) are used consistently for the Latin Vulgate's *tympanum* acc. sg. (Job 21:12; Psalms 81:2), *tympano* dat. sg. (Psalms 149:3, 150:4) and *tympani* dat. pl. (Exodus 15:20, Judges 11:34, 2 Samuel 6:5, 1 Chron 13:8), all of which are rendered *timbrel* in the King James Version. Cormac's 10th-century definition, or rather etymology, of *timpán* reads, 'Timpán .i. tim (.i. bocc [added from another MS]) .i. sail .i. umæ bīs inti. Uel quasi simpān a simphonia .i. ōn bindius.' (Meyer 1994, 109 §1258) 34 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.

E.g. 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
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), braidan (120), carbad (153), farsuing (399) and marbh (602); long in fasaidh (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 fasaidh 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)</th>
<th>Muasdale (pt 38)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>short</td>
<td>half-long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 abhainn</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 amharc</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53 aran</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54 arbhar</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120 braidan</td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>153 carbad</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>399 farsuing</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400 fasaidh</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>602 marbh</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>758 sgamhan</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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

49 Some similar traits are found in the responses of Neil Thomson’s cousin, George Thomson, also interviewed by Colm Ó Baoill for the Linguistic Survey, e.g. short and half-long 558, 559, 560 reachd; half-long 544 cidsr; half-long and long 576, 577, 578 logadh; long 576 ochd. Yet, apparently, no trace of such a phenomenon appears in Nils Holmer’s study of Kintyre Gaelic, for which he undertook fieldwork in 1937 (Holmer 1957, vii), which included interviews with both Neil MacDougall (Ca 1) (Holmer 1962, 4), and Neil Thomson (La 12) (ibid., 3) – unless it be in his note 2 on p. 36 (ibid.): having discussed the glottal stop between vowels in Kintyre Gaelic, Holmer turns to the question of syllabification and syllable limits, adding, ‘Some people even make a short stop before the syllable-ending consonant, as *teine* /tən/ ‘fire’..., *coileach* /ko'laakh/ ‘rooster’..., *gealach* /ga'laakh/ ‘moon’..., *sileadh* /sl'æd/ ‘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. 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 Kilmory (about two and a half miles north of Muasdale), all recorded by MacAulay.

Glottalisation & lengthening of stressed vowels in Kintyre & Arran in SGDS data Fig. 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SGDS item</th>
<th>pts 31–35 (Arran), 36–39 (s. Kintyre), 40–42 (Gigha + n. Kintyre)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 abhainn</td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35 37 39 40 41 42 36, 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 amharc</td>
<td>31 32 33 34 35 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 40 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 fasaidh</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 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 beg 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 Foneataigs fir mhath dha-rìreadh. Dh’haodadh tu an t-naicéal-èisteach a rinn tu an urrainn a bhith ag iarraidh air seann sluagh faclan a’ cheisteachain a ràdhach a dhà no tri tursan air neo dh’hàsadh iad searbh den chuis oir bha sreath a cheisteach ann. Bha e comasach tu an aon fhacal no sreath a chluinntinn uair is uair agus bha sin a’ toirt cothrom dhut na fuaimean a sgrìobhadh ann am foneataigs air do shocair gu math ceart. Cha bhiodh dhut na fuaimean a sgrìobhadh ann am foneataigs air do shocair gu math ceart. Cha bhiodh tu an uainn a bhith ag iarraidh air seann slaugh faclan a’ cheisteachain a ràdhach a dhà no tri tursan air neo dh’hàsadh iad searbh den chuis oir bha sreath a cheisteach ann. Bha e comasach cuideachd an aon fhacal o dheintrach a chur air lùib teip agus coimeas a dhèanamh a bhàs t-inneal-èisteach a rinn T ony Anthony ann an Roinn nam Foneataigs fìor mhath dha-rìreadh.

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.)

While this feature of lengthening may have had its focus within southern Kintyre, it would be wrong to restrict the area of lengthening entirely to southern Kintyre. Ó Baoill’s informant from Tarbert in northern Kintyre, Mary MacKinnon, also shows signs of the same development, e.g. half-long 48 achadh, 63, 66 goirt, 87 olann; short and long 89 lomabh (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 soibeach, 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).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LASID item</th>
<th>Stressed vowel quantity in LASID IV, 212–17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>short</td>
<td>half-long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 tarbh</td>
<td>Arran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 reci</td>
<td>Arran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 bainne</td>
<td>Arran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 tabhann</td>
<td>Arran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 agad</td>
<td>Arran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44 uisge</td>
<td>Arran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 thainig</td>
<td>Arran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125 gairm</td>
<td>Arran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>138 coileach</td>
<td>Arran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>139 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 craceann</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>

Sporadic stressed-vowel lengthening in Arran in LASID data

Fig. 5

However, unless Holmer simply failed to record examples of lengthened short vowels (cf. his Rathlin \( \text{abhainn} \) [\( o>\text{in} \)] (with hiatus, Holmer 1942, 156), as opposed to LASID's (I, 280) lengthened form, [\( o>\text{an} \)] (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 \( \text{Abhainn} \) (1910) and Watson's \( \text{Eibhinn} \) and \( \text{Eubhainn} \) (1926). If so, we should look for an alternative cause for the lengthening of the stressed vowel in \( \text{Abhainn} \).

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 \( h\text{öfn} \) and ScG \( \text{abhainn} \) may indeed have some basis in fact.

On the one hand, the relative importance of \( \text{Sannda}'s \) harbour within the area is highlighted consistently in early descriptions by reference to the Norse use of the harbour and their naming it \( H\text{öfn} \). This scenario is supported by the topography of the island's anchorage and the nature of \( \text{Sruth na Maolid} \); by the fact that the island is a stepping-stone between Ireland and Scotland, and between Arran and Gigha and Islay;\(^5\) and by the frequency with which the Norse element \( h\text{öfn} \) occurs in Norse loan-names throughout the Suðreyjar.

From this perspective, ON \( h\text{öfn} \) is the perfect candidate for the derivation of \( \text{Abhainn} \). On the other hand, the place-name is traditionally said to be synonymous with the Scottish Gaelic term \( \text{abhainn} \) 'river'.

We know little of the Gaelic dialect of Southend, i.e. of the Mull of Kintyre and \( \text{Sannda} \). 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,\(^5\) 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 \( \text{abhainn} \) 'river' occurs through vocalisation of the intervocalic fricative.\(^5\) Thus LASID (I, 280) records Rathlin \( [\text{oshn}] \) (point 67), Ormeath \( [\text{oshnl}] \) (point 65) and Inishowen \( [\text{oshnl}] \) (point 68). Although this is in contrast to Holmer's Rathlin \( [\text{oshn}] \) (1942, 156, in which the superscript dot (\( \cdot \)) indicates hiatus\(^8\)), it is possible that Southend Gaelic \( \text{abhainn} \) was pronounced something like *[\( a>\text{in} \)] or *[\( a>\text{in} \)] with a half-long or long stressed vowel after vocalisation of the fricative,\(^5\) and this is supported by the Ulster form of the name, *[\( i>\text{in} \)] \( \cdot \) \( i>\text{in} \),\(^5\) with a half-long stressed vowel.

On this count, it is conceivable that ScG \( \text{abhainn} \) derives from ON \( H\text{öfn} \hbox{/} h\text{öfnn}, via Early Gaelic *\( \text{Abban} \hbox{/} *\text{aβn}, dat. *\( \text{Abhain} \hbox{/} *\text{aβn}, with a short

\(^{52}\) The island is described as 'within dangerously easy reach of Clann Dómhnall [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 rime 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 \([\text{oshn}]\) in Islay. Brian McLaughlin, whose family was from Carnlough (in sight of \( \text{Sannda} \)), 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 \( \text{Sannda}'s \) 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 Scalfe (‘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 Indian meal. (Brian McLaughlin, pers. comm.)

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

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).

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

§1.1 Conclusion

Of the various possible derivations of Abhainn discussed above, ON Høfn seems contextually to be the most likely. The historical phonology for the development of Abhainn from ON Høfn, however, is not entirely clear. Our knowledge of the Gaelic dialect of Southend in very limited. There is evidence that some lengthening of short stressed vowels took place in southern Kintyre and there is evidence to suggest that lengthening was in more or less complementary distribution with the development of a glottal stop in similar environments in neighbouring areas, although the sporadic nature of the lengthening may suggest that the development was one of free variation. On the face of it, the lack of comment on lengthening of short stressed vowels in Holmer’s description of Kintyre Gaelic suggests that the phenomenon was a developing one during the 20th century, one which may be too late to account for lengthening in Abhainn. Alternatively, lengthening of *Abhainn to Abhainn may have paralleled the development of the appellative abhainn ‘river’ > *a‘ainn in the local Gaelic dialect, assuming that this was the same as that which took place in Ulster, c.f. Rathlin [a‘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 have two different Norse names: one for the island itself, ON Sandey (yielding ScG Sannda), and one for the harbour, ON Høfn (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 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 Sanda, a fact which presumably reflects administrative usage. The shape of the island as seen from the sea gives rise to a third form, An Spāín. If ScG Abhainn ever had a hold in modern Scots/English usage, it has been eclipsed by the English form of An Spāín, Spoon Island.

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

Phonetic note

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

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

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

62 There are parallels, albeit that the islands concerned are larger than Sannda. Na Hamhn on Eriskay (ON EiríksEy ‘Eirik’s isle’), Na Hamhun and Na Hamhuan on Mull (ON Myrl), as well as Port na b-Abhainn (< *Abhann) on Islay (ON Il.), all from ON Høfn (Cox 2008, 51–55).

63 E.g. <https://www.ourscotland.co.uk/clydeislands/>.
Acknowledgements
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Appendix
A Description of Sanda
by the Rev. Father Edmund MacCana

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

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


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

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


63 cogadh sa na tri Rioghachtaithe ‘this war of the three Kingdoms’ (Gille-Criost MacBheatha – Christopher Beaton – writing in what is now known as the Book of Clanranald during the 1690s or early 1700s (Cameron 1892, 176; Bannerman 1998, 16–17).
Sandae seu Avonie Hibernie [sic] Abhyn brevis descriptio R.P. fratris Edmundi Mac Cana.'

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]

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

Insula Sanda est in oceano Scotico ad occasum, uno milliari a Kinntiriæ continentie sejuncta; complectitur in circuitu unum magnum milliare. Solum jucundum, fructuum ac frugum, si coleretur, ferax. In ea est ædicula S. Ninniano sacra, ad cujus canebium in Galvidia tota insula spectat. Conjunctum huic ædicule est ossarium sive sepulchretum quatuordecim filiorum sanctissimi viri Senchanii Hiberni, sanctitate illustrium. Saxeo murulo septuim, in quo sunt septem grandia et polita saxa, quibus sanctissima corpora teguntur, in quorum medio stat obeliscus, aliorum hominum statua (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 præ ætate egredi poterant, omnes intortis collis – insigni spectaculo – processisse. Retulit mihi etiam grandior natu insulanorum, et ferme omnium pater, hoc prodigium quod subscribo. Ængussius Mac Donellus, Kenntiriæ ac Insulæ Ilæ dinasta (quem ipse jam olim vidi), ingressus est aliquando insulam, multa comitante caterva, inter quos etiam præcipua Kinntiriæ juventus. Cum forte dinasta ac ceteri nobiles de rebus seriis tractarent, juventus, ut solet, se pilæ ac clavarum ludo exercebat; pila vi clavæ impulsa, præsertim ab adversa manu juventum excipi posset, altius in sacrum sepulchretum volavit. Juvenis, memor loci

**64** MS Abhuiñ.
‘Insulae Sandae seu Avoniae Hibernie Ab huin brevis descriptio R. P. fratris Edmundi Mac Cana’, MS 5301–20, fo. 276, reproduced here with the kind permission of Bibliothèque royale de Belgique.
Richard A. V. Cox

Sanda tibi cedit, vETERUM celebrata CamenEis,
Bettiginum gaze, ripa beata Tagi.
Hos igitur sacros cineres devotus adora,
Quisquis in Hebrigenum littorata tuta venis.

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

Translation

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

[fo. 276]

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

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

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

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

Fourteen bodies, throughout the world revered,
Of Senchanius born blessed Sanda holds.
Ireland, the mother of divine teachers, once
Begat the saints whom Scotland’s soil covers.

Scottish Gaelic Sannda and Its Aliases

67 A sometimes inflated translation is given by the Rev. Father Butler in Campbell 1924, 3–4, a heavily truncated one in Originæ Parochiales Scotiæ 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 Βηστίγγα ὄρους (Nobbe 1843–45 II, 148) ‘from the mountain of Βηστίγγα) and the Ταγός in the Iberian Peninsula (Ptolemy, Lib. II, cap. 5 §4, Τάγον ποταμόφ έκβολαι (Nobbe, ibid. I, 80) ‘the mouth of the river Τάγος’) may be being used here to represent natural wonders of the world.
69 Nom. pl. of Hebrigenum, which is taken to be a short form of Hebrigenarum ‘of the Hebrideans’, gen. pl. of a compound, Hebrigena ‘Hebridean’ (as in Romigenea ‘Roman’ and the ninth-century theologian Johannes Scotus Eriugenæ’s name, whose pseudonym contains Ériu ‘Ireland’), cf. John Milton’s penē totis finibus Anglientiæ (Ad Ioannem Rousium’, Beeching 1900, 170.32) ‘almost all the lands of the English’.
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