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The Drystone Chapels of Islay: aspects of chronology, context and distribution

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Contents

Declaration.....	i
Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Copyrights	iv
Figures and Tables.....	v
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Background.....	1
1.2 Objectives	2
1.3 Chronological terminology.....	2
1.4 Methodology and structure of this thesis.....	2
1.5 Preconceptions.....	4
1.6 State of research.....	5
1.7 The Isle of Islay	8
1.7.1 Geology	9
1.7.2 Map	11
Chapter 2: The Drystone Chapels of Ireland and Argyll.....	13
2.1. Introduction	13
2.2. The evidence in Argyll	13
2.3. The remains of the early church in Iona	15
2.4. Timber or stone?.....	17
2.5. Geographical distribution of church constructional techniques in Ireland	18
2.6. Length to width ratio	20
2.7. The drystone church in Ireland and Argyll.....	25
2.8. Irish Drystone pre-Romanesque churches	27
2.8.1. A chronological model for the corbelled drystone oratories of western Kerry ...	33
2.9. Conclusion	37
Chapter 3: The Islay Drystone Chapels.....	39
3.1 Introduction	39
3.2 Selection of chapels for analysis.....	42
3.3 The 27 chapels	46
3.3.1 The 17 measureable drystone chapels	47
3.4 The Western Entrance.....	51
3.5 The chapels with western entrances.....	54

3.5.1 Cill Eathain chapel, Lower Killeyan, Oa (RCAHMS 1984, 165; NR 2799 4337; Map, 13)	54
3.5.2 Duisker 2 (RCAHMS 1984, 170; NR 3602 6678; Map, 9).....	57
3.5.3 Bruichladdich chapel, Conisby (RCAHMS 1984, 158-9, NR 2677 6147; Map, 7)	64
3.5.4 Nereabolls 2, <i>Cill Iain</i> chapel (RCAHMS 1984, 230; NR 2273 5540; Map, 10) ..	65
3.5.5 Ardilistry chapel (RCAHMS 1984, 157; NR44NW 1; NR 4476 4852; Map, 18) ..	67
3.5.6 Kilsleven, <i>Cill Sléibheainn</i> , Chapel (RCAHMS 1984, 223; NR 4218 6733; Map, 3)	69
3.6 The anomalous drystone chapels	71
3.7 The rejected chapels	74
3.7.1 Cill an Ailein, Killinallan (RCAHMS 1984, 159: NR37SW 1; NR 3151 7230; Map, 17)	74
3.7.2 Ballitarsin, <i>Eaglais Bhogainn</i> (RCAHMS 1984, 158; NR36SE 8; NR 3520 6070; Map, 16)	75
3.7.3 Laphroaig, Torr Math Laoruinn, NR34NE14, NR 3798 4547, Map, 22.....	76
3.7.4 Cnoc Grianail (NR35SW 3; NR 3312 5262; Map, 23)	76
3.7.5 Tayandock (NR36SW 13; NR 3100 6341; Map, 24).....	76
3.7.6 Craigfad (NR25NW 21; NR 2315 5550; Map, 25).....	77
3.8 The lost chapels	77
3.8.1 Lossit (NR46NW 11; NR 4118 6526; Map, 2)	77
3.8.2 Kilennan, Cill Fhionáin (RCAHMS 1984, 216; NR35NE 2; NR 3733 5737; Map, 19)	78
3.8.3 Laggan chapel	79
3.9 Conclusions	79
Chapter 4: New and reclassified chapels, and miscellaneous sites	80
4.1 Introduction	80
4.2 New chapels.....	80
4.2.1 Kilcavan, Kelsay, chapel and burial ground.....	80
4.2.2 Airigh Ghuaidhre, chapel and burial ground.....	82
4.3 Reclassified site	84
4.3.1 Cill Ronain, Braigo burial ground.....	84
4.4 Simple burial grounds containing cairns	86
4.4.1 Cill an Ailein (RCAHMS 1984, 160; NR45SE 4; NR 4622 5332).....	86
4.4.2 Cladh Chill Fhinn, Nerabus.....	86
4.4.3 Cill Luchaig, Laphroaig (RCAHMS 1984, 166; NR34NE 16; NR 3902 4524) ..	86
4.4.4 Cemetery of penannular-ditched barrows, Newton, Islay	86

Chapter 5: The Chapels with lateral entrances.....	90
5.1 Introduction	90
5.2 The Chapels with lateral entrances	90
5.2.1 Cill Chòman, (Map, 1)	92
5.2.2 Duisker 1 (RCAHMS 1984, 170; NR36NE 1; NR 3662 6643; Map, 8).....	93
5.2.3 Tockmal (RCAHMS 1984, 262; NR24NE 1; NR 2993 4735; Map, 11)	94
5.2.4 Cill a' Chubein, (RCAHMS 1984, 159; NR45SE ;NR 4537 5282; Map, 12)	95
5.2.5 Cill Tobar Lasrach, Port Ellen (RCAHMS 1984, 167; NR34NE 1, NR 3736 4580; Map, 14)	100
5.2.6 Gleann na Gaoidh (RCAHMS 1984, 182-4; NR25SW 1; NR 2118 5361; Map, 4)	104
5.2.7 Cill Braenan, Daill (RCAHMS 1984, 193; NR36SE 6; NR 3740 6236; Map, 15)	106
5.2.8 Cilleach Mhicheil, Carn (RCAHMS 1984, 159; NR25NW 2; NR 2409 5666; Map, 21)	107
5.2.9 Cill Eileagain, Craigens (RCAHMS 1984, 165; NR26NE 2; NR 2987 6693; Map, 22)	108
5.2.10 Cill Eileagain, Balulive (RCAHMS 1984, 165-6; NR46NW 4; NR 4031 6948; Map, 6)	109
Chapter 6: Early medieval carved stones recorded from Islay	111
6.1 Introduction	111
6.2 The early medieval carved stones.....	111
6.2.1 Orsay (Map, 28) and Gleann na Gaoidh (Map, 4).....	112
6.2.2 Laggan (Map, 5).....	114
6.2.3 Cill Eileagain, Balulive (Map, 6)	115
6.2.4 Kilbride (Map, 23) and Cnoc na Cille, Brahunisary (Map, 35)	116
6.2.5 Kilnave Cross (Map, 31)	117
6.2.6 Nave Island, cross fragment (Map, 29)	117
6.2.7 Kildalton Church and Great Cross (Map, 30)	119
6.2.8 Kilchoman (Map, 32), <i>Cill Chomáin</i> , cross-slabs	122
6.2.9 Dóid Mháiri, Port Ellen, cross-slab (Map, 33)	124
6.2.10 Trudernish, cross-slab fragment, (Map, 34)	126
Chapter 7: Place-names and Early Christian Monastic Sites	127
7.1 Introduction	127
7.2 Early ecclesiastical place-names on Islay	127
7.2.1 Annuid	127
7.2.2 Bachlaig (NR 416 753 and NR 413 738)	128

7.2.3 Callumkill (NR 408 465).....	128
7.2.4 Carraig an Dòmhnach (NR 3981 7882)	129
7.3 Small eremitic Early Christian monastic sites with no surviving drystone chapel	133
7.3.1 Orsay	133
7.3.2 Eilean Nèimh, Nave Island, monastic enclosure	140
7.4 Conclusions	145
Chapter 8: Christianity, Origins and Gaelicisation: history and myths	147
8.1 Introduction	147
8.2 Christianity	147
8.2.1 The Mission to Ireland	148
8.3 Contacts between Dál Riata and Gaul	152
8.4 The voyaging saints	156
8.5 Islay and Ireland in the First Millennium	157
8.5.1 Origins.....	159
8.5.2 Gaelicisation of north Britain.....	160
8.6 The North Channel Region.....	162
8.6.1 The Goidelic Migration.....	162
8.6.2 Philology and the North Channel Region.....	164
8.6.3 Archaeology and the North Channel region.....	165
8.6.4 North Channel - conclusions.....	167
8.7 Míniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban.....	167
8.8 Place-names from <i>MSFA</i>	172
8.8.1 Freg/Freag	175
8.8.2 Átha Cassil	176
8.9 Conclusions	177
Chapter 9: The Norse	180
9.1 Introduction	180
9.2 Hoards, settlements, and burials	180
9.3 Southern Region and Dál Riata	181
9.4 The Norse Archaeology of Islay.....	184
9.5 The pottery sequence in western Scotland.....	186
9.6 Burials and place-names	187
9.7 Norse Place-Names.....	189
9.8 War or peace?	197
9.9 War or Peace; a conclusion.....	200

9.10 The Norse in Islay – a hypothesis.....	201
9.10.1 Norse farm-names in Islay	203
9.11 Factors and arguments supporting a ‘peaceful plantation hypothesis’	204
9.11.1 Archaeology - lack of surface finds and evidence for settlements.	204
9.11.2 Distribution of burials and settlements.....	205
9.11.3 Viking pottery distribution suggests less intense settlement in Argyll and the southern islands.	205
9.11.4 Relative land quality of farm-districts with Norse and Gaelic names	206
9.11.5 Secondary settlement in Islay by Norse from Ireland.	206
9.11.6 Where are the Norse?	207
9.11.7 Christianised Norse on Islay	208
Chapter 10: Discussions and Conclusions	210
10.1 Drystone Chapels of Ireland and Argyll	210
10.2 The Islay Drystone Chapels.....	210
10.2.1 Duisker 2, Cill Eathain and Kilslevan	212
10.2.2 Ardilistry, Nereabolls 2 and Bruichladdich.....	213
10.3 Chapels with entrances in the lateral walls	215
10.3.1 Cilleach Mhicheil, Cill Eileagian (Balulive), Cill Eileagian (Craigens), and Duisker 1	215
10.3.2 Cill Choman, Tockmal, Gleann na Gaidh, Cill Tobar Lasrach and Cill a’Chubein	215
10.4 New and reclassified sites.....	216
10.4.1 Kilcavan, Kelsay	216
10.4.2 Airigh Ghuaidhre.....	216
10.4.3 Cill Ronain, Braigo, Burial ground, Chapel (possible)	217
10.5 Place-names and Early Christian Monastic Sites	217
10.6 Simple burial grounds containing cairns	218
10.7 Cemetery of Penannular Barrows, Newton, Islay.....	218
10.8 Christianity, Origins and Gaelicisation: history and myths	219
10.9 The Norse on Islay	220
10.10 A prototype chronological model	220
10.10.1 Possible sixth or seventh-century chapels	221
10.10.2 Phase 2: Possible eighth to tenth-century chapels.....	222
10.10.3 Phase 3: Late 12 th -century chapels	223
10.10.4 Phase 4: Post twelfth-century chapels	224
10.11 Early Christian Carved stones from Islay	225

10.12 The Distribution of Ecclesiastical Activity	227
10.12.1 The First Millennium	227
10.12.2 The Twelfth century	229
10.13 The total distribution of ecclesiastical activity on Islay.....	231
10.14 <i>Leachta</i> on Islay.....	232
10.15 Some reflections	232
10.16 Further research	233
10.16.1 Orsay	234
10.16.2 Burial grounds of unknown date	234
10.16.3 <i>Cill an Ailein</i> and other lost sites	234
Bibliography.....	235

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is the result of my own work and has not, whether in the same or a different form, been presented to this or any other university in support of an application for any other degree than that for which I am now a candidate.

Date.....

Signature.....

Abstract

One often reads in the literature that the simple drystone-built chapels on Islay date from the Norse period. This researcher always felt uncomfortable about that hypothesis, and this thesis explores the possibility that some of the chapels may be pre-Norse. A hypothesis is presented for the spread of Christianity in Ireland and across the North Channel to Islay. The traditional origins of the *Scotti* and recent conclusions regarding the gaelicisation of Argyll are examined to establish the likely degree of communication in the first millennium AD across the North Channel. A trade/communication route from the North of Ireland to Islay and onward to Knapdale, Mid Argyll and Iona is identified. The civil survey of Islay in the genealogical tract *Míniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban* is shown to be unreliable as an aid to the understanding of the settlement archaeology and political geography of Islay.

An assumption is made that the lands bordering both sides of the North Channel formed a homogeneous Gaelic-speaking cultural region; justification for this is offered. An analysis of length to width (L/W) ratio for the corpus of drystone chapels in Ireland is presented. The L/W ratio is found to be an effective tool for the identification of early drystone-built churches. This is confirmed by a comparison of the L/W ratio of medieval mortared churches of approximately known date in Argyll with that of churches in the west of Scotland that are generally assumed to be early.

Of the 27 chapels in Islay, 17 are classified according to L/W ratio value, entrance position, and orientation, and it is argued that a number are potentially pre-Norse. Four phases of chapels are identified. The locations of two small eremitic monastic sites are identified. These are used with the distribution of Early Christian carved stones and burial grounds to establish the extent of Early Christian activity on the island in the first millennium AD.

The extent of the Norse settlement in Islay is discussed and arguments presented to support a proposal that this was a peaceful plantation rather than annihilation. A number of chapels are identified that may have been founded by the Norse, however it is suggested that the majority of the chapels date from the 12th century or later.

Two new chapels were found during the course of fieldwork, and it is observed that *leachta*, - outdoor memorials often constructed on top of non-specific graves, and frequently used as pilgrimage stations in Ireland, are more common in Islay than often assumed.

All chapels are fully described, together with some sites found during fieldwork that require further investigation to confirm their ecclesiastical use in the first millennium.

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Because of a walking difficulty, fieldwork for this thesis would have been impossible without the help of Donald James MacFee, Head Keeper, Lossit Estate, Islay, who provided transport on many occasions, and to whom I am deeply grateful.

Copyrights

Some elements of the descriptions of certain archaeological sites in this thesis, and their location data, are derived from information compiled by, and copyright of, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) from the CANMORE database of the National Monuments Record of Scotland.

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Figures and Tables

Figure 1.1: Geology of Islay (adapted from Maltmann 2000)	11
Figure 1.2: Map of Islay showing roads, principle places and elevation model	12
Figure 2.1: Length to width ratio for early and Romanesque churches	24
Figure 2.2: Length to width ratio versus entrance position.....	24
Figure 2.3: Number of drystone chapels with known dimensions in Argyll	26
Figure 2.4: Length to width ratio for 37 selected Irish drystone churches.....	29
Figure 2.5: L/W ratio for drystone and corbelled examples	29
Figure 2.6: L/W ratio histogram for 37 drystone churches of known dimensions.....	30
Figure 2.7: Data excluding sites with insecure data.....	31
Figure 2.8: Length to width ratio for corbelled sites with secure data.....	32
Figure 2.9: L/W ratio for non-corbelled sites with secure data.....	32
Figure 2.10: Descriptive statistics for corbelled and non-corbelled chapels.....	32
Figure 2.11: The oratory at Gallarus, Co. Kerry	34
Figure 2.12: Examples of the ground-plans of Irish oratories (Rourke & White Marshall 2005)	36
Figure 2.13: Typology for corbelled oratories (adapted from Rourke & White Marshall 2005)	37
Figure 3.1: The chapel at Gleann Na Gaidh in May 2009	39
Figure 3.2: The chapel at Gleann Na Gaidh in c. 1975 (photo © RCAHMS)	40
Figure 3.3: Chapel Cilleach Mhicheil, Carn in 2009 (centre, within burial ground).....	41
Figure 3.4: Cilleach Mhicheil in 2005	41
Figure 3.5: Balulive, Cill Eileagain; chapel within burial ground	42
Figure 3.6: Location map of the sites of the selected drystone chapels and carved stones....	46
Figure 3.7: L/W ratio for mortared pre-Reformation Irish churches (Ó Carragáin 2010, 113 Figure 122).....	48
Figure 3.8: The L/W ratio of the seventeen measureable Islay drystone chapels	49
Figure 3.9: Length to width ratio versus chapel area	50

Figure 3.10: L/W histogram for Islay drystone chapels.....	50
Figure 3.11: Length to width ratio of chapels versus door position.....	52
Figure 3.12: L/W ratio versus door position plotted in order of L/W ratio.....	52
Figure 3.13: Comparative plans of the 15 extant chapels	53
Figure 3.14: Plan of Cill Eathain chapel (adapted from RCAHMS 1984, 165)	54
Figure 3.15: Cill Eathain chapel looking west-north-west with liturgical south-east corner centre left of photo	55
Figure 3.16: Duisker 2 chapel and burial ground (adapted from RCAHMS 1984, 170)	58
Figure 3.17: Inishmurray; the earliest burials are aligned north-east to south-west; the later group east to west (O’Sullivan & Ó Carragáin 2008)	59
Figure 3.18: Nominally east-facing radiocarbon-dated burials from Scotland (Maldonado 2011)	60
Figure 3.19: Church and non-church burials in Atlantic Scotland (Maldonado 2011).....	61
Figure 3.20: Orientation of Islay drystone chapels	63
Figure 3.21: OS 25-inch Argyll and Bute Sheet CCVII.12, 1878 (detail).....	65
Figure 3.22: Bruichladdich chapel, Conisby (adapted from RCAHMS 1984, 159)	65
Figure 3.23: Nereabolls 2 chapel © Bing Maps (accessed 20th October 2012)	66
Figure 3.24: Nereabolls 2 chapel (adapted from RCAHMS 1984, 230).....	67
Figure 3.25: Ardilistry chapel (adapted from RCAHMS 1984, 157)	68
Figure 3.26: Kilsleven chapel; looking north-east from north-west corner of chapel	69
Figure 3.27: Plan of Kilsleven chapel (adapted from RCAHMS 1984, 223)	70
Figure 3.28: Area of measureable drystone chapels of Islay	71
Figure 3.29: Cladh Eilisteir chapel – south-east corner	72
Figure 3.30: Early Christian stone from Kilbride (adapted from RCAHMS 1984).....	74
Figure 3.31: Cill an Ailein - looking north across the burial ground (note field clearance) ..	75
Figure 3.32: First edition 25-inch OS map (CXC VIII, 14, 1882)(detail)	78
Figure 4.1: In this detail from OS sheet CCXVIII.6, 1882, the chapel is to the right of the sheepfold.	81
Figure 4.2: Kilcavan chapel from the west	82

Figure 4.3: Airigh Ghuaidhre chapel; (© RCAHMS DP_021204).....	83
Figure 4.4: Airigh Ghuaidhre burial enclosure with chapel mound.....	84
Figure 4.5: Cill Ronain from the east.....	84
Figure 4.6: Cill Ronain; structure on the top of the enclosure mound looking west	85
Figure 5.1: Comparative plans of extant chapels with lateral entrances (adapted from RCAHMS 1984).....	91
Figure 5.2: Location map of Islay chapels	92
Figure 5.3: Plan of Cill Chòman (adapted from RCAHMS 1984, 163)	93
Figure 5.4: Plan of Duisker 1 chapel (adapted from RCAHMS 1984, 170).....	94
Figure 5.5: Plan of Tockmal chapel (adapted from RCAHMS 1984, 262)	95
Figure 5.6: Plan of Cill a' Chuibein (adapted from RCAHMS 1984, 159)	97
Figure 5.7: Cill a' Chuibein chapel from the north-west	98
Figure 5.8: Cill a' Chubein; north-east corner showing batter of walling	99
Figure 5.9: Oratory with door in the south wall, Bishop's Isle, Co. Clare (Ó Carrágain 2010)	100
Figure 5.10: Plan of Cill Tobar Lasrach, Port Ellen	101
Figure 5.11: Eaglais Tobar Lasrach; worked stone.....	101
Figure 5.12: Eaglais Tobar Lasrach; hole-stone at entrance to outer enclosure. Stick 1m in height.....	102
Figure 5.13: Eaglais Tobar Lasrach; hole-stone at entrance to outer enclosure	103
Figure 5.14: Plan of Gleann na Gaoidh chapel (adapted from RCAHMS 1984, 182).....	105
Figure 5.15: IASG sketch of chapel and cell (Lamont 1959, Plate II).....	105
Figure 5.16: Cilleach Mhicheil, Port Charlotte, chapel and burial ground (adapted from RCAHMS 1984, 159).....	108
Figure 5.17: Plan of Cill Eileagain, Craigens (adapted from RCAHMS 1984, 165).....	109
Figure 5.18: Plan of Cill Eileagain chapel, Balulive (adapted from RCAHMS 1984, 166)	110
Figure 6.1: Distribution map of early medieval carved stones	112
Figure 6.2: Carved stones from Gleann na Gaoidh (adapted from RCAHMS 1984)	113
Figure 6.3: Cross-slab fragments; Orsay (adapted from RCAHMS 1984).....	114

Figure 6.4: Carved stone from Laggan (adapted from RCAHMS 1984).....	115
Figure 6.5: Cill Eileagain cross-slab (adapted from RCAHMS 1984)	115
Figure 6.6: Stones from Kilbride and nearby Cnoc na Cille (adapted from RCAHMS 1984)	116
Figure 6.7: Kilnave Cross and fragment from Nave Island (adapted from Fisher 2001).....	118
Figure 6.8: Kildalton Cross (adapted from Fisher 2001)	120
Figure 6.9: Kildalton; cross-marked stones (adapted from RCAHMS 1984).....	121
Figure 6.10: Kilchoman 1 & 2 (adapted from RCAHMS 1984).....	123
Figure 6.11: Early medieval disc-headed cross at Kilchoman	124
Figure 6.12: Dóid Mháiri cross-slab	125
Figure 6.13: Dóid Mháiri, Port Ellen (adapted from RCAHMS 1984)	125
Figure 6.14: cross-marked stone from Trudernish.....	126
Figure 7.1: Locations of place-names associated with the early church.....	127
Figure 7.2: Carraig an Domhnach; Left, RCAHMS 612_88_63, 1988 (detail); Right OS 1:25,000, 2004 (detail); both Crown Copyright.....	130
Figure 7.3: Top left, the RCAHMS/OS site; bottom right, the author's site (All Scotland Survey 612_88_64, 1988 (detail) Crown Copyright).....	132
Figure 7.4: Orsay (© Bing Maps; accessed 20 October 2012)	134
Figure 7.5: Hugh Mackay's grave, Orsay (possible <i>leacht</i>) © RCAHMS.....	136
Figure 7.6: Crossatemple <i>leacht</i> , Inishmurray (O'Sullivan & O Carragáin 2008, plate 44)	137
Figure 7.7: Cloch Breaca <i>leacht</i> , Inishmurray (O'Sullivan & Ó Carragáin 2008, Plate 32)	137
Figure 7.8: Fragments of cross slab from Orsay © RCAHMS	138
Figure 7.9: Ballywiheen cross-slab (Cuppage 1986)	139
Figure 7.10: Nave Island Early Christian enclosure (RCAHMS DP 112338 Crown Copyright)	141
Figure 7.11: Plan of Nave Island Early Christian site (adapted from RCAHMS 1984, 225)	142
Figure 7.12: Cashel on Inishmurray, Co. Sligo.....	144
Figure 8.1: <i>Chi-Rho</i> monogram	151

Figure 8.2: Developed form of <i>Chi-Rho</i>	151
Figure 8.3: One of three hexafoil stones from Cladh a' Bhile (NR77NW 4); RCAHMS Crown Copyright.....	153
Figure 8.4: Cross slab; Kilmory Oib, Argyll (NR79SE 7, RCAHMS Crown Copyright)...	154
Figure 8.5: Possible double transom cross-slab at Duncrun (from Northern Ireland Sites & Monuments Record).....	154
Figure 8.6: suggested route from Derry ultimately to Iona, with sites of Early Christian carved stones (in Scotland)	155
Figure 8.7: An Ros, Loch Ballygrant; OS Six-inch sheet CXC VIII, 1882 (detail)	175
Figure 8.8: The boundaries between districts in <i>MSFA</i> from Nieke 1983, 318.....	178
Figure 9.1: 'Tracks to Norway' from Heather 1804 (detail).....	188
Figure 9.2: Oa of Islay; farm-names and divisions adapted from McDougall's map of c.1750	192
Figure 10.1: Comparative plans of the measureable chapels surveyed by the RCAHMS (adapted from RCAHMS 1984, 26)	212
Figure 10.2: Phase 1 chapels 6th - 8th centuries; Phase 2 chapels 8th - 10th centuries.....	223
Figure 10.3: Phase 3 chapels late 12th century; Phase 4 chapels post 12th century	225
Figure 10.4: Ecclesiastical sites - first millennium AD	228
Figure 10.5: Pre-parochial situation - c.12th century.....	229
Figure 10.6: Early medieval sites and burial grounds of unknown date	231
Table 1.1: Ratio of Old Norse to Gaelic settlement names (Macniven 2006, 138, Fig 18)	7
Table 2.1: Internal length to width ratio of selected potentially early and architecturally dated medieval chapels	23
Table 2.2: Irish drystone pre-Romanesque churches	28
Table 2.3: Descriptive statistics for Irish drystone churches	28
Table 3.1: The initial list of 27 possible chapels.....	44
Table 3.2: The Early Christian carved stones recorded from Islay	45
Table 3.3 : The seventeen drystone chapels selected for analysis	47

Table 3.4: Descriptive statistics for the measurable drystone chapels.....	51
Table 3.5: Chapels with western entrances.....	57
Table 3.6: Descriptive statistics for chapel orientations	62
Table 3.7: Orientation of the Islay drystone chapels.....	63
Table 5.1: Chapels with lateral entrances	90
Table 6.1: Early medieval carved stones from Islay	111
Table 10.1: Earlier and later carved stones from Islay.....	226

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

Numerous holidays and many hours of my leisure time have been spent in Argyll, and the compulsion to explore old churches and burial grounds has not diminished. The decision to associate my research topic with the early church in Argyll was an easy one; the final choice was made after reading comments and observations on the subject of the Argyll chapels in the RCAHMS inventories. The introductory chapter of the Mid-Argyll volume (RCAHMS 1992, 3) notes that:

The classification of undocumented ecclesiastical sites in Western Britain and Ireland remains a matter of great difficulty despite extensive recent field-survey and excavation...

In the introduction to the Islay volume (1984, 27-8) comparanda for the chapels are suggested in the Isle of Man and in the Northern Isles, where their distribution is said to be associated with the Norse settlement pattern. Furthermore it is noted that although the chronology of these chapels is unclear, most are said to reputedly stem from the Christian Norse period from the tenth century or later. It was the subsequent comment in the RCAHMS introductory text that resolved the dilemma regarding the precise research topic for this thesis.

Neither of these areas (Isle of Man and Northern Isles) however, can show comparable burial-grounds of such restricted scale and it is possible that, in this respect at least, some of the Islay sites preserve evidence of pre-Norse origin (*ibid*).

This comment seems to have gone largely un-noticed, because the literature usually intimates that the Islay chapels may broadly be dated to the Christian Norse period or later, on the basis of a comparison with chapels in the Isle of Man and the Northern Isles where the settlement pattern is said to be better documented (Fisher 1997, 194; Fisher 2004, 83, Ó Carragáin, T 2010, 53). The association between settlement patterns and the Isle of Man keeills stems from the work of Marstrander who argued that a chapel or keeill was situated in every treen (a land division) (Marstrander 1937). This is heard so often that it is almost considered to be a self-evident fact. If there was a keeill on every treen, there would be almost 170 of them (Wilson 2008, 129). One of the first to suggest that this was based on unreliable data was Lowe (Lowe 1983, 124-6). He indicated that the fundamental issue with Marstrander's work was the extent to which it is necessary to believe that treens and keeills were contemporary. He strongly suggested that an urgent re-assessment of Marstrander's

database was required to remove sites that are not unequivocally Early Christian (*ibid*, 126). There is no documentary evidence for the patterns of landholding in the Viking-age on Man (Wilson 2008, 91), and attempts to transport late medieval landholdings back to that time are fraught with difficulties. The unreliability of Marstrander's work and the uncertainty of the chronology of the keeills were critical factors in the decision not to analyse Isle of Man chapels in this thesis. Another fundamental reason is the conviction that the Islay chapels were of 'Irish' type; their context differs from that of the Isle of Man keeills, most notably, as was indicated in the above quotation from the RCAHMS, because of the diminutive burial grounds. In addition, the chapels on Man are situated on an island from which approximately 100 sculptures may be dated to the Christian Norse period (*ibid*, 59-60); there is one from Islay, datable to the late 11th century.

1.2 Objectives

The major objective of this thesis is to create a theoretical chronology for the Islay drystone chapels, and to identify those that could date from the pre-Norse era. Obviously, this chronology must remain a prototype until such time that scientific dating is available for the chapels. A secondary objective is to examine the impact of the Norse upon the distribution and chronology of the Islay chapels.

1.3 Chronological terminology

In this thesis, the Early Christian period on Islay is assumed to broadly extend from the fifth to the tenth century, between the introduction of literacy and Christianity to Islay no earlier than in the fifth century AD, and the settlement of the Norse sometime in the ninth or early tenth centuries. In this study, the Early Medieval period extends from the fifth to the twelfth century AD. Occasionally the term 'pre-Romanesque' is used to identify the same period. It covers the interval between the introduction of Christianity and the establishment of the parochial system in Argyll in the late twelfth century. These two significant chronological events also determine the boundaries for this research. The chronological terms 'Early Historic' and 'Early Christian' are occasionally used interchangeably and cover the same period.

1.4 Methodology and structure of this thesis

It is intimated above, that in this thesis a comparison will be made between the Islay and Irish chapels. In Chapter Two, some implications of a recent major study of the Irish early medieval church are discussed and the presumption that small timber churches preceded and

often underlay early stone churches is questioned. One would expect the Insular church to have developed chronologically after the arrival in Ireland of Christians with a mental blueprint of a prototype design. However, the development of the church building was not always a missionary diffusion of the faith, but the application of local architectural styles using local traditional materials (Carver 2009, 336). Ó Carragáin (2010) found that the form of the early medieval church varies geographically rather than chronologically, with five principal groupings across Ireland. With this in mind, it is argued in Chapter Two, that in regions with a stone building tradition stretching back hundreds or thousands of years, early chapels would have been built in stone. The effectiveness of length to width (L/W) ratio as an aid in the identification of pre-Reformation chapels is tested by compiling and comparing data of Scottish chapels that are believed to be early medieval with those known to have been built in the later medieval period. Measurements for all of the Irish drystone chapels are sourced, grouped into corbelled and non-corbelled types, and an analysis of L/W ratio carried out. A recent typology and associated chronological model for the Irish corbelled drystone churches is introduced in Chapter Two. In the absence of anything similar from Scotland, this offers an informed opinion about the chronology of the drystone oratory in Ireland (Rourke & White Marshall 2005, 112-21).

An extensive literature survey was carried out in order to compile a list of chapels in Islay. Primarily, this revealed the high standard of investigation and survey carried out by the Ordnance Survey and the RCAHMS largely in the 1970s; with the exception of 'possible sites' where no remains have ever been seen, all sites from the literature were also found in the National Monuments Record. Consequently Chapter Three introduces the group of drystone chapels in Islay that have been surveyed and described in modern times, largely by the RCAHMS and the OS. The state of survival of the chapels has deteriorated noticeably since the 1970s and many chapels that survive only as one, or perhaps two, courses of stones have disappeared under scrubland; others have been 'puddled' by standing cattle or have become receptacles for large quantities of field clearance stones and boulders. The location of one chapel (Ardilistry) situated only a few hundred metres from both a farm and a gamekeeper's house is locally unknown; it is now surrounded by impenetrable thickets of scrub woodland. An analysis of the Islay chapels is carried out in Chapter Three. They are classified according to a hierarchical combination of L/W ratio, entrance position and

orientation. Evidence is presented to allow the probable Early Christian chapels on the island to be identified. These chapels are described in Chapter Three.

During the course of the research for this thesis two new chapels have been identified, one from a study of aerial photographs, and a second during fieldwork. One burial ground has been reclassified as a chapel site. These are presented in Chapter Four. The chapels which the writer suggests are later are grouped and fully described in Chapter Five.

In order to visualise the extent of ecclesiastical activity in the first millennium AD on Islay, the early medieval carved stones are listed and described in detail in Chapter Six. Chapter Seven introduces two small monastic sites on islands off Islay where there are important physical remains that no longer include a drystone chapel. There are a number of place-names on Islay that occur in rentals and charters, which are traditionally associated with the early church; these are also discussed in Chapter Seven to complete the picture of ecclesiastical activity in the first millennium AD.

The tractate *Miniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban*, ‘The Explanation of the Genealogy of the (Gaelic) Men of Britain’ has been used, by some, in the analysis of settlement patterns on the island in the first millennium AD (for example, Níeke 1983, 305-8, 318; Meredith-Lobay 2009). Hereafter referred to as *MSFA*, this tractate was apparently compiled in Dál Riata. The original has been dated to the seventh century but in its present form has been shown to be a tenth-century document (Bannerman 1974, 39). It contains a civil survey of Islay, which has been analysed and misanalysed by many historians and archaeologists, all of which, including the civil survey itself, is now considered unreliable by Dumville (Dumville 2002, 207). The justification for not using the civil survey of Islay in *MSFA* to create hypothetical territories and to analyse political settlement patterns on the island is presented in Chapter Eight.

1.5 Preconceptions

At the start of his research, the writer believed that it was possible that Christianity may have arrived on Islay, having spread along the western littoral of Ireland from the south-west, and

that this was facilitated by long established communication across the North Channel between northern Ireland and, Islay and Argyll. These topics are discussed in Chapter Eight in the hope that the reader may be persuaded to accept these presumptions as supported hypotheses. The traditional origins of the *Scotti* and the gaelicisation of Argyll are also examined to establish the likely degree of communication in the first millennium AD across the North Channel.

1.6 State of research

Werner (2007) examined communication across the North Channel region through analysis of a series of comparisons of sites in Argyll and the northern part of Ireland. Her interpretation of the analyses suggests communication and contact between Scotland and Ireland in the first millennia BC and AD. She identified stronger connexions between Argyll and Co. Donegal than with Northern Ireland, especially during the first millennium BC, and suggests that intermarriage occurred between the two areas over a lengthy period of time. This may account for the claims of Irish ancestry by the dynasties of Argyll in the later king lists and genealogies. Her suggestion that these alluded to ancient contacts with Co. Donegal rather than Co. Antrim, is very relevant for this thesis.

The subject of Early Christianity in Islay has appeared in recent years as part of the research topic of a number of postgraduate theses. Swift (1987) used the Islay chapels as a case study in her thesis on the *Irish influence on ecclesiastical sites in Scotland: A case study of the island of Islay*. The mortared churches on Islay were used as a control group. She noted that there are problems with Marstrander's work on the Isle of Man keeills and treens (*ibid.* 250-1), and found no systematic correlation between the Islay chapels and any of the known medieval land-holdings, and thus no evidence for the type of church organisation proposed by Marstrander (*ibid.* 173), yet she still concludes that 'the closest parallels for the [Islay] drystone church sites are found on Man' (*ibid.* 310-11). She notes that 'the evidence of the dedications suggest[s] that, on Islay, they were coined under native influence in the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries' (*ibid.* 340). Swift classifies the chapels primarily by area, with the larger ones closer in date to the control group, and the earlier smaller ones tentatively founded between the ninth and twelfth century as private estate chapels (*ibid.* 255). In so doing, she occasionally ignores the conclusions of her analysis of door position of Anglo-Saxon and Argyll churches. Although she measured the orientations of all of the Islay churches, both mortared and drystone, she does little with the results other than to conclude

that there seemed to be a ‘tightening up of orientation policy on Islay in the medieval period’ (*ibid.* 182-5).

Macniven’s thesis (2006) on the *Norse in Islay: A settlement historical case-study for medieval Scandinavian activity in western maritime Scotland* has become the definitive reference for Islay place-names. It also includes some environmental and historical material, which made interesting background reading for this thesis. In particular, his extensive treatise on land and territorial divisions is a valuable contribution to the economic history of western Scotland and also to the local history of Islay. His interdisciplinary analysis (2006, 216-33) of historical and fiscal sources suggests that the recorded Islay ‘Quarterland’, which was probably created in the later medieval period, replaced an earlier standard of land based on an Old Extent equivalent of five merks. Using fiscal, archaeological and cartographic data, Macniven reconstructs these early divisions in the landscape, and shows that the two quarterland holding in Islay is almost equivalent to that of the ounceland in other areas of Scandinavian Scotland. Furthermore the distribution of Iron Age sites suggests that these reconstructed ouncelands originated in a pre-Norse system of land division (*ibid.* 234). Unfortunately, his correlation of these five merk units with the distribution of chapels and burial grounds, and his subsequent identification of a ‘highly regular and hierarchical system of ecclesiastical administration’ is based upon an unfortunate selection of ecclesiastical sites, and consequently must be largely discounted (*ibid.* 239-52). Macniven (*ibid.* 239) is critical of Swift’s failure to differentiate between types of ecclesiastical site in her attempt to correlate them with land-holdings, however he falls into the same trap. His selection includes a small number of the drystone chapels and all of the late medieval churches. He suggests that the origin of his 18 *cill*-units may be found in the 20 *tech* naval defence units of *MFSA* (*ibid.* 254-6). His argument is that the multiplied total of 18 units of 20 *techs* (360) is close to the 350 *tech* listed in the civil survey of Islay in *MFSA*. Macniven’s conclusions (*ibid.* 138) regarding the language background of the settlement-names of Islay are based on his extensive analysis of the place-names, and are very relevant for this thesis. Table 1.1 tabulates his results, where it is seen that 53% of the farm-names are derived from Old Norse onomastic material. In contrast, Thomas’ long accepted survey found that 34% of the island’s place-names in the 1872-4 Valuation Roll were Old Norse (Thomas, F W L 1882).

Parish	% of farm-districts with ON + ONX names	
	Thomas' Survey	This Survey
Kilchoman	40%	65%
Kilarrow	32%	53%
Kilmeny		40%
Kildalton	33%	51%
Total	34%	53%
ON = Old Norse ONX = ON ex nomine onomastic units from dependent coinages of a different language background		

Table 1.1: Ratio of Old Norse to Gaelic settlement names (Macniven 2006, 138, Fig 18)

Macniven notes that Old Norse and ONX farm-names dominate in the Oa, the northern part of the Rhinns, the adjacent part of Kilarrow along with its south-eastern boundary, the north-eastern part of Kilmeny, and the south-eastern limits of Kilarrow. They survive also in a continuous section along the river Sorn and the upper river Laggan. High densities of Gaelic farm-names are found around Laggan in Kilarrow, and in a strip along the northern side of the river Sorn and Loch Finlaggan, continuing eastwards to Ballighillan. Significant numbers are also found in the Lossit area in the south-eastern of Kilmeny parish, as well as around Ballyvicar, Lagavullin, and Kintour in Kildalton. Finally, they are found along the south-west coast of the Rhinns as well as around the centre of its east coast. However Macniven issues a warning: To automatically assume that these divisions mirror the maximum extent of Norse ethnicity in Islay, however, as many previous writers on the subject have done (*cf.* MacEacharna 1976; Olson 1983; Nieke 1983, 1984) would be to ignore the subsequent impact of the Gaelic language and culture (Macniven 2006, 139-41). He suggests that the aboriginal Gaelic population of Islay may have been exterminated or extremely subjugated by the Norse incomers (*op cit*, 205). The writer finds difficulty accepting either of these conclusions. This is discussed fully in Chapter Nine.

Meredith-Lobay (2009) studied the context of early medieval churches in Argyll for her doctoral research. This appears to have been largely theoretical and desk-based, and with the exception of some visits to a few ecclesiastical sites near Oban, fieldwork was carried out as part of the Lismore Landscape Project, which formed one of her three regional case-studies (*ibid*, 30). A second was the parish of Kilchoman on Islay; the third was the Mull of Kintyre. Her case studies are used to test the hypothesis that the early church in Argyll was organised territorially and that different areas reacted differently to the new Christianity (*ibid*, 56).

They are preceded by an examination of the archaeology of the Cenél nGabráin, Cenél Loairn, and Cenél nOengusa (*ibid*, 47-55), which for the latter, relies heavily on the political geography of Islay suggested by Níeke (1983) using her (Níeke's) hypothetical boundaries between townships derived from the civil survey of Islay in *MSFA*. Meredith-Lobay analyses the civil surveys of the three cenéla in *MSFA* in detail and creatively suggests where the territories of the seven septs of the Cenél Loairn may have been situated. Like many before her, she assumes that Islay was the exclusive home of the Cenél nOengusa. Her survey of Kilchoman parish on the Rhinns of Islay is interesting, particularly the observation that only one of the five chapels along the eastern shore of the Rhinns has a local Early Christian place-name. The others are named after a nearby settlement or the topography, and imply a different approach to the Christianisation of the landscape. She provides evidence to show that in Argyll:

Churches were constructed, and sculpture displayed, in places of great ritual significance as a way of legitimising the position of the church and its new ideology. The places where the churches were located again suggest that they were connected to the local, secular, territorial concerns of the local inhabitants because of the strong associations between the church and the places of ritual importance (Meredith-Lobay 2009, 67).

1.7 The Isle of Islay

Islay is the furthest south of the islands of the Inner Hebrides and is almost due west of Edinburgh and Glasgow. It measures almost 32km in width and about 42km from north to south. It has a land area of 615 km². It has a population of c.3400, although in the 1830s this peaked at almost 15,000 (Storrie 1997, 123). From Dùn Athad on the Oa of Islay, to Dunseverick, Ballintoy Point, east of the Giant's Causeway, in Northern Ireland is approximately 38km or almost 24 miles. This is the shortest distance between Islay and mainland Ireland and is measured between two Early Historic fortifications. The hills rise to 490m over datum in the south-east of Islay and to 230m on the southern Rhinns.

With its large areas of limestone-derived soil the island is relatively fertile. This explains why for hundreds of years it has been referred to as the 'Queen of the Isles' or the 'Green Island' (*ibid*, 3). Its fertility and strategic location at the northern western approaches to the North Channel, with the potential to control traffic between the Irish Sea and the Hebrides, would have been major factors behind the establishment on Islay of the epicentre of the

Kingdom of the Isles in the 12th century. This would not have been overlooked either by Early Medieval and Iron Age population groups (Macniven 2006, 36).

The MacAulay Institute measures the capability of land for agriculture in Scotland. It is measured on a scale from 1 to 7, where class 1 is 'Land producing a very wide range of crops' and class 7, 'Land of very limited agricultural use'. Macniven (*ibid*, 35) found that no area of Islay is rated above class 3, 'Land capable of producing consistently high yields of a narrow range of crops and/or moderate yields of a wider range', and that most of the island was rated as class 5 or 6, suitable for little more than rough grazing. However, he makes some important observations; that in Argyll this is only bettered by Bute, and that when assessing the potential of land for agriculture in pre-modern times, it would be rash to simply go along with these modern classifications. The requirements of earlier systems of agriculture differ widely from those of the heavily mechanised system we see today.

1.7.1 Geology

This section on geology is largely summarised from Maltman et al (2000). The Loch Gruinart fault divides the eastern section of the island from the notably different bedrock found on the Rhinns. Loch Indaal and Loch Gruinart have been produced by erosion of relatively weaker rocks along the fault line that created long depressions into which the sea invaded. Dalriadian rocks such as quartzite and slate dominate the eastern half of the island. Quartzite underlies the high hills of Jura and Islay, and slate is found under the low peaty ground of eastern Islay. Limestone is found in parts of the eastern half of the island (see Figure 1.1). Veins of lead, silver and manganese ore associated with this limestone have been mined from the 14th century and probably much earlier (Caldwell 2008, 231-40; Cressey 1993). Between Port Ellen and Ardmore Point at the south end of the Sound of Islay, a series of conspicuous ridges and offshore reefs and islands run parallel to the shoreline. These are formed from sheets of tough Dalriadian meta-igneous rocks that are more resistant to erosion than the phyllites that surround them. These ridges and rocks are a hazard to small vessels up to 7km offshore. Inland, many of these ridges have been used as the sites of defensible dwellings and small forts of the later Iron Age and Early Historic periods.

The southern part of the Rhinns is formed from the oldest rocks on Islay – the Rhinns Complex. These are igneous rocks that crystallised at depth and were then subjected to great deforming forces. Despite being highly sheared and modified, the original pink feldspars (sheared syenites) may be identified by their distinct colour in many places. In other areas of the southern Rhinns, especially on higher ground, the dark metta-gabbros of the Rhinns Complex is visible. The northern part of the Rhinns comprises folded sedimentary sandstones, which in parts have changed into phyllites. Collectively these are known as the Colonsay Group. Islay is criss-crossed in a north-west to south-east direction by a series of quartz-dolerite dykes. They vary in width from less than 1m to more than 20m and often form conspicuous ridges. Impressive examples may be seen in the Ballygrant area, where occasionally small duns have been constructed on them e.g., Lon Broach 1 (CANMORE: NR46SW 2).

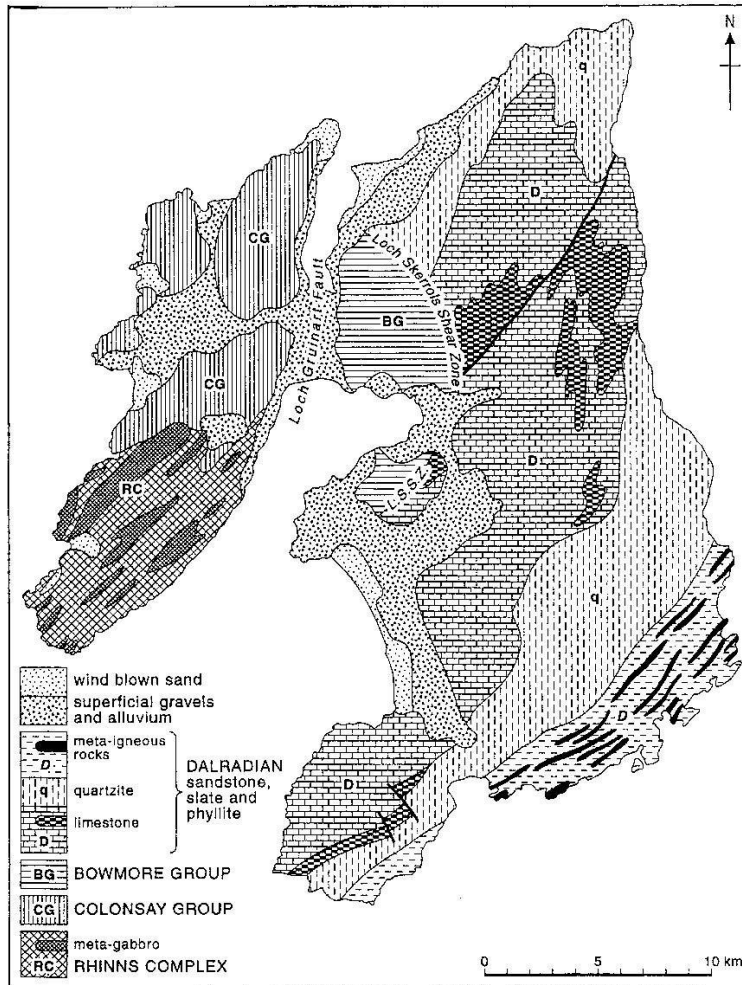


Figure 1.1: Geology of Islay (adapted from Maltmann 2000)

1.7.2 Map

Figure 1.2 is a map of the island that shows modern roads, and places mentioned in the text of this thesis together with a terrain model.

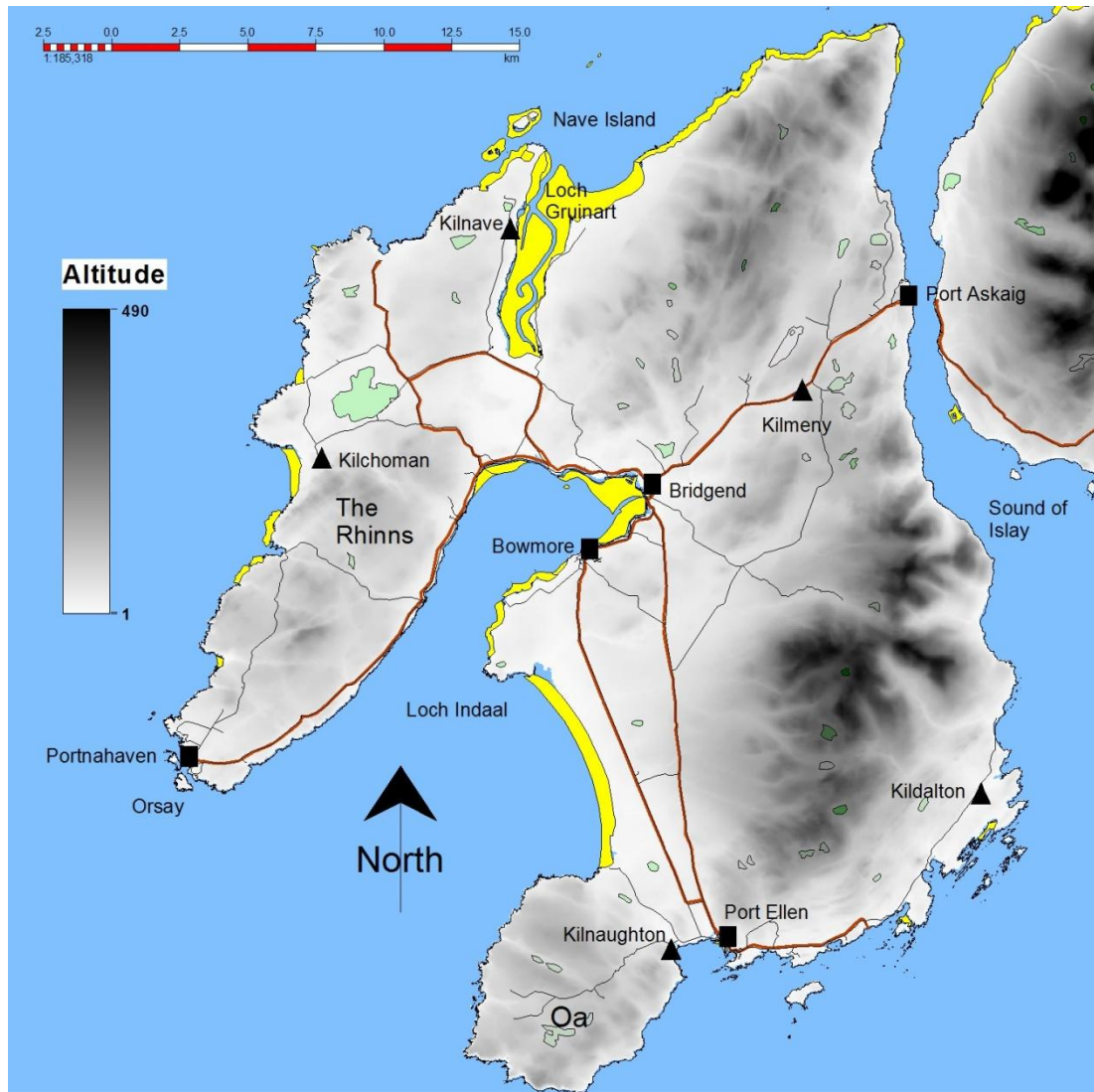


Figure 1.2: Map of Islay showing roads, principle places and elevation model

Chapter 2: The Drystone Chapels of Ireland and Argyll

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter the evidence for the early medieval church in Argyll is discussed and the presumption that small timber churches preceded and often underlay early stone churches is questioned. The possibility is explored that in regions with a stone building tradition stretching back hundreds or thousands of years, early chapels would have been built in stone. The effectiveness of length to width ratio as a tool to identify pre-Reformation chapels is tested by compiling and comparing data of Scottish chapels that are believed to be early with those known to have been built in the later medieval period. Measurement for all of the Irish drystone chapels are sourced and separated into corbelled and non-corbelled types. An analysis of L/W ratio is performed for the Irish drystone chapels.

2.2. The evidence in Argyll

During the last few years there has been an explosion in the publication of archaeological studies and excavation reports on the early church in Scotland and Ireland. Monographs about the monastic sites at Whithorn, Hoddam, Inchmarnock, Inishmurry, have appeared along with a book about Portmahomack, monastery of the Picts, which enhances our knowledge of life and death in a monastic settlement in north-eastern Scotland (Hill 1997, Lowe 2006, Lowe 2008, O'Sullivan, J & Ó Carrágain 2008, Carver 2008). In addition, some valuable survey and excavation books and reports have been published about Irish western hermitage sites such as: Illaunloughan (White Marshall, J & Walsh 2005), High Island (Marshall & Rourke 2000) and Caherlehillan (Sheehan 2009). However, the interpretation of the evidence for the early church in Scotland is still fraught with difficulties. This is due to confusing entries in early annals and documents about constructions, and a general lack of excavated chapel sites, for which little in the way of dating information is available.

This is particularly true in Argyll, where the chapel at Ardnadam, Cowal, excavated over a period of twenty years by the Cowal Archaeological Society, (Rennie 1984; Rennie 1999) and The Time Team's excavation at Balliscate, Mull (Wessex Archaeology 2010) are the only examples to be excavated since St. Ninian's Point, Bute and Ardwall Isle, Kirkcudbright, were excavated in the mid-twentieth century (Aitken 1955; Thomas, C 1966).

The only scientific dating evidence comes from Balliscate chapel, Mull, where bone from a burial sealed under the eastern wall of the chapel produced a calibrated date of 610-690 cal AD (at 93.9% probability) (UB-12555, 1365±29 BP; calibrated with OxCal4.1.1) (Wessex Archaeology 2010, 27, Appendix 2). The burial was 0.3 m below ground level, and the topsoil 0.2 m deep, but the depth of the burial beneath the wall is not clearly stated in the report. For reasons which will become obvious later in this thesis, the extant chapel remains at Balliscate are likely to date from several centuries after the date of this burial, and therefore the burial is likely to be associated with an earlier, seventh century phase of the site. Wessex Archaeology suggest that two pieces of possible decayed wood, each 0.5 x 0.3 m and 0.08 m in thickness, found sealed below the core of the south wall of the chapel, are the remains of sill beams associated with an earlier timber chapel (*ibid*, 7, 15, 22), although this would seem to the author an unreliable conclusion, for several reasons, not least of which are the inadequate thickness for sill-beam use and the lack of a stone platform or walling to level the sill beams.

Excavations at Bruach an Druimein, Poltalloch, Argyll, in 1929 found long cist burials and a stone bearing a fragment of an ogham inscription. Further excavation was carried out in the early 1960s by Eric Cregeen (Craw 1932, 448-50; Abernethy 2008). The Iron Age enclosure here was reused in the early medieval period; the long cists, the ogham inscription and a disused *Kil* place-name (Kilchiaran) suggest ecclesiastical use. The Iron Age ditch may have been re-used for monastic use but the excavators found no remains of a church. Instead, evidence of relatively high status metal-working in the seventh to tenth centuries AD suggests a secular settlement with perhaps a cemetery associated with it (Abernethy 2008, 65-8). Without dates for the cist burials little more can be said, other than the ogham has been read as the Irish name *Cronan*.

A second site in Argyll with a *kil* place-name was excavated in advance of the construction of a car park at Killevin, Crarae, Loch Fyne, where a possible monastic ditch was found. The fill of the ditch was radiocarbon dated to the 7-9th century (Kirby & Alexander 2009). A carved pillar stone, which may be part of a simple composite cross with a socket on the side of the shaft for a timber transom, is recorded from the burial ground at Killevin. Fisher tentatively dates it to the eighth to ninth century (2001, 15, 148).

2.3. The remains of the early church in Iona

We know from Adomnán's life of St Columba that many, if not all, of the buildings of the early monastery on Iona were constructed from wood. There is mention of beams for a great house (Sharpe 1995, II 45, 201) as well as wattles for a guest house, (*ibid*, II 3, 155). Excavations in 1979 revealed an arc of substantial postholes, probably from a timber roundhouse, north-east of Reilig Odhráin, which the excavator suggests was erected sometime after the early seventh century (Barber 1981a, 358). Although Barber admits that the stratigraphical relationship is weak, he provides a *terminus post quem* for the post hole settings of 595+/-55 ad (GU-1262), or 557-722calAD (89.3%) (Oxcal v4.1.7).

Barber's date for the primary peat fill of the monastic vallum when similarly calibrated is 547-714calAD (91.8%) (GU-1243), suggesting that it almost certainly dates from some time after Columba's arrival, which is not unreasonable.

Two samples from the surface of the peat underlying the bank of the vallum provided dates of 106calBC-415calAD (95.4%) (GU-2595) and 111calBC -232calAD (94.9%) (GU-2593) when calibrated (Oxcal v4.1.7) (McCormick 1989, 54). Examination by specialists of the context for these unexpected results confirmed their validity. This suggests that part of the vallum is a re-used Iron Age earthwork (McCormick 1993, 78-80, 91-5, 100-4).

The calibrated date range for carbon from a shallow feature F352 excavated by McCormick is 533-668calAD (93%) (GU-2597). A second shallow feature provided a date range of 319-538calAD (86.2%) (GU-2598). Reece's 1981 dates for charcoal from a cobbled surface calibrate to 319-597calAD (90.5%) (HAR-815) and 397-635calAD (95.4%) (HAR-816); these could be associated with late Iron Age activity or the earliest phases of the monastery. There are therefore tantalising glimpses of both pre-Columban and Columban activity on the island.

The material from which the monastery church was constructed is not mentioned by Adomnán; we must assume that it was wood from comments made by Adomnán (*supra* 15). This is not surprising when account is taken of the geographical variation in early church type introduced in the preceding chapter. It is highly probable that when in Ireland, Columba lived in an area where church buildings were traditionally constructed from wood; certainly, there are no surviving drystone churches from Donegal (*infra*, 19) and hence one would not expect to find them in the early monastery on Iona. That the monks could also build with stone if required is suggested by Adomnán's reference to the construction of a stone wall around the machair on the west coast of Iona (Sharpe 1995, II 28, 177).

St Columba's Shrine on Iona has been rebuilt as a chapel, however the lower courses are the remains of an early mortared shrine-chapel of Irish type with antae, which in my opinion, dates from no later than the tenth century and is likely to be much earlier. We know from the Annals that a stone church existed at Kells, Ireland in 920 (Herbert 1988, 81; Manning 2000, 42), constructed sometime after 807 when this Columban monastery was founded as a refuge from the Vikings for some of the Iona community along with their treasured books and sacred objects (Herbert 1988, 68). It is possible that the Iona shrine-chapel may have been constructed by Irish masons in the 'Roman style' around the same time. It may be compared to Teach Molaise on Inishmurray, Temple Ciarán at Clonmacnoise and three other Irish shrine-chapels (Ó Carragáin, T 2010, 66-80) that appear to be earlier than the congregational stone churches of the western church. Mortar samples from Teach Molaise and Temple Ciarán were radiocarbon dated and provided calibrated two sigma dates of AD 690-980 and AD 660-980 respectively (Berger 1995, 169-71). However, Ó Carragáin (*ibid*) warns that Berger's results should be treated with caution because the documented construction date of one of his sites (the round tower at Clonmacnoise) falls at the extreme end of his measured two sigma range. Hence my suggestion that St Columba's Shrine may date to the tenth century, but if the measured dates for the group of shrine-chapels are statistically valid, a date in the early ninth century comparable to the date of the stone church at Kells is also possible. It is believed that these shrine-chapels were built to house the translated remains of saints, reflecting the tomb of Christ in Jerusalem. Ó Carragáin suggests that Iona may have been where this was first used, and that it may date from the abbacy of Cilléne Droichteah (726-52) (Ó Carragáin 2010, 78).

Barber's excavations in 1979 showed that the vallum of the monastery terminated at the Road of the Dead, which therefore survives with the vallum as a surviving feature from the Columban monastery (Barber 1981a, 292-5), however, no recognizable timber buildings from the early monastery have been excavated, although the arc of postholes referred to above may be from a contemporary roundhouse.

2.4. Timber or stone?

For many years it was presumed that small timber churches preceded and often underlay early stone churches. In many cases they undoubtedly did, but the identification of a timber church from a few postholes is tricky, and seems in some cases to have been almost a self-fulfilling prophecy. It was not uncommon for the early stone church to be fitted with a wooden altar and dividing partitions, and timber roof supports – all of which could produce post holes. Internal wooden scaffolding may have been used during the construction of stone churches, particularly those with fully or partly corbelled roofs. In some cases this may explain the rather imprecise alignment of some rows of postholes discovered under the floor of stone churches.

Thomas, in his seminal work on Christianity in North Britain (Thomas, C 1971), stresses that 'the contention that the chapel series starts with structures in rough wood, hewn timber, or perhaps wattling, is not in dispute'. He describes how the evidence, which is largely literary, was set out by Petrie, Reeves and Leask, and explains that the Early Irish sources constantly refer to wooden chapels. Thomas also finds support for his hypothesis from Bede and other Northumbrian writers who not only confirm the timber-stone progression in Northumberland and in other areas in England, but also indirectly confirm this sequence in Ireland (Thomas, C 1971, 68-9). On the face of it, this sounds like an unequivocal platform on which to base further research, however the situation has changed slightly in recent times. An examination of the annals by Manning (Manning 2000, 37-52) found 154 references to churches from 760 to 1170 AD. He divided his results into two periods centred on 965. He found that in the earlier period (760-965) 51% of the references were to wooden churches and 19% to stone. The remainder of the entries use an ambiguous or a non-understandable word for church. It should be noted however that he found that the locations of the all churches mentioned in the chronicles had a central and eastern distribution, probably because of the availability of chroniclers in these areas (*ibid*, 47).

The accounts in the sources make interesting reading. According to a 12th-century chronicle, St Malachy constructed a timber church at Bangor ‘in the Irish fashion’ (*ibid*, 51). Bede refers more than once to churches of hewn oak thatched with reeds after the Irish manner – in contrast to stone churches built in what he refers to as in the Roman style, and Tírechán twice refers to a church constructed of earth (Kerr 2008, 53). Early antiquarians assumed that the well-known drystone oratory at Gallarus was built during the formative years of Christianity, while in modern times, scholars argue about construction dates for it between the eighth and twelfth centuries (Ó Carragáin, T 2010, 60-1; Harbison 1970, 34). Ó Carragáin (2010, 60-1) notes that in Tírechán’s late seventh-century *Collectanea* there is a reference to a stone church at the ecclesiastical site of Duleek on the east coast. This is the earliest documented reference to a stone church in Ireland. He argues convincingly that it was already long established, and may have been based on the fifth-century stone church at Whithorn in south-west Scotland. According to Ó Carragáin the next mention of a stone church in the Annals occurs in 789. Although the early Romano-British churches in Britain were stone-built and mortared, later, during the fourth and fifth centuries, it became the custom to build in timber (Ó Carragáin, T 2010, 37). In 881, the Annals of Ulster imply that the main church at Duleek was wooden and large (*ibid*, 61), and in some areas, timber was the preferred constructional material for large churches even down to the fifteenth century (*ibid*, 15, 137).

Although, with reference to the traditional timber to stone chronology for early churches, the above documentary information indicates considerable variation in construction material, what it reveals is a geographical variation in early church type.

2.5. Geographical distribution of church constructional techniques in Ireland

Carver argues that one would expect the insular church to have evolved with time after the arrival in Ireland of Christians with a mental blueprint of a recommended design (Carver 2009, 336); however a recent major study of the Irish corpus found that the type of the early medieval churches varies geographically rather than chronologically, with five principal groupings across Ireland (Ó Carragáin, T 2010). Drystone churches are found only along the

west coast - almost exclusively in Kerry and not at all in Ulster. Ó Carragáin attributes this to a general change to building in stone by the Corcu Duibne kindred (2010, 55). Their kingdom included the Dingle and Iveragh peninsulas where most of the drystone chapels are found.

Ann Hamlin recognised the dearth of pre-Romanesque churches of any form in the six counties of (modern) Northern Ireland in the course of her postgraduate research (Kerr 2008, 52-3). This author notes the relatively high density of Domnach place-names in the same area. From c.600 AD, the Old Irish word for a church complex was *cell* – hence the kill or kil place-names in Scotland and Ireland, however the earlier corresponding word was *Domnach*, which probably ceased to be used for new churches after 500 (Charles-Edwards 2000, 184-5). Therefore, one possible suggestion is that in north east Ireland churches were not only constructed in timber until at least the end of the fifth century, but may not have been replaced with stone churches until the Romanesque period.

Carver suggests that the results of Ó Carragáin's research implies 'the contemporary application of architectural ideas by local people, as opposed to, or in addition to, a missionary diffusion of the faith' (Carver 2009, 336-7). This agrees with my own position in the debate about the relative chronology of timber-built and stone-built churches. It appears to me that in regions with a stone building tradition stretching back hundreds or thousands of years, early chapels would have been built in stone – especially along the Atlantic facing coasts of Ireland and Scotland. Exceptions to this convention would be made when larger churches for pastoral or community use, were built with timber. In my opinion, there is a practical stability limit to the size of a rectangular dry-stone building. Not many drystone churches exceed 15 square metres in area, and the limit seems to be about 24 square metres. The four largest recorded drystone chapels on Islay measure 22.38, 22.75, 23.31 and 23.8m² and the largest in Ireland is Killoe at 24 m² (Ó Carragáin 2010, 311). Until the technique of building with mortared stone was mastered, the only option for many community churches was to build in timber. Fewer resources may have been required to construct a large church in wood rather than in stone. The Annals confirm in many instances that some wooden churches were large. For example, that at Trevet, Co. Meath, was burned in 850 AD along with 260 people within it (Manning 2000, 46). A detailed description of the wooden cathedral church at Kildare is found in Cogitosos's life of St Brigit, composed in the late seventh century. This church was relatively large, with many windows, two doors, three

internal chapels, a chancel screen and a longitudinal division to segregate the sexes. Modern reconstruction drawings depict a building of at least 20m in length and 10m in width (Neuman De Vegvar 2003, 153-61).

Carver suggests that the practice of building churches in timber was not chronological in application and compares building in stone to the construction of ritual monuments such as stone circles (Carver 2008, 91). In that context, perhaps timber churches actually post-date stone churches in instances where ritual needs were more relaxed.

2.6. Length to width ratio

Based on the analysis of a small database, largely taken from MacGibbon & Ross (MacGibbon & Ross 1896), Carver proposes that the ratio of length to width (L/W) may be a rudimentary pointer to the date of a church. In this thesis the length to width ratio will be expressed arithmetically as a dimensionless quotient; the ratio is around 1.5 for early churches, and greater for Romanesque (Carver 2008, 91). The writer notes that this was proposed by Leask more than 50 years earlier. When discussing the plans of the early churches, Leask noted:

The most usual proportion is the short oblong; that in which the length within is seldom greater and is in some instances even less than one and a half times the breadth. This proportion, where it occurs, seems to be an indication of early date. In this connexion it is interesting and suggestive that the Brehon Law Tract, already referred to, dealing with the payment to the artificer for the construction of oratories and stone churches, specifically mentions dimensions of 15 feet by 10 feet, precisely the length-breadth proportion of one and a half to one (Leask 1955, 49-50).

He provides evidence from four reputedly early churches: St. Macdara's island with an internal L/W ratio of 1.4 to 1; St. Columb's, Kells and St. Kevin's, Glendalough 1.22 and 1.55 to 1 respectively, and St. Flannan's, Killaloe with the ratio 1.64 to 1. He is satisfied that this progression from shorter to longer in these stone churches conforms well with his proposed relative chronology for them. Leask quotes the frequently cited 'Brehon Law Tract' about the pay of builders for the construction of an oratory 15 feet in length and 10 feet in breadth. This Middle Irish commentary on a law tract was translated in 1845, but a modern study of it does not exist (Ó Carragáin, T 2010, 112, 330 n127).

Hamlin noted the L/W ratio of seven stone churches in the six counties of Northern Ireland. They ranged from 1.33 to 2.29, and although she thought it ‘unwise to draw firm chronological conclusions from these figures alone’, she acknowledged the earlier work of Leask, and suggested that there may be a possibility that later churches have a greater L/W ratio than earlier ones (Kerr 2008, 56).

By consulting MacGibbon and Ross (MacGibbon & Ross 1896), Muir (Muir 1885), Anderson (Anderson, J 1881) and the RCAHMS Argyll inventories (1980, 1984 and 1992), data was compiled to compare the L/W of Scottish churches that are assumed to be very early, with those that are datable with reasonable confidence to a time in the later medieval period. A search through the Argyll inventories and CANMORE reveals that, excluding Islay, there are only five extant drystone chapels in Argyll that are potentially early; all have western entrances.

These are the chapels at:

Achadh na Cille, Ardminish (NR76SW 13);

Lan nan Clach, Kintyre (NR61SE 1);

Crackaig, Mull (NM34NE 2);

Cill Moire, Oronsay (NR38NE 1);

Cill Mhoire, Upper Kilchattan, Colonsay (NR39NE 6).

The small number may be accounted for because of subsequent replacement of the drystone chapels with churches, which continued to be used throughout the medieval period into modern times; some became parish churches. The Early Christian foundation of these later churches is confirmed in most cases by the survival of a collection of early carved stones.

The corbelled oratories on the Flannain Isles and North Rona are assumed to have been established before the Viking Age. Table 2.1 contains the internal dimensions (except where stated), the L/W ratio, a suggested architectural date and the entrance direction for the five Argyll chapels listed above, along with two potentially early sites of an eremitic nature - Teampull Beannachadh (CANMORE: NA74NW 1; Anderson, J 1881, 121-2) and North Rona (CANMORE HW83SW 1; Anderson, J 1881, 113-6), and an intriguing, possibly early, mortared chapel at Nunton, Benbecula (MacGibbon & Ross 1896, 83; CANMORE NF75SE 4). To this corpus are added ten medieval mortared chapels that have been dated

architecturally by RCAHMS on Islay and Mid-Argyll, along with two medieval chapels in Tiree, and Carver's eighth-century stone church from the excavations at Portmahomack:

Keils, Knapdale (RCAHMS 1992, 83-93)

Kilmory Knap, Knapdale (*ibid*, 161-72)

St Columba's Chapel, Cove, Knapdale (*ibid*, 200-1)

St Columba's Shrine, Iona (RCAHMS 1982, 41-2; Ó Carragáin, T 2010, 66-67, fig 69)

Kilmarie, Craginish (*ibid*, 120-7)

Old Parish church, Kirkapoll, Tiree (RCAHMS 1980, 153-6)

Kirkapoll chapel, Tiree (*ibid*, 155-6)

Chapel. Eilean Mór, MacCormac Isles (RCAHMS 1984, 66-74)

Kildalton, Islay (*ibid*, 203-15)

Kilnaughton, Islay (*ibid*, 217)

Kilchiaran, Islay (*ibid*, 194-6)

Kilnave, Islay (*ibid*, 219-23)

Portmahomack Church 1 (Carver 2008, 90)

Internal length to width ratio of selected potentially early and architecturally dated medieval chapels						
No.	Name	Architectural Date	Size int m	L/W	Class	Entrance
1	Kilnaughton, Islay	Late medieval	11.7 x 4.5	2.60	Romaneque	N + S
2	Kildalton, Islay	Late 12 th century	17.3 x 5.7	3.03	Romaneque	N + S
3	Kilchiaran, Islay	Late medieval	14.5 x 5.1	2.84	Romaneque	N
4	Kilnave, Islay	Late medieval	9.2 x 4.3	2.14	Romaneque	W
5	Kilmory Knap, Knapdale	Early 13 th century	11.6 x 5.2	2.23	Romaneque	S
6	Keils, Knapdale	Late 12 th century	10.9 x 4.8	2.27	Romaneque	N
7	St Columba's chapel, Cove, Knapdale	Early 13 th century	11.0 x 5.2	2.12	Romaneque	N + S
8	St Columba's Shrine, Iona	8 th -10 th century	3.2 x 2.15	1.48	Early	W
9	Eilean Mór, MacCormac Isles	c.1200	9.5 x 4.2	2.26	Romaneque	N
10	Kilmarie, Craginish	Early 13 th century	14.5 x 6.1	2.38	Romaneque	S
11	North Rona oratory (corbelled)	7 th -9 th century?	3.5 x 2.3	1.53	Pre-Norse	W
12	Nunton, Benbecula	?	7.6 x 4.9 ext	1.56	Early	W
13	Teampull Beannachadh, Flannain Isles (corbelled)	7 th -9 th century?	2.36 x 1.52	1.55	Pre-Norse	W
14	Achadh na Cille, Ardminish	8 th -10 th century?	5.6 x 4.2	1.33	Early	W
15	Lan nan Clach, Kintyre	8 th -10 th century?	7.5 x 5 ext	1.5	Early	W
16	Crackaig, Mull	8 th -10 th century?	5.2 x 3.2	1.58	Early	W
17	Cill Moire, Oronsay	8 th -10 th century?	5.5 x 3.5	1.57	Early	W
18	Cill Mhoire, Upper Kilchattan, Colonsay	8 th -10 th century?	6.4 x 3.5	1.83	Early	W
19	Kirkapoll, old Parish church, Tiree	14 th century?	11.3 x 5.2	2.17	Romaneque	W
20	Kirkapoll chapel Tiree	14 th century?	7.1 x 3.4	2.10	Romaneque	S
21	Portmahomack 1	8 th century	11.2 x 7.5	1.5	Early	W?

Table 2.1: Internal length to width ratio of selected potentially early and architecturally dated medieval chapels

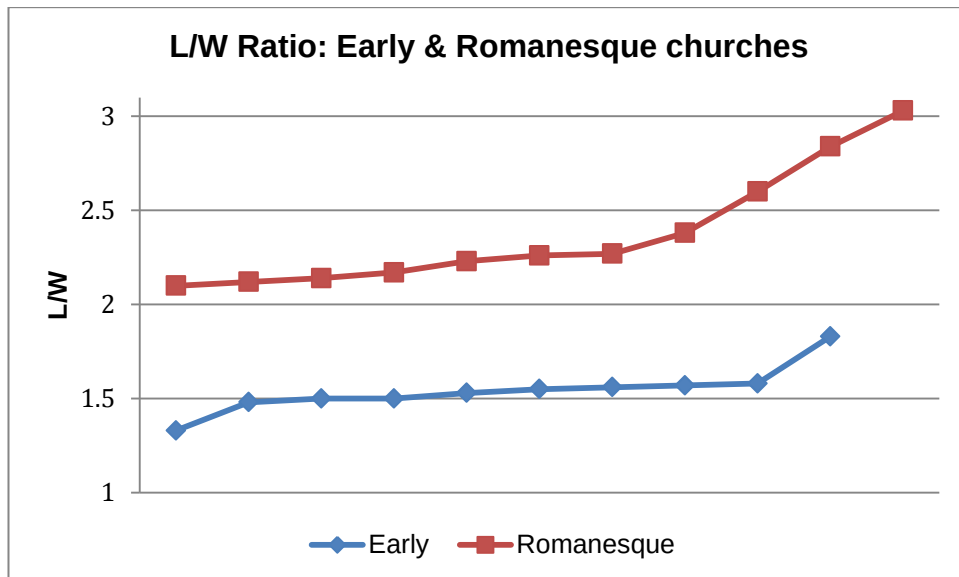


Figure 2.1: Length to width ratio for early and Romanesque churches

Table 2.1 and accompanying Figure 2.1 clearly show that developed Romanesque chapels of the later medieval period consistently have a greater L/W ratio than the drystone chapels or oratories, which are assumed to be earlier. What is also interesting is that a plot of L/W ratio versus western or lateral entrance for the same corpus of chapels produces almost the same results.

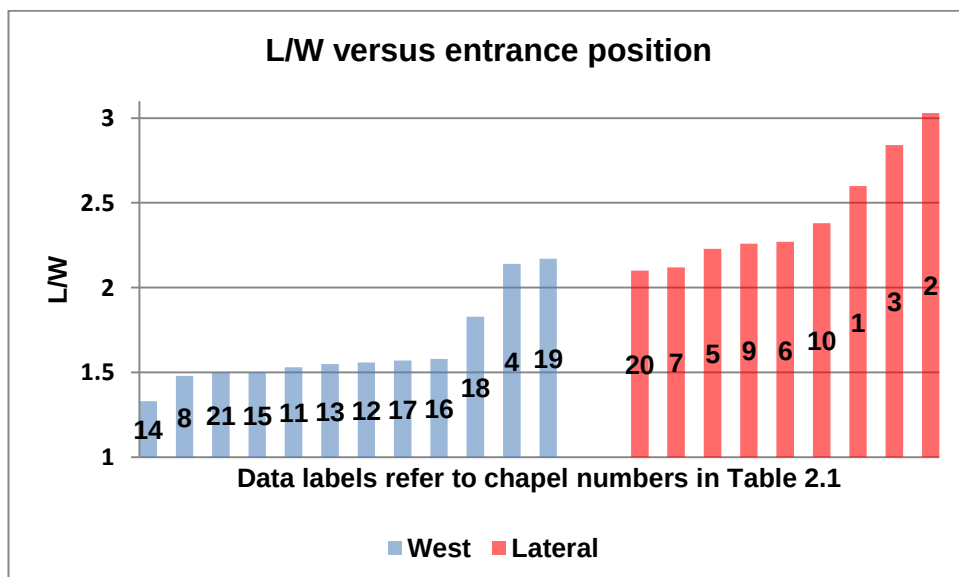


Figure 2.2: Length to width ratio versus entrance position

The two churches (4 & 19) with western entrances and an L/W ratio of greater than 2 on Figure 2.2 are mortared, and of thirteenth or fourteenth century date (Kilnave, Islay and Kirkapoll, Tiree). Western entrances are less common in mortared medieval churches than in their drystone predecessors. We shall return to this topic shortly (Section 3.4).

2.7. The drystone church in Ireland and Argyll

The recent research by Ó Carráigan on the pre-Reformation church in Ireland considerably advances our understanding of the insular church (Ó Carragáin, T 2010). Although he focusses mainly on mortared stone churches, he stresses that according to the annals only a small percentage of churches were built in stone before c.900. It may have remained thus until c.1200, and in some areas mortared-stone churches may not have been common until 1500 (Ó Carráigan, 2010, 15). Closer to home, we know from Bede's time that churches in Northumbria were constructed from both timber and stone; the former described as the Irish method of construction and the latter as the Roman (*ibid* 15). The excavations at Whithorn revealed that coexisting eighth and ninth-century Northumbrian churches were individually constructed of stone, timber or clay (Hill 1997, 44-6). In spite of recent analysis of documentary evidence which shows that timber churches were more common than assumed hitherto, they remain elusive, and a challenge to identify during excavations of early church sites. In Ireland, evidence has been found for churches constructed of turf (White Marshall, J & Walsh 2005, 23-7). Rectangular groupings of postholes at Irish sites such as Church Island, Caherlehillan, and Reask are suggestive of post-and-wattle churches (Ó Carragáin, T 2010, 17). Not all lie under stone replacements. Stone church 1 at Portmahomack is believed to date from the seventh or eighth century. There was no timber predecessor (Carver 2008, 49, 90). The implication is that Church 1, which, because of its size, must have been mortared, was built soon after the Anglo-Saxon churches at Monkwearmouth and Jarrow were constructed with mortared stone in 674 and c.681AD (Lambert 2010, 255-6).

It is not possible to define a general model for the architectural development of the early Church in North Britain (and Ireland). The 'timber replaced by stone sequence' should be used with caution.

Initial survey for this research suggested there were 44 drystone chapels in Argyll that were either measurable or had been measured in modern times; half of these were located on Islay.

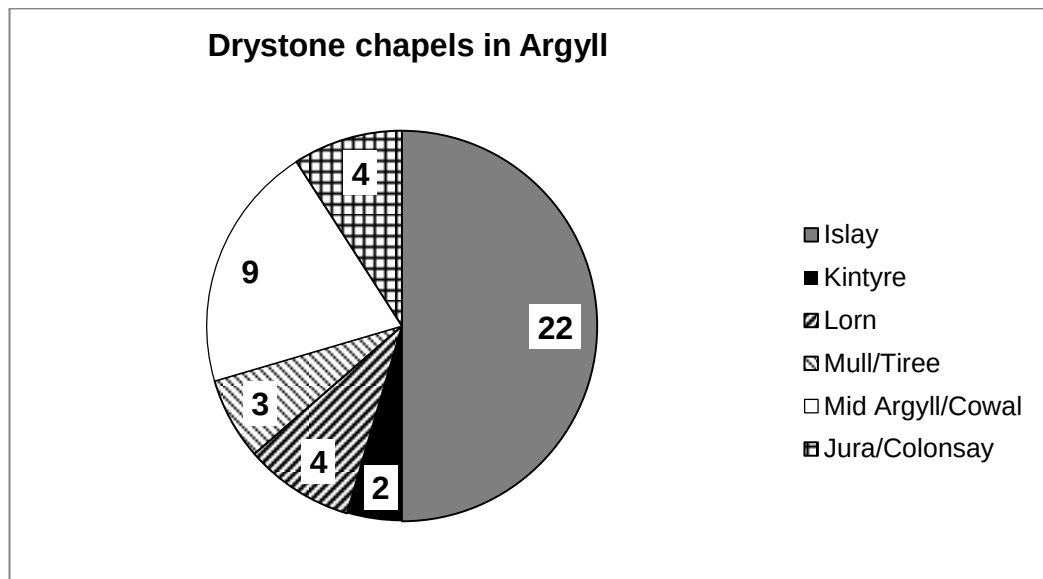


Figure 2.3: Number of drystone chapels with known dimensions in Argyll

The author was therefore surprised to discover that in Ireland, according to Ó Carragáin, there are only 36 drystone churches, of which 31 are in the south-west - on the Inveragh peninsula and at the western end of the Dingle peninsula, which jointly formed the early medieval kingdom of Corcu Duibne. His five others have a west coastal distribution in Co. Cork, Co. Clare and Co. Mayo (Ó Carragáin, T 2010, 52).

Consideration of drystone churches only fills a few pages in Ó Carragáin's book (*ibid*, 49-55). It is unclear from his text how many of his 36 drystone churches are corbelled. Consequently, the writer used Ó Carragáin's site descriptions from his list of pre-Romanesque Irish churches (*ibid*, 305-15), to create a list of corbelled and non-corbelled drystone chapels. Ambiguous entries were verified with data from Rourke and Marshall (Rourke & White Marshall 2005, 108-9), and with the regional archaeological surveys of the Dingle and Iveragh peninsulas (O'Sullivan, A & Sheehan 1996; Cuppage 1986). In all cases measurements are taken from the lastmentioned source. My results suggest that out of 37 Irish drystone churches, 18, or 48%, are corbelled.

The paucity of excavated chapels in Argyll is matched in Ireland, where between 1930 and 2004, only eight drystone oratories have been excavated (O'Sullivan, A et al 2008, 132). It appears that from these excavations there is only one directly related (but unpublished) radiocarbon date and that is from Croagh Patrick, Co Mayo, a drystone church, where charcoal from a context inside the church produced a date of 430-890 AD (O'Sullivan, A et al 2008, 132). Excavations suggest an eighth century date for the dry stone oratory at Illaunloughan on the basis of the stratigraphy of related and dated burials, rather than direct dating evidence (White Marshall, J & Walsh 2005, 37, 227, n34). The recent unpublished re-excavation of Church Island, Co. Kerry, by Hayden provides radiocarbon dating evidence from a burial associated with the turf-built predecessor of the drystone oratory that suggests the turf oratory continued in use from the seventh/eighth century to the tenth/eleventh (Ó Carragáin, T 2010, 17, 51, 318 n22, 321 n9). This also suggests that its stone replacement, once thought to date from the eighth century by the original excavator (O'Kelly 1958, 128), may now date from the eleventh.

2.8. Irish Drystone pre-Romanesque churches

There are 37 drystone churches in Ireland with ground plan dimensions, of which 18 display evidence for corbelling. These are listed in Table 2.2. The mean L/W ratio for the 37 churches is 1.39 with a range varying between 1.086 and 1.90 (Table 2.3).

Name	L	W	Area m ²	L/W	Construction
Killabuonia main	3.8	3.5	13.30	1.09	Corbelled
Illautannig small	2.45	2.2	5.39	1.11	Non-corbelled
Inishtooskert	3.4	2.94	10.00	1.16	Non-corbelled
Templecashel	3.75	3.2	12.00	1.17	Corbelled
Reencaheragh	2.7	2.3	6.21	1.17	Non-corbelled
Kilfountan	3.75	3.15	11.81	1.19	Non-corbelled
Feaghmann West	2.75	2.3	6.33	1.20	Non-corbelled
Skellig Michael	2.55	2.1	5.36	1.21	Corbelled
Cloghanelinaghan	5.2	4.2	21.84	1.24	Corbelled
Killabuonia subsidiary	3.52	2.8	9.86	1.26	Non-corbelled
Inishvickillane	3.96	3.08	12.20	1.29	Non-corbelled
Croagh	3.9	3.02	11.78	1.29	Non-corbelled
Temple Geal	4.4	3.35	14.74	1.31	Non-corbelled
Skellig Michael	2.45	1.85	4.53	1.32	Corbelled
Kildreelig	3.05	2.27	6.92	1.34	Corbelled

Name	L	W	Area m ²	L/W	Construction
Lateevemore	4.55	3.35	15.24	1.36	Non-corbelled
Loher	3.11	2.26	7.03	1.38	Non-corbelled
Killeenamunterlane	4	2.9	11.60	1.38	Non-corbelled
Ballywiheen	3.6	2.6	9.36	1.38	Corbelled
Killelton	4.91	3.49	17.14	1.41	Non-corbelled
Inisglora	3.6	2.55	9.18	1.41	Non-corbelled
Cappanagroun	4.6	3.2	14.72	1.44	Corbelled
Illautannig large	4.25	2.95	12.54	1.44	Non-corbelled
Duvillaun	3.9	2.7	10.53	1.44	Non-corbelled
Illauloughan	3.2	2.2	7.04	1.45	Corbelled
Killemlagh	5.1	3.5	17.85	1.46	Non-corbelled
Gallarus	4.65	3.15	14.65	1.48	Corbelled
Bishop's Is	3.66	2.46	9.00	1.49	Corbelled
Skellig Michael	3.65	2.45	8.94	1.49	Corbelled
Kilkeaveragh	3.6	2.4	8.64	1.50	Corbelled
Killoe	6	4	24.00	1.50	Non-corbelled
Reask	3.5	2.33	8.16	1.50	Corbelled
Church Is	5.72	3.77	21.56	1.52	Corbelled
Croagh Patrick	5.57	3.5	19.50	1.59	Corbelled
Beginish	4.6	2.7	12.42	1.70	Corbelled
Shronahiree More	5.5	3.2	17.60	1.72	Non-corbelled
Kilmalkedar	5.33	2.8	14.92	1.90	Corbelled

Table 2.2: Irish drystone pre-Romanesque churches

All Irish drystone	
Mean	1.39
Standard Error	0.03
Median	1.38
Mode	1.5
Range	0.81
Minimum	1.09
Maximum	1.90
Count	37

Table 2.3: Descriptive statistics for Irish drystone churches

Figure 2.4 shows plots of the L/W ratio for these churches and Figure 2.5 displays the L/W ratio for drystone and corbelled examples separately. Figure 2.6 is a histogram of the L/W values for all 37 churches. It shows the number of incidences of L/W ratio that occur in the

data set in discrete intervals (buckets) of L/W of 0.025. It also shows a possible bimodal distribution of L/W with peaks at 1.5 and 1.175.

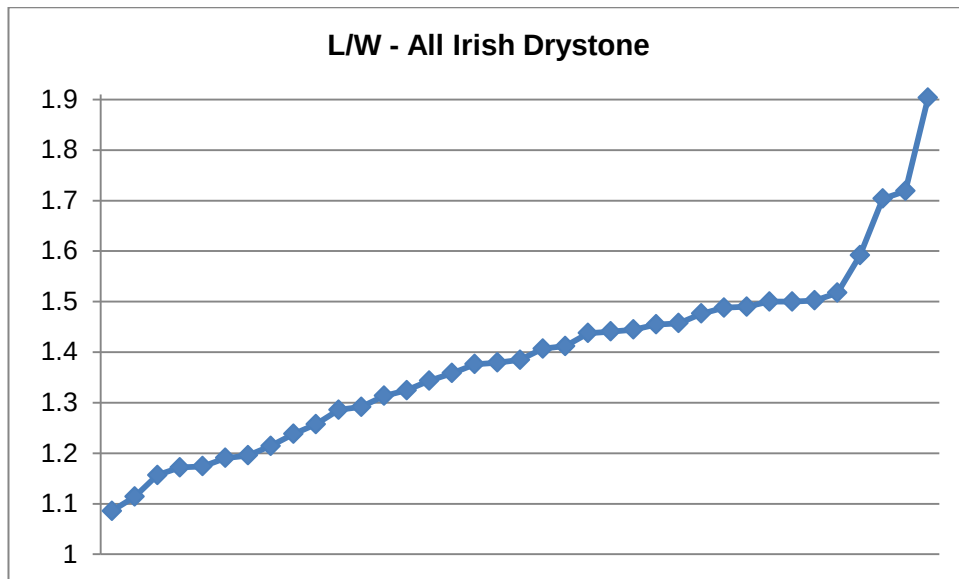


Figure 2.4: Length to width ratio for 37 selected Irish drystone churches

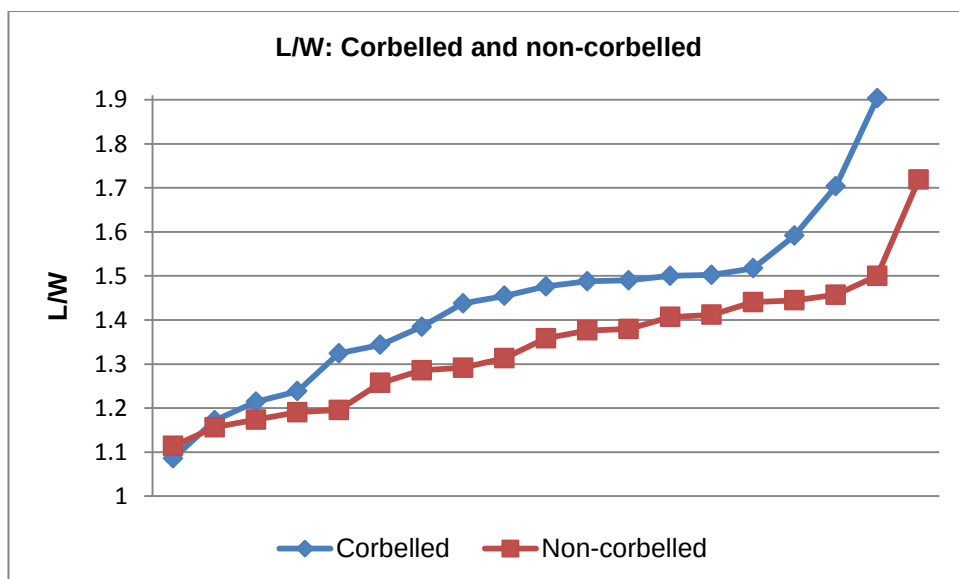


Figure 2.5: L/W ratio for drystone and corbelled examples

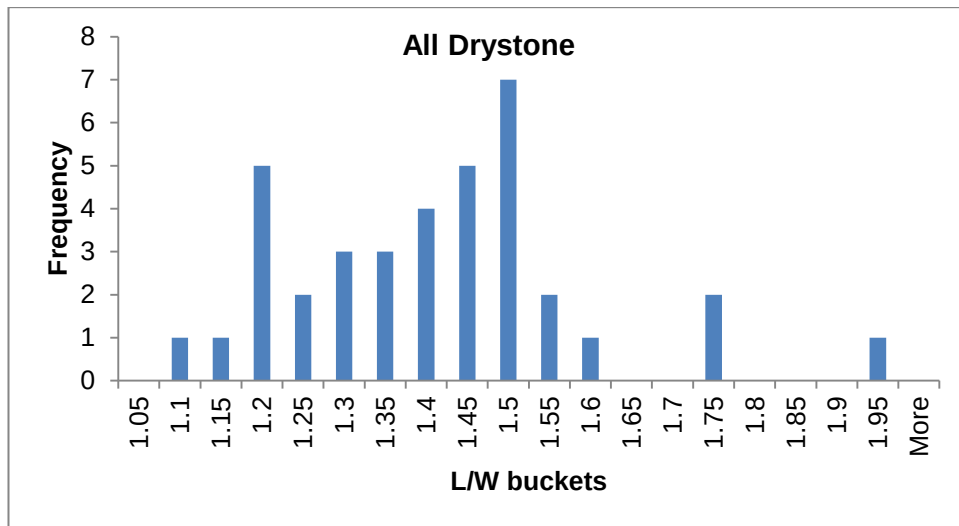


Figure 2.6: L/W ratio histogram for 37 drystone churches of known dimensions

The majority of drystone churches have an L/W ratio of less than 1.5, and there seems to have been an attempt to construct almost half of the corpus close to an L/W value of 1.5. Figure 2.4 also suggests that 4 of the 37 churches in the data set skew the distribution of L/W ratio; 3 are corbelled with L/W ratios of 1.6 (Croagh Patrick), 1.7 (Beginish) , and 1.9 (St Brendan's oratory, Kilmalkedar); 1 is drystone with an L/W ratio of 1.72 (Shronahiree More). These 4 churches also appear as outliers on the histogram in Figure 2.6. The writer decided to re-examine the original source data, to ensure that his analysis of the range of L/W ratio for corbelled chapels was not biased by unreliable data.

The condition of Beginish is poor with tumble concealing much of the outline of the site (O'Sullivan, A & Sheehan 1996, 261). Likewise, only the footings of the church at Shronahiree More survive; the published plan shows an irregular rectilinear outline (*ibid*, 311-2), and Ó Carragáin only describes it as a probable drystone church (Ó Carragáin, T 2010, 314). The oratory on the summit of Croagh Patrick was excavated by Walsh (G) in 1994 and has not been fully published; the EMAP Report 2.1 (O'Sullivan, A et al 2008, 131-2) reports that the oratory was of the 'Gallarus type' which was radiocarbon dated to 430-890 AD . Croagh Patrick is ignored by Rourke & Marshall in the discussion of their chronological model for drystone oratories (*infra*, 35-7); they clearly state that none of these (Gallarus type) structures has been dated. There is a valid justification for excluding sites with insecure data; Figure 2.7 shows the results for L/W ratio without Croagh Patrick, Beginish, and Shronahiree More in the data set. St Brendan's Kilmalkedar remains for some

unknown reason anomalous compared with other Gallarus-type oratories, but the site survival state is excellent and the measurements appear correct.

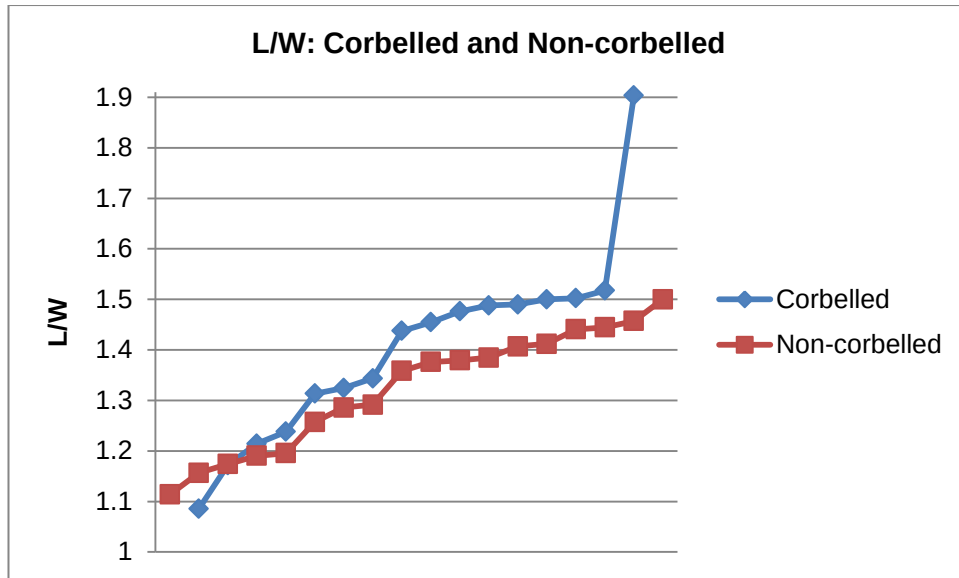


Figure 2.7: Data excluding sites with insecure data

The one remaining anomalous site is also visible in Figure 2.8, which is the distribution of L/W ratio values for the corbelled sites. Figure 2.9 shows the equivalent distribution for the non-corbelled sites.

Although, the main interest is the distribution of L/W ratio for the data set of all Irish drystone churches, the results reveal a difference between the pattern of L/W ratio for corbelled examples and the non-corbelled group. Figure 2.8 shows that the L/W ratios of half of the churches in the corbelled set fall within about five percent of the significant ratio of 1.5 (*supra*, 20-1). For the non-corbelled examples, about half have an L/W ratio between 1.35 and 1.5.

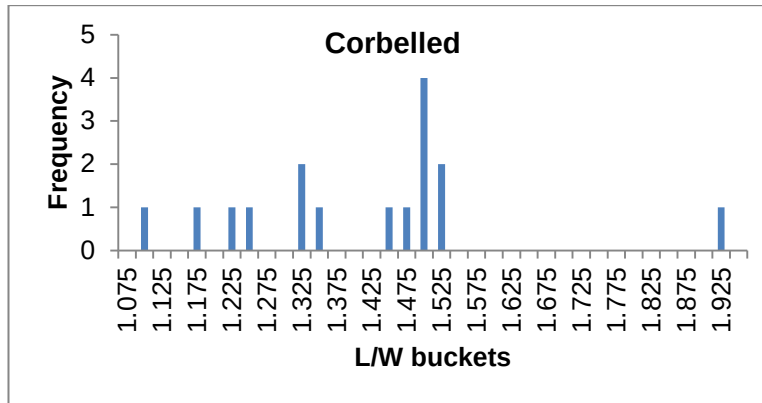


Figure 2.8: Length to width ratio for corbelled sites with secure data

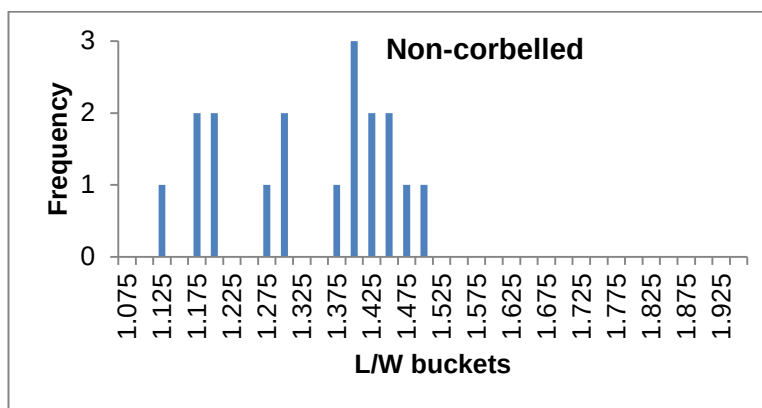


Figure 2.9: L/W ratio for non-corbelled sites with secure data

L/W Corbelled		L/W Non-corbelled	
Mean	1.404	Mean	1.324
Standard Error	0.047	Standard Error	0.028
Median	1.446	Median	1.367
Standard Deviation	0.190	Standard Deviation	0.118
Range	0.818	Range	0.386
Minimum	1.086	Minimum	1.114
Maximum	1.904	Maximum	1.5
Count	16	Count	18

Figure 2.10: Descriptive statistics for corbelled and non-corbelled chapels

The analysis of the Irish data suggests that the pattern of variation in the range of L/W ratio for corbelled and non-corbelled churches is different. Half of the corbelled chapels in this data set may have been constructed intentionally with an L/W ratio of 1.5, whereas the non-

corbelled examples all have an L/W ratio of 1.5 or less, with almost half within 3.5% of a ratio of 1.4. This suggests that the additional structural stability obtained with corbelling facilitated the construction of a more rectangular structure than was possible with the non-corbelled form.

2.8.1. A chronological model for the corbelled drystone oratories of western Kerry

The corbelled drystone chapel is almost exclusively found in peninsular Kerry. Evidence for corbelling in the Islay chapels will be discussed later (Section 10.2.1). Corbelled oratories are found on the island of North Rona (CANMORE HW83SW 1, HW 8091 3231), possibly on nearby Sula Sgeir (CANMORE HW63SW 1; HW 6212 3058) - about 20 km north of Lewis, and on the Flannain Islands (CANMORE: NA74NW 1) . In contrast to the non-corbelled oratories or chapels, these exceptions are undoubtedly ‘deserts in the ocean’ founded by voyaging monks between the sixth and eighth centuries (see Follet 2007; Wooding 2009; Tipp & Wooding 2010). The corbelled oratory is widely referred to as the Gallarus type, after the eponymous site on the Dingle Peninsula. The building technique is similar to that used to construct domestic beehive cells or *clochauns*, although the oratories have a rectangular footprint and the cells are circular. Drystone corbelled roof vaulting is found in Ireland, Scotland and Europe in the Neolithic period where it was used, for example, in the construction of chambered cairns at Newgrange, Boyne Valley and Maeshowe, Orkney. However, it was not until about three thousand years later, in the first millennium AD that drystone corbelled buildings appear on a smaller scale in the vernacular architecture in Ireland.



Figure 2.11: The oratory at Gallarus, Co. Kerry

Their distribution is along the west coast, particularly in western Co. Kerry, where they are often associated with secular and ecclesiastical settlements (White Marshall, J & Walsh 2005, 103-5). In Argyll, the *clochaun* or beehive building is found within a number of prehistoric forts, although the writer is unaware of any evidence for their dating. For example, in an uncatalogued photo album from 1954, in the Marion Campbell archive in Kilmartin Museum, a photo depicts an intact corbelled beehive building of unknown date, and the remains of others, inside the dùn at Tur a'Bhodaich above the head of Loch Craginish, Argyll (RCAHMS 1988, 197). Small corbelled structures of unknown date are found on Islay inside the fort complex at Beinn a'Chaistel (RCAHMS 1984, 77-81).

In contrast to the south-west of Ireland where few buildings of stone construction are found in the Bronze Age, (Rourke and Marshall, 103-5), stone hut-circles of that period and also the late Iron Age have been excavated on Islay (Ritchie, J N G & Welfare 1983, 317-22). This, coupled with the long tradition of the drystone construction of Iron Age forts, settlements, hut-circles and Atlantic roundhouses (Henderson 2007) suggests to the author

that stone may have been the natural choice of material for the construction of early Islay churches, rather than wood or turf, which was traditionally employed in domestic buildings of the period in western Ireland. An analysis of the form of construction of excavated Early Medieval rural buildings in Ireland in the EMAP Report 2.1, shows that 286 were constructed from wood, commonly post and wattle, in contrast to 80 in stone (O'Sullivan, A et al 2008, 109-10, fig. 3.8). The geographical distribution of the two forms is not available in O'Sullivan's report. Lynn (Lynn 1994, 85) concludes that roundhouses were the most common form of building in the earlier (i.e. AD 400-800) phase of the Early Medieval period before rectilinear buildings became more significant during the tenth century AD. The early roundhouses were mainly constructed from wicker or post and wattle (*ibid*, 85). Lynn found that from 105 excavated rectangular Early Medieval houses 39 had stone walls and a further 23 were delimited by boulders, suggesting that 37-60% had a substantial stone content; but only 14 unambiguously excavated Early Medieval roundhouses out of 104 were constructed from stone (*ibid*, 87). The reason for the change in architectural style from round to rectangular construction is not clear; influences from the Irish church, from Anglo-Saxon England, and the Vikings have been suggested (O'Sullivan, A et al 2008, 115-6).

A typology has been published (Rourke & White Marshall 2005, 112-21) for the Irish corbelled drystone churches along with an associated chronological model, which suggests a construction range from the seventh to the eleventh century. It has long been assumed that the corbelled churches developed from the traditional circular cell (Leask 1955, 18). For liturgical reasons churches were required to be rectangular and, according to Rourke and White Marshall (2005, 112-4) the earliest corbelled churches developed internal rounded corners with increasing wall height because of a compulsion to return to rounded construction. Internally the structure became oval towards the apex, but externally it was rounded. They suggest that the earliest form of the oratories resulted from an attempt to construct a rectangular drystone structure while trying to follow traditional building techniques. As a result, the earliest structures have rounded eastern corners down to ground level (Figure 2.12). The oratory at Illaunloughan is an example. They speculate that the vaulted roof would have been constructed above a wall offset or plinth.

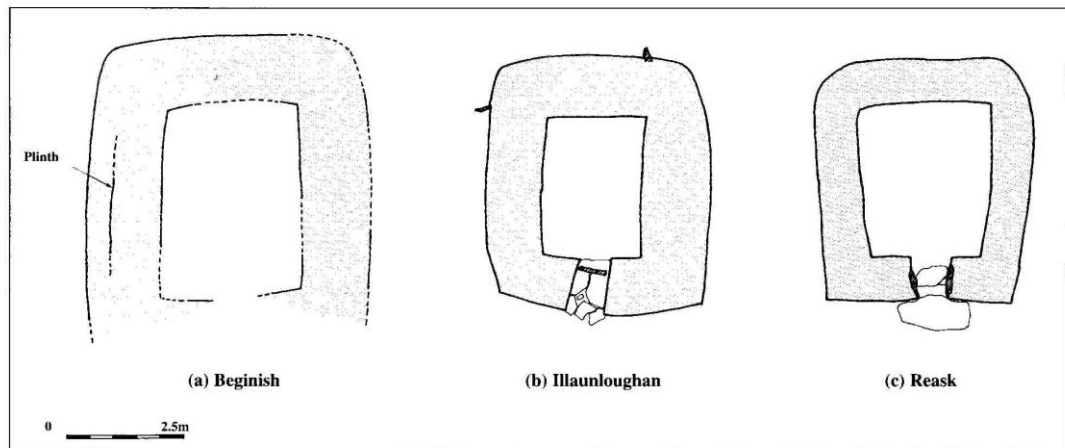


Figure 2.12: Examples of the ground-plans of Irish oratories (Rourke & White Marshall 2005)

The next phase of the model demonstrates a fully rectangular footprint rising to a height of c.2m, above which the corners become rounded (approximately 1m below the capstones), for example, the large oratory on Skellig Michael fits this arrangement. With experience, the rectangular form was continued up to the apex by employing thinner walling rising from a lower plinth. The internal and external corners are articulated to full height. An example is the Small Oratory on Skellig Michael.

The final phase in the development is represented by the Gallarus form of oratory (Figure 2.11). The vault is constructed with great skill externally from ground level without any offsets and the wall rises to a well-defined ridge. This form is the most architecturally advanced and its implementation required considerable knowledge of materials and structural engineering.

This model remains speculative and it is yet to be supported by direct scientific dating, however burials closely associated with the oratory at Illaunloughan, Co. Kerry, suggest that it may date from the eighth century. Rourke and White Marshall, suggest that the first corbelled oratories may have been constructed in the seventh century. They appear to contradict themselves by suggesting that ‘there is not a huge leap developmentally to (the) Gallarus Oratory’ – having stressed how technically advanced it was – and suggest that this form may be no later than the tenth or early eleventh century (*ibid*, 121).

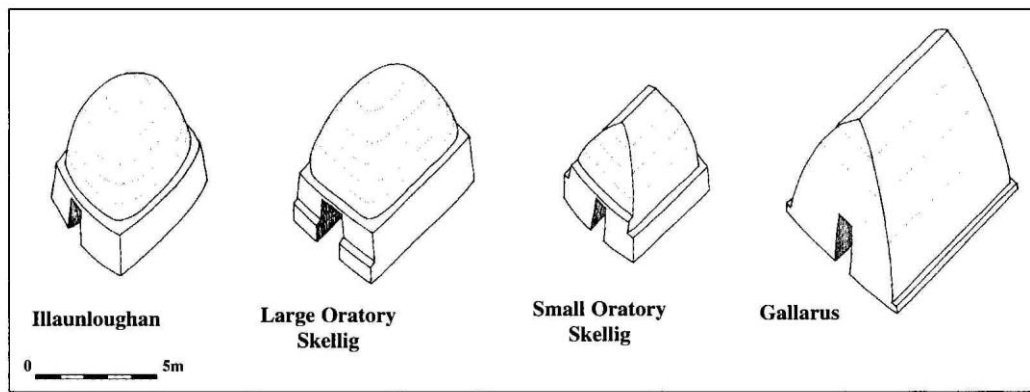


Figure 2.13: Typology for corbelled oratories (adapted from Rourke & White Marshall 2005)

This model remains speculative until firmly dated, and for this thesis it is fortunate that the most reliable dating available is for the earliest phase. It is the date range for Irish drystone chapels/oratories and their distribution that is of relevance in my study of the Islay chapels.

2.9. Conclusion

One would expect the insular church to have developed chronologically after the arrival in Ireland of Christians with a mental blueprint of a prototype design. However, the development of the church building was not always a missionary diffusion of the faith, but the application of local architectural styles using local traditional materials. Ó Carragáin's study of the Irish corpus demonstrated that the form of the early medieval church varied geographically rather than chronologically, with five principal groupings across Ireland. This geographical variation in early church type suggests that the traditional timber followed by stone chronology model should be used with caution or abandoned. The implication for Islay is that timber may not have been used for early chapels on Islay, where there was considerable experience in construction in stone, for example the complex Atlantic roundhouses (galleried dùn) found in the Rhinns, and one recorded broch (Dùn Bhoraraig; RCAHMS 1984, 101-2). There are probably two more brochs; Dùn Chroisprig (RCAHMS 1984, 113-4) and the dùn at Struthan na Cille (NR 3787 4578).

It has been shown that the L/W ratios of a selection of Scottish drystone chapels or oratories that are expected to be early are less than those which are known to be Romanesque. This is

potentially a powerful tool. An underlying inference is that small chapels are generally earlier than large ones; this is a structural issue associated with the problem of constructing a long rectangular building in drystone without regular internal dividing walls or buttresses.

Published data on drystone churches in Ireland has been analysed. The majority have an L/W ratio of less than 1.5 with a mean of 1.39. If unreliable data and the one remaining anomalous corbelled church are removed, the mean L/W ratio for all Irish drystone is 1.34 with a standard deviation of 0.13, and the mean L/W ratio for the corbelled group is 1.375 with a standard deviation of 0.14. My analysis suggests that there may have been an attempt to construct the corbelled Irish oratories with an internal L/W ratio of 1.5.

Rourke and White Marshall's typology for the Irish corbelled drystone churches was introduced along with an associated chronological model, which suggests a construction range from the seventh to the eleventh century. The writer does not wish to imply that the drystone chapels on Islay were constructed in the style of the Co. Kerry oratories; however, in some cases a local style of corbelled roof construction may have been used.

Chapter 3: The Islay Drystone Chapels

3.1 Introduction

The group of drystone chapels on Islay that have been surveyed and described in modern times, primarily in the late 1970s by the RCAHMS and the OS, are introduced and analysed in this chapter, and possible Early Christian examples identified. Since the 1970s, there has been a change in animal husbandry, grazing practises and mechanisation. The use of quad-bikes and tracked vehicles to reach outlying parts of estates has reduced the need to maintain drainage systems and trackways. Many chapels are now very overgrown – often with scrub willow - and the author has been unable to get to one (Ardilistry) because of impenetrable thickets of scrub woodland. The local farmer who lives a few hundred metres from the site had no knowledge of its existence. Other chapels are invisible from ten metres away.



Figure 3.1: The chapel at Gleann Na Gaoidh in May 2009



Figure 3.2: The chapel at Gleann Na Gaidh in c. 1975 (photo © RCAHMS)

As an example of local environmental change, Figure 3.1 (2009) and Figure 3.2 (c.1975) of the chapel at Gleann na Gaidh should be compared. In the latter case, it was assumed that the undergrowth had been cleared for field survey, however a photo taken in the mid-80s, is also relatively clear of undergrowth (Swift 1987, plate IV), confirming that the deterioration is due to changes in grazing. Figure 3.3 shows the chapel of Cilleach Mhicheil, Carn – the enclosure is central in the photo immediately above the muddy track, with the chapel within it.



Figure 3.3: Chapel Cilleach Mhicheil, Carn in 2009 (centre, within burial ground)



Figure 3.4: Cilleach Mhicheil in 2005

Figure 3.4 shows the same chapel and enclosure taken a few years earlier. The task of evaluating the chapel architecturally – whether constructed from rubble or squared stone, the existence of an altar or aumbry, for example – is almost impossible, particularly as many sites accumulate increasing amounts of field clearance boulders. Therefore, for most sites, the author is dependent on the descriptions and surveys of the OS and RCAHMS investigators (both authorities were consulted). In addition, the fieldwork carried out by Swift in the late 1980s for her research project, has proved most helpful to this researcher (Swift 1987).



Figure 3.5: Balulive, Cill Eileagain; chapel within burial ground

Where chapels are situated on managed farmland and grazed by sheep and cattle, they are easy to locate, but the walls of the burial enclosure and chapel are usually grass-grown. For example, Figure 3.5 shows Cill Eileagain, Balulive.

3.2 Selection of chapels for analysis

The ‘undeveloped cemetery’ as defined by Thomas (Thomas, C 1971, 51) - ‘enclosed cemeteries which were not subsequently elaborated with anything more than the odd cross-incised slab or pillar’ form a category which this writer finds difficult to relate to in the field. Without excavation, the confirmation of the original presence of a chapel in what now appears to be just another example of an enclosed burial ground is fraught with difficulties. The interchangeable toponyms *cill* and *cladh*, which, on Islay, may both mean ‘churchyard’ or ‘burying ground’ do not help with the task of selecting sites for fieldwork and analysis

(M'Alpine 1833). A provisional list of chapels was compiled by searching key sources of records and texts for evidence of drystone building remains within a burial ground.

Sources

The major sources of local history were consulted (MacNeill, J G 1899; Graham 1895; Maceacharna 1976; Storrie 1997; Ramsay, F 1991; Ramsay, L 1890; Smith, G G 1895; Lamont 1966; Lamont 1972). The NMRS was searched for records of the identification of drystone building remains within a burial ground on Islay by the RCAHMS or Ordnance Survey field investigators from the survey of Argyll in the 1970s, (RCAHMS 1984; CANMORE). The typescript survey produced by the (London-based) Islay Archaeological Survey Group in the mid-twentieth century was carefully examined (Celoria 1960). The Islay Cultural Database (ICD) of the Finlaggan Trust was searched; the place-name database contains transcripts from the OS ONB for many entries, and Swifts's 1987 thesis (*supra*, 5) was used as a cross-reference.

Although the writer referred to local sources not consulted by the RCAHMS, the list of 27 chapels derived from his literature survey was identical with the combined listing of sites classified as 'possible chapels' and 'chapels' in the NMRS. This reveals that the literature survey carried out for the Islay inventory (1984) by RCAHMS was thorough and complete.

The initial list comprises twenty seven possible chapels which are numbered in Table 3.1. The allocated number is used as a site locator on the map in Figure 3.6.

MAP	CANMORE	NAME	NGRE	NGRN	L m	W m	Area	L/W	Visit
1	NR34SW 4	Cill Choman	3147	4115	6.3	3.1	19.5	2.03	X
2	NR46NW 11	Loch Lossit	4118	6526					X
3	NR46NW 3	Kilsleven	4218	6733	6.3	3.7	23.3	1.70	X
4	NR25SW 1	Gleann na Gaidh	2116	5361	5	2.9	14.5	1.72	X
5	NR25NE 1	Laggan	2942	5588	7.46	3	22.4	2.49	X
6	NR46NW 4	Balulive, Cill Eileagain	4031	6948	5.5	3	16.5	1.83	X
7	NR26SE 1	Bruichladdich	2677	6147	4.2	2.5	10.5	1.68	X
8	NR36NE 1	Duisker 1	3662	6643	6.5	3.5	22.8	1.86	X
9	NR36NE 2	Duisker 2	3602	6678	3.6	2.8	10.1	1.29	X
10	NR25NW 33	Nereabolls 2	2273	5540	4.4	2.7	11.9	1.63	X
11	NR24NE 1	Tockmal	2993	4735	5.6	3.2	17.9	1.75	X
12	NR45SE 1	Cill a'Chubein	4537	5282	6	3	18	2.00	X
13	NR24SE 1	Cill Eathain	2799	4337	5	3.5	17.5	1.43	X
14	NR34NE 1	Cill Tobar Lasrach	3736	4579	7	3.4	23.8	2.06	X
15	NR36SE6	Kilbraenan	3740	6236	5.4	3	16.2	1.80	
16	NR36SE 8	Ballitarsin	3520	6070					X
17	NR37SW 1	Cill an Ailein	3151	7230					X
18	NR44NW 1	Ardilistry	4476	4852	5.5	3	16.5	1.83	
19	NR35NE 2	Kilennan	3733	5737					
20	NR25NW 2	Cilleach Mhicheil	2409	5666	3.75	2.25	8.44	1.67	X
21	NR26NE 2	Craigens, Cill Eileagain	2987	6693	5.5	2.7	14.9	2.04	
22	NR34NE 14	Laphroaig	3798	4547					X
23	NR35SW 3	Cnoc Grianail	3312	5262					X
24	NR36SW 13	Tayandock	3100	6341					X
25	NR25NW 21	Craigfad	2315	5550					X
26	NR34NE 6	Kilbride	3844	4648	9.14	3.66	47.94	2.17	X
27	NR15SE 7	Cladh Eilister	1869	5240	10.5	4.5	47.3	2.33	X

Table 3.1: The initial list of 27 possible chapels

The Early Christian carved stones recorded from Islay are tabled in Table 3.2. Where carved stones are known to be associated with a drystone chapel site they are indexed in the table with the appropriate chapel number from Table 3.1. Stones recorded from the site of the later medieval mortared churches on Islay are numbered 28 to 32. Numbers 33 to 35 are stray finds.

MAP	CANMORE	NAME	NGRE	NGRN
4	NR25SW 1.01	Glean na Gaoidh, cross-slab; local stone	2116	5361
5	NR25NE 1	Laggan, incised outline ringed cross	2942	5588
6	NR46NW 4	Balulive, Cill Eileagain; incised ribbon cross with plaited centre	4031	6948
26	NR34NE 6	Kilbride, Latin cross within circular frame	3844	4648
28	NR15SE 1	Orsay Island; cross on tomb; stones at Gleann na Gaoidh removed from Orsay	16404	51679
29	NR27NE 1	Nave Island; cross arm fragment, c.f. Kilnave cross	29201	75873
30	NR45SW 3	Kildalton, Great Cross	45802	50830
31	NR27SE 1	Kilnave Great Cross	28513	71519
32	NR26SW 1	Kilchoman 1; cross-slab Latin cross, superimposed linear cross	2197	6314
32	NR26SW 9	Kilchoman 2, Disc headed slab	2135	6301
33	NR34NE 18	Port Ellen, Doid Mhairi; cross-slab, 'Ringerike' style	357	458
34	NR45SE 19	Trudernish, stray find, cross-incised stone	4609	5252
35	NR34NE 4	Brahunisary, Cnoc na Cille burial ground, equal-armed cross c.f. Kilbride	3780	4625

Table 3.2: The Early Christian carved stones recorded from Islay

Figure 3.6 is a location map of these drystone chapel sites and Early Christian carved stones. It represents the distribution of ecclesiastical sites on Islay in the first millennium as understood at the start of my research. The twenty four burial grounds, and sites of possible burial grounds, of unknown date on Islay are not included in my research.

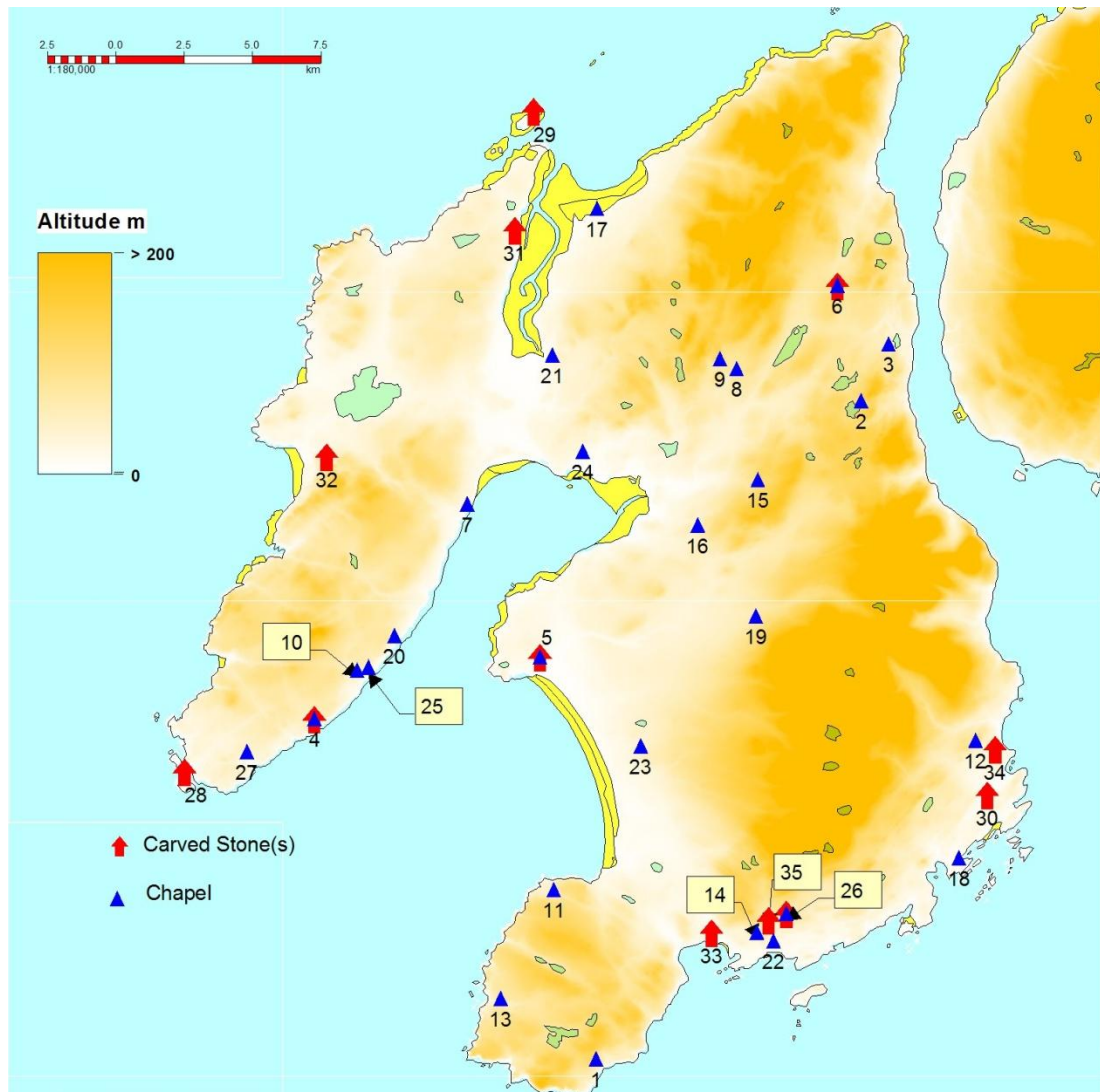


Figure 3.6: Location map of the sites of the selected drystone chapels and carved stones

3.3 The 27 chapels

Although many chapels listed in Table 3.1 were inspected and surveyed by the RCAHMS and the OS, the evidence for the identification of some sites in the NMRS as chapels came from unreliable or confused local information. Consequently, as many as possible of the 27 sites were visited during a programme of fieldwork in order to select the chapels for analysis; sites that have been visited are annotated with an 'X' in Table 3.1. Four sites have not been visited, of which one (Ardilistry) is surrounded by an impenetrable thicket of scrub-woodland. Visits were made to Islay in late May or early June in 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, and 2010, and in April 2012. Some chapels (Kilennan and Lossit) have been lost since they were described by the OS in 1878, and one (Laggan) has been washed away by the river. As

a result of fieldwork six sites were rejected (Cill an Ailein (Loch Gruinart), Ballitarsin, Laphroaig, Cnoc Grianail, Tayandock and Craigfad), and two (Kilbride and Cladh Eilister), described as drystone-built by RCAHMS were found to be mortared. These lost and rejected sites will be discussed later in this chapter. Seventeen measureable sites were finally confirmed as drystone chapels suitable for analysis (Table 3.3).

MAP	CANMORE	NAME	Entrance	L/W
1	NR34SW 4	Cill Choman	North	2.03
3	NR46NW 3	Kilsleven	West	1.70
4	NR25SW 1	Gleann na Gaoidh	North	1.72
5	NR25NE 1	Laggan	Unknown	2.49
6	NR46NW 4	Balulive, Cill Eileagain	South	1.83
7	NR26SE 1	Bruichladdich	West	1.68
8	NR36NE 1	Duisker 1	South	1.86
9	NR36NE 2	Duisker 2	West	1.29
10	NR25NW 33	Nereabolls 2	West	1.63
11	NR24NE 1	Tockmal	North	1.75
12	NR45SE 1	Cill a'Chubein	South	2.00
13	NR24SE 1	Cill Eathain	Unknown	1.43
14	NR34NE 1	Cill Tobar Lasrach	South	2.06
15	NR36SE6	Kilbraenan	Unknown	1.80
18	NR44NW 1	Ardilistry	West	1.83
20	NR25NW 2	Cilleach Mhicheil	South	1.67
21	NR26NE 2	Craigens, Cill Eileagain	North	2.04

Table 3.3 : The seventeen drystone chapels selected for analysis

3.3.1 The 17 measureable drystone chapels

Length to width ratio of the Islay chapels

In Chapter 2 it was suggested how L/W ratio may be used with care as a chronological indicator to broadly date pre-Romanesque churches (Section 2.6). Ó Carragáin graphed L/W ratio for internal, external and wall centre-line proportions for 92 pre-Romanesque mortared Irish churches (Figure 3.7) (Ó Carragáin, T 2010, 113). Internal measurements are used in this thesis because it removes the variability of wall thickness from the calculation; also, the inner face of the chapel wall is often better defined than the outer. He observed that there are no very significant clusters at symbolically important ratios such as 1.414, 1.5, 1.618 and 1.75. He concluded that most (about 95% - my figure) pre-Reformation churches in Ireland have an L/W ratio of between 1.3 and 1.8 using internal dimensions. This result agrees with

my own limited analysis of the internal L/W ratio of Scottish churches and further confirms the usefulness of it as a means to identify pre-Romanesque churches in Scotland. Ó Carragáin's results are for mortared Irish churches, however my own analysis of the drystone Irish corpus shows that L/W ratio varies between 1.1 and 1.9 (Section 2.8). This is a powerful chronological tool.

Ó Carragáin notes that Manning has suggested that some churches were built to specific L/W ratios (2010, 112-3). For example, Temple Dowling, Clonmacnoise has an L/W ratio of 1.437 which is almost $\sqrt{2}$ (1.414). The L/W ratio of Glendalough Cathedral is 1.62 which is close to the Golden Section (1.618033987...). The L/W ratio of 1.75 for Clonmacnoise Cathedral is equal to seven fourths, numbers that were both important in the Christian tradition. The Golden Section, Number, Ratio or Rule (φ) is defined as follows:

$$\varphi \equiv \frac{a}{b} = \frac{a+b}{a}$$

It can be shown that $\varphi = 1.618033987 \dots$; it is important in geometry and in the analysis of measurements of natural objects.

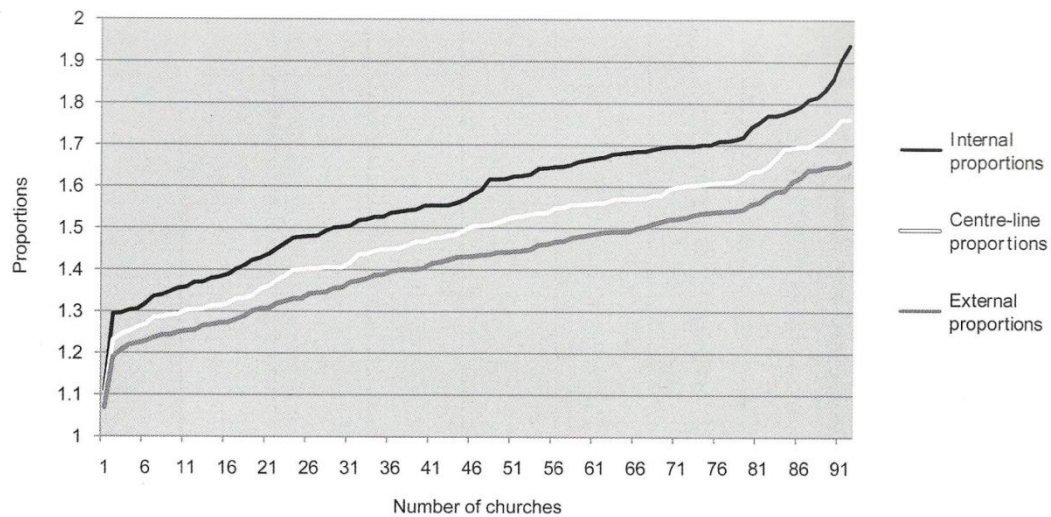


Figure 3.7: L/W ratio for mortared pre-Reformation Irish churches (Ó Carragáin 2010, 113 Figure 122)

The L/W ratio of the seventeen Islay drystone chapels is plotted in Figure 3.8. The anomalous point with an L/W ratio of 2.5 is for the chapel at Laggan, which was finally swept away by the river in the early 20th century, but had been measured by Graham after erosion had started (Graham 1895, 42). Whether the chapel was of drystone construction or mortared, and the position of the entrance were not recorded. Graham measured the chapel as 7.46m by 3m internally, but did not refer to the form of construction.

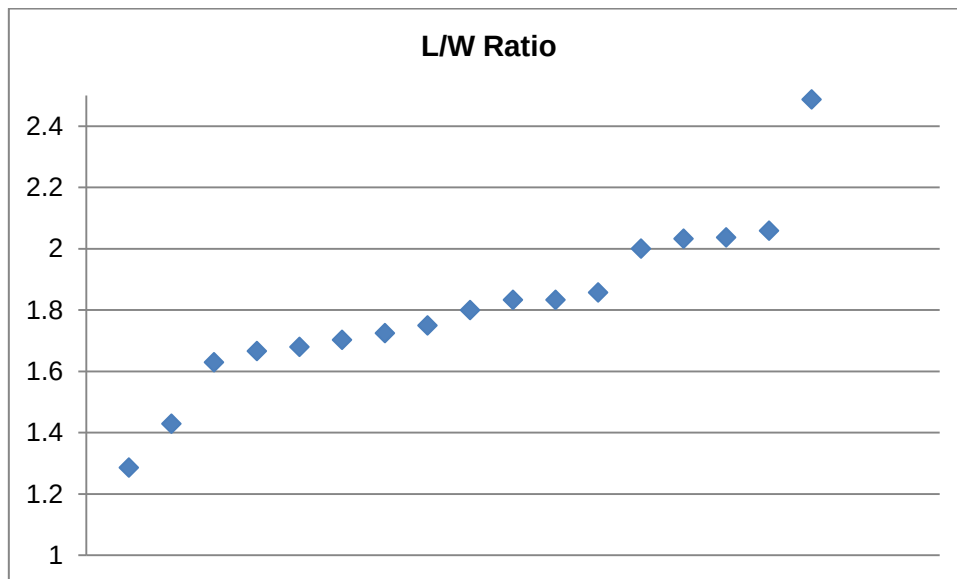


Figure 3.8: The L/W ratio of the seventeen measureable Islay drystone chapels

What is also evident from this analysis is that chapels possessing a smaller floor area have a smaller L/W ratio - as may be seen in Figure 3.9. This suggests that smaller chapels tended to be squarer on plan rather than rectangular. This may simply be because a minimum width was required for practical reasons.

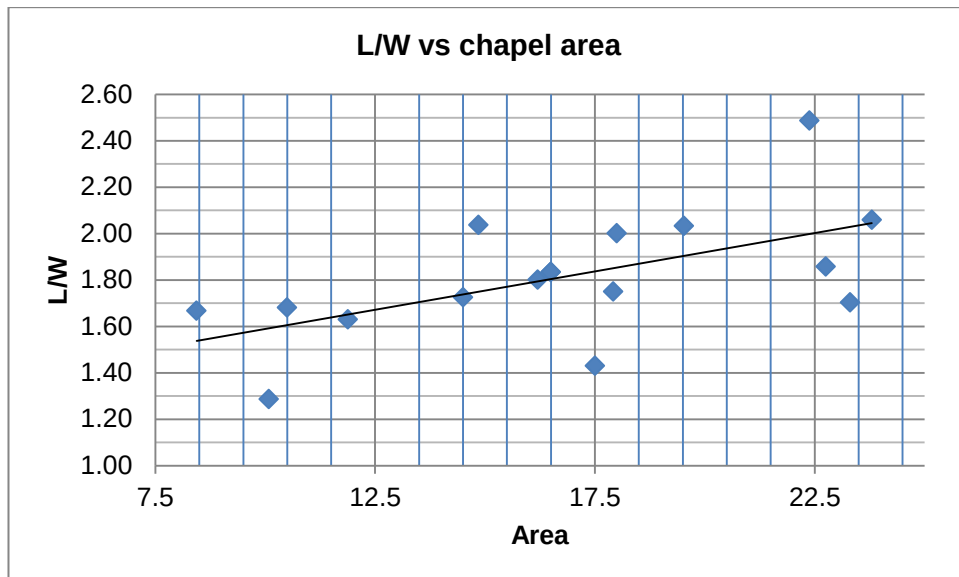


Figure 3.9: Length to width ratio versus chapel area

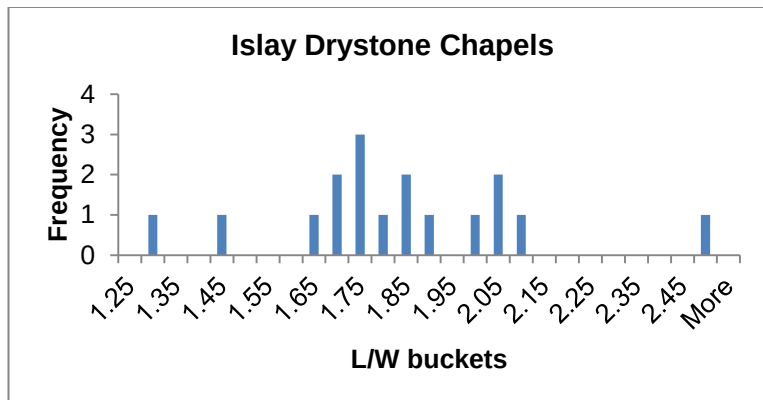


Figure 3.10: L/W histogram for Islay drystone chapels

Statistically, the mean L/W ratio for these 17 chapels is 1.81 (Table 3.4)(1.77 without Laggan chapel). Figure 3.10 shows that ten chapels are within ± 0.1 of a ratio of 1.75. This is different to the results for the Irish corpus of drystone chapels (mean L/W ratio = 1.39). It not only suggests an independent geographical constructional technique but also implies that either corbelling was not used or it was implemented differently on Islay.

Islay Drystone Chapels	
Mean	1.81
Standard Error	0.07
Median	1.80
Mode	1.83
Standard Deviation	0.27
Range	1.20
Minimum	1.29
Maximum	2.49
Count	17.00

Table 3.4: Descriptive statistics for the measurable drystone chapels

3.4 The Western Entrance

Another chronological indicator for the age of a church is the position of the doorway. The presence of the entrance in the west wall is a powerful indication that a church could be early. The early medieval architectural guidelines for church construction, which surely must have existed, almost certainly would have included a western doorway (Carver 2008, 88). In Ireland, with one or two exceptions for topographical reasons, all 186 pre-Romanesque churches, mortared and drystone, have western entrances. (Ó Carragáin, T 2010, 87, 140, 298-9). Lateral (N & S) entrances appear in Ireland after the 12th century (Harbison 1992, 151-2), and although south doorways had started to appear in parts of Anglo-Saxon England before the arrival of the Normans (Swift 1987, 196-7), on Islay the significant influence was probably the introduction of the parochial system in the 12th century (Bridgeand 2004, 88). The change from western entrances to north or south, or both, must have been liturgical; the reason for it has not survived. The later medieval churches on Islay, with the exception of Kilnave, all have lateral entrances, as do the medieval parish churches in mid-Argyll, for examples, see Table 2.1 (*supra*, 23).

We can also examine the relationship between the two chronological factors L/W ratio and doorway position for the Islay chapels (Figure 3.11).

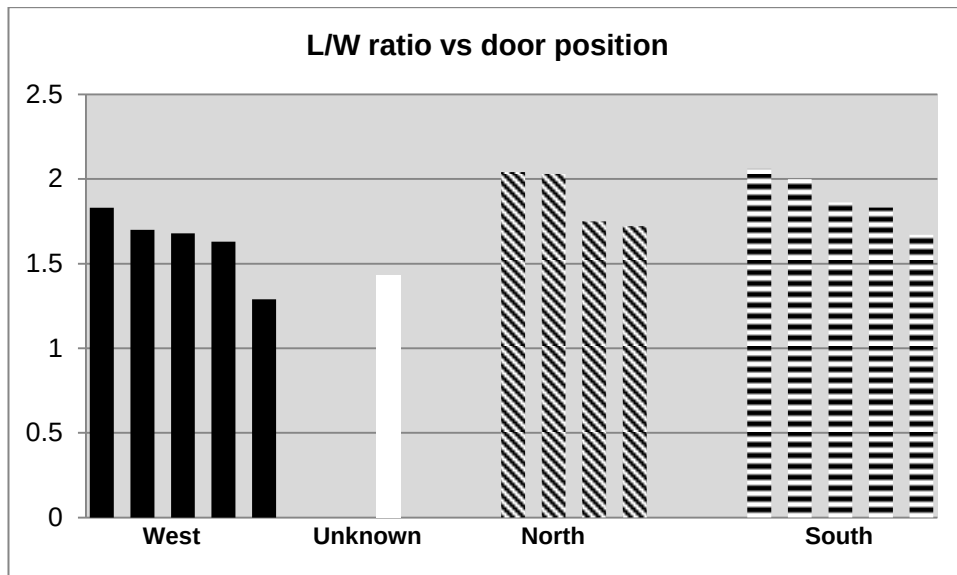


Figure 3.11: Length to width ratio of chapels versus door position

The results are interesting; the chapels with western entrances have an L/W ratio less than the mean of 1.8 for the whole set. The values for the chapels with west doorways are generally, but not always, less than those with lateral (N, S) entrances. This is perhaps easier to see when available data are plotted in order of L/W ratio in Figure 3.12.

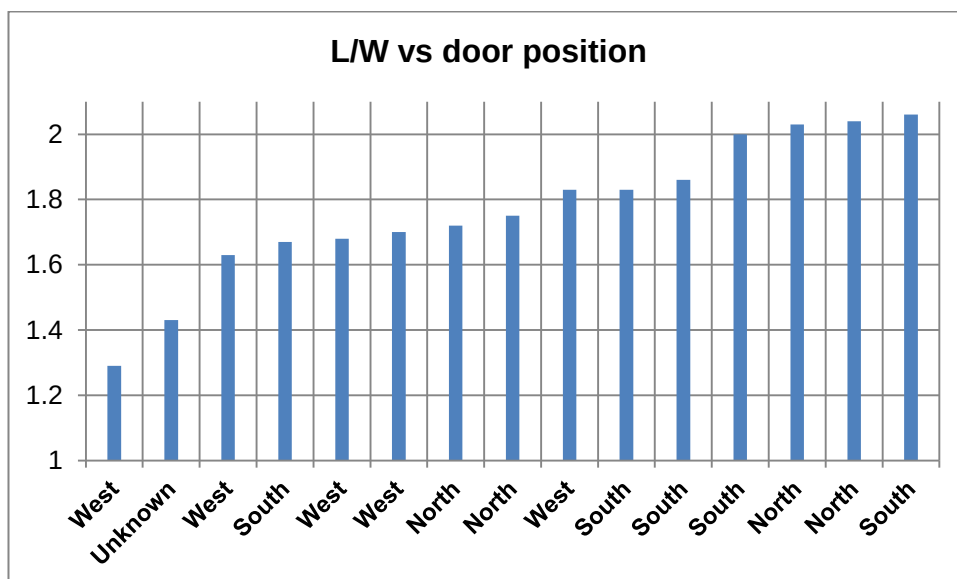


Figure 3.12: L/W ratio versus door position plotted in order of L/W ratio

The chapel in the charts with an L/W ratio of 1.43 and an unknown entrance position is Cill Eathain. The relevance of this is clarified in the next section.

Although this chapter includes individual plans of the chapels with western entrances within their burial enclosures, for information and convenience, Figure 3.13 shows the comparative plans of the 15 extant Islay chapels.

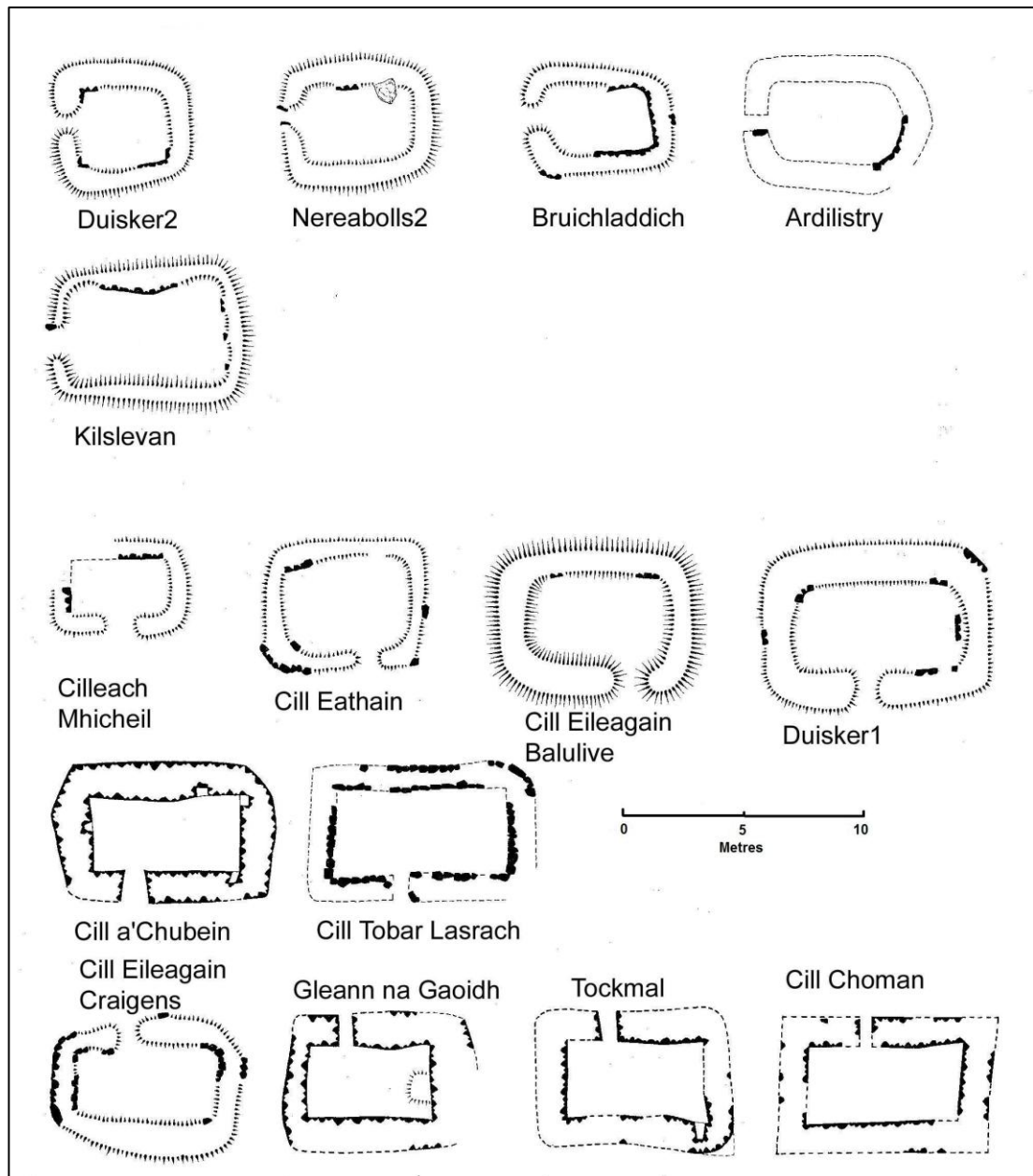


Figure 3.13: Comparative plans of the 15 extant chapels

3.5 The chapels with western entrances

3.5.1 Cill Eathain chapel, Lower Killeyan, Oa (RCAHMS 1984, 165; NR 2799 4337; Map, 13)

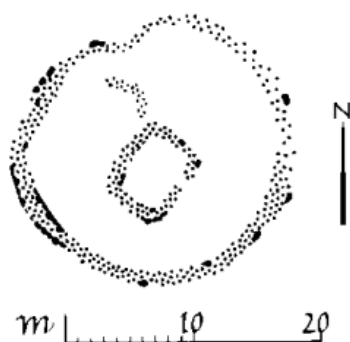


Figure 3.14: Plan of Cill Eathain chapel (adapted from RCAHMS 1984, 165)

This chapel is situated on a natural terrace on the south bank of the Abhainn Ghil, about 500m from where it enters Loch Indaal. The site is only 100m north-west of the ruined farm of Leacann and 500m west of the township of Cnoc na Leirge Brice, consequently it has been much disturbed. The state of its survival is not good, with serious damage or deterioration since it was measured by Lamont, the OS and the RCAHMS in 1957, 1978 and 1981 respectively (RCAHMS 1984, 165; NR24SE 1, NR 2799 4337). In descriptions from these times, the walls appeared as low turf-covered stony mounds; the internal dimensions were approximately 5m from north-east to south-west by 3.5m transversely, and the position of the original entrance could not be determined. A break in the south-east wall was considered to be modern. The enclosure, which is platformed into the slope, had been subdivided at some time and there were field clearance dumps within it. It measures about 19m in diameter, and the wall, in which some massive facing stones are (still) visible, is 0.8m in height and 1.4m in thickness.

Today, it would be difficult to identify this site as a chapel; it has either been covered by field clearance since 1981, which seems unlikely because the surrounding land remains

unimproved, or robbed in modern times, which is doubtful because of the ruined steading nearby. In liturgical terminology, the south wall and south-eastern corner survive, along with part of the east wall but the liturgical north and west walls have disappeared under spreads of stones and earth, which actually seem too small to have obliterated the chapel. There is no evidence of the break in the surviving south-east wall noted by the RCAHMS in 1981.



Figure 3.15: Cill Eathain chapel looking west-north-west with liturgical south-east corner centre left of photo

Though the recorded orientation is closer to south-west than west, there is little doubt that this is a chapel. It has an L/W ratio of 1.42, a circular burial ground and a relatively rare dedication. Its orientation may also support an early date. Swift measured it at 218 degrees (Swift 1987, 184) and noted that it was constructed from rubble and had rounded external corners (*ibid*, 187-8). The orientation of earlier chapels often deviated widely from east-west (e.g. Duisker 2, Figure 3.16). Traditionally, Cill Eathain commemorates St John (MacKinley 1910, 278-9; Maceacharna 1976, 52). In my opinion, a biblical dedication to St John – probably no earlier than the twelfth century and possibly much later, is at odds with the physical remains that imply an early foundation.

Both Graham and MacNeill note a *Cill Chatain* in the Oa in this very area. Thus, there is some confusion in the late nineteenth century, surely as a result of misreading of the gothic script for *Cill Eathain* on the first edition OS maps (OS 25 Inch CCXXXIC, 5, 1878; OS 1 Inch, Sheet 63, 1863; Maceacharna 1976, 52; Graham 1895, 74; MacNeill, J G 1899, 43). However, the historic forms of the name of the farm of Killeyan are as follows:

Killaane (1541), *Killeyane* (1562), *Killyayan* (1563), *Killeagan* (1584), *Killaane* (1614), *Killaan* (1627), *Gilleaan* (1631), *Kalenan* (1654), *Kilarenie* (1662), *Killoane* (1686), *Killean* (1722, 1733, 1741), Lower & Upper *Kileyen* (1749), *Kilearn* (1832), (Macniven 2006b, 483; ICD; John Thomson's Atlas of Scotland, 1832, NLS). OPS suggests that there was a chapel at *Kilearn* or *Killean* near the Mull of Oe (*sic*) (Innes 1854, 269). These historic names do not support the suggestion that this chapel was called *Cill Chatain*.

Thomas derives Killeyan from St Aidan, which in Gaelic is *Cill Aedhan* (Thomas, undated manuscript NMR/MS574). This is supported by Macniven (Macniven 2006, 483). Watson notes sixteen saints with this name (Watson 1926, 289) including St Aidan who is widely known as the first Bishop of Lindisfarne. He was a monk of Iona who travelled extensively in north Britain and died in 651 AD. Churches dedicated to Aidan are found mainly in the east of Scotland, in Angus and Perthshire (MacKinley 1914, 237-42). However, the interpretation of this dedication in the west may be unreliable, or it could refer to another St Aidan; otherwise it appears to be an isolated occurrence.

This chapel as originally described by the RCAHMS meets many of the indicators for an early site with an L/W ratio of 1.42, a circular burial ground and a relatively rare dedication. Its orientation may also support an early date (*infra*, 58). Therefore, in my opinion it is highly probable that the original entrance was in the west wall. Assuming that to have been the case, then the doorways of five out of six of the chapels with the smallest L/W ratios are in the west wall.

Chapel	Length m	Width m	Area m ²	L/W
Duisker 2	3.6	2.8	10.08	1.29
Bruichladdich	4.2	2.5	10.5	1.68
Nereabolls 2	4.4	2.7	11.88	1.63
Ardilistry	5.5	3	15.5	1.83
Cill Eathain	5	3.5	17.5	1.43
Kilsleven	6.3	3.7	23.31	1.70

Table 3.5: Chapels with western entrances

3.5.2 Duisker 2 (RCAHMS 1984, 170; NR 3602 6678; Map, 9)

The chapel is situated 215m south-east of the ruined farm of Duisker and 700m north-west of the chapel known as Duisker 1. Duisker 2 is the second smallest on the island with an area of 10 square metres. Its liturgical western end is orientated 52 degrees south of true west at 218 degrees – the same as Cill Eathain (Figure 3.14). There is no record of the original dedication or name of this chapel. The interpretation of the place-name Duisker caused problems for earlier authorities and for Macniven. His Old Norse *dúfa* + *sker* ‘rock-dove rock’ is not totally convincing (Macniven 2006b, 428-9); he notes that *sker* is predominately applied to maritime features although it can also relate to low isolated hilltops, however the hill behind Duisker is one of many peaks forming the high ground to the west. A suggestion of my own is that the generic is not Norse but Gaelic *sgir(e)*, anglicized as *-skir* (Watson 1926, 291, 380), which may mean ‘parish’ or ‘county’ (whereas *sgeir* has the meaning ‘peat-bank’ and ‘a rock surrounded by the sea’) (M'Alpine 1833). This perhaps accords with the historic forms of the name *Doweskir* (1499), *Dowaskir* (1507), *Dowasker* (1509), *Doweskkir* (1541), *Dowasgir* (1563), *Dowaskir* (1584), *Doweskir* (1614) *Dweskir* (1627) *Duaskir* (1631) (Macniven, 428). The name could thus be ‘Black Parish’!

The OS recorded Duisker 2 in 1878 as an ancient place of internment. The plan of the chapel and burial ground is clearly shown on the first edition 25-inch map (Argyllshire & Buteshire, CXC VII.12, 1882). On it, the burial ground is shown as almost circular with a flattened southern arc. Today the chapel and burial ground are covered with turf and bracken. The walls of both are about 1m in height. The chapel entrance is in the liturgical west wall. The low cairn described by RCAHMS (1984, 170) is still visible adjacent to the east end of the chapel; this may be a burial, or the remains of a *leacht* (outdoor memorial or prayer station)

or a cross base. The chapel measures 3.6m by 2.8m internally; the almost circular burial ground measures about 13m in diameter within a wall c1.3m in thickness.

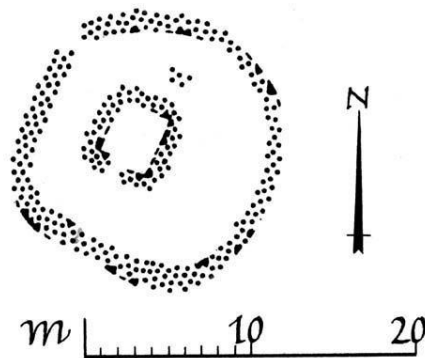


Figure 3.16: Duisker 2 chapel and burial ground (adapted from RCAHMS 1984, 170)

The entrance, in the liturgical western wall, and the almost circular burial ground imply an early date for this chapel. The small internal area and the rounded corners suggest that the building could have been a cell or oratory with a corbelled or slab-lintelled roof. It may date to the early phase of Christianity on Islay. Likewise the orientation of 218 degrees could suggest an early foundation. Its orientation falls (by 12 degrees) outside the limit of the range for 1444 medieval parish churches in England and Wales (230-308 degrees) (Hinton 2006, 214), and outside that for the Anglo-Saxon churches in England (Hoare & Sweet 2000, 166), although such comparisons are more interesting than fair or relevant. However, the earliest burials on ecclesiastical sites are often oriented north-east/south-west and were aligned with an earlier chapel or related feature. They frequently underlie a later chapel which is more accurately aligned with east-west. The writer notes that three of the earliest burials at Portmahomack, one of which was dated to AD 430-610 (GU-14997, 2sigma, OxCal3), are aligned north-east to south-west; these were situated down the hill from the church. In contrast, the earliest group of burials under the church, dated to 6th and 7th centuries AD, were generally more accurately aligned east-west, although 5 of these 23 burials still had the head to the north-east (Carver 2008, 76-7). On Inishmurray (O'Sullivan, J & Ó Carrágain 2008, 259-61, Figure 58), the earliest burials were aligned north-east to south-west in

contrast to the later group which were east to west and respected the *leachta* and drystone structures (Figure 3.17).

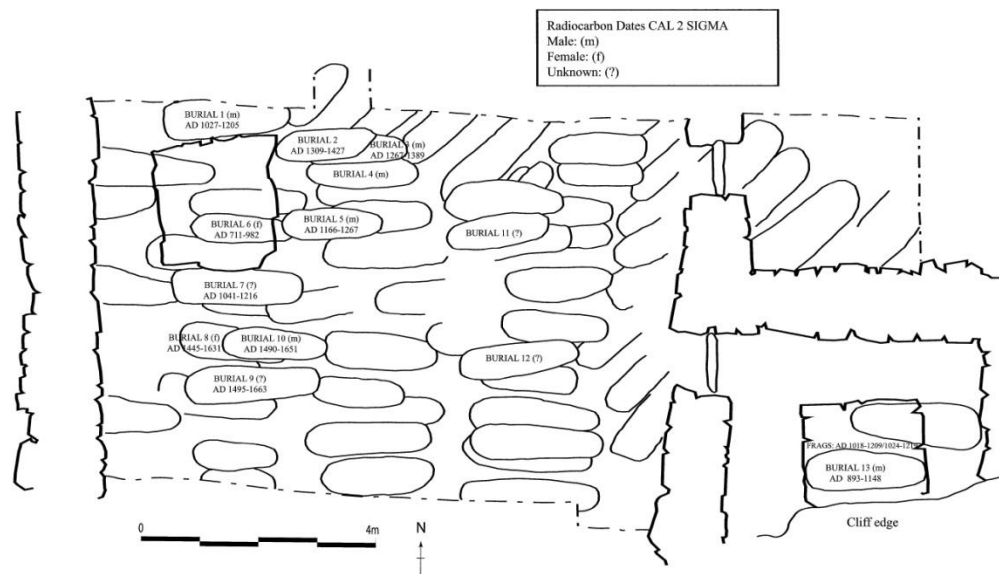


Figure 3.17: Inishmurray; the earliest burials are aligned north-east to south-west; the later group east to west (O'Sullivan & Ó Carragáin 2008)

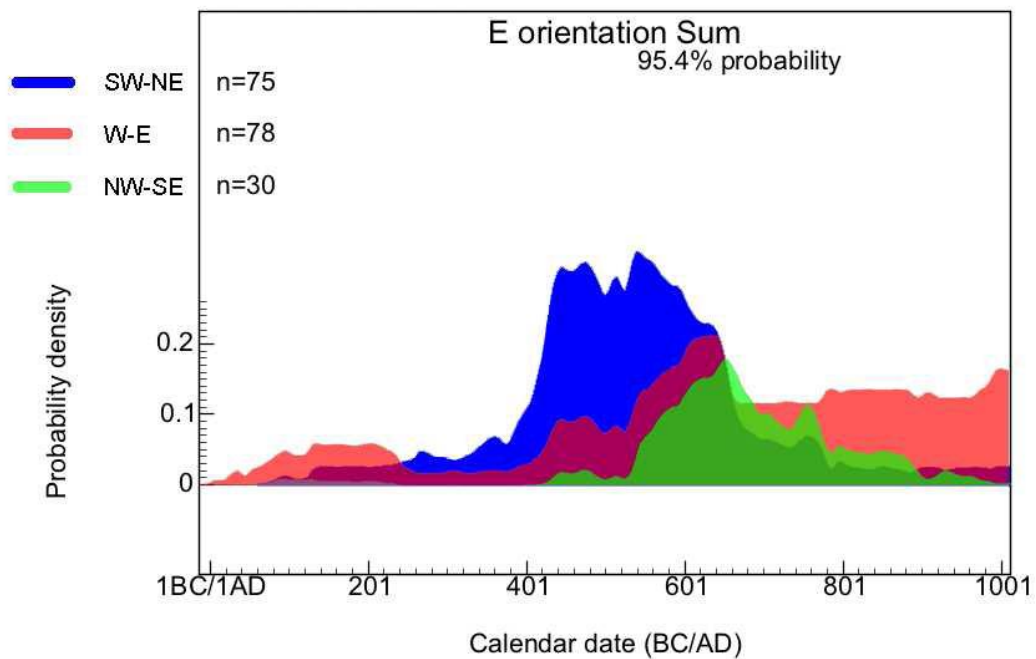


Figure 3.18: Nominally east-facing radiocarbon-dated burials from Scotland (Maldonado 2011)

Recent analysis (Maldonado 2011, 158) of the orientation of scientifically dated burials in cemeteries in Scotland reveals that in the mid first millennium AD there is a notable preference for north-east to south-west orientation rather than true east to west (Figure 3.18). It is not until the mid-seventh century that true east-west orientations start to predominate, because the practice of Christian burial in the style of pagan ancestors started to die out as the church slowly began to legislate on the subject of burial practices for Christians and to take more control over churches and cemeteries (O'Brien 2009, 135, 148-9; O'Brien 2003, 67). Although the data are dominated by burials from the eastern side of Scotland and Orkney and consequently c.50% of the radiocarbon dates are from 10 sites, (Maldonado 2011, 74-81) data from approximately 20 western sites are included in the analysis. The preference for east-west burial by the end of the millennium is demonstrated by the orientations of burials from East Lothian to Shetland (*ibid*, 158). The chronological change from north-east to east facing graves is demonstrated by burials in the Fey Field at Whithorn, where the fifth to seventh-century burials are orientated south-west to north-east and the later eighth to ninth-century Northumbrian graves west to east (*ibid*).

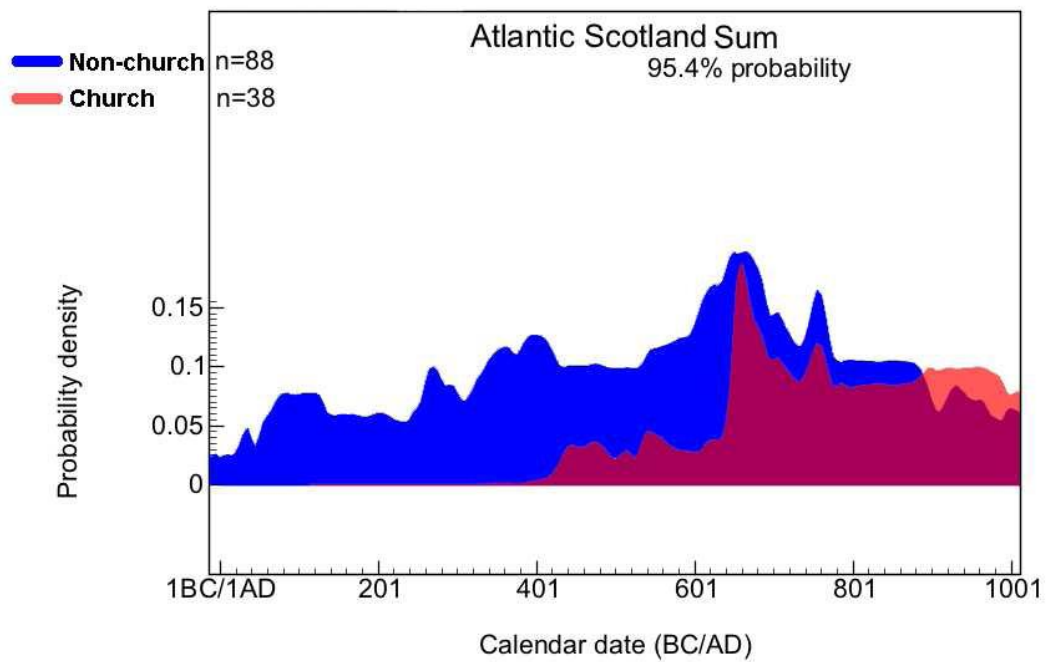


Figure 3.19: Church and non-church burials in Atlantic Scotland (Maldonado 2011)

The analyses carried out by Maldonado (Maldonado 2011, 78-81) also show that although burial commenced in the mid Iron Age in both the Lowland and Atlantic zones, the increase in the fifth century is explained by the appearance of inhumation cemeteries often established on new sites instead of the old familial burial grounds (Figure 3.19). In order for a burial to qualify as a ‘church burial’ in his data it must be associated with a site on which there is evidence for a church at some time before the end of the first millennium AD. His results also reveal that burial in churchyards commences slowly in the fifth century and reaches a maximum in both lowland and Atlantic Scotland in the seventh century (Figure 3.19). After the seventh century-maxima, church burials flatten out, and by the early tenth century non-church burials are in the minority. These results support the documentary evidence, already cited, that Christians were slow to accept burial in churchyards and preferred familial field cemeteries.

The chapels on Islay with western entrances and also with north-east to south-west orientation are the most likely to be pre-Norse.

The mean orientation of the Islay chapels is 255.67 degrees. True west bears 270 degrees. The range of the orientations is very wide and measures from 213 to 288, or 75 degrees. The majority of the chapels are orientated south of true west. The descriptive statistics for the orientations of the chapels are shown in Table 3.6.

Orientation	Degrees
Mean	255.67
Standard Error	5.83
Median	260.00
Mode	270.00
Standard Deviation	22.56
Range	75.00
Minimum	213.00
Maximum	288.00
Count	15.00

Table 3.6: Descriptive statistics for chapel orientations

The orientations of the chapels are listed in Table 3.7 (along with L/W ratio and entrance position), and plotted in Figure 3.20. This includes the newly discovered chapel at Kelsay (Kilcavan) (see section 10.4.1).

Chapel	Orientation	Map	Entrance	L/W
Duisker 2	213	9	West	1.29
Cill Eathain	215	13	West	1.43
Kilslevan	230	3	West	1.70
Cill Eileagain Balulive	240	6	South	1.83
Duisker 1	252	8	South	1.86
Nereabolls 2	253	10	West	1.63
Cill a'Chubein	255	12	South	2.00
Kilcavan, Kelsay	255		South	1.94
Cilleach Mhicheil	260	20	South	1.67
Cill Eileagain Craigens	262	21	North	2.04
Bruichladdich	270	7	West	1.68
Cill Tobar Lasrach	270	14	South	2.06
Ardilistry	273	18	West	1.83
Gleann na Gaoidh	276	4	North	1.72
Cill Choman	278	1	North	2.03
Tockmal	288	11	North	1.75

Table 3.7: Orientation of the Islay drystone chapels

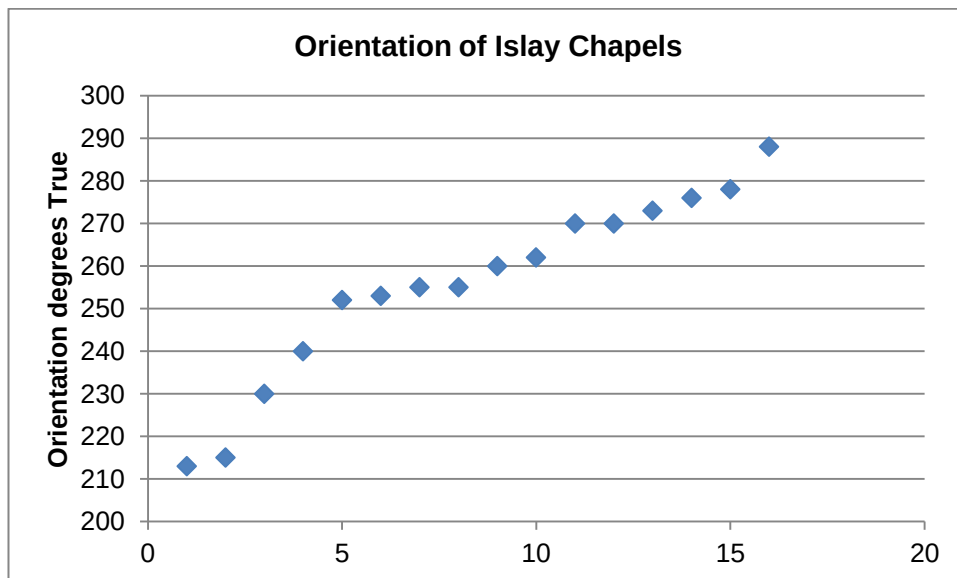


Figure 3.20: Orientation of Islay drystone chapels

3.5.3 Bruichladdich chapel, Conisby (RCAHMS 1984, 158-9, NR 2677 6147; Map, 7)

This chapel is situated in pasture immediately west of the coastal road along the east side of the Rhinns. It measures 4.2m east to west by 2.5m within walls about 1m in thickness. The entrance is in the west wall. The plan of the site is shown on the first edition OS 25-inch map (CCVII.12, 1878). The RCAHMS describe the burial-ground as square on plan, however its enclosure consists of several straight sections of varying lengths, which together form a trapezoidal shape about 20m by 20m. The reported entrance on the south-west side is probably modern; it is only a break and the position of the original is not known. In 1975 there was one grave-marker visible; it has disappeared.

My own supplemental research finds that the chapel name was recorded in 1878 as *Eaglais Uillean* and the burial-ground as *Cill Uillean* (ONB 34, 70) although for some reason the names were subsequently cancelled in the ONB. However, a recent publication about Islay folklore notes that the name is *Cill Iollarain*, which suggests that the OS names were correct (Earl Not dated, 5). The meaning of *Uillean* is ‘angular’ or ‘ill-shaped’, undoubtedly referring to the strange shaped burial-ground. Local sources give the dedication of *Eaglais Iolarain* as St Hilary (Maceacharna 1976, 53; Swift 1987, 337) although this is difficult to believe. There are only two dedications in Scotland to Hilary, in Shetland and Aberdeenshire. He was a bishop of Poitiers who was elected in 353 AD (MacKinley 1914, 316). In 1897, MacNeill’s trap-driver informed him that the name was *Cladh Dhumhan* ‘burial-ground of the mounds, barrows or tumuli’ (MacNeill, J G 1899, 105). There was also a well, *Tobar Cladh Dhumhain*. Some of the undulations in the interior may be the remains of burial mounds. The orientation of the chapel is approximately 270 degrees, or true east-west.

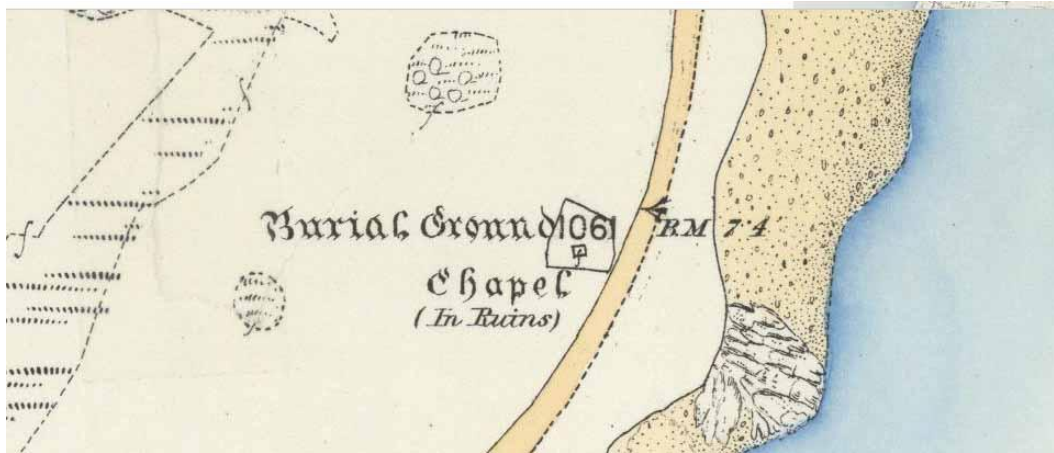


Figure 3.21: OS 25-inch Argyll and Bute Sheet CCVII.12, 1878 (detail)

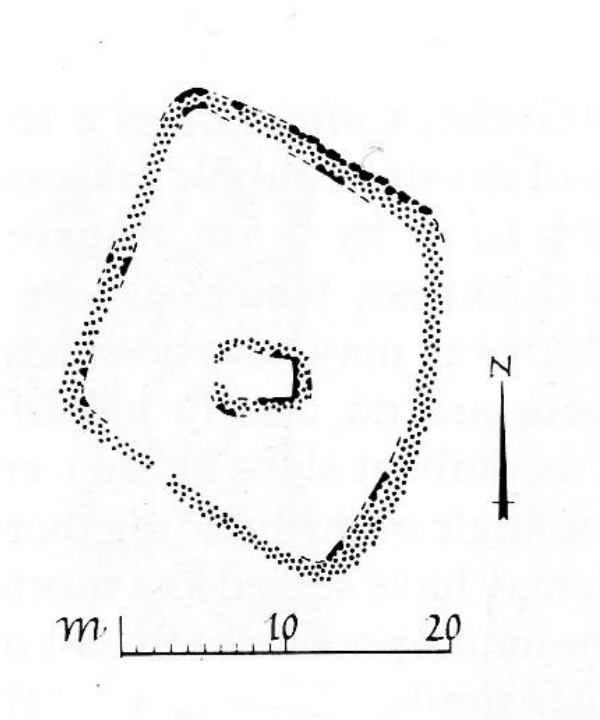


Figure 3.22: Bruichladdich chapel, Conisby (adapted from RCAHMS 1984, 159)

3.5.4 Nereabolls 2, *Cill Iain* chapel (RCAHMS 1984, 230; NR 2273 5540; Map, 10)

Like Bruichladdich, this chapel is also situated on the western shore of Loch Indaal. It is 130m north-west of the coast road. In 1960, its name was collected as *Cladh Cill Iain* or *Cill Iain*, but in 1899 MacNeill recorded it as *Cill Fhinn*, or 'White Chapel' (1899, 102). The

Gaelic pronunciation of *Fhinn* is close to the pronunciation of 'Iain' in English. The modern Scots Gaelic 'Iain' is a form of *Eoin*, which is a form of John, and possibly the name was Killeen or *Cill Eoin*, but see below for suspicions of rededication.

The burial-ground is now irregularly shaped, however the northern sector has been destroyed by the plough, and the western sector impacted by the construction of a small circular enclosure. Consequently the earth and stone-wall is best preserved on the south and east sides. Satellite imagery (Figure 3.23) suggests that this wall was originally almost circular and measured about 25m from east to west by 27m north to south. The relationship of the possible hut-circle on the west to the enclosure wall is difficult to judge on the ground, but it is possible that they were contemporary if the burial ground was circular.



Figure 3.23: Nereabolls 2 chapel © Bing Maps (accessed 20th October 2012)

The chapel is relatively small and measures 4.4m east to west by 2.7m within walls 0.7m in thickness and about 1m in height (measurements from RCAHMS 1984, 230; NR25NW 33). The earliest description of the site (Megaw & Cregeen 1960) suggests that the ‘irregular oval enclosure’ is divided by a north-south wall and in my opinion the RCAHMS plan may not be a true representation of the site.

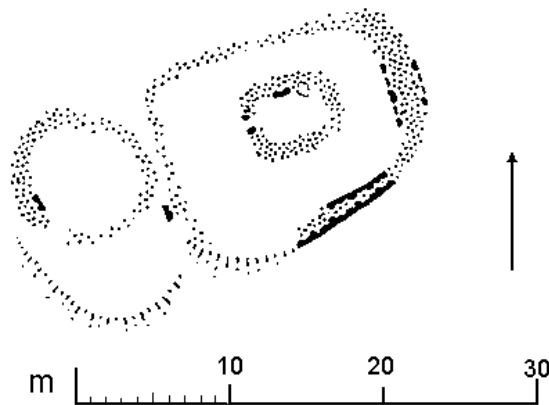


Figure 3.24: Nereabolls 2 chapel (adapted from RCAHMS 1984, 230)

The dedication is to St John and is at odds with the physical remains. This biblical commemoration could be eleventh or twelfth century reflecting the increasing influence of Rome, and perhaps associated with the establishment of the diocese of Argyll c.1189 (Bridgland 2004, 87). However, the writer notes that, although there is a collection of Early Christian stones at Killean, Kintyre, the church is believed to be dedicated to St John and was first recorded in 1222 (RCAHMS 1971, 129-36). In my opinion, Nereabolls 2 may have been re-dedicated in the middle-ages to St John.

3.5.5 Ardilistry chapel (RCAHMS 1984, 157; NR44NW 1; NR 4476 4852; Map, 18)

The OS identified this building, which is orientated precisely east to west, as a chapel during their survey of the area in 1878. Exactly one hundred years later, when the OS returned, they were unable to locate the site because of an impenetrable thicket of undergrowth. During my

visit in 2009, this area was impassable, and the location of the site was not even known to gamekeepers and farmers who live locally. However, in 1976, the RCAHMS successfully recorded the remains of a building 5.5m east to west by 3.1m transversely within a partly orthostatic drystone rubble wall about 1m in thickness. The entrance is in the west gable and is 0.75m in width. In 1976, there was an enclosure constructed against a rock face; it measures 3.5m by 3m overall. There are indications of enclosure walls near the site but nothing to suggest an enclosure around the building.

The site is 120m from the closest inlet of the sea in an area with several sheltered anchorages. The internal dimensions, L/W ratio, orientation and position of the entrance as recorded in c.1987 (Swift 1987, 191), strongly imply that the remains are those of a chapel. On plan, the external and internal corners are rounded, to such an extent that the east end of the building appears apsidal. The structure is likely to have been corbelled.

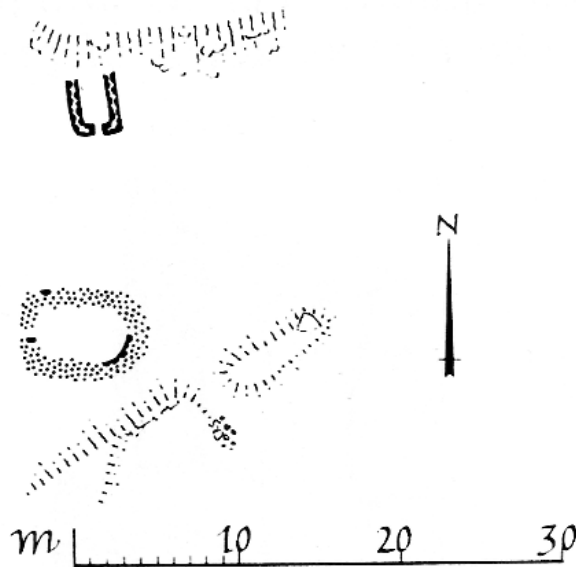


Figure 3.25: Ardilistry chapel (adapted from RCAHMS 1984, 157)

The author suggests that it may be compared with the oratories from Kerry shown in Figure 2.12, which have externally rounded eastern corners at base level.

3.5.6 Kilsleven, *Cill Sléibheainn*, Chapel (RCAHMS 1984, 223; NR 4218 6733; Map, 3)

The site sits at the transition of improved land to the west and gently sloping moorland to the east, 325m north east of the township of Kilsleven and only 1km from the Sound of Islay. Two old march-dykes, from the east and north-east, converge on the chapel. The site is close to copper mines (NR 41 67) in what must have been a strategically important area.

According to the RCAHMS, it measures internally 6.2m north-east to south-west by 3.5m transversely; the wall is about 1.0m thick and stands to 0.7m in height, although at the time of my visit it was being damaged by foraging pigs.



Figure 3.26: Kilsleven chapel; looking north-east from north-west corner of chapel

The south-west arc of the enclosure has been disturbed but it appears to have been originally circular with a diameter of 12.5m within a wall spread to about 2.5m in thickness and 0.8m in height. The original entrance to the enclosure appears to have been in the south-east sector. The entrance to the chapel is in the south-west wall which is the liturgical west wall. The orientation of the chapel is about 230 degrees, which is 40 degrees south of west-east; it is the third of the Islay chapels with western entrances to be orientated north-east/south-west. This suggests a relatively early date for the laying out of the site (*supra*, 58-63).

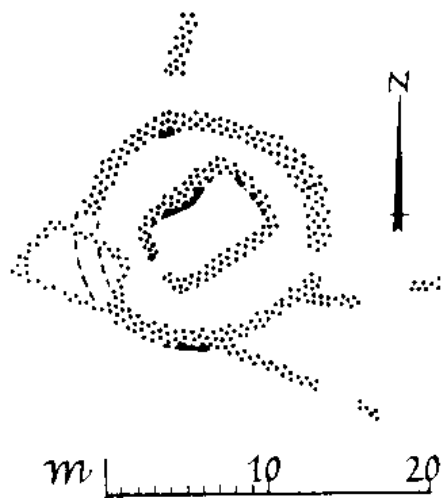


Figure 3.27: Plan of Kilsleven chapel (adapted from RCAHMS 1984, 223)

Other factors supporting an early foundation are the rare dedication to St Slébhine, the chapel entrance, in the liturgical west wall, and the circular enclosure. Watson derives Kilsleven from Gaelic *Cill Sléibheainn*. Dedications in Scotland to St Slébhine or Sléibéne, an abbot of Iona, are scarce and possibly this is the only one. (MacKinley 1914, 143; Watson 1926, 291). Slébhine was abbot of Iona from 752 until his death in 767 AD. It has been suggested (Clancy & Márkus 1995, 33-4) that from the early eighth century there were close contacts between Iona and Islay. The Virgin and Child panels found on the Kildalton, St Oran's (Iona) and St John's (Iona) crosses are some of the oldest images of Mary from the British Isles; they are not only similar to each other but resemble such images found in the *Book of Kells*. This iconography of Mary may be as a result of the establishment of the four great feasts in the calendar of the church by Pope Sergius I who died in 701. Therefore, the

established contacts with Iona and the dedication both support a date for the chapel in the eighth century.

3.6 The anomalous drystone chapels

Earlier in this chapter (Table 3.1) nineteen measurable drystone chapels were identified of which only seventeen are included in the analysis in the preceding section. The nineteen were selected on the basis that they were of drystone construction as recorded by the OS or RCAHMS and their measurements were known. A plot of the internal areas of the nineteen chapels is shown in Figure 3.28, from which it may be seen that two chapels are anomalous. In my opinion, they are too large to have been constructed in drystone. A search through the site descriptions in the Argyll inventories and Ó Carragáin's Irish data reveals that the internal areas of the largest drystone chapels are approximately 24 m².

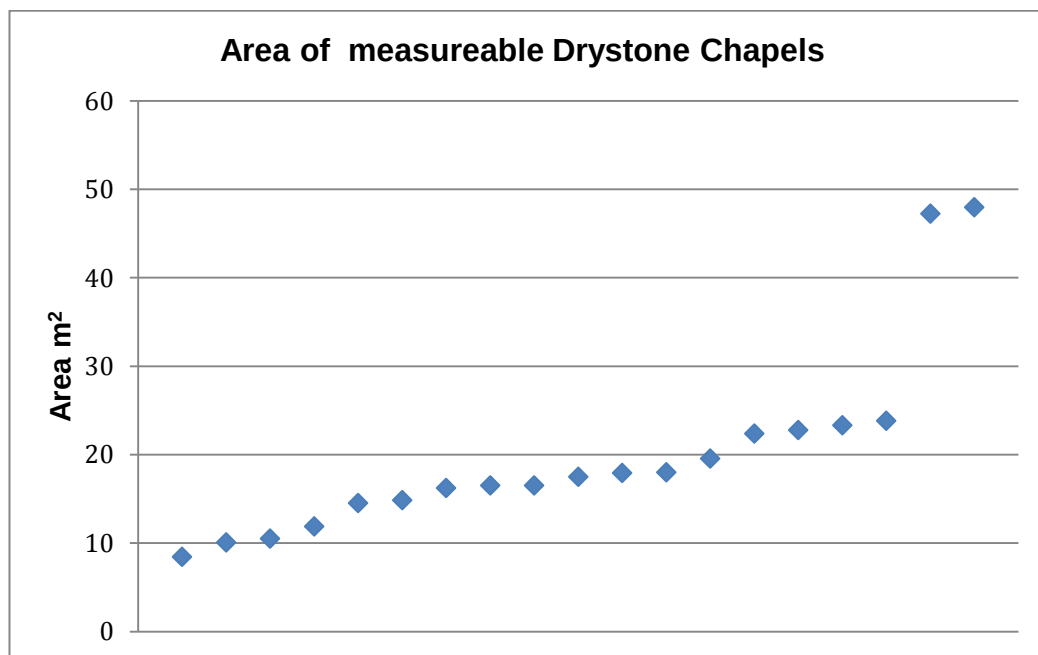


Figure 3.28: Area of measureable drystone chapels of Islay



Figure 3.29: Cladh Eilisteir chapel – south-east corner

The two anomalous chapels are Cladh Eilisteir (Map, 27), near Portnahaven and Kilbride (Map, 26). The RCAHMS recognised the similarity on plan of these two church sites and suggested that they may be post-Reformation (RCAHMS 1984, 167, 193) but the author considers this unlikely. On the ground they are very different; Kilbride is constructed from large squared stones with evidence of lime mortar and Cladh Eilister is built from rubble and clay (Figure 3.29). There seems to be some confusion about the history of the church at Kilbride. In 1878, the OS reported that the site at Kilbride was the remains of an ancient building, which was supposed to have been a pre-Reformation chapel, but no confirmation of this, or its date, was obtainable (ICD; ONB 36, 143).

In December 1651, the Synod of Argyll records that:

The said Commissioners appoyntes ane new kirk to be buildeit on the grund and lands of Kilbryd besyid Duneveg in Illa, and that the twa old paroaches of Kildalton and Kilnachten be the paroache of the said new kirk' (MacTavish 1943, 246).

It is probable that it was this source that prompted the RCAHMS to propose a post-Reformation date for Kilbride chapel. However, in spite of the Synod's decision, my research suggests that the 1651 church at Kilbride was not built. The Old Statistical Account for Kildalton reports that a new parish church was built about 60 years ago (1730s), near the

farm of Baille Naughtan, replacing a meeting-house in the same place (<http://stat-acc-scot.edina.ac.uk/link/1791-99/Argyle/Kildalton/11/286/>, 295 (accessed 20 October 2012); Ramsay, L 1890, 13). Further evidence that the new parish church was not built at Kilbride is provided by the decision of the Stent Committee in 1730, which announced that a new parish church would be built in the neighbourhood of Lagavullin and that the medieval chapel of Kildalton should be deserted (Ramsay, L 1890, 12-13; Ramsay, F 1991, 55-6). This church was built on the quarterland of Ballynaughton More beside the track that led to Kilbride, Leorin, Arivoichallum and Glen Machrie down to the Big Strand (Laggan Bay), at the time, the main road between the Parish of Kilarrow and the Parish of Kildalton & Oa (*ibid*,56).

Evidence that the church at Kildalton continued in use until at least the end of the 17th century is provided by a burial dated 1696 (Caldwell 2008, 187, 358 n8; , 218).

It is proposed therefore that the remains at Kilbride are not those of a church of mid17th - century date as suggested by RCAHMS, but of a late medieval church which may be compared to those at Kilnaughton and Kilnave. It may have originated as a dependency of the parish church of Kildalton.

However, the site is of Early Christian origin; a slab (Figure 3.30) from Kilbride bearing an Early Christian Latin cross is in the Islay museum (PSAS 1883, 281-3; RCAHMS 1984,193).

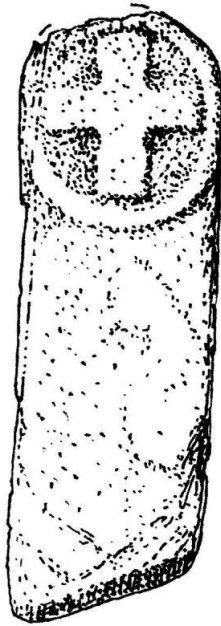


Figure 3.30: Early Christian stone from Kilbride (adapted from RCAHMS 1984)

3.7 The rejected chapels

A number of sites which are described in the NMRS as chapels, or possible chapels, were rejected during fieldwork.

3.7.1 Cill an Ailein, Killinallan (RCAHMS 1984, 159: NR37SW 1; NR 3151 7230; Map, 17)

Although Martin mentions *Killhan Alen* North-West of *Kidrow* (Martin 1934, 275) as a church in current use in 1695, its whereabouts is unknown to the writer, local farmers and gamekeepers. In my opinion, Martin may have got this wrong, however, *Cill an Ailein* is the name of a burial ground, which survives as an oval enclosure, 34m south-west to north-east by 20m transversely within a discontinuous grass-grown earth and stone bank about 3m, in width (measurements from RCAHMS). It is situated on the north side of a modern farm-track by a burn, close to the east shore of Loch Gruinart and about 500m from the farm of Killinallan. The place-name suggests that there was once a church here, and in 1978, the OS noted a level area within the north-east corner of an otherwise sloping site; the writer agrees with this observation. This may be seen in the dead-centre of the photo (Figure 3.31); however, any church here would have to be very small – similar to the drystone chapels, and

it is more likely that there was at some time an Early Christian chapel within this enclosure. The church of 1695 must have been located elsewhere.

The Islay Estate has improved, cleared and enclosed the land surrounding the chapel, and the burial ground is used now as a convenient repository for large stones.



Figure 3.31: Cill an Ailein - looking north across the burial ground (note field clearance)

3.7.2 Ballitarsin, *Eaglais Bhogainn* (RCAHMS 1984, 158; NR36SE 8; NR 3520 6070; Map, 16)

MacNeill describes *Eaglais Bhogainn*, where, there stands a mysterious grey stone basin, which, if taken away one day, will be back in its place the next day (MacNeill 1899, 65). He is referring to the chapel at Lower Ballitarsin, 2.25km south-east from Bridgend. In 1878, the OS associates it with another traditional story about a stone vase in the west end of the ruin that has never been dry and describe the site as 'supposed remains', and the 'vase' as still

being in place, but does not refer to the name *Eaglais Bhogainn* (ONB 40, 62). The author found the site of this chapel to be a low turf-covered stony mound in an otherwise featureless improved field of pasture. Overall, it measures about 11m in length from east to west and 5m transversely. There is no trace of an enclosure, although in the 1950s, local people confirmed to the IASG (Celoria 1960) that an uncultivated, area about 25m by 21m at this spot was the burial ground of the chapel. The chapel is shown as rectangular and aligned almost east-west on the first edition 25-Inch map (CCIII, 12 1882); no burial enclosure is shown. MacNeill's source for the name of the chapel is not recorded.

3.7.3 Laphroaig, Torr Math Laoruinn, NR34NE14, NR 3798 4547, Map, 22

The remains of a church with 'very ancient buildings nearby' were reported by Graham (1895, 77), in the west angle of the junction of the minor road from Kilbride and the A846 coastal-road to Ardbeg. The OS first edition 25-inch map (CCXXXII, 13) shows a burial ground at approximately NR 3800 4550, however, this exact area is now occupied by modern agricultural buildings, and all land, with the exception of the rock outcrops, has been ploughed. In 1878, the burial ground was disused, ancient and enclosed by an earthen bank (OS ONB 361, 136). Inspection of the area revealed that a raised rocky area about 60m east of the site shown on the first edition is enclosed on its eastern side by a dyke. No 'ancient' buildings were found.

3.7.4 Cnoc Grianail (NR35SW 3; NR 3312 5262; Map, 23)

Cnoc Grianail is a conspicuous rocky hillock that rises 10m above the surrounding machair and peat-banks, about 1km north of Glenegedale. It overlooks Loch Indaal from a central position just inland from the Tràigh Mhór, the 'Big Strand'. In 1878, the OS recorded 'the supposed remains of a pre-Reformation chapel of which nothing is known' at this position (ONB 35, 23). One hundred years later, they found no trace of a chapel, however, they did identify a deserted croft (NMR NR35SW 4, NR 3308 5268) on the north side of the summit. The writer found no evidence of a chapel on or below the knoll. The croft is situated on the opposite side of the knoll from the position of the chapel on the first edition 25-inch map (CCXIX, 15).

3.7.5 Tayandock (NR36SW 13; NR 3100 6341; Map, 24)

The IASG recorded a possible chapel on the south side of the Gruinart road west of Tayandock (Newall & Newall 1961, 21). The site was subsequently located by the OS in

1979. The building measured 4.0m east to west by 4.8m transversely within a wall 0.6m in thickness. The OS agreed with IASG that the remains were possibly those of a chapel, however, the writer believes this to be unlikely because the wall thickness and L/W ratio are not typical of such sites. The described site lies in an area of disturbed ground alongside the road and the author was unable to locate any remains in the vicinity.

3.7.6 Craigfad (NR25NW 21; NR 2315 5550; Map, 25)

The CANMORE entry classifies this site as a possible chapel. Nothing is visible in this improved field at the point where, in 1960 according to local information, a heap of stones was all that remained of a former burial ground. Graves were found when it was levelled in 1975.

3.8 The lost chapels

Two sites classified as chapels in the NMRS have been lost since they were noted by the OS in 1878, and one chapel has been eroded away by the River Laggan.

3.8.1 Lossit (NR46NW 11; NR 4118 6526; Map, 2)

The OS provides the only evidence that there was a chapel and burial ground in the position shown on the first edition maps at the east end of the loch (1882, CXCVIII, 14). They note that part of the burial ground was flooded when the water level was raised (ONB 39, 207). Neither the OS nor the RCAHMS in the 1970s could locate any remains; in fact, at that time, the OS observed that it would be almost impossible to construct a building in this marshy area. The first edition map annotates the burial ground with a cross symbol, rather than the customary outline of the burial ground, however there does seem to be a plan of the chapel on the first edition map (it resembles a 'Q' – see Figure 3.32), although it is annotated 'site of'. The field walls in the vicinity appear on both the first edition and modern maps, and the chapel should be at NR 4122 6525, immediately on the east side of the field wall at the east end of the loch. No evidence of this chapel or burial ground was found during a search by the writer and the Lossit Estate gamekeeper. It is possible that the site lies under the loch and the drystone dykes were moved following a further rise in water level.



Figure 3.32: First edition 25-inch OS map (CXC VIII, 14, 1882)(detail)

3.8.2 Kilennan, Cill Fhìonáin (RCAHMS 1984, 216; NR35NE 2; NR 3733 5737; Map, 19)

Although the site of a chapel appears on the first edition 25-inch OS map (CCXX, 1 1881) several authorities have failed to find it (RCAHMS 1984; Whiteman 1960, 19). In 1878, the OS reported that ‘one wall of the chapel forms part of a sheepfold and the full outline may be easily traced’ (ONB 40, 157). The OS in 1978, and the RCAHMS in 1974, found nothing resembling a chapel at or near the sheepfold. The IASG in 1960 noted that the reputed site of the chapel was in a hollow by a stream (Celoria 1960, (6) 1). The writer has not visited this area.

The farm-name Kilennan is derived from *Kilfinan*, or *Cill Fhìonáin* through aspiration of the *f*. The chapel was dedicated to St Finan known as *Lobur* ‘the infirm’ (MacKinley 1914, 80; Watson 1926, 338).

3.8.3 Laggan chapel

This chapel and burial ground which has been washed away by the River Laggan is described in Section 6.2.2 with the carved stone from the site.

3.9 Conclusions

The techniques used in the previous chapter to analyse the Irish chapels were applied in this chapter to the measurable drystone chapels of Islay. Chronological factors were discussed and it was argued that three chapels with western entrances and north-east/south-west orientation are probably pre-Norse, and a further three with doorways in the west are possibly from the same period; they were described. Two chapels that are recorded by the RCAHMS as drystone were rejected from the analysis on the grounds that they are too large to have been constructed without mortar. The chapels that were rejected for various reasons during fieldwork were described.

Chapter 4: New and reclassified chapels, and miscellaneous sites

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents sites that as a result of fieldwork are newly recognised or should be reclassified, along with possible Early Christian simple burial grounds.

4.2 New chapels

Two new chapels have been identified during the course of my research.

4.2.1 Kilcavan, Kelsay, chapel and burial ground

Although Maceacharna includes Kelsay in his list of chapels obtained from the late Gilbert Clark (Maceacharna 1976, 52), he comments that he does not know it himself, and it appears that if its location was ever known, it was lost in modern times. In sixteenth and seventeenth-century rentals, Kelsay is associated with the place-name *Kilcavan*:

Kilcavane and Kelsay (1541), *Kilcavane and Kelsay* (1614), *Kilcavan et Kelsay* (1627), *Kealsa, Killaglan and Ilandoursa* (1631), *Kilcaven et Killsay* (1662) (Macniven 2006, 336). *Kilsey et Kyntisan* are listed in a rental of 1509 of the farms and church lands of Islay (Smith 1895, 485).

There are two dedications to St Kevin in Kintyre (MacKinlay 1914, 88) and possibly another one on Islay at Cill a' Chuibein, near Trudernish (*infra*, 95-100), otherwise dedications to this saint are rarely found in Scotland. There is a Kilcavan in Ireland, dedicated to St Kevin (Hogan 1910, 55).

While studying the first edition OS map (Figure 4.1), David Caldwell realized that the orientation of one of the buildings at Kelsay farm suggested that it could be a chapel (*pers com*). The author visited the farm. The site is situated between a sheepfold and the farm track at NR 1944 5603. It is covered by grass and has survived better than most of the other Islay chapels. Internally it measures about 6m by 3.1m transversely within walls spread to 2.4m (east and west) and 3m (north and south), and about 1.1m in height. The entrance is in the south wall. The spread of its walling and the overlay of soil suggest that it may have been revetted with turf. At Speke Keeill on the Isle of Man, a chapel excavated in 2006 (Wessex Archaeology 2007, 9) revealed the use of unshaped stones, revetted with turf, and it is likely that a similar construction technique was utilised at Kelsay. The date of Speke Keeill is not

known and the published ninth-century date is speculative; it was later than three underlying burials dated to the sixth to seventh centuries AD, but dating for the chapel was elusive. The excavation revealed that the entrance was in the south wall, and in my opinion Speke Keeill is probably two to three centuries later than the published date.



Figure 4.1: In this detail from OS sheet CCXVIII.6, 1882, the chapel is to the right of the sheepfold.

The plan of the chapel and burial-ground is shown on the first edition map, although it was not identified as such by the OS in 1878 (Figure 4.1).

At Kelsay, the northern side of the chapel's D-shaped enclosure is built against a rocky ridge; it measures 22m north to south by 28.3m transversely over walls about 1m in height and thickness. The author believes that the enclosure was originally oval and was converted in modern times into a sheepfold by the addition of the straight-sided east end which has a centrally-placed entrance and appears to be more recent than the remainder of the enclosure.



Figure 4.2: Kilcavan chapel from the west

The lands of Kelsay are included together with *Killaglan* (Kilcavane) and *Ilandoursa* in a rental of 1631. This suggests an old connection between Orsay and Kelsay.

4.2.2 Airigh Ghuaidhre, chapel and burial ground

While studying available aerial photography of Islay in the RCAHMS (DP_021204), the author noted a possible chapel within a burial ground among the complex of pre- and post-improvement enclosures and buildings at Airigh Ghuaidhre (NR 3986 6259). This complex is close to the extensive lead mines of North and South Ardachie, south of Ballygrant. The north mine is situated to the west of the road from Ballygrant to Mulindry, and the south mine near to Loch Bharradail (Cressey 1993, 67; ICD). Analysis of sediment from Loch Bharradail, nearby, by Cressey (Caldwell 2008, 231) reveals that mining of lead was carried out here from at least the 1360s, and it is reasonable to assume that it would have been strategically important and would have supported a sizeable population from a much earlier times..



Figure 4.3: Airigh Ghuaidhre chapel; (© RCAHMS DP_021204)

The burial enclosure is platformed into a gentle slope, and internally measures 26m east-west by 22m north-south within walls about 2m in thickness and up to 1m in height. The entrance to the enclosure is in the south-west although there are several other smaller breaks to the north and north-east. The possible chapel survives as a stony oval mound about 0.8m in height, which measure about 6.8m east-west by 4.1m north-south; it may be seen in the centre of Figure 4.4. The mound is orientated approximately 255/75 degrees, or 15 degrees away from true west-east.



Figure 4.4: Airigh Ghuaidhre burial enclosure with chapel mound

4.3 Reclassified site

4.3.1 Cill Ronain, Braigo burial ground

Cill Ronain is situated on the east side of the road between Loch Gorm and Sanaigmore on the northern part of the Rhinns. It is 370m north of Braigo farm at NR 2348 6965. When the OS and RCAHMS visited Cill Ronain in the 1970s (RCAHMS 1984, 167; NR26NW 2) the site was overgrown and interpretation was difficult. The enclosure is situated at the edge of a



Figure 4.5: Cill Ronain from the east



Figure 4.6: Cill Ronain; structure on the top of the enclosure mound looking west

field of pasture. It is noticeably raised (c.1m) above the level of the surrounding field (Figure 4.5). The eastern sector appears to have been truncated by ploughing – a process that still continues, resulting in the enclosure appearing oval, whereas the OS recorded it as circular with a diameter of 20m. Suggestions of an external ditch may be seen on the north and west. Unfortunately, the site is a repository for field-clearance boulders of all sizes, which hinders interpretation of the remains of a structure on the top of the mound. This appears to be a rectangular building roughly 3.5m in internal width, which is orientated 257/77 degrees, or 13 degrees south of true west-east (Figure 4.6). The eastern part of the building is not well-defined and may be under grass-grown field clearance rubble. This site is therefore an early burial ground complete with chapel. There is no sign of the two grave markers that were noted in the 1970s. The site is dedicated to St Ronan (MacKinley 1914, 152). There are many saints with this name and dedications are found throughout the Hebrides and on the mainland.

4.4 Simple burial grounds containing cairns

4.4.1 Cill an Ailein (RCAHMS 1984, 160; NR45SE 4; NR 4622 5332)

This site is situated immediately to the west of the coastal road to Ardtalla, about 150m north of the point where the road is nearest to the shore, and only 60m from the high water mark at Claggain Bay. The meaning of *Cill an Ailein* is ‘church of the green or plain’, which hardly agrees with the topography. It survives as a sub-circular enclosure about 12m in diameter with a flattened north-eastern sector. The enclosing-wall largely consists of beach-boulders and earth; it is covered by grass and, at the time of my visit, the interior was blanketed by iris and (short) bracken. Nevertheless, the major cairn in the interior referred to by IASG (Celoria 1960, (7)59) was clearly visible and minor ones were detectable under foot in the vegetation. The presence of cairns may imply the continued use of a pagan burial technique in the early years of Christianity. The setting of white pebbles noted in 1976 by RCAHMS was not found. The enclosing wall is spread to about 1.5m in width and in places reaches 0.5m in height. Burial grounds such as Cill an Ailein, which are simply delimited by a single thickness of boulders rather than an enclosure wall, could be very early undeveloped cemeteries. In 1878, the OS noted that ‘it has not been used within living memory, nor is there any knowledge of when it was used’ (ONB 36 1878, 30).

4.4.2 Cladh Chill Fhinn, Nerabus

Cairns are also found in burial grounds elsewhere on Islay: at the chapel at Bruichladdich (Section 3.5.3) and at Cladh Chill Fhinn, which according to MacNeill (1900, 102) is ‘covered with mounds supposed to be graves’. It is now known as Cladh Cill Iain (Nereabolls 2, Section 3.5.4); no burial mounds are now visible.

4.4.3 Cill Luchaig, Laphroaig (RCAHMS 1984, 166; NR34NE 16; NR 3902 4524)

Another simple burial ground is recorded at Cill Luchaig, Laphroaig; it is oval and measures 24m by 13m internally within a largely single thickness boulder wall. This site has not been visited.

4.4.4 Cemetery of penannular-ditched barrows, Newton, Islay

In 1975, a major crop-mark complex was discovered about 600m north-east of Bridgend. It comprises a group of 17 barrows with annular or penannular ditches and what appeared to be central grave pits, along with miscellaneous enclosures and other unidentifiable features

(RCAHMS 1984, 83). Three of these crop-marks were excavated ahead of the realignment of the A846 road and were found to be soil-filled penannular ditches 8-10m in overall diameter. Each contained a central rectangular pit averaging about 1.9m in length by 0.75m in width and aligned east to west. No artefacts or skeletal material were found in the pits, although one had small vertical stone slabs at each end. The combined results of phosphate and organic analysis of excavated soil from the three pits suggest that they are burial pits. The fill from the penannular ditches indicated the presence originally of either a central mound or embankment with arable agriculture nearby (McCullagh 1989, 23-51).

Barrows are not common in Argyll or in western Scotland generally, but occur in large numbers in the east and north-east, although penannular examples are still rare. On Islay, there is a barrow about 11m overall diameter, 2.7km south-east of Newton at NR 3589 6078 near to Neriby (NR36SE 20; RCAHMS 1984, 55). On the summit of Cnoc nan Nathrach, not far from the head of Lochindaal, and overlooking the old parish boundary, there are two barrows, 9.3 and 4.5m in diameter and 0.7m and 0.4m in height respectively (NR26SE 11; RCAHMS 1984, 53).

A cropmark of a circular barrow was discovered in 2008 on oblique aerial photographs (CANMORE: NR36SW 72; 33925 62812). It is situated c.200m west of the Newton complex, circular in plan and defined by a ditch about 2m wide that encloses an area 15m across. The south-east sector of the ditch is incomplete suggesting that it too could be penannular in style. About 1km north-east from Newton, aerial photography has revealed the cropmark of another possible barrow (NR36SW 73; NR 34975 63319). It is 13.5m in diameter.

The excavator of the Newton site notes that although the practice of single burial within circular ditches is widespread from the early Bronze Age, this hardly ever includes regular east-west alignment or extended burial. This type of burial occurs much more frequently in the post-Roman era. In Scotland, he notes penannular examples, dateable to the early medieval period, from Garbeg, Drumnadrochid on the northern side of Loch Ness, and from Whitebridge, Inverness (McCullagh 1989, 49). The writer notes that the penannular barrow

at both of these sites is associated with a complex of round and square barrows and, in the case of Garbeg, a Pictish symbol stone (CANMORE: NH53SW 15.00; NH41NE 2), which suggests that comparison with Newton may not be ideal. There is however mention in *MSFA* of the Pictish mother of one (or all three) of the sons of Barrfind who divided land in Islay, which raises the possibility that at least one high status Pict lived in Islay at that time.

In Ireland, although there are several examples of multiple inhumation burials within a penannular enclosure (O'Sullivan, A et al 2008, 160-1), individual burials are rarely found. O'Brien calls them 'a short-lived anomaly' and lists five or six of them (O'Brien 2003, 68-9; O'Brien 2009, 148). She notes that they are primarily found in areas of Ireland with recognized Anglo-Saxon links in early medieval times. This hardly helps us with the Newton barrows, although McCullagh finds close parallels for the Newton penannular barrows at Orsett, in Essex, where even the alignment of the ditch opening and the grave are similar (1989, 49). The writer is aware of a number of extant penannular barrows in Co. Donegal (Lacy 1983, 107-10), particularly at Tullymore where there are three. Several of the Donegal group are similar in size to the Newton examples. O'Brien acknowledges that although several examples are known from eastern and western Scotland, as well as one from Anglesey, approximately 90 are known from south-east England (2009, 148). They are also recorded in Gaul (O'Brien 2003, 148). The author finds the option that the Newton barrows covered the graves of traders from Gaul plausible because of the trade routes active at that time (Campbell 2007, 10, 112, 116); however, seventeen burials of Gauls is difficult to explain, unless the result of a battle or a shipwreck. The author's preferred solution to the mystery of these barrows is similar to that offered by the excavator. Referring to *Senchus Fer nAlban* (sic), and the work of Nieke, who unfortunately believed that only the location of the district of *Ros Deorand* is in doubt (*infra*, 177-9), McCullagh notes that the 'best endowed' of the districts, *Freg* is in the valley of the lower River Sorn which includes Newton. He proposes that the Newton cemetery is a late Iron Age site, possibly linked to *Freg* or its forerunner and perhaps associated with a Christian-Irish presence on Islay (McCullagh 1989, 49; Nieke 1983, 306). The writer proposes that the barrows are associated with a Christian presence on the island; they may not necessarily date from the formative days of conversion to Christianity, and could be as late as the seventh or eighth century AD.

After the introduction of Christianity in Ireland in the fifth century, conversion took place slowly throughout the sixth. It was not until the seventh century in Ireland that Christianity was a mainstream part of the social order. The literature suggests that in the late seventh and early eighth century it was not yet the custom for burial in formal Christian cemeteries; pagan practices were still tolerated and the bulk of the population were still buried in ancestral or familial burial places (O'Brien 2009, 135; O'Brien 2003, 67). Writing in the late seventh century, Tírechán describes the burial in the fifth century of the recently converted daughters of a king in a *fossam rotundam* 'round ditch' after the manner of a *ferta* – because that is what the heathen Irish did. He adds the comment that a *ferta* is now referred to as *relic*. Thus in the seventh century Tírechán found the practice of burials inside a circular ditched enclosure acceptable, however the process was in the course of Christianisation through the change of name from *ferta* to *relic*, from *reliquiae*, 'the remains of the saints' (O'Brien 1992, 133). In the late seventh and early eighth century, the sources record the burial of Christians in pagan cemeteries and declarations from clerics for Christians to be buried in Christian cemeteries. At that time, some high-status individuals were still being buried in territorial burial mounds, among their pagan ancestors. The siting of burials on territorial boundaries in the Iron Age is referred to in later Irish law texts (Ó Riain 1972, 25; Ó hÓgáin 1999, 49-50). Such burials are also mentioned in an Irish Law tract of the late sixth or early seventh century in the description of the procedure to be followed by an individual claiming hereditary ownership of a parcel of land (Charles-Edwards 1976, 83-4). In Iron Age Gaul and Ireland a frontier was also the preferred location for an assembly place, a commerce centre, a pagan sanctuary or a (later) Christian church, a major trade-route or road system, hostile encounters, inaugural ceremonies, and political headquarters (Ó Riain 1972). Thus it is possible to suggest that the Newton barrows are the graves of Christians in the style of their pagan ancestors in a familial burial ground overlooking a tribal boundary (the River Sorn?). They probably date to the seventh or eighth century AD. Without further investigation we shall never know. Furthermore the author firmly believes that one of the main communication and trade routes to mainland Argyll from Ireland (Lough Foyle) crossed Islay from Loch Indaal to Port Askaig through the Sorn valley nearby. If correct, this supports my suggestion that the river was the boundary and that the Newton tumuli overlook it and the trade route.

Chapter 5: The Chapels with lateral entrances

5.1 Introduction

Using the identifying numbers from the table created in Chapter Three, the measurable chapels with entrances in the lateral walls, which are assumed to be of twelfth century date or later (Section 3.4), are described in this chapter.

5.2 The Chapels with lateral entrances

These are listed in Table 5.1 and are numbered on the map in Figure 5.2. The comparative plans of the 9 extant Islay chapels with lateral entrances are shown in Figure 5.1.

MAP	CANMORE	NAME	NGRE	NGRN	L m	W m	Area	L/W
1	NR34SW 4	Cill Choman	3147	4115	6.3	3.1	19.5	2.03
4	NR25SW 1	Gleann na Gaoidh	2116	5361	5	2.9	14.5	1.72
6	NR46NW 4	Balulive, Cill Eileagain	4031	6948	5.5	3	16.5	1.83
8	NR36NE 1	Duisker 1	3662	6643	6.5	3.5	22.8	1.86
11	NR24NE 1	Tockmal	2993	4735	5.6	3.2	17.9	1.75
12	NR45SE 1	Cill a'Chubein	4537	5282	6	3	18	2.00
14	NR34NE 1	Cill Tobar Lasrach	3736	4579	7	3.4	23.8	2.06
15	NR36SE6	Kilbraenan	3740	6236	5.4	3	16.2	1.80
17	NR37SW 1	Cill an Ailein	3151	7230				
20	NR25NW 2	Cilleach Mhicheil	2409	5666	3.75	2.25	8.44	1.67
21	NR26NE 2	Craigens, Cill Eileagain	2987	6693	5.5	2.7	14.9	2.04

Table 5.1: Chapels with lateral entrances

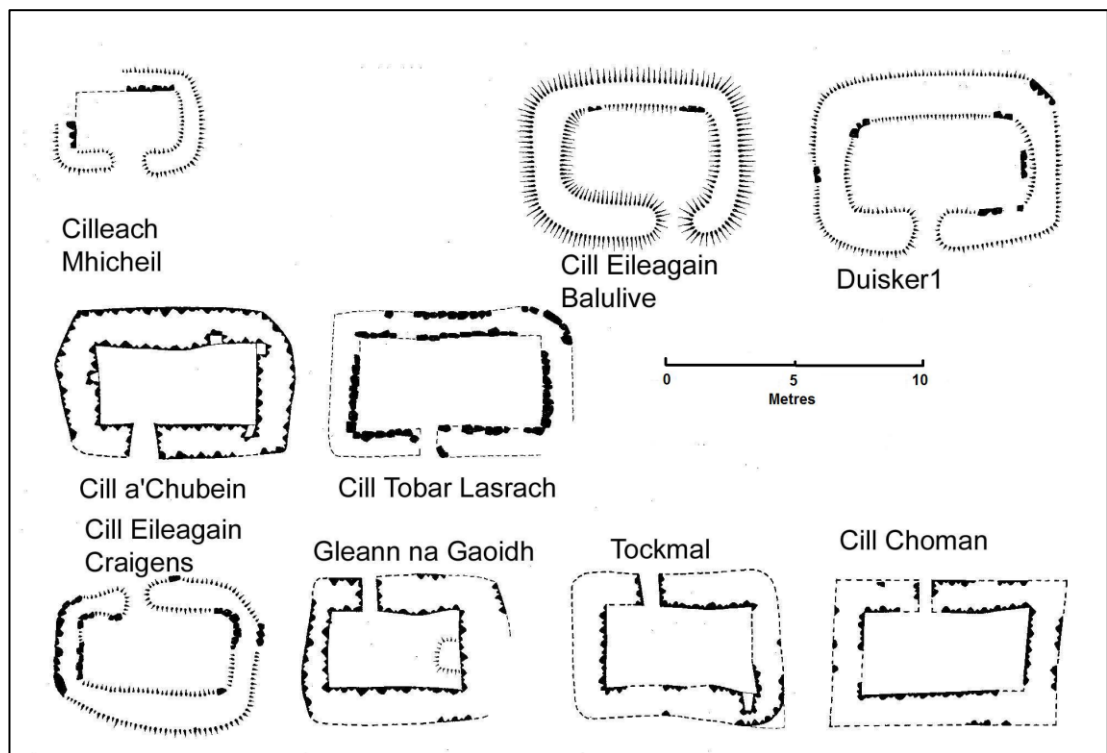


Figure 5.1: Comparative plans of extant chapels with lateral entrances (adapted from RCAHMS 1984)

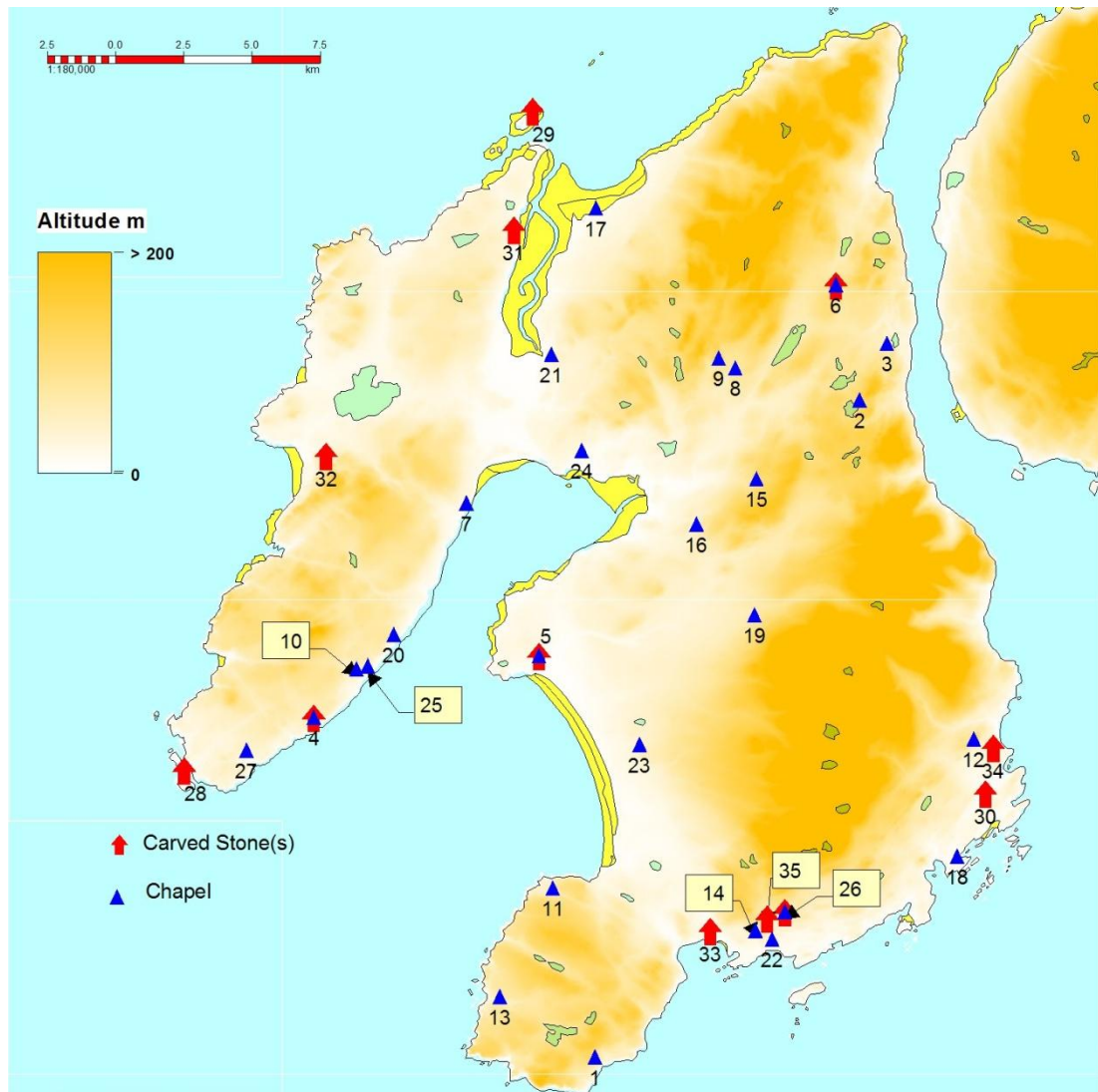


Figure 5.2: Location map of Islay chapels

5.2.1 Cill Chòman, (Map, 1)

This chapel is situated a short distance above, and to the north of, the old coastal track from Kilnaughton to Stremnishmore. One hundred metres to the north-west is the ruined small settlement of Tighean Ùra Strimnish. The name of this chapel was initially recorded as *Cill a' Chobhain* and later changed to the published version. Therefore it is probably the *Kilchoan* or *Cill Chomhghain* mentioned by Watson and dedicated to St Comgan, an 8th - century saint. The spelling in MacKinlay is *Congan* (Watson 1926, 281; MacKinlay 1914, 162-3).

The chapel is densely covered by heather and bracken; it measures 6.3m from east to west by 3.1m transversely within walls about 1m in thickness, which survive to about 1m in height. The walls are of dry-stone construction and most of the facing stones survive; those that are visible seemed to be shaped rather than rubble. The entrance is in the middle of the north wall. Around the chapel is an almost rectangular enclosure 24m from east to west by 11m, which has been subdivided in more recent times by slighter walls parallel to the east wall of the chapel. The boundary wall stands in places to a height of 0.8m. There are no funerary monuments from the site (measurements from RCAHMS 1984, 163; NR34SW 4).

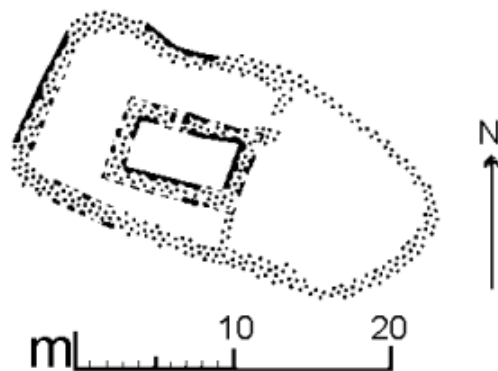


Figure 5.3: Plan of Cill Chòman (adapted from RCAHMS 1984, 163)

During my visit to this site in 2006, an unrecorded well was found 70m west of the chapel. A fresh water spring emerges from an opening in a dry stone-walled surround. Although the spring would have supplied water for the late settlement nearby, it almost certainly was the well for the chapel (Waters & MacFee 2008, 39).

5.2.2 Duisker 1 (RCAHMS 1984, 170; NR36NE 1; NR 3662 6643; Map, 8)

This chapel is situated approximately midway between the farms of Duisker and Ballimartin. Its plan is clearly depicted on the first edition 25-inch OS map (CXC VII, 12, 1882). It sits in the south-east corner of an area of pasture approximately 200m by 160m, which in 1878 was known as *Buaile na L Eaglaise*. It is enclosed on the west from north to south by woodland and a meandering wall, and to the east by the *Abhuinn a' Bhaile Tharbhaich*. A later wall on the west bank of this burn incorporates part of the original wall of the enclosure surrounding the chapel. The enclosure is now almost triangular and measures 22m north to south by 23m within a dry-stone wall up to 3.5m in thickness. A modern wire fence passes through the east side of the chapel enclosure.

The internal dimensions of the chapel are 6.5m by 3.5m within a wall 1.5m in maximum thickness and 0.9m in height. The chapel is aligned to c.252 degrees, 18 degrees south of true west. Unusually, the north-east and north-west corners are thicker and rounded, whereas the other corners are square, possibly suggesting that the building was slab-lintelled. The entrance is in the south wall, which suggests that it dates from the twelfth century or later.

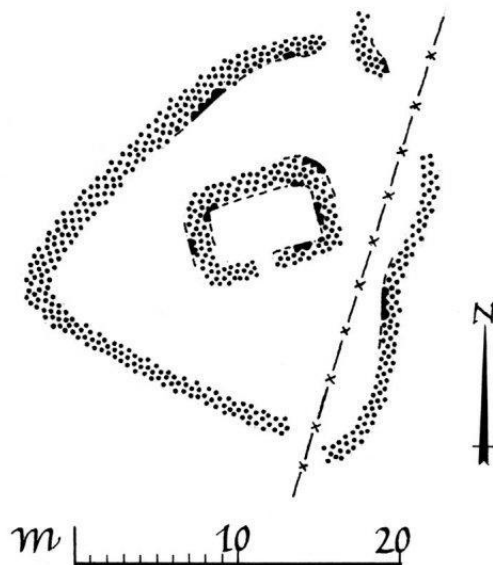


Figure 5.4: Plan of Duisker 1 chapel (adapted from RCAHMS 1984, 170)

It appears to the writer that the shape of the enclosure was probably modified when the surrounding land was enclosed. The survival state is relatively good, although the enclosure appeared to be complete in 1882.

5.2.3 Tockmal (RCAHMS 1984, 262; NR24NE 1; NR 2993 4735; Map, 11)

The chapel sits within a sub-rectangular enclosure on the west bank of an un-named burn close to the deserted township of Tockmal on the Oa of Islay. Internally, the chapel measures 5.6m from east to west by 3.2m transversely within walls about 1.25m in thickness. The rubble-built drystone walls stand to an average height of 1m and have rounded corners. The

entrance is in the north wall. There is an aumbry in the south-east corner. The almost rectilinear enclosure measures 32m north-west to south-east by 18m over walls about 1.2m in width and 0.9m in height. The orientation of the chapel is 288 degrees, or 18 degrees north of west. The name of this chapel is lost. However, its relatively better state of survival suggests that it remained in use in some form into post medieval times, in connection with, or possibly as the church for, the nearby townships of Tockmal, Grassdale and Frachdale. It is possible that it is late medieval in date, built when it was fashionable to place doorways in lateral walls. It is not mentioned by Martin as one of the churches in use in 1695 (Martin 1703, 243).

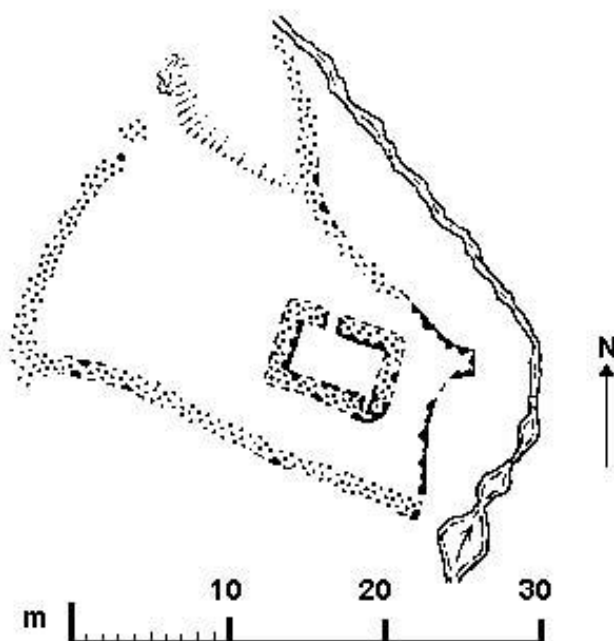


Figure 5.5: Plan of Tockmal chapel (adapted from RCAHMS 1984, 262)

5.2.4 Cill a' Chubein, (RCAHMS 1984, 159; NR45SE ;NR 4537 5282; Map, 12)

This chapel is situated 1.5km north-north-west of Kintour in scrub-woodland on the lower slopes of Druim Nam Bùth at NR 437 5282. Graham considered it to be the oldest chapel on the island; the writer did too when he commenced his research. Although situated only 800m from the coastal road, the site is difficult to find. The dedication is traditionally to St Kevin, although 'the church of the hollow' has been suggested from Gaelic *cobhan* (Graham, 1895, 93-4). Topographically however, the site sits in a hollow, albeit, close to the edge of a rock

escarpment on the wooded lower slopes of Druim Nam Bùth. In the 1890s, Graham was able to trace the remains of the altar 1.7m in length at the east end, and noted a mound of stones which he thought may be the foundations of a cross-base south-east of the chapel. Today, a setting of stones may be seen 4m south-west of the south-west corner of the chapel and another 1.5m to the east of it. These may represent the remains of a *leacht* and perhaps a cross base. In Graham's time, the well produced 'beautifully clear' water and his local informant said it contained 'worthless odds and ends' deposited as votive offerings. An almost rectangular enclosure 48m by 30m with a wall up to 2m in thickness surrounds the chapel; within it are many rock outcrops. Slighter sub-dividing walls to the east of the enclosure are probably late additions. The dry-stone chapel measures 6m east to west by 3m in width within walls about 1.5m in thickness. The entrance is towards the west end of the south wall and splays outwards (measurements from RCAHMS). Internally there are four aumbries; three at the east end and a larger one in the west wall. This is unique among the Islay chapels. The chapel is relatively well preserved with walls standing to 1.5m in height (figure 5.7). This suggests that the chapel went out of use in a relatively late period, unless the building provided a different function in the post-medieval period when the nearby fermtoons and crofts were established. The conversion of a chapel for secular use is a modern phenomenon, and the writer believes that superstitious beliefs prevented that happening in many cases in the past. The external corners of the chapel are rounded and the walls heavily battered (Figure 5.8), which suggests that the roof may have been corbelled or slab-lintelled, although nineteenth-century photographs of thatched blackhouses, show that some display heavily battered walling (Ferguson 2009, 81, 126-7).

The constructional technique, plan and internal and external architecture of Cill a' Chuibein are remarkably similar to the corbelled-oratory, Sgeir An Teamphill or Tigh Beannaichte on Sula Sgeir west of North Rona (CANMORE: HW63SW 1). This also has its entrance in the west end of the south wall, and survived intact until recent times.

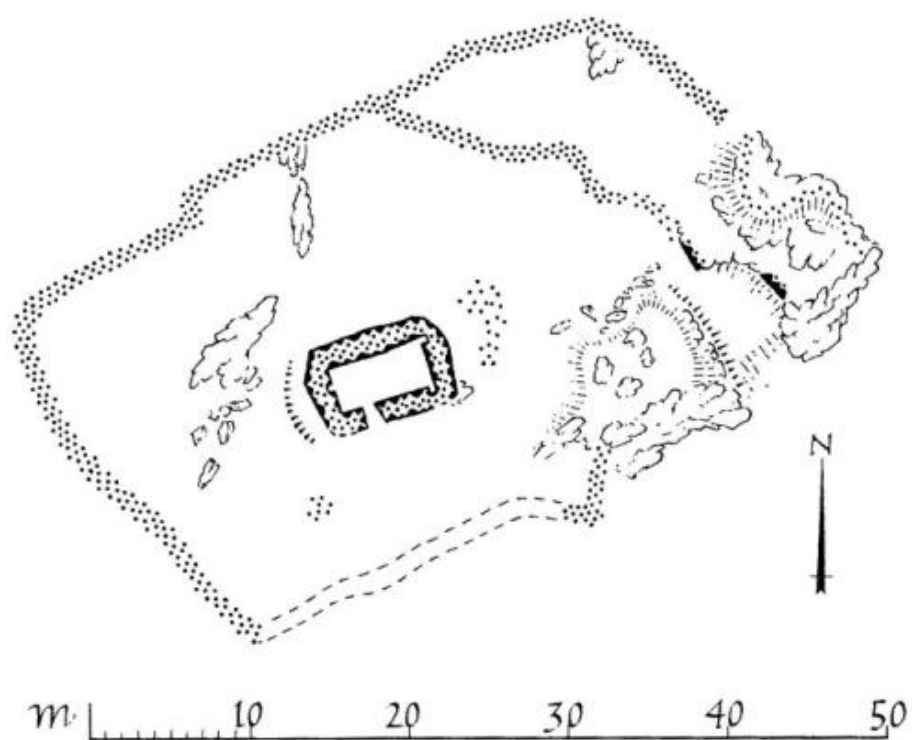


Figure 5.6: Plan of Cill a' Chuibein (adapted from RCAHMS 1984, 159)



Figure 5.7: Cill a' Chuibein chapel from the north-west

The remains of this chapel therefore are difficult to interpret; it is different to all of the others on Islay. We have the possibility that it is an early corbelled chapel, but to explain its remarkable state of survival we must assume that it was reused in the early-modern period. Alternatively, it is simply a post-Reformation chapel with lateral doorway and aumbries, constructed in the traditional blackhouse style that continued to be venerated with its well, into the modern era.



Figure 5.8: Cill a' Chubein; north-east corner showing batter of walling

The remains of a possible *leacht* and a cross base outside the chapel, and the Holy well, strengthen this pilgrimage role. Although the absence of a western entrance weakens the argument for an early date, support is provided by *Teampull Sula-Sgeir* discussed above, and the corbelled oratory in Ireland with the door in the west end of the south wall, on Bishop's Isle, Co Clare (Figure 5.9).



Figure 5.9: Oratory with door in the south wall, Bishop's Isle, Co. Clare (Ó Carrágain 2010)

In the latter oratory the west door was blocked up in the medieval period (Harbison 1970, 53) and the author suggests that the same may have happened at Cill a' Chuibein, when it became liturgically fashionable to provide entrances in lateral walls. It is almost certain that any church or chapel in use at that time would have been modified in this way. There is no evidence of a blocked western entrance at Cill a' Chuibein, although at the time of my visit, the interior was full of tumble, bracken and scrub; only archaeological investigation of the footings of the west wall would confirm the presence of a blocked door. My conclusion is that this chapel was built sometime after the twelfth century, although only excavation could confirm this. There are two dedications to St Kevin in Kintyre (MacKinlay 1914, 88), otherwise dedications to this saint are rarely found in Scotland.

5.2.5 Cill Tobar Lasrach, Port Ellen (RCAHMS 1984, 167; NR34NE 1, NR 3736 4580; Map, 14)

Traditionally referred to as Eaglais Tobar Lasrach (Graham 1895 74-6), the name commemorates the chapel of the well of *Lasair*. The chapel measures 9m east to west by 5.5m north to south over walls about 1m in thickness. The external corners are rounded. The

north and east walls of the chapel continue to form a sub-circular enclosure 14m east to west by 12m (measurements from RCAHMS). The chapel appears to have been constructed in the corner of an earlier enclosure. The entrance to the enclosure is in the south-west; there is an upright hole-stone either side of the entrance. One has a circular hole towards the top and the other has a rectangular hole in a similar position (Figures 5.12 and 13).

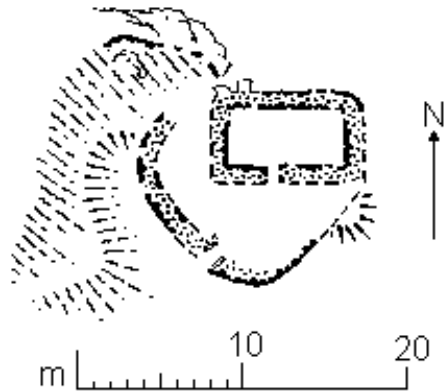


Figure 5.10: Plan of Cill Tobar Lasrach, Port Ellen



Figure 5.11: Eaglais Tobar Lasrach; worked stone



Figure 5.12: Eaglais Tobar Lasrach; hole-stone at entrance to outer enclosure. Stick 1m in height



Figure 5.13: Eaglais Tobar Lasrach; hole-stone at entrance to outer enclosure

Hole-stones are found on Early Christian sites in Ireland. Hamlin refers to several categories including holed crosses, pierced ballauns, and simple slabs pierced by a hole (Kerr 2008, 154). There, and in Scotland, they tend to have pagan associations with fertility, healing and marriage. In the case of *Eaglais Tobar Lasrach*, it is my belief that the stones are component parts of bases for wooden crosses, which have been reused at a later time as gateposts to the burial enclosure. The ‘gate-post’ with the circular hole could be an unfinished holed-cross, which also finds parallels in the far north, in North Rona (*ibid*; Anderson 1881, 116). The outline of the stone is partially shaped and there are tool marks on the stone; it may have broken while the mason was carving the left side of the shaft (Figure 5.12). It is possible that the saint commemorated at Cill Tobar Lasrach is Lasair of Aghavea who was educated by Molaise of *Daimh-inis* (Devenish) where, interestingly, one of the few hole-stones in Northern Ireland is found (Kerr 2008, 147; Gwynn 1911, 75; Ó Dufaigh 2004, 300). There is a miracle story, which describes how Molaise was rescued by a heavy stone, which appeared from nowhere to transport him over the sea back to Ireland. It is possible that at a time when the original function of the hole-stones at Cill Tobar Lasrach – to support one or more crosses – was long forgotten, they became venerated because of this miracle story.

The eponymous well was clearly visible in 1895 (Graham 1895, 74-6). In 1978, the OS reported that it was poorly preserved and situated approximately 50m south of the chapel. At that time, it was enclosed by boulders and supplied water to a modern trough. The writer was unable to locate it.

The chapel of Cill Tobar Lasrach on Islay only survives to 0.6-0.8m in height and there is nothing to suggest that it is earlier than similar chapels in the island. While the corners are rounded, the wall thickness implies that the chapel was not corbelled. However, the dedication of the well to a rarely commemorated saint may be early. Cill Tobar Lasrach is thus a chapel connected with a holy well of Early Christian date. Wooden crosses supported in stone bases, fragments of which survive today, may have been associated with the well and the burial ground, and possibly with an earlier chapel. The existing chapel probably dates to the twelfth century or later. One hole-stone may be an unfinished Early Christian hole-cross. The site may be compared with two Early Christian sites in Northern Ireland with the same dedication.

5.2.6 Gleann na Gaoidh (RCAHMS 1984, 182-4; NR25SW 1; NR 2118 5361; Map, 4)

This site is close to the western shore of Loch Indaal on the southern part of the Rhinns. Its landscape setting suggests a conscious decision to establish the chapel away from the road that skirts the western shore of Loch Indaal, immediately next to which the other drystone chapels on the southern Rhinns are situated. The chapel stands within its burial-ground on the south bank of the Abhainn Gleann na Gaoith, about 200m from Loch Indaal. It measures 5m from east to west by 2.9m transversely within walls about 1.3m in thickness; the entrance is in the north wall. The rectangular enclosure measures about 35m by 11m (RCAHMS). At the east end of the interior, the foundations for an altar were noted by RCAHMS in 1975 and by Swift in 1987 (198). Today, the site is too overgrown to record

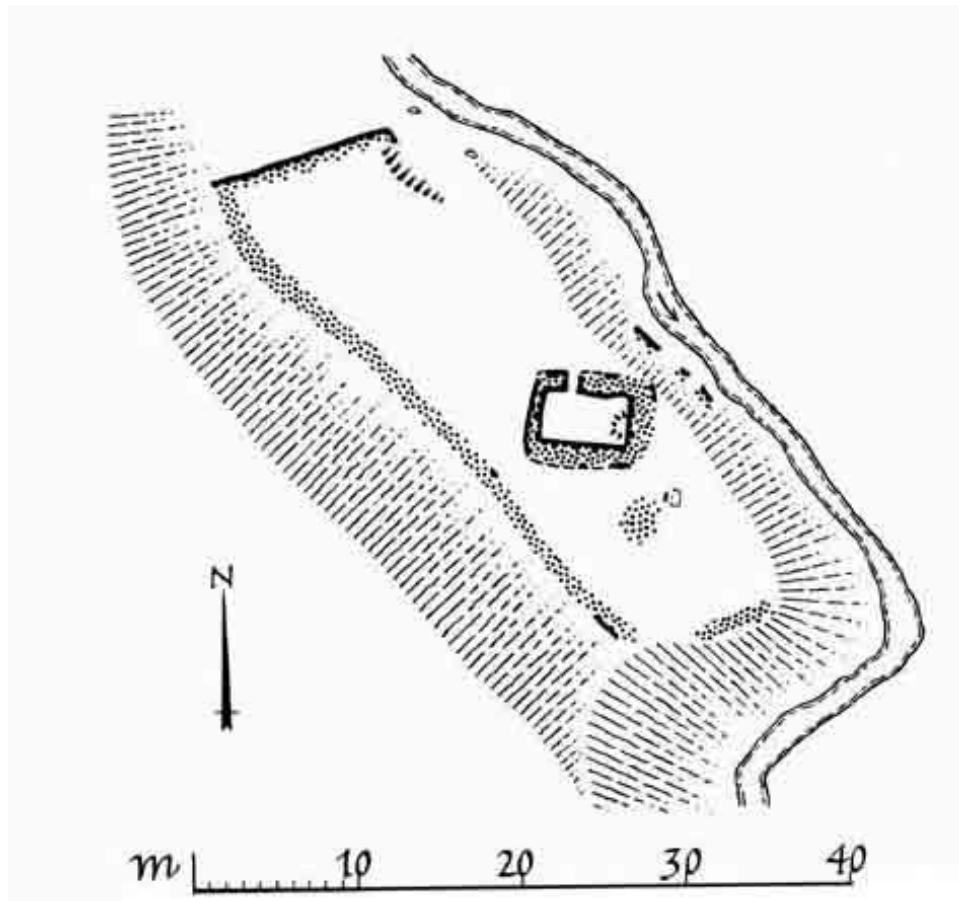


Figure 5.14: Plan of Gleann na Gaoidh chapel (adapted from RCAHMS 1984, 182)

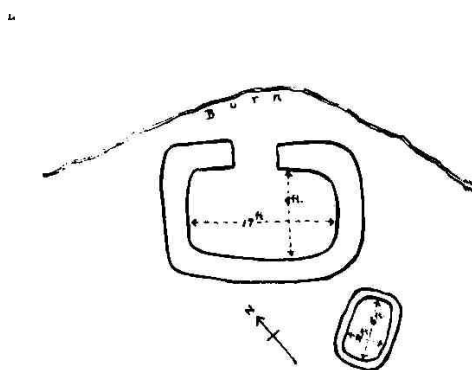


Figure 5.15: IASG sketch of chapel and cell (Lamont 1959, Plate II)

architectural features (see photo Figure 3.1). Two of the three early medieval carved stones from this site may have been brought from Orsay Island (see Section 6.2.1).

The IASG thumbnail-sized sketch of the chapel and a ‘cell’ shown in Figure 5.15, is reproduced in Lamont (1959, plate II). In that figure, the cell measurements are shown as 6ft by 4ft (1.83 by 1.22m). In 1975, this ‘cell’ is described by the RCAHMS as a roughly built stone platform, 2.8m by 2m, with a circular hollow in the centre, perhaps the result of excavation. In 1978, it was described as an un-classifiable mound 3.5m in diameter by the OS. However, Lamont remarked that an authority on Manx antiquities, believed that until the cross-slab (Figure 6.2 (ii), 112) was moved, it was loosely standing on what he believed was a lintel grave (Lamont, 1968, 21). The ‘lintel grave’, the ‘cell’ and the ‘platform’ may all be descriptions of the same feature, which in my opinion represents the remains of a *leacht* (see Orsay, Section 7.3.1). This would have consisted of a drystone-built platform, with a slab-covered top; the cross-slab would have been loosely mounted on the slabs.

Although, the OS believed the chapel to be of drystone construction, the RCAHMS thought that the walls were laid in clay-mortar. This would be quite unusual, if not unique, for an Islay chapel of this size, and until the walling is re-examined, the author assumes that it was of drystone construction. Swift commented that this chapel was no more constructed from clay mortar than any of the other Islay chapels (1987, 178). The situation of this chapel is very secluded and it is not visible from the nearby road or from Loch Indaal, consequently it may have acted as a retreat for the monks of Orsay Island. The orientation of the chapel confirms its ecclesiastical function, because a house in this position would surely be constructed with the long axis parallel to the burn.

5.2.7 Cill Braenan, Daill (RCAHMS 1984, 193; NR36SE 6; NR 3740 6236; Map, 15)

Graham could find no trace of a chapel at Kilbraenan steading although he acknowledged that the OS map marks the site of it. He questions whether ‘some substructures of a small building, properly oriented, among a mass of later ruins at *Cill Bhraenan* may be those of the church’ (Graham 1895 35). The 25-inch first edition map details the buildings and enclosures here; there is nothing that could be construed as a chapel ‘properly oriented’, although it is possible that his ‘substructures’ were so fragmentary that they were not surveyed by the OS (CCIX, 5, 1878). Unfortunately, the writer has not visited this site to try to resolve the difference in findings between the OS (1978) and the RCAHMS (1974). The OS found a burial ground between the *Allt Cill Bhraenan* and the ruined steading. It measured 22m east to west by 26.5 transversely within a wall up to 1.5m in width and 0.3m

in height; inside the north-east corner was a rectangular depression, 5.4m east to west by 3.0m, possibly the site of a building. The RCAHMS found no identifiable remains among the ruins of the steading. One can say little more other than place-name evidence suggests that there was a chapel here, and in the nineteenth century the OS noted a local tradition of a burial ground.

The dedication is presumably to *Brénaid*, *Brénainn* or St Brendan. Watson notes that while there are 17 saints with this name, two are well known; *Brénainn m. Findloga* and *Brénainn m. Nemainn* (Watson 1926, 274). There is some evidence from Adomnán's life of St Columba that suggests that these two saints may be the same (Butter 2007, 308). Butter notes that there are reasons to assume that the commemorations to Brendan in Scotland are mostly to *Brénainn m. Findloga*, where he is associated in the west with dedications in Tiree, Mull, Islay, Bute, Seil Island and Kintyre (*ibid*).

5.2.8 Cilleach Mhicheil, Carn (RCAHMS 1984, 159; NR25NW 2; NR 2409 5666; Map, 21)

This chapel and burial-ground is situated 100m west of the high-water line of Loch Indaal and immediately west of the coast road from Port Charlotte to Portnahaven. It is c.2km south of Port Charlotte. In 1945, the Piggots misidentified the site as a cairn containing a cist. It was interpreted as a chapel by the IASG (Newall & Newall 1961, 22). The chapel, and the adjacent crofting settlement to the south, do not appear on the first edition 25-inch OS map, although the inlet below the chapel is shown as *Port Gille Car-mhìceil* (CCXVIII, 7 1882). On current editions, the name reads *Port Cellachan Michael*.

The chapel measures 3.75m from east to west by 2.25m transversely within walls about 1.25m in thickness and 0.4m in height (measurements from RCAHMS). There is an entrance in the centre of the south wall. The enclosure wall, which is D-shaped, was in my opinion originally circular and 14.5m in diameter. It has been truncated and forms part of a field-dyke that is aligned with a field-boundary that continues uphill. On the east side, the enclosure wall is built on massive boulder foundations and measures 1.5m in average width. Entrance to the enclosure is from a terraced platform in the lower south-east sector, however this also may be as a result of plough disturbance and the position of the original entrance is uncertain.

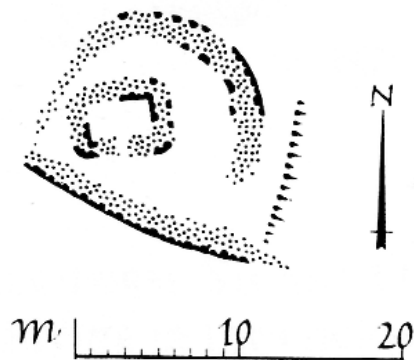


Figure 5.16: Cilleach Mhicheil, Port Charlotte, chapel and burial ground (adapted from RCAHMS 1984, 159)

The dedication is to St Michael; chapels founded by Irish monks and their followers would not have been commemorated with a Scriptural dedication, with the exception of St Mary, (see Kildalton, Section 6.2.7). Neither would one founded by the Norse. It is likely to be associated with the change to Latin Christianity in the eleventh to twelfth centuries (MacKinlay 1910, 1-2). The entrance in the south wall supports a construction date in the 12th century or later.

5.2.9 Cill Eileagain, Craigens (RCAHMS 1984, 165; NR26NE 2; NR 2987 6693; Map, 22)

The turf-grown footings of this chapel stand within a raised-up D-shaped burial-ground measuring approximately 18m from north-east to south-west by 14m transversely within a drystone wall 1m in thickness. Internally, the chapel measures approximately 5.5m from east to west by 2.7m, within walls about 1m in thickness.

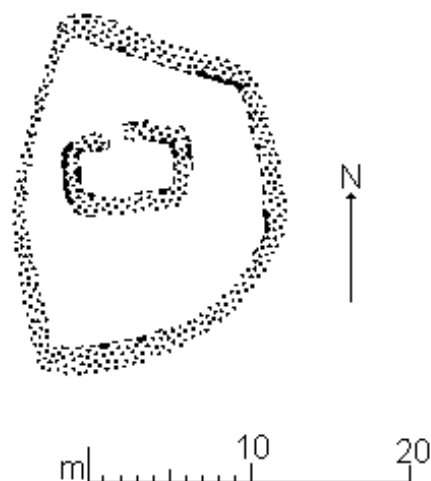


Figure 5.17: Plan of Cill Eileagain, Craigens (adapted from RCAHMS 1984, 165)

Unusually, the entrance is in the north wall (this site has not been visited - measurements from RCAHMS). The orientation of the chapel is about 10 degrees south of west/east. The entrance in a lateral wall indicates either construction or remodelling sometime after the twelfth century. The name, Cill Eileagain, is from Gaelic *Cill Fhéileagan*, after St Finlagan, a diminutive form of St Findlug (MacKinlay 1914, 71; Watson 1926, 304).

5.2.10 Cill Eileagain, Balulive (RCAHMS 1984, 165-6; NR46NW 4; NR 4031 6948; Map, 6)

The grass-grown ruins of this chapel and burial ground are situated about 700m north of Mulreesh, 370m south-west of Balulive, and about 1km north-east of Finlaggan (see photo, Figure 3.5). The burial-ground is almost square but two thirds of the north-west wall has been extended to the west at some time. Internally it measures 18m by 15m within a stone-and-turf wall up to 1.5m in thickness, which is noticeably less substantial in the extended section. The internal dimensions of the chapel are 5.5m from north-east to south-west by 3m transversely within walls approximately 1m in thickness (measurements from RCAHMS). The entrance is in the south-east wall. The orientation deviates significantly from east to west by about 28 degrees.

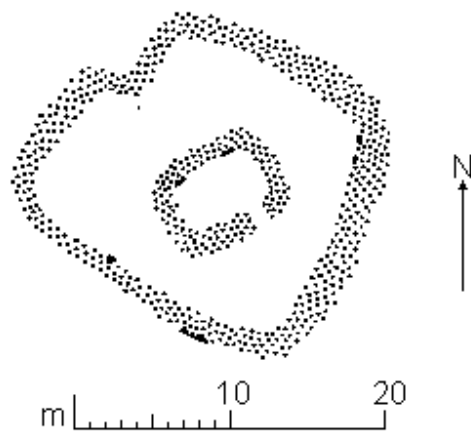


Figure 5.18: Plan of Cill Eileagain chapel, Balulive (adapted from RCAHMS 1984, 166)

There are strong local traditions that the chapel and the nearby place-name Mulreesh are associated with St Maolrise, reputedly a hypocoristic name for St Findlugan or Finlagan hence *Cill Fheileagan* for the Gaelic name of the chapel (Thomas 1882, 267). Finlaggan appears on Pont's late 16th-century map of Islay from the *Blaeu Atlas* as *Falinghan* (NLS). This chapel with its square burial ground may have been associated with the descendants of Norse settlers; the place name Balulive is from Gaelic *Baile Uilbh*, with the personal name a borrowing from Norse *Úlfr* (Macniven 2006, 421). The entrance in the south wall, however suggests that the chapel was constructed or remodelled sometime during or after the twelfth century.

Chapter 6: Early medieval carved stones recorded from Islay

6.1 Introduction

To obtain a realistic understanding of the distribution of early ecclesiastical activity on the island, the locations and descriptions of the early medieval carved stones recorded from Islay are presented in this chapter.

MAP	CANMORE	NAME	NGRE	NGRN
4	NR25SW 1.01	Glean na Gaidh, cross-slab; local stone	2116	5361
5	NR25NE 1	Laggan, incised outline ringed cross	2942	5588
6	NR46NW 4	Balulive, Cill Eileagain; incised ribbon cross with plaited centre	4031	6948
26	NR34NE 6	Kilbride, Latin cross within circular frame	3844	4648
28	NR15SE 1	Orsay Island; cross on tomb; stones at Gleann na Gaidh removed from Orsay	16404	51679
29	NR27NE 1	Nave Island; cross arm fragment, c.f. Kilnave cross	29201	75873
30	NR45SW 3	Kildalton, Great Cross (also 3 thin slabs bearing outline crosses)	45802	50830
31	NR27SE 1	Kilnave Great Cross	28513	71519
32	NR26SW 1	Kilchoman 1; cross-slab Latin cross, superimposed linear cross	2197	6314
32	NR26SW 9	Kilchoman 2, Disc headed slab	2135	6301
33	NR34NE 18	Port Ellen, Doid Mhairi; cross-slab, 'Ringerike' style	357	458
34	NR45SE 19	Trudernish, stray find, cross-incised stone	4609	5252
35	NR34NE 4	Brahunisary, Cnoc na Cille burial ground, equal-armed cross c.f. Kilbride	3780	4625

Table 6.1: Early medieval carved stones from Islay

6.2 The early medieval carved stones

These are listed in Table 6.1. The key refers to the associated map (Figure 6.1) and to the drawing of the stone. Where early medieval carved stones are associated with a chapel site they are indexed in the table with the appropriate chapel number. Later medieval mortared churches associated with early medieval carved stones are annotated 28 to 32. Stones 34 and 35 were stray finds, and Stone 33 was found during the removal of an alleged burial ground where there was no known chapel. Unless stated differently, drawings of carved stones in this chapter are illustrated at a scale of 1:20. All drawings of carved stones are adapted from RCAHMS publications (Fisher 2001; RCAHMS 1984).

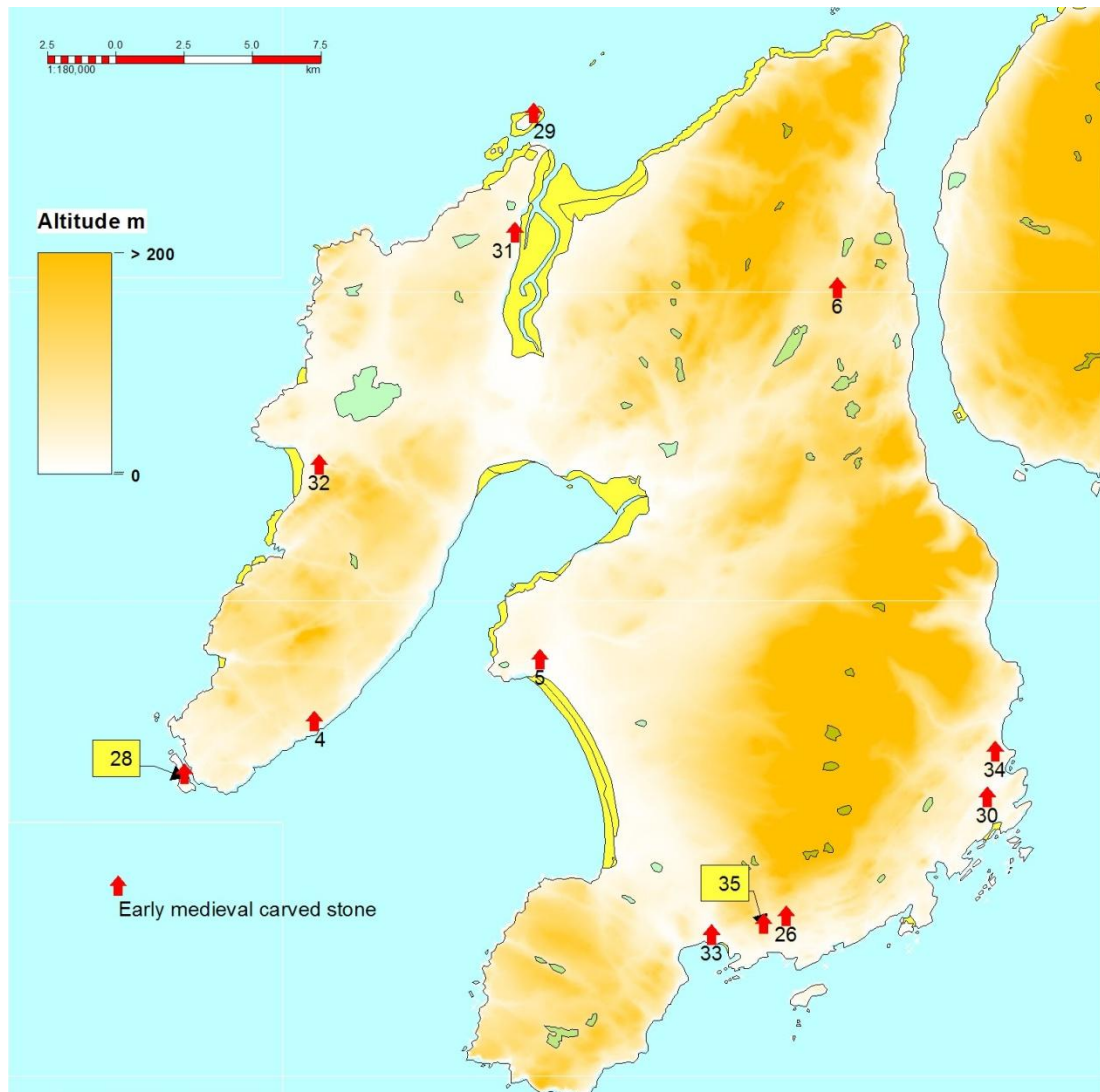


Figure 6.1: Distribution map of early medieval carved stones

6.2.1 Orsay (Map, 28) and Gleann na Gaoidh (Map, 4)

These two sites are described in Sections 7.3.1 and 5.2.6 in this thesis. In 1959 four unrecorded stones were found at the chapel of Gleann na Gaoidh, which is situated on the Rhinns close to the western shore of Loch Indaal (number 4 on the map).

i) Pillar of Torridonian flagstone, of a type which outcrops in the Portnahaven/Orsay area. It measures 1.25m in length by 0.26m in maximum width and bears an outline Latin cross and a circle around the junction of the shaft and transom. Today, the top of this stone is just visible above the scrub-willow covering the chapel site.

ii) Roughly rectangular slab of coarse epidiorite, which outcrops on the shore approximately

200m south-east of the chapel. It bears an outline ringed cross with semi-circular sunken armpits, whose sunken shaft is flanked by a lower transom. Two crosslets with pellets in the angles flank the extended top arm.

(iii) Crude cruciform stone with slightly tapered arms – perhaps a simple grave-marker. It is carved from Torridonian flagstone, which outcrops near Portnahaven. (All measurements and descriptions of stones are based on RCAHMS (1984, 182-4).

(iv) The fourth stone was simply incised with a groove.

Stones (i) to (iii) are shown in Figure 6.2.

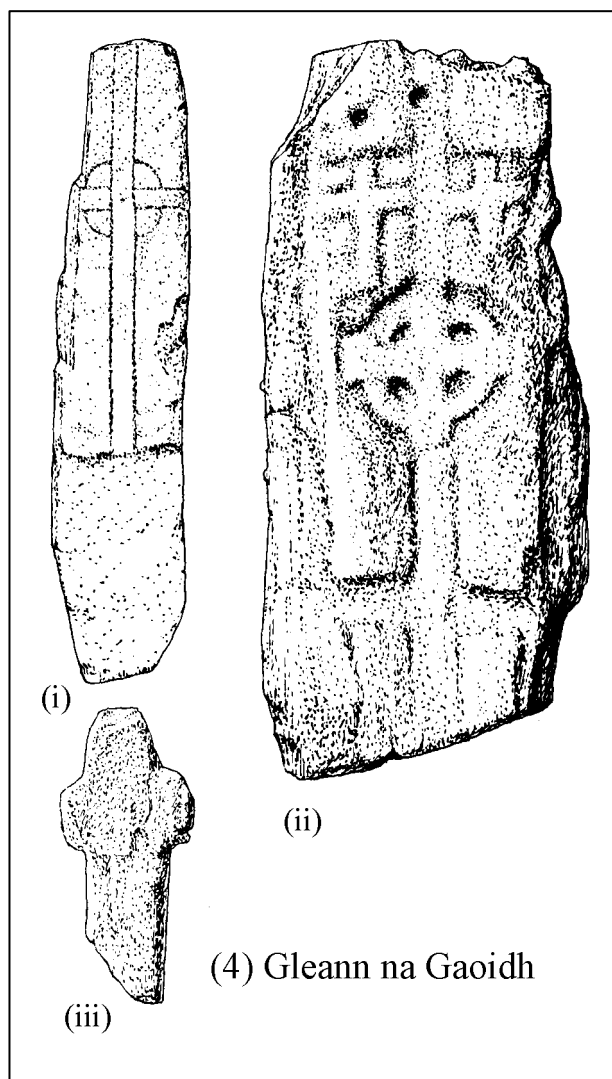


Figure 6.2: Carved stones from Gleann na Gaoidh (adapted from RCAHMS 1984)

The tradition that these stones had been relocated from the chapel on Orsay in the 1820s when the lighthouse was built was collected in 1959 (Dobbins 1959, 17), however as we have just seen, one stone from Gleann na Gaidh is of a type that outcrops very nearby, and one may be dismissed. The use of stone that outcrops close to Orsay/Portnahaven for stones (i) and (iii) strongly supports the tradition that these stones were removed from Orsay.

The fragments of a cross-slab, found beside Hugh MacKay's Grave in 1959, (RCAHMS 1984, 254-6; Celoria 1960, 2(29)) are shown in Figure 6.3. On one face there is an incised ring-headed outline cross with square armpits, with an outline Greek cross in each of the lower surviving subdivisions of the ring. In the lower right subdivision, the spaces above the arms of the crosslet are formed into pellets.

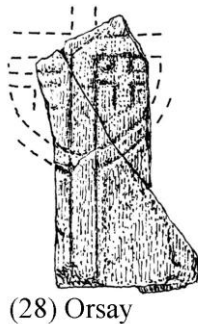
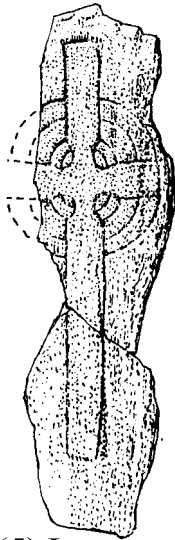


Figure 6.3: Cross-slab fragments; Orsay (adapted from RCAHMS 1984)

6.2.2 Laggan (Map, 5)

Martin mentions 'St Columbus his church in Laggan' in his list of churches in use on Islay in c.1695. During the latter part of the nineteenth century, the River Laggan began eroding it away (Graham 1895, 42). By the 1970s, nothing remained of the chapel. However, in the 1890s, Graham noted that it measured internally c.7.5m east to west by 3m transversely. Remains of an altar projected about 1.3m from the east wall. The chapel was surrounded by an enclosure and a number of plain funerary monuments were visible. In 1850, a number of finely carved tombstones could be seen (MacNeill, 60). The surviving north part of the burial ground measures 25m east to west by 6.7m transversely. In the 1960s, a ninth to eleventh-century slab bearing a double-ringed Latin cross with rounded armpits was found eroding



(5) Laggan

Figure 6.4: Carved stone from Laggan (adapted from RCAHMS 1984)

from the river-bank (RCAHMS 1984, 223-4; Lamont 1968, 20-1, 44-5). It bears an outline double-ringed Latin cross with rounded armpits (Figure 6.4). This chapel was in the parish of Kilmeny and is located on the boundary with the parish of Kildalton.

6.2.3 Cill Eileagain, Balulive (Map, 6)

Not long before 1968, a carved stone was found near the chapel of Cill Eileagain (Lamont 1968, 21).



(6) Cill Eileagain
Balulive

Figure 6.5: Cill Eileagain cross-slab (adapted from RCAHMS 1984)

In 2010, the present occupier of Balulive farm informed the writer that the stone was found in a burn to the north-east of the farm about 850m from the chapel. The stone is a damaged

slab that bears an incised ribbon-cross with an intertwined centre. A knot at the only surviving cross terminal suggests that originally there may have been four. A miniature Latin cross is incised in one quarter. Although 850m is some distance from Cill Eileagain, it is assumed that this ‘pillow stone’ was removed from the chapel.

6.2.4 Kilbride (Map, 23) and Cnoc na Cille, Brahunisary (Map, 35)

Kilbride chapel and Cnoc na Cille burial ground are situated 1.5-2km north-east from Port Ellen. In 1988 an Early Christian carved stone was found at the burial ground of Cnoc na Cille (NR3781 4626). The period of use of the burial ground is not known. The name Cnoc na Cille refers to a rock outcrop in an area of raised rough pasture in a field which has been ploughed and improved in recent years. On the outcrop, an earth and stone-wall encloses an area of c.11m by 8m, of which sections still remain. It appears to have been built on the bed rock. The carved stone is shown in Figure 6.6; it was found face down at the eastern base of the mound. It shows signs of plough damage and is approximately rectangular. One side bears a carving in false relief of a plain equal-armed cross with slightly rounded and bevelled armpits and curved arms. Originally, a band about 25mm wide and 0.26m in diameter encircled this, but it only survives in the lower part. Fisher notes that the stone may be compared to the more complete one from Kilbride 700m to the east. This is also illustrated in Figure 6.6; it bears a Latin cross in false relief within a circular frame 25mm in width, and the armpits are more obvious (measurements from RCAHMS 1984, 168; Fisher 2001, 136). Until 1838, the slab from Kilbride stood a few metres east of the chapel (PSAS 1883, 281-3; RCAHMS 1984, 193).

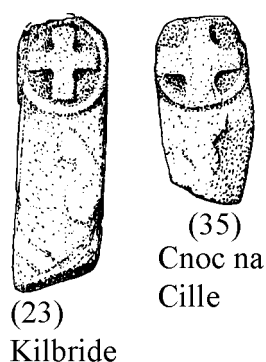


Figure 6.6: Stones from Kilbride and nearby Cnoc na Cille (adapted from RCAHMS 1984)

6.2.5 Kilnave Cross (Map, 31)

The late medieval chapel at Kilnave (*Cill Nèimh*) stands within a nineteenth-century stone-walled enclosure only about 100m from high water line of Loch Gruinart to the east. Although there is an almost complete free-standing cross of seventh to eighth-century date in the burial ground (see Figure 6.7), the site shows none of the characteristics often associated with Early Christian foundations and the RCAHMS compare the chapel architecturally with late medieval work at Dunollie and Dunstaffnage Castles, Lorn (NR27SE 1.00, NR 28524 71520).

It is possible, in my opinion, that the monastic community on Nave Island founded the church here in late medieval times, and that the Kilnave cross originally stood on the island (see above). This is supported by Barber's excavation of the Kilnave cross-base (Barber 1981b, 98-101). He observed that the tenon cut into the foot of the cross had no purpose in the cist-like cross-base which he found at Kilnave, and suggested that the cross was formerly mounted in a different style of cross-base. The bottom-slab of the cross-base was discovered at the same depth below ground level as the threshold of Kilnave medieval church; thus although the cross is believed to date from the eighth century, the base could easily be of a later date. This writer suggests that it was moved from Nave Island when Kilnave chapel was built in the later medieval period.

6.2.6 Nave Island, cross fragment (Map, 29)

A fragment of the arm of a free-standing Early Christian cross had been reused in the paving of the floor of the chapel (see Figure 6.7). It came from the narrowest part of the arm and closely resembles the arms of the Kilnave Cross (Fisher 2001, 140).

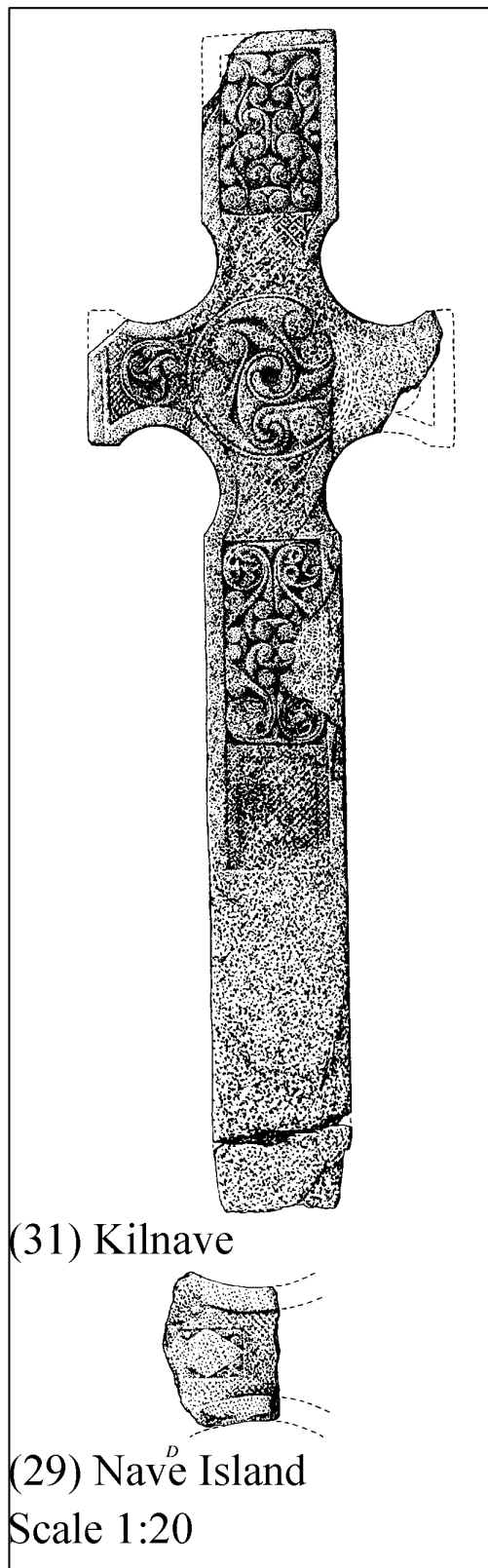


Figure 6.7: Kilnave Cross and fragment from Nave Island (adapted from Fisher 2001)

6.2.7 Kildalton Church and Great Cross (Map, 30)

This parish church was in use until a new one was built in 1732 on the quarterlands of Ballynaughton More (*supra*, 72-3). It is situated on the south side of the track, which leads to Ardmore and Port Mor, 1km to the east. The church served the medieval parish of Kildalton, an independent parsonage in the patronage of the Bishops of the Isles. According to RCAHMS, the architectural style of the church dates from the late twelfth or early thirteenth century. It is a simple rectangular building, 17.3m from East to West by 5.7m transversely within walls about 0.9m in thickness and constructed from boulders laid in lime mortar. There are entrances in both the north and south walls. The churchyard wall is of nineteenth-century date.

The name Kildalton (*Cill Daltan*) is said to be derived from Old Irish *Daltae*, 'foster-son', fosterling' or 'disciple', and the dedication in medieval sources is to St John the Evangelist. The church is first documented in 1425 (RCAHMS 1984 No. 367, n2, 345), although the magnificent and complete monolithic cross (Figure 6.8) suggests an early foundation. It is 2.65m in height and is stylistically closely related to the major Iona crosses. It is one of the finest Early Christian crosses in Britain and probably dates to the second half of the eighth century. In addition to the standing cross, there are a number of other carved stones of Early Christian date from the site (see Figure 6.9); one bears an incised cross, another a Latin cross, and a third a ringed outline cross (NR45SE 3.00; NR 45804 50818; RCAHMS, 1984, 203-15). Fifty metres north-east from the churchyard, a medieval cross stands on a cairn-base at NR 4583 5086. Locally it is referred to as the 'Thief's Cross'. It may have been one of a number of similar crosses that demarked the limits of a sanctuary around the church in medieval times (Watson 1926, 125).



(30) Kildalton Cross (left west face; right east face)
(Scale c.1:20)

Figure 6.8: Kildalton Cross (adapted from Fisher 2001)

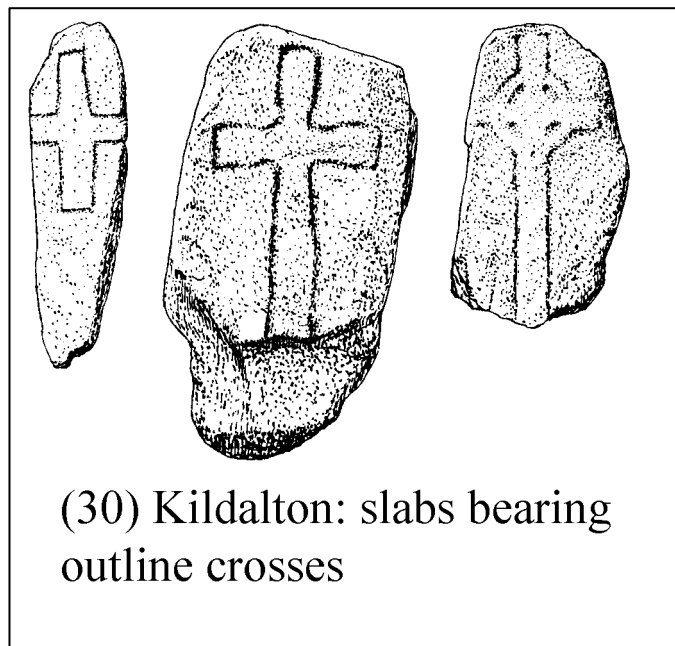


Figure 6.9: Kildalton; cross-marked stones (adapted from RCAHMS 1984)

The rules of ecclesiastical succession rights discussed in early Irish law texts define a range of church types; the *Córus Bésqnai* differentiates between the *annóit* 'primary or mother church', the *dalta* 'disciple-church' the *compairche* 'church of the same *paruchia*' and the *ceall* church 'neighbouring church' (Etchingham 1999, 227-9). The *dalta* church was established by an assigned member or 'disciple' of the primary foundation or mother-church who was not personally connected with the founder or patron. The commemoration to St John the Evangelist is first recorded in late medieval times, and no historic forms of the name Kildalton survive before the fifteenth century. This biblical commemoration could be eleventh or twelfth century reflecting the influence of Rome, perhaps associated with the establishment of the diocese of Argyll c.1189 (Bridgland 2004, 87).

The Virgin and Child panels found on the Kildalton, St Oran's (Iona) and St John's (Iona) crosses are some of the oldest images of Mary from the British Isles; they are not only similar to each other but resemble such images found in the *Book of Kells*. This dedication to Mary may be as a result of the establishment of the four great feasts in the calendar of the church by Pope Sergius I who died in 701 (Clancy & Márkus 1995, 33-4). This suggests very close contacts between Iona and Islay in the seventh century. Therefore, the church at Kildalton may have been established as a *dalta* church from Iona in the Early Christian period by a chosen follower of St Columba. This, rather than a specific commemoration of St John, may account for the place-name Kildalton.

In spite of the contacts with Iona and the survival of early stones from Kildalton, oblique aerial photography shows no suggestion of a monastic vallum around the church, or of an earlier burial ground enclosure (RCAHMS, DP021166-9).

6.2.8 Kilchoman (Map, 32), *Cill Chomáin*, cross-slabs

The area around the parish church of Kilchoman has been improved agriculturally in the last 200 years, and only tantalising glimpses of its early history survive; even the 'new' church of 1827 is now roofless. The dedication is to St *Commán*, one of several saints with that name; however the one commemorated here is almost certainly the priest *Commán* who was a contemporary of *Adomnán* on Iona. This is the only dedication to *Commán* in the west of Scotland (Watson 302, MacKinlay 1914, 60-1; Sharpe 1995, 35, III 19). In 1427 the name is documented as *Killecomman* (OPS, 272).

Although the burial-ground contains an important collection of fourteenth to fifteenth-century tombstones and a free-standing contemporary cross, there are no visible remains of any earlier churches. With its dependencies at Kilchiaran, Kilnave and Nereabolls, the church administered to a parish that extended throughout the Rhinns and (in my opinion) eastwards almost to the northern tip of Islay.

Two early medieval cross-slabs survive from the site situated 380m east and 330m south-west of the church (Figure 6.10). These may have marked the boundaries of a monastery or have been sanctuary crosses, and imply that Kilchoman was an important Early Christian site.

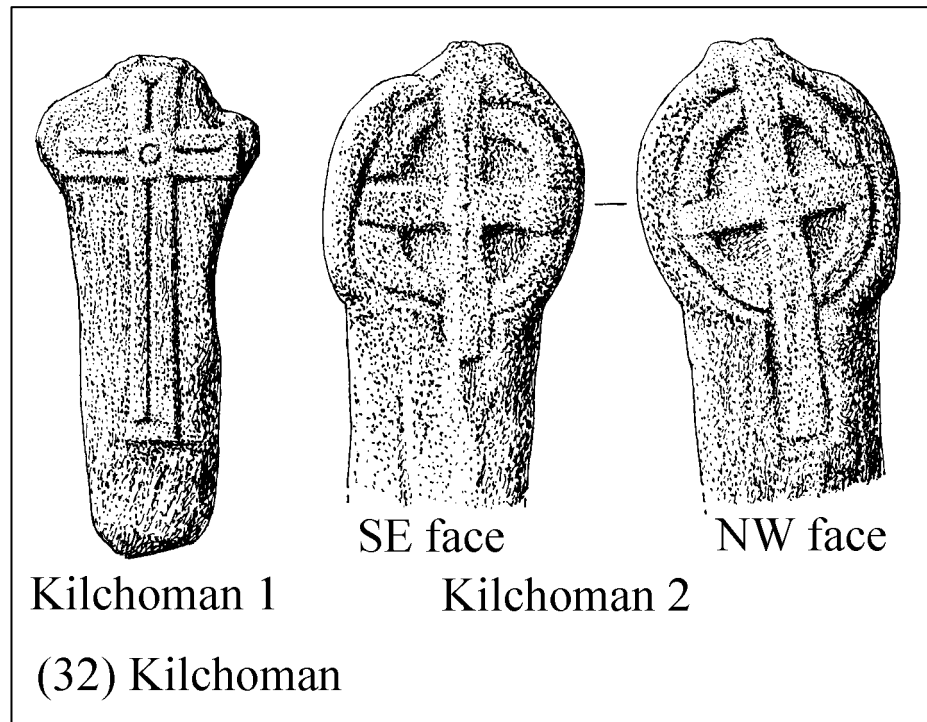


Figure 6.10: Kilchoman 1 & 2 (adapted from RCAHMS 1984)

Kilchoman 2, a disc-headed cross to the south-west, still stands on an old boundary or field dyke in an otherwise improved field. On each face there is a ringed Latin cross with square sunken armpits (see Figures 6.10 & 11; Fisher 2001, 42, 137).



Figure 6.11: Early medieval disc-headed cross at Kilchoman

The cross-slab known as Kilchoman 1, originally to the east, is now in the Islay museum. It is a cruciform slab on which is carved in low relief a Latin cross with square armpits and an overlaid linear cross with forked terminals. At the centre of the superimposed crosses is a small boss; it is illustrated in Figure 6.10 (Fisher 2001, 39, 137).

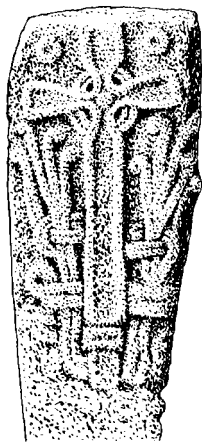
6.2.9 Dóid Mháiri, Port Ellen, cross-slab (Map, 33)

An eleventh-century cross slab in Scandinavian ‘Ringerike’ style was found in about 1838 at the head of Port Ellen Bay, when Dóid Mháiri, ‘Mary’s croft’ was being cleared for cultivation. The find spot, c.NR 357 458, is about 200m west of the distillery and 150m from the north shore of the bay. The site had been left uncultivated in an otherwise cultivated field because of a local suspicion that it was a burial ground. It was being used as a dump for field clearance. The finder believed that there was a suggestion of a building or enclosure (PSAS 1883 (PSAS 1883, 279-81). Today, it is difficult to locate the find spot. The stone was found in the 1840s in ‘a large park’ and ‘north of the limekiln which is on the side of the public road’ (*ibid*). This limekiln is shown on the first edition 25-inch map (CCXXXI.16, 1880). It

is on the south side of the road, which runs east to west, and consequently unless one knows how far north the stone was found, it will be difficult to locate the site of ‘Mary’s croft’.



Figure 6.12: Dóid Mháiri cross-slab



(33) Dóid Mháiri

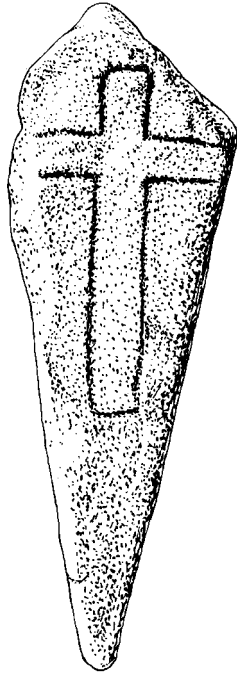
Figure 6.13: Dóid Mháiri, Port Ellen (adapted from RCAHMS 1984)

The cross-slab (Figures 6.12 & 6.13) bears a ringed Latin cross with round armpits and splayed arms. Above are two discs, which have been interpreted as the sun and moon. The foot of the cross penetrates a free-form double-beaded plait which continues upwards on both sides of the shaft and splits into tendrils with lobed terminals, characteristic of the

Scandinavian Ringerike style, which may be dated to the second half of the eleventh century (Fisher 2001, 41, 136).

6.2.10 Trudernish, cross-slab fragment, (Map, 34)

Trudernish is located in the far south-east of Islay at the south end of the Sound. A triangular-shaped slab was found while pipe-laying in 1975 (NR 4609 5252). It measures 1.27m by 0.44m and bears an outline Latin cross (Fisher 2001, 140).



(34) Trudernish

Figure 6.14: cross-marked stone from Trudernish

The nearest ecclesiastical sites are the chapel of Cill a' Chubein (*supra*, 97; NR 4537 5283) and the burial ground of Cill an Ailein (*supra*, 86; NR 4622 5331), both of which are c0.8km (west and north respectively) from the find spot.

Chapter 7: Place-names and Early Christian Monastic Sites

7.1 Introduction

In order to understand the distribution of early ecclesiastical activity on the island the author wishes to bring the reader's attention to two sites where there are important physical remains that no longer include a drystone chapel. There is also some evidence of place-names which could be associated with the early church; these will be discussed briefly.

7.2 Early ecclesiastical place-names on Islay

There are four place-names on Islay that could be associated with the early medieval church. These are shown in Figure 7.1.

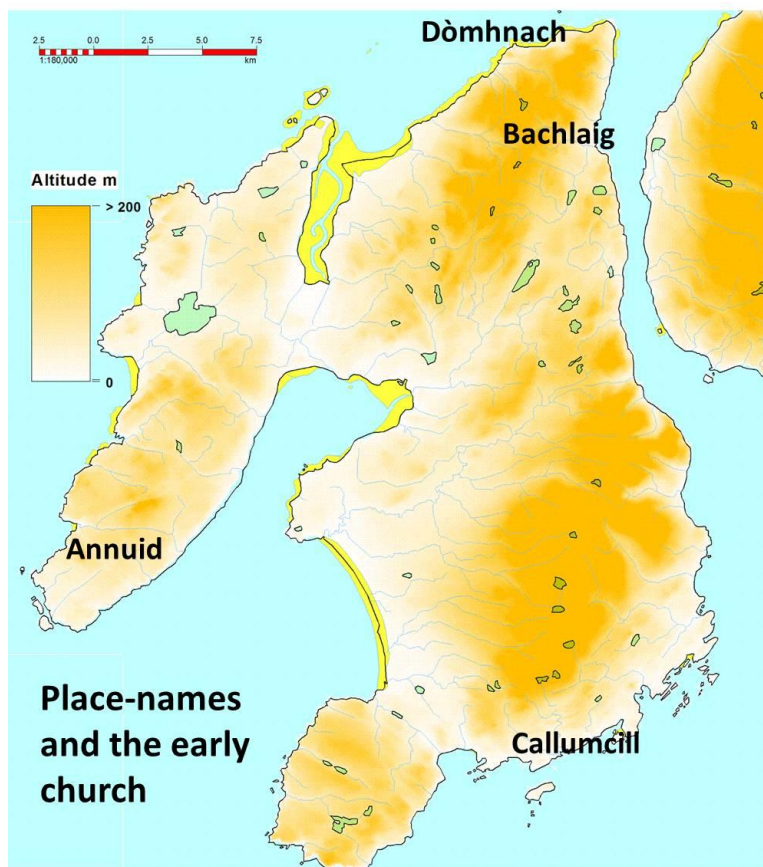


Figure 7.1: Locations of place-names associated with the early church

7.2.1 Annuid

This Islay place-name was first noted by Clancy (Clancy 1995, 115) in a rental of 1509. The association is with the Gaelic place-name element *annaid*, frequently appearing as 'Annat' or

‘Annet’. The name is derived from the earlier *andóit*, which in Old Irish has the meaning ‘a local mother church’. It is widely accepted as an early church term (*ibid*, 91; Fraser, I A 1986, 181; Taylor 1998, 7; Watson 1926, 250-3), and, particularly in the west, uncompounded *annaid* examples may be suggestive of the site of a local centre of pastoral care (Clancy 1995, 114). Annuid appears in the rentals of Islay for 1509 (Smith, G G 1895, 484). It is listed next to *Kilsey* (Kelsay), and thus is located in the Rhinns, however in 1507 (Burnett 1889, 588) it appears as *Ambud*.

7.2.2 Bachlaig (NR 416 753 and NR 413 738)

This name appears in two places on both the first edition and modern OS maps, to the north of Bunnahabhain, where it appears to refer to the name of an area. The name does not appear in any of the published Islay farm rentals or seventeenth/eighteenth-century maps and therefore may be considered to be modern. However there is always a small possibility that it is an old name collected locally by the Ordnance Survey in the nineteenth century, which originally was associated in some way with a saint’s staff or crozier (Taylor 1998, 11; Watson 1926, 266-7). The writer accepts that the link with *bachall* ‘crozier’ is tenuous, particularly as it may also mean ‘shepherd’s crook’; also *bachlag*, which stems from *bachall* may mean ‘shoot/curl/blade’, however it is mentioned for completeness.

7.2.3 Callumkill (NR 408 465)

Although there is no record or local knowledge of a chapel near the farm of Callumkill, the place-name suggests that at some time there was a church dedicated to St Columba in the vicinity. Earlier forms of the name include *Killcallumkill* (1541) (Macniven 2006b, 471) and *Kilcholkil* (Blaeu, 1654, NLS). Although the place-name appears on Blaeu’s map, his symbol for a church does not, however none of the three **Kilcholkil* place-names on Islay at Keills, Laggan and Callumkill are shown with a church symbol by Blaeu. There are late medieval funerary monuments from the other two sites whereas the location of the church and burial ground at Callumkill has been lost for generations. Although Graham mentions the chapel and well – ‘into which offerings were at one time dropped’, there is nothing to suggest that he knew where they were (Graham 1895, 81). Innes also refers to a chapel here; the authorities cited are Blaeu and Martin (Innes 1854, 269).

Martin, who visited Islay in c.1695, and listed its churches, is used by many researchers to identify those in use at the end of the 17th century (e.g., Swift 1987, 137; Caldwell 2008,

197; Innes 269), and the church at Callumkill is assumed to be one of them. The writer believes that Martin's text has been misinterpreted and that the church at Callumkill was not still in use in c.1695. Martin's original text reads:

The name of the Churches in this Ifle are as follow:

Kil-chollim Kill, St Columbus his church near Port Efcok, Kil-Chovan in the Rins on the Weft-fide the isle; Kil-Chiarin, on Weft side Nerbols in the Rins, St Columbus his church in Laggan, a Chappel in Ifland Nave, Killhan Alen North-West of Kidrow (Martin 1934, 275).

The number of churches in this list is commonly assumed to be eight. The lack of a specific location for *Kil-chollim Kill* in the list suggests to the writer that the first church is *Kil-chollim Kill*, St Columbus near Port Efcok (Keills, Port Askaig), and seven churches are included in total rather than eight. Thus, perhaps Martin does not mention a church at Callumkill, and in all probability it went out of use during the period when the medieval churches at Kilnaughton and Kildalton were built. The survival of a number of carved stones in the burial grounds of the other two **Kilcholmkil* chapels suggests that they were used for relatively high status burials –perhaps into the sixteenth century. The last burial at St Columbus, Laggan took place in c.1840; the burial ground at Keills continues to be used.

Callumkill survives as a farm-name because the lost chapel was dedicated to St Columba, and it is possible that there was an early chapel here associated with the Early Christian establishment at Kildalton. The IASG suggest that the lost well may be Tobar na Dabhaich (NR 4091 4774), 1.2km north of the farm of Callumkill, which as the name (dabhach) suggests is situated on Callumkill land. They note that pennies are still offered there (Celoria 1960, 'Additions and Corrections', (7)25). The proposed site is near to the ruined fermtoun of Claigeann Mhìcheil. This is a most interesting suggestion, which has yet to be examined in the field.

7.2.4 Carraig an Dòmhnach (NR 3981 7882)

This is the name of a natural geological dyke that runs into the sea in the far north of the island at the west end of Lon na Cuinasachd, and next to Uamh Mhor, the great cave (Figure 7.2). The place-name means 'rock or headland of the Sunday' in Gaelic. The area is surrounded by old shielings, modern enclosures and some interesting older small enclosures.

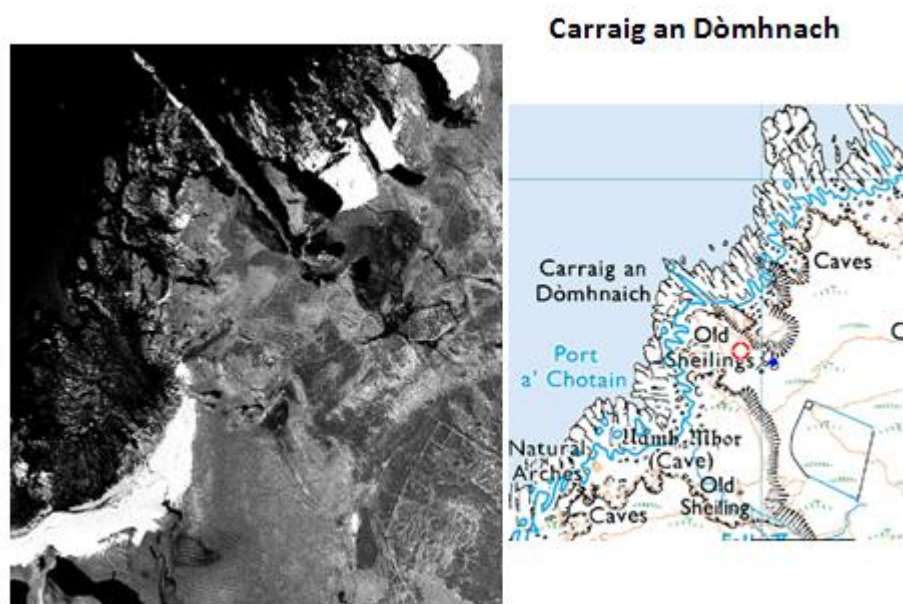


Figure 7.2: Carraig an Domhnach; Left, RCAHMS 612_88_63, 1988 (detail); Right OS 1:25,000, 2004 (detail); both Crown Copyright

Domnach, from Latin *dominicum*, ‘the Lord’s place’ was an earlier word used for *cell*, a church complex, responsible for the generation of *kill* or *kil* place-names. After the fifth century, the Latin parent-word *Dominicum* was no longer in use; Irish *Domnach* was probably not in current use for new foundations after 500 (Charles-Edwards 2000, 184-5). It was believed that the use of the word *Domhnach* was restricted to Ireland, however evidence has been found of similar usage in Scotland (G Márkus, *pers com*). The elements, *Dòmhnach*, *Donach*, *Donich*, *Dòmhnach*, were probably used in place-names associated with the early church in the fifth century in pre-Columban Scotland and continued to be used until the seventh century. This occurrence on Islay could simply refer to a Sunday gathering place, but that seems unlikely. Martin Martin (1934, 274) refers to a well and chapel venerated by locals one mile south-west of Uamh Mhor.

The ‘big cave of Bolsa’, Uamh Mhor (NR 3983 7838), is situated on the north shore of Islay, about 2.5km west of Rhuvaal lighthouse. Martin reported that it can hold 200 people standing or sitting, 14 or 15 families use it as their summer residence, and 3 families reside in it the whole year (Martin 1703, 241). In Martin’s time, the name of the cave was *Uamh Fhearnaig*, which he spelled *Vah Vearnag*. The cave was situated a mile north-east of a (now lost) chapel and well. MacNeill noted that this cave was once the headquarters of those employed in the manufacturing of kelp in the East end of the Island (MacNeill, J G 1899, 70). A short distance along the shore from the cave is Carraig an Domhnaich, which the OS record as ‘Rock of the Sunday’ (ONB 70, 1878, 7).

Although the remote situation of Carraig an Domhnaich might seem to make its function as a gathering place unlikely, it is only 250m from Uamh Mhor, and possibly the place-name was associated with the use of this cave by people collecting kelp. Although we must not rule out the existence of an early chapel in the vicinity, the construction of the place-name is late; one would expect ‘Domnach XX’ rather than ‘XX domnach’ (E Campbell *pers com*). Many vertical aerial photographs and old maps of the surrounding area were examined in a search for the lost chapel mentioned by Martin, 1 mile from Uamh Mhor. Between the landward end of the dyke and the cave, aerial photographs reveal many circular, D-shaped and irregular enclosures and patches of lazy-beds and extensive rig and furrow. Although most of these are likely to be post medieval, they deserve further investigation and survey, however access is difficult. Martin’s chapel was also searched for on aerial photographs in the 1970s by the RCAHMS, who noted a circular feature on one photograph. Later, the OS field-investigators found no trace of a chapel and well one mile south-west of Uamh Mhor, or at the RCAHMS site, which was found to be a patch of bracken (CANMORE, NR37NE 3, NR 3779 7732). This site was visited in May 2007; its correct grid reference is NR 3779 7782, and found to be a circular patch of vegetation. Confluences of water-courses and meanders in rivers and burns in the vicinity of the cave, potentially suitable for Early Christian use, were examined on aerial photographs before the field-trip (NMRS 612_88_77-79, 1988 and 612_88_62-64, 1988).

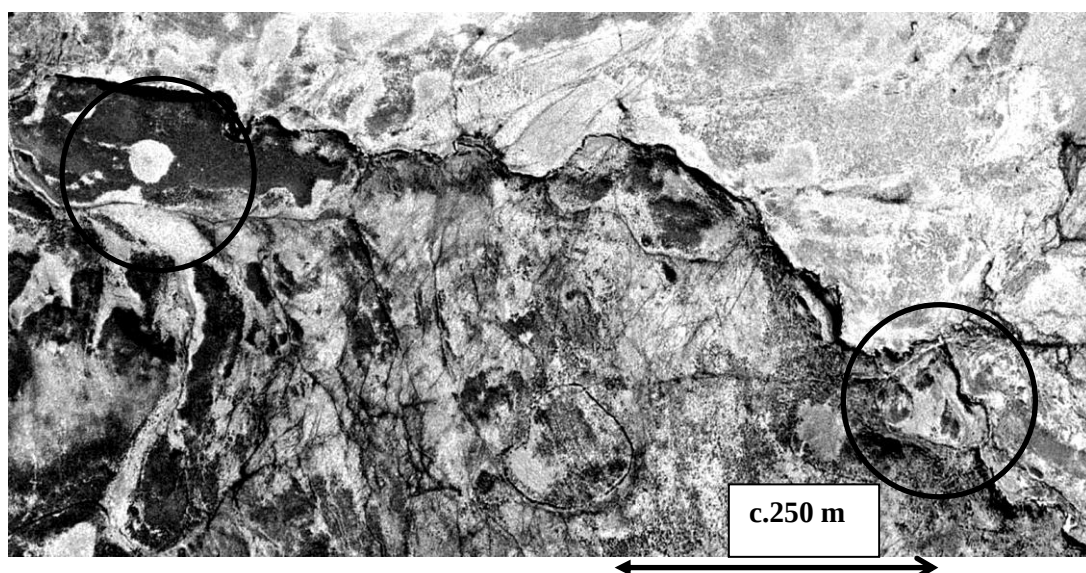


Figure 7.3: Top left, the RCAHMS/OS site; bottom right, the author's site (All Scotland Survey 612_88_64, 1988 (detail) Crown Copyright)

At one such position, 300m south-west of the ruined farm of Bolsa, and 1.85km south-west of the cave, a small grassy knoll appeared from the air to be enclosed. This site has great potential as the site of the chapel. Traces of stone footings were found on the top of the knoll, although nothing aligned east to west was visible. However, at a point where the side of the knoll is almost vertical and about 3m above the surrounding land, it was fully revetted with stone. It is possible that originally this revetting extended above the top of the knoll to form an enclosure wall. At the foot of this section is a spring rising from the slope of the hill that emerges from the centre of a roughly constructed stone façade built into the slope. An earthen enclosure dyke runs from the foot of the knoll on the south to the burn about 50m to east. A second dyke runs northwards to the burn from the northern footings of the knoll, thus forming an outer enclosure around the site. The spring could be the lost holy well. In 1695, Martin described it in detail:

A mile on the South-Weft fide of the cave is the celebrated Well called *Tonbir* in *Knahar*, which in the antient language is [...] the Well that sallied from one place to another: For it is a receiv'd Tradition among the vulgar Inhabitants of this Ifle, and the opposite Ifle of *Collonfay*, that this Well was first in *Collonfay*, until an imprudent woman happen'd to wash her Hands in it, and that immediately after [...] came in an instant to *Ila*, where it is like to continue, and is ever fince esteem'd a *Catholicon* for Difeafes by the Natives and adjacent Iflanders; and the great refort to it is commonly every Quarter day. It is common with fick people to make a Vow to come to the Well, and after drinking, they make a Tour Sunways round it, and then leave an Offering of fome fmall token, such as a Pin, Needle, Farthing, or the like, on the Stone Cover which is above the Well. [...] There is a little Chappel befide this Well, to which fuch as had

found Benefit of the Water, came back and return'd thanks to God for their Recovery (Martin 1934, 274).

The tradition of the well suddenly appearing from Colonsay, may have originated to explain its rather unusual presence immediately next to two freshwater burns and a waterfall. The ancient, impassable and almost lost road around the top of the island passes through this site. On either side of the knoll, on the road, is a large squat unworked unrecorded standing stone.

The remoteness of this site, the terrain and the weather considerably reduced the writer's time on site; nevertheless, he provisionally identifies the spring as Martin's holy well. The well is 1.15 miles south-west of the great cave – precisely as Martin described! The remains of the chapel may be on top of the knoll. However, this location could be too far from Carraig an Domhnaich to be the ecclesiastical site associated with that place-name. The latter could be the name of a meeting place, and the remains of a chapel could be closer to Carraig an Domhnaich, perhaps among the complex of remains in the vicinity of the great cave.

7.3 Small eremitic Early Christian monastic sites with no surviving drystone chapel

7.3.1 Orsay

The island of Orsay is situated only 100m from the southern end of the Rhinns of Islay.

Oversa wher some hermits were wont to dwell (Sibald's MS in Smith 1895, 481 – text late 16thC?)

Any hermits would have been offered some protection by the tidal currents and overfalls that surround Orsay and the Rhinns. Navigation through these would require local knowledge. In 1549, Munro wrote:

It hath ane paroche kirk...with ane right dangerous kyle and stream callit Corey Carrache: na man dare enter in it bot at ane certain tyme of the tyde, or ellis he will perish (Munro 1934, 495, §76)

A late-medieval chapel is situated at the north end of an irregularly shaped enclosure at the north end of the island of Orsay. The enclosure wall dates from the 1820s when the lighthouse was established. At the same time, the burial ground was levelled and cleared to form a garden, and the tombstones thrown into the sea below. Outside the present wall, an earlier drystone wall is visible on satellite imagery, particularly on the north-west and south-

west of the enclosure (Figure 7.4). On the north-west side, this earlier wall runs along the top of a substantial rampart. This may be the remains of the enclosure of the earlier burial ground and chapel, or perhaps a monastic enclosure. In addition, satellite imagery shows that the curved south-west section of the modern enclosure wall follows part of an earlier oval enclosure c.50m by 30m, with a robbed out, once substantial, wall, (centred NT 1640 5162). The writer has been unable to visit the island to confirm this.



Figure 7.4: Orsay (© Bing Maps; accessed 20 October 2012)

Near the north corner of the enclosure is a monument known as Hugh Mackay's Grave (annotated in Figure 7.4); a person with that name is recorded as Coroner of the Rhinns in 1506 (Caldwell 2008, 73). Constructed of rubble masonry in clay mortar, and roofed with flat slabs, it measures 3m in length and 1.8m in width. It contains a chamber 1.95m in length by 0.5m in width, which is entered at ground level from the west. It is roofed with slab-lintels and covered with stones (measurements from RCAHMS 1984, 254-6; NR 1640 5167). The author notes that all or most of the chamber is above ground level. The remains may be of a *leacht*; an outdoor memorial, often constructed on top of non-specific graves, and frequently used as pilgrimage stations on monastic sites in Ireland. The writer believes that remains of similar structures may be found on Nave Island; H on plan in Figure 7.11

(*infra*, 142) and on Eileach an Naoimh in the Garvellach Islands (RCAHMS 1984, 177). The writer recently examined the feature described as a cross-base on Eileach an Naoimh and concluded that it was more likely to be a *leacht*, because of its rectangular footprint and height. Hugh Mackay's Grave may be compared to the *leacht* at Inishvickillane, one of the Blasket islands off Dingle in south-west Ireland, although there are many other similar examples including several on Inishmurray in the north-west (O'Sullivan, J & Ó Carrágain 2008, 320-1). On Inishvickillane, the *leacht* survives as a rectangular mound of stone, faced with drystone masonry; it measures 7.45m in length by 2.35m in width by 1.03m in height. A rectangular lintelled chamber extends into the *leacht* at ground level from the west; it measures 1m in length and about 0.4m in height and width. A cross stands loosely on the top (Cuppage 1986, 300).

Leachta have been dated to the end of the first millennium AD on Inishmurray, but one on Illaunloughan Island, Co. Kerry, was associated with the Period 2 drystone oratory on the site. This may be scientifically dated to between the late eighth and late ninth centuries from an associated burial (Sk120) (UB4103, 1191+/-22, calAD777-891 2σ; White Marshall, J & Walsh 2005, 28, 37, 50-3).

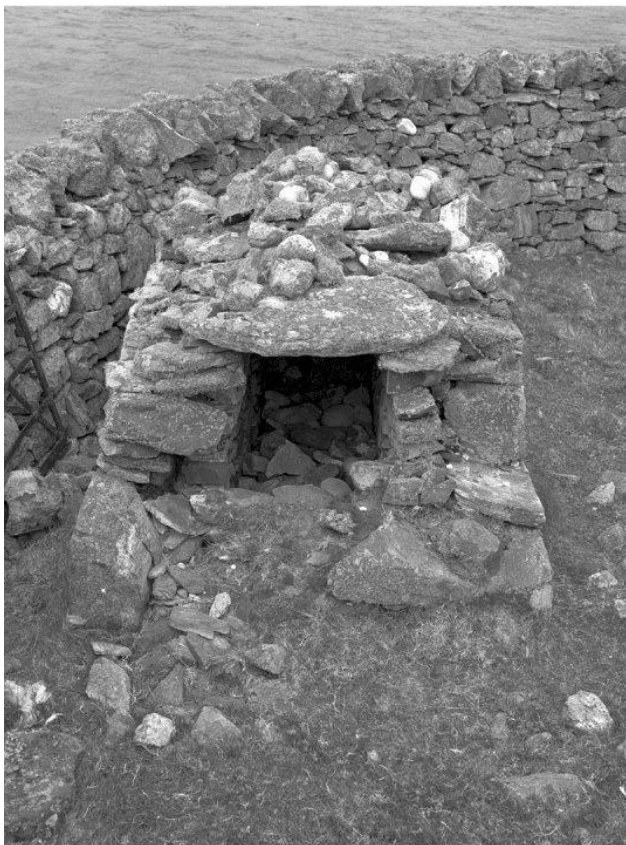


Figure 7.5: Hugh Mackay's grave, Orsay (possible *leacht*) © RCAHMS



Figure 7.6: Crossatemple *leacht*, Inishmurray (O'Sullivan & O Carragáin 2008, plate 44)

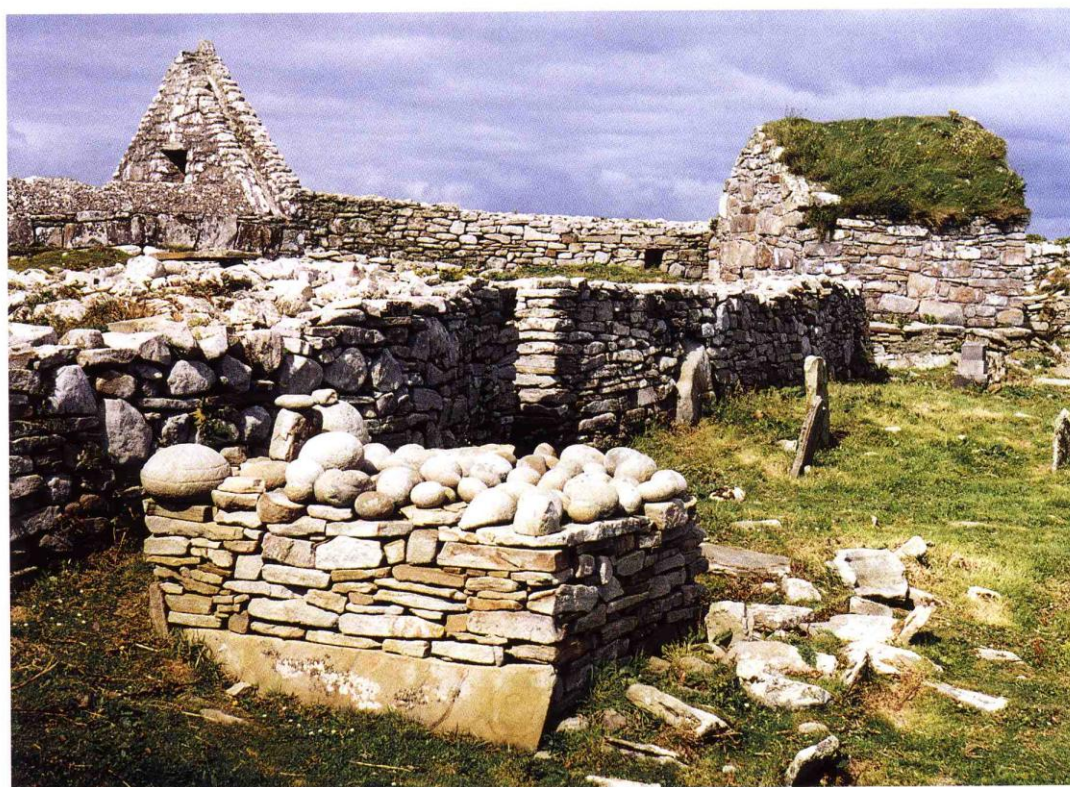


Figure 7.7: Cloch Breaca *leacht*, Inishmurray (O'Sullivan & Ó Carragáin 2008, Plate 32)

Three fragments of an early cross-slab bearing an outlined ringed cross with square arm-pits were found amongst the stones at Hugh Mackay's Grave in 1959 (Celoria 1960, 2(29)).

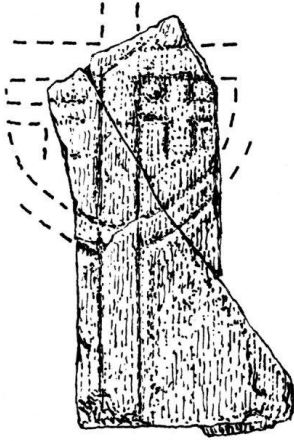


Figure 7.8: Fragments of cross slab from Orsay © RCAHMS

Fisher describes this stone (Figure 7.8) as difficult to parallel (Fisher 2001, 14), however the author notes a carving with a similar arrangement of crosses, albeit a very crude version, from the Early Christian site of Ballywiheen, Co. Kerry (Cuppige 1986, 276, Figure 156), perhaps linking the south-west of Ireland with Islay in the later part of the first millennium.

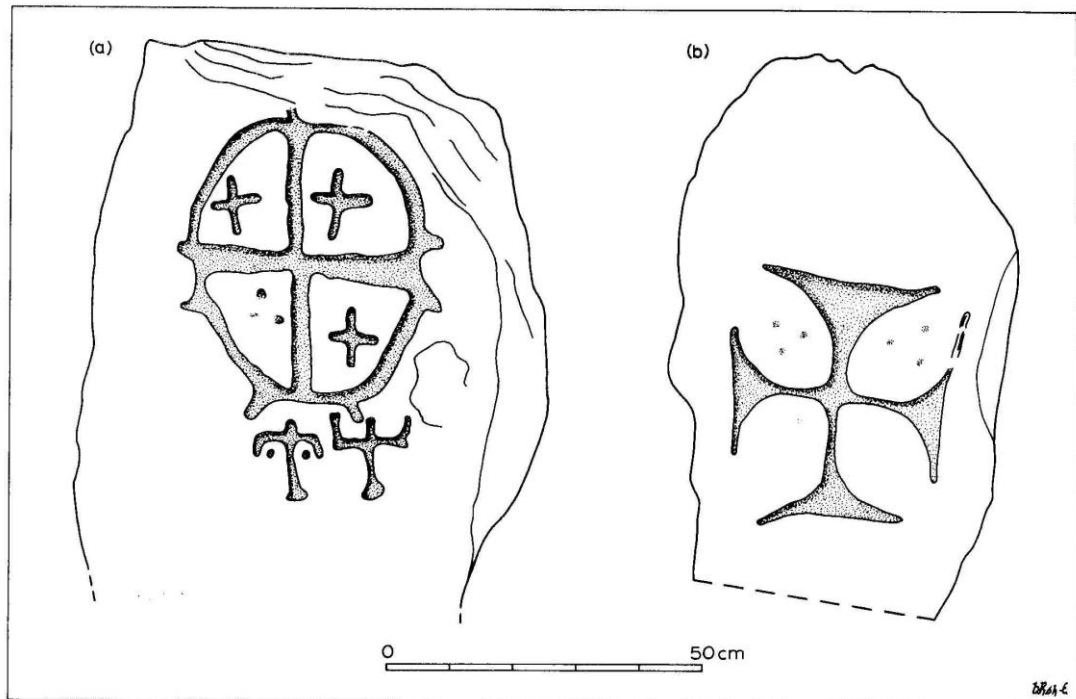


Figure 7.9: Ballywiheen cross-slab (Cuppage 1986)

There is a local tradition that the carved stones found in 1959 at the chapel at Gleann na Gaoidh (Section 6.2.1) were relocated there from Orsay. This tradition is supported by the fact that two of the stones are carved from Torridonian flagstone, which outcrops near Portnahaven/Orsay.

It is assumed that Hugh Mackay's grave was heavily robbed to construct the c.1820 enclosure wall, which it almost touches; indeed its very survival may be due to the tradition that it was the sixteenth-century burial of Hugh Mackay. Typically, *leachta* stand 0.9m to 1.2m above the surrounding ground; Hugh Mackay's grave stands 1m in height. They have flat tops, on which one or more decorated stones or slabs may stand (Thomas 1971, 169-75). It may have been maintained into post medieval times for penitential purposes. It is possible that Orsay would have resembled Irish island monastic sites equipped with penitential stations such as Inishmurray, Co Sligo, where excavated *leachta* have been dated to the late 1st millennium (Ó Carragáin, T 2009, 209). However, the excavation at Illaunloughan demonstrates the construction of *leachta* as early as the eighth century (*supra*, 135). The excavators suggest that they were open-air altars of considerable antiquity, and although currently there is no evidence to link them with specific burials, more data is required before

concluding that this was always the case. A plausible suggestion (*ibid*) is that they served as altars for the dead buried outside the church. *Leachta* are still used as pilgrimage stations. They are found on the perimeters of sacred areas or islands – Inishmurray is a good example (Ó Carragáin, T 2009). The position of Hugh Mackay’s Grave is indicated on Figure 7.4 in a classic position for a *leacht*, at the break of slope down to the shore.

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Contradictory local traditions survive regarding the chapel on Orsay; although its name is St Oran’s, this could be a fanciful attempt to link a saint’s name with the island’s name. Traditionally, it is also said to be dedicated to St Columba. This is confirmed by entries in an early sixteenth-century rental referring to *Insula Sancti Columbe de Ilanorsa in Iley* (Burnett 1889, 589). Nearby on the mainland, adjacent to the farm of Ballymeanach (Townland of the Monks) there is *Cnoc an Orain* (NR 173 533).

On the island of Inishmurray there is a satellite cemetery called *Relickoran* (O’Sullivan, J & Ó Carragáin 2008, 251-70); it contains *leachta*. Odrán was an obscure follower of Columba. His name is also found on Iona associated with another satellite cemetery there, and also with a burial ground on Tíree, Cladh Orain (CANMORE: NM04NW 28). Tíree is where the lost Columban daughter-monastery of *Mag Luinge* was situated (Sharpe 1995, 21). Ó Carragáin suggests that the dedication to Odrán on Inishmurray was a deliberate emulation of Columba (2009, 209). Possibly this was true on Orsay also, and the ancient cemetery (with chapel) was *Relickoran* and the island was, or became, *Insula Sancti Columbe de Ilanorsa*. There is an underlying possibility that contact between Inishmurray and Orsay – as well as Iona – was firmly established in the latter half of the first millennium AD.

7.3.2 Eilean Nèimh, Nave Island, monastic enclosure

Nave Island is situated a few hundred metres north from Ardnave Point and the north end of the Rhinns. Munro in 1549 writes:

beside the entresse of Lochgrunord, layes ane iyle, called by the Erish
Ellan-nese, with ane kirk in it’ (Munro 1934, 496, §80).

Nave Island and the adjacent farmlands of Ardnave were owned by Iona Abbey until the reformation. According to the nineteenth-century OS, the chapel on the island was in ruins by 1785 when the walls were repaired and a chimney associated with kelp processing was

constructed in the north-east corner of the ruins. It was reported in 1844 that the ruined church on Nave Island:

..once had a very extensive burial ground. The gravestones are made of clay slate handsomely formed, many of them beautifully cut, and several with figures in relief. These mark the resting-place of persons of some note in their day, but of whom no other memorial is known (<http://stat-acc-scot.edina.ac.uk/link/1834-45/Argyle/Kilchoman/7/650/> accessed 10th November, 2012).

For example, Donald Balloch, cousin of the imprisoned Alexander of Islay, Lord of the Isles, who defeated Royalist forces under the Earl of Caithness and of Mar in 1431 at the battle of Inverlochy, died in 1480 on Nave Island, his ancestral home (ICD: Nave Island). Today, there are no gravestones visible in or around the burial-ground.



Figure 7.10: Nave Island Early Christian enclosure (RCAHMS DP 112338 Crown Copyright)

The medieval chapel is situated next to a beach suitable for landing boats. It sits in the south-east corner of an almost complete sub-circular enclosure, which measures internally about 46m north-south by 34m east-west within a drystone wall of 2.5m maximum thickness (Figure 7.11). This may date from the Early Christian period. Attached to the south-west of this enclosure is another larger one that encloses about 2ha of rig and furrow cultivation. The writer suggests that the lost 'very extensive' medieval and later burial ground may have been cleared for, and destroyed by, this cultivation, and that the small enclosure containing the chapel and associated structures was exclusively the Early Christian burial ground.

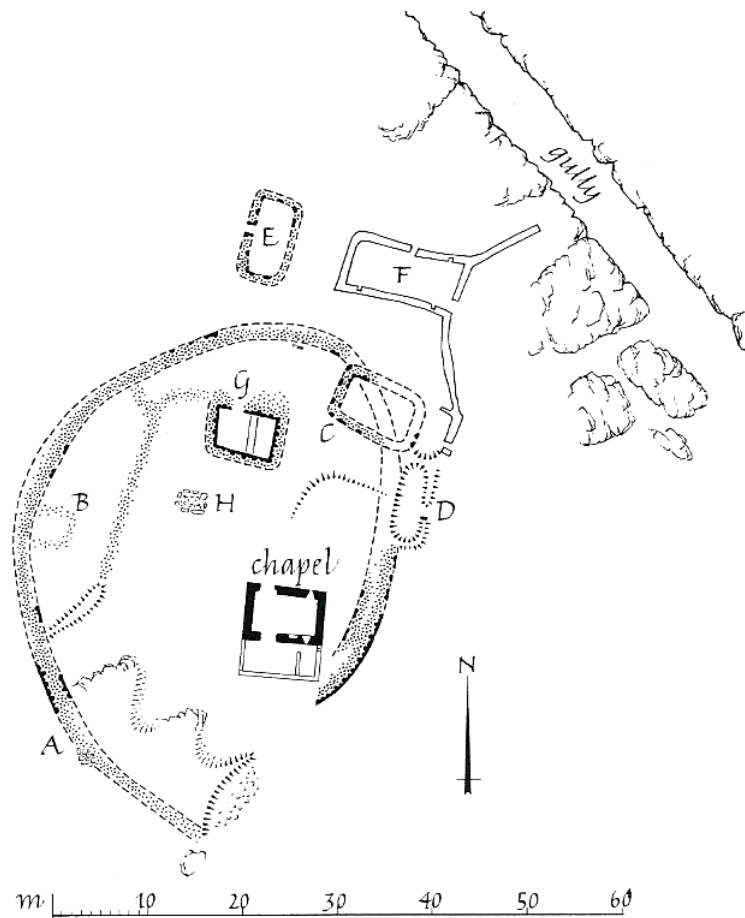


Figure 7.11: Plan of Nave Island Early Christian site (adapted from RCAHMS 1984, 225)

The chapel measures 6.75m by 4.1m internally. The walls are 0.9m in thickness, and the entrance is in the north wall. A two-light window in the south wall is of a style found at Kildalton, and the RCAHMS date it architecturally to the first half of the thirteenth century (RCAHMS 1984, 226). However the chapel was heavily repointed by the kelp-processors in the late eighteenth century and the writer suggests that it should be compared to the early

chapel on Eileach an Naoimh in the Garvellach islands. This is clay mortared, of a similar size and is equipped with the same, unusual, internal shelf along the southern half of the east wall (RCAHMS 1984, 178-9). The buildings outside the chapel enclosure were probably associated with post medieval agricultural use. To the south of building G however, a rectangular platform 3m by 2.2m, with a kerb of stone blocks (H) is covered with small stones and quartz pebbles. This almost certainly is a *leacht*. Structure B, built against the enclosure wall, could be the remains of a corbelled cell. A fragment of the arm of a free-standing Early Christian cross was reused in the paving of the floor of the chapel. It came from the narrowest part of the arm and closely resembles the arms of the Kilnave Cross (Fisher 2001, 140). Both crosses may date from the eighth century.

The site on Nave Island may be compared to others on the islands of Canna (Sgor nam Bannaomha: CANMORE; NG20SW 2), Kerrera (Cladh a' Bhearnaig: RCAHMS 1975, 119-20) and with many Early Christian sites in Ireland. For example, the Cashel at Inishmurray, Co. Sligo is shown in Figure 7.12 to the same scale as the plan of Nave Island (O'Sullivan, J & Ó Carrágain 2008, 15, fig 12).

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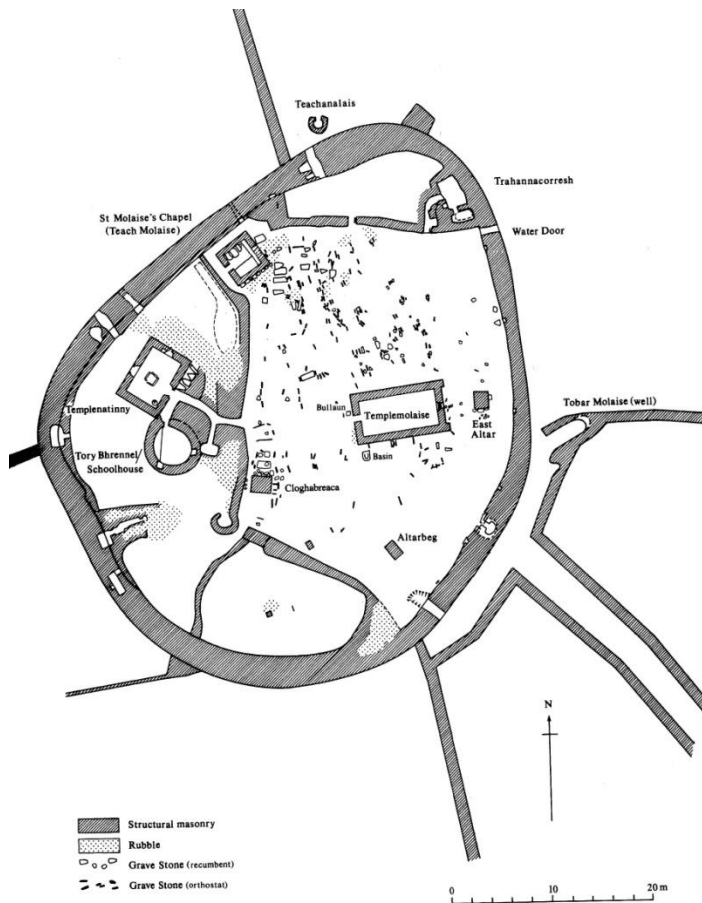


Figure 7.12: Cashel on Inishmurray, Co. Sligo

The place-names Ardnave (farm, point and peninsula), Nave Island and Kilnave (farm and church) are found close together on the Ardnave peninsula. Thomas proposes that Ardnave is derived from *Aird na Naomh* (Thomas, F W L 1882, 264). On grounds of local pronunciation, Maceacharna argues that ‘nave’ in Ardnave is not *naomh* ‘holy’ as may be expected, because local Gaelic speakers pronounce it as ‘nave’ - of a church; he proposes that the ‘nave’ in Ardnave is derived from either *nemeton* or a Saint Nemh (Maceacharna 1976, 30). *Nemeton*, *neimheadh*, *neimed*, ‘consecrated’ or ‘sanctuary’ appears in Scottish place-names where its meaning is the same as in Ireland and Gaul – a pagan foundation adopted by the early church (Taylor 1998, 12). Watson derives Ardnave, Kilnave and Nave Island from *Nèimh* (Watson 1926, 246, 307). There are a number of saints with this name, and according to Watson, Kilnave is ‘Ném’s church’. This personal name is attested in *Míniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban* and may have seen contemporary usage on Islay (Bannerman 1974, 42, §24).

7.4 Conclusions

Whilst the identification of the place-names *Annuid* and *Bachlaig* with the early church may be unreliable, the survival of the *Killcallumkill* name, associated with a church dedicated to St Columba, is well documented in post-medieval times, however its precise location is unknown. A search through aerial photographs for the well and chapel referred to by Martin in 1695 located a possible site. The well found during fieldwork by the writer is 1.15 miles south-west of the great cave – precisely as Martin described. The remains of the chapel may be on top of a nearby knoll.

Early Christian carved stones are recorded from both Orsay and Nave islands, and the remains on the latter are undoubtedly associated with an early monastic site (complete with a *leacht*). Although any remains of the probable monastic site on Orsay were cleared in the 19th century, the author has argued that Hugh Mackay's grave could be the remains of a first-millennium *leacht* rather than an early sixteenth-century burial.

Chapter 8: Christianity, Origins and Gaelicisation: history and myths

8.1 Introduction

To support the author's ideas about the mechanism and chronology of the arrival of Christianity on Islay, the extent of the communication across the North Channel is examined in this chapter. As part of this, the traditional origin of the *Scotti* is explored along with theories about the gaelicisation of Argyll. The problems of interpreting and using *Míniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban* are summarised and applied to the author's research. The pre-Norse district place-names from *MSFA* are briefly discussed.

8.2 Christianity

It is generally assumed that Ireland received Christianity through contacts with Gaul and Roman Britain in the fifth century AD. We know that there were organised Christians in Gaul before 177 AD (Raleigh Radford 1968, 20), and it is known that Christians were victimised in Roman Britain during the mid-third century (Lambert 2010, 5-6). However, by the early fourth century, the persecutions had ceased and in 314 the British Church enjoys both an independent existence and representation, when a number of its bishops attend a council meeting at Arles (*op cit*, 11). Paganism was banned throughout the Empire by the end of the fourth century.

Archaeology provides glimpses of the Christianisation of Roman Britain through the fourth century in the form of house-churches, mosaic floors and murals, temples and burials as well as early churches from Roman military sites (*op cit*, 13-43; Frend 1968, 38-43; Thomas, C 1981). It was not until the end of Roman occupation was approaching in the early fifth century that Christianity was an open, accepted and politically strong religion.

In 441, papal authority had reached outside the limits of the secular Roman Empire (Lambert 2010, 134) when Pope Leo the Great preached that Rome had come to govern over 'a wider territory through the worship of God than by earthly dominion'. Earlier, in 431, Palladius had been sent to Ireland from Gaul as the country's first bishop, principally to curb Pelagianism (heresy), but, undoubtedly, also to attend the sparsely distributed converted

Irish. He was the first to be despatched by the papacy in support of Catholicism outside the limits of the Empire (*op cit.* 135). The mission to Ireland in 431 was formalised and made possible by a small network of anti-Pelagians in Rome, Gaul and Britain (Charles-Edwards 1993b, 5). However only a few years later the situation had changed, and a Gallic Chronicle (*Chronica Monora*) of 452 AD no longer reports successes against Pelagianism or missions to Ireland, but instead, the subjugation of the Britons by the Saxons (Charles-Edwards 1993a, 10).

Although the contemporary Roman opinion of Palladius is well documented, and, more than 100 years later, Bede refers to Palladius as Ireland's first missionary bishop, by the seventh century his activities were forgotten and have been replaced by the widespread reputation of fifth century St Patrick as the chief apostle of Ireland (Charles-Edwards 2000, 182-3). The writings of Patrick, and the appearance of loan words from the British dialect of Latin into Irish, show that it was the established connexions between Ireland and Britain, now dominated by Christianity that drove the conversion of Ireland (*ibid*, 184-5).

The Latinus Stone, at Whithorn, probably Scotland's earliest post-Roman British inscription dating from the fifth century (Forsyth 2009, 30-1), provides evidence that there was an active Christian population a short journey across the Irish Sea from Antrim and Down.

8.2.1 The Mission to Ireland

Little if anything is known about the relationships between Palladius and Patrick and the other early missionaries, Auxilius, Secundinus and Iserninus, associated with Patrick in later texts. Charles-Edwards provides evidence about Auxilius, Secundinus, Iserninus and Palladius from seventh century or later annals that indicate that:

no later evidence suggests that any member of this group was remembered for activities outside the area which can be attributed to Leinster in the fifth century (Charles-Edwards 2000, 233-9).

Leinster is situated on the eastern seaboard of Ireland. It is the area of Ireland where most Roman imports have been found. Charles-Edwards argues plausibly that the mission would have been aided by Leinster settlements in western Britain and also by established trading contacts (*ibid*, 155-6, 239).

Patrick was probably active in the second half of the fifth century (Dumville 1993a, 18). He referred to himself as the ‘apostle of the western extremities of Ireland’ (Charles-Edwards 2000, 237-9), and appears to have been active in the north and west of Ireland (particularly Co. Mayo), and perhaps down to the south coast (*op cit*, 215; Dumville 1993a, 17-18).

Scholars agree that although Palladius was ordained as a bishop by Pope Celestine and despatched by Rome to Ireland, his association with the Irish must have had support from the British church (Charles-Edwards 2000, 239). However, contacts between Rome, Gaul and Britain became increasingly difficult during the years of the Anglo-Saxon expansion and the subsequent subjection of the British (Charles-Edwards 1993a, 10; Dumville 1993a, 18). Dumville suggests that this led to the British churches taking over responsibility from Rome for the development of Christianity in Ireland. But what happened to contacts between Gaul and Ireland? The suggestion that the mission of Auxilius, Secundinus, Iserninus and Palladius to the area of Leinster followed an established trading route from Britain was alluded to above. The writer proposes that this form of transport may have been regularly used and that Christians in Britain and Gaul travelled on trading vessels and spread their faith to Ireland. The Anglo-Saxon expansion would not have interrupted trade between Ireland and the Mediterranean and Gaul. It is suggested that Christians from Gaul continued to work as missionaries along established trade routes to eastern and southern Ireland during times of difficult communication with Rome and Britain.

Early sources hint that there were saints in Ireland before the time of St Patrick who had no connection with either Patrick or Palladius (Thomas 1981, 302-4; Fraser 2009, 106). Furthermore, Thomas reports another tradition that describes how the first people to be Christianised in Ireland were the Corcu Loígde whose territory was the south-west of Co. Cork, but which at one time extended farther east. Irrespective of whether that tradition is historical or mythological, the south coast from Rosslare Harbour in the east, to Dingle Bay in the west, is an area of great rivers, natural harbours and bays that formed a terminus of a trading network with not only Roman Britain, but also Gaul and the Mediterranean. Campbell shows that Late Roman amphorae were imported to Britain and Ireland in large numbers during the fifth and sixth centuries; in Ireland their distribution is mainly in the southern half of the country (Campbell 2007; 18-22). Therefore, it is very likely that before

and after the times of Patrick and Palladius, missionaries from Gaul would have been active in this area of high commerce.

The author suggests that the arrival of Christianity from Gaul in the south-west of Ireland, and its gradual spread northwards along the west coast, may help to explain the high density of corbelled oratories on the Dingle and Inveragh peninsulas in the territory of the Corcu Duibne to the north of the Corcu Loígde. He submits that the missionary activity from Britain to the east coast of Ireland – and the subsequent development of the church there – was independent from that to the south-west of Ireland from Gaul. Furthermore, the mission to the east coast was almost certainly initiated by Irish Christians through their British contacts and was carried out with full Papal authority. This led to the ordination of Palladius by Celestine. This mission to preach the gospel to barbarians was monitored and documented by the see of Rome and others (Charles-Edwards 2000, 202-13).

The author suspects that Christianity spread to Islay and Argyll from Derry via the west coast of Ireland, although he accepts that traders from Gaul, with clerics as passengers, may have journeyed directly to the North Channel area by sea, although the sail to Islay requires more local pilotage knowledge than when sailing into the Kilbrannan Sound heading for Loch Fyne. However, the west coast of Ireland was like a magnet to early clerics seeking a ‘desert in the ocean’; it was the end of the known world, and a departure point for the voyaging Saints (Tipp & Wooding 2010, 241-2). Patrick remarked in his *Confessio* that he went everywhere, ‘even to the farthest districts beyond which there lived nobody’, which is thought to refer to the western seaboard of Ireland (Dumville 1993a, 17-18). We saw in Section 2.7 (*supra*, 25) that the tradition of building churches in drystone has a west coast distribution in Ireland. Some have associated this with the spread of the cult of St Brendan from Galway Bay southwards to Corcu Duibne and northwards to Donegal (for discussion see Ó Carragáin 2010, 54-5).

The distribution of the Early Christian stones in Ireland, inscribed with a *Chi-Rho* symbol, also largely follows the western littoral. The *Chi-Rho* symbol contains the first two letters ‘X’ (*chi*) and ‘P’ (*rho*) of the name of Christ in Greek. Superimposing the two letters

produces the monogram shown in Figure 8.1. This arrived in Britain in the fourth century followed later in that century by the simplified form shown in Figure 8.2 (Thomas, C 1981, 86-91).



Figure 8.1: *Chi-Rho* monogram



Figure 8.2: Developed form of *Chi-Rho*

This latter style developed into a cross-form with a small *rho*-hook extension during the later fourth and fifth centuries, and is encountered within a three-century window in western Ireland and south-west Scotland, and in Argyll, on Eilean Mór, Iona and Raasay (Trench-Jellicoe 1998, 499-503; Herity 1990, 208-10). Chi-Rho inscribed crosses are found in Ireland in Counties Kerry, Clare, Mayo, and Galway, with a few uncertain examples in Co. Donegal. There is one example in Northern Ireland at Drumaqueran, Antrim (*ibid*).

Little is known about the Christianisation of Dál Riata. While the annals record the activities of St Columba and his move to Iona in 562, less is known about the ecclesiastical history of the Dál Riata in Ulster. Dumville explains that Dál Riata and Dál nAraide ‘had been brought into the view of Patrician hagiotopeography’ by the time of the *notulae* in the *Book of Armagh*. He notes from the *Liber Angeli* that Armagh had authority over a *terminus* that had jurisdiction over the Airgialla, Dál Fiatach, and Dál nAraide, but not Dál Riata (Dumville 1993b, 186).

constituitur terminus a Domino vastissimus urbi Alti Mache

‘a most vast precinct is established by the Lord for the city of Armagh’

Terminus seems to refer to a province rather than a diocese (Etchingham 1999, 158).

Therefore it is possible that if Patrick had introduced Christianity to Dál Fiatach in the fifth century, Dál Riata may have been introduced or subjected to the faith too if they were part of the Dál Fiatach overkingdom (Dumville *op. cit.*). If St Patrick was active in the second half of the fifth century then one could argue that not only Dál Riata but also Antrim, Londonderry and Donegal may have been introduced to Christianity at that time. Thus, there is some justification to search for evidence of early Christianity and the pre-Columban church, not only in Iona but also elsewhere in Dál Riata – in particular on Islay, which is an easy sail from the coast of northern Ireland. Although it is documented that Columba founded monasteries on the far side of the *Druim Alban*, and could have established Portmahomack (Carver 2008, 196), the radiocarbon dates from that site could also imply pre-Columban ecclesiastical activity. One of three cist burials found downhill from the church, which were aligned north-east to south-west (see Section 3.5.2 for the significance of this) produced a date span of 430-610 calAD (95.4%). Eleven cist burials were also found under the church (five aligned north-west to south-east); the dates from two of them, 410-570 and 430-650 calAD (95.4%), suggest that they were probably pre-Columban (*ibid*, 207).

8.3 Contacts between Dál Riata and Gaul

Contact between Gaul and Dál Riata is suggested by the survival of a number of carved stones in Mid Argyll of two types that are common in Gaul and relatively scarce in Scotland (Alcock 2003, 368-70; Fraser 2009, 106). The hexafoil was considered to be equivalent to a cross in Christian art; it is commonly found in Gaul. It is also found at monastic sites at Maughold, Isle of Man, and in central Ireland at Gallen, Co. Offaly (Fisher 2001, 12). Five of the seven hexafoil stones known from western Scotland are found in Knapdale, Mid Argyll. The remaining two are from Kintyre and Cumbrae (*op cit*). One of three hexafoil stones from Cladh a' Bhile, Ellery, Knapdale (NR 7333 7560) is illustrated in Figure 8.3 (Fisher 2001, 142).

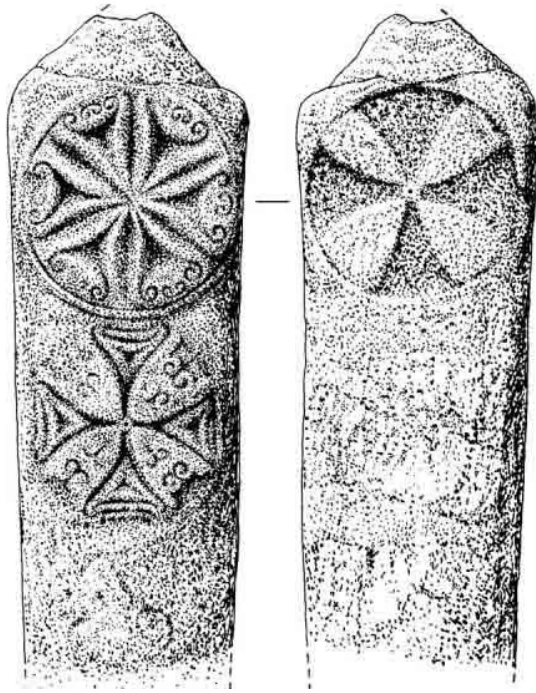


Figure 8.3: One of three hexafoil stones from Cladh a' Bhile (NR77NW 4); RCAHMS Crown Copyright

Thirteen km from Ellary, at Kilmory Oib, at the head of Loch Sween, there is a most interesting stone (CANMORE NR79SE 7; NR 7808 9024). Believed to be in its original position because of its correct orientation, the west face depicts a cross with two cross-arms with barred terminals (Figure 8.4). Between them are possible images of the sun and moon, but above and below there are clear images of pairs of birds. At the base and in the damaged top there are animals, and saltires flank the shaft (Fisher 2001, 150-1). The double-armed cross is found throughout the Mediterranean, and the birds – especially in pairs – are found in Gaul (Alcock 2003, 368-9), but rarely in Ireland. However the writer is aware of one in Northern Ireland (Figure 8.5) situated a few miles from the eastern shore of Lough Foyle on Church Hill at Duncrun, Co. Derry (NISMR: LDY005:002; C6817032410) . This stone has been widely described as a double-armed cross, although caution is necessary because the lower part of the shaft is unclear and an alternative explanation is that the lower cross arm is a depiction of a base (E Campbell *pers com*). However the location of a stone with links to Gaul and Argyll, would support the writer's hypothesis that there was a trade route (Figure 8.6) from Lough Foyle to Loch Indaal on Islay, which crossed Islay and used one of several later ferry routes from Jura to Mid Argyll and Knapdale (where the double armed cross and the five hexafoil inscribed stones are found).

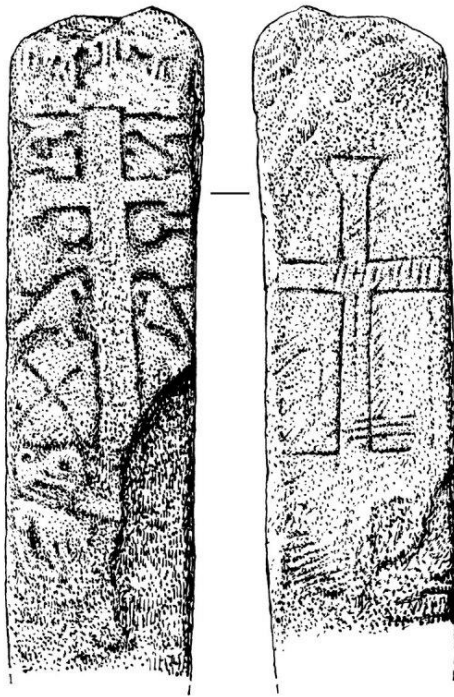


Figure 8.4: Cross slab; Kilmory Oib, Argyll (NR79SE 7, RCAHMS Crown Copyright)



Figure 8.5: Possible double transom cross-slab at Duncrun (from Northern Ireland Sites & Monuments Record)

Figure 8.6 shows the author's proposed communication route from Ireland to Islay and mainland Argyll together with the locations of Early Christian carved stones taken from Fisher (2001). The ferry routes are not hypothetical and were in operation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Youngson 2001, 6, 441-4), with at least one route from Jura to the mainland operational well into the twentieth century. There is little reason to doubt that these routes are ancient. The author suggests that the safest route to Iona from Derry/Lough Foyle was that taken by the later ferry from the north end of Jura. This avoids the rock field that extends south-westwards from the Ross of Mull for c10km on the direct route to Iona (Admiralty Chart BA2724, 1979). The route also passes close to Eileach an Naoimh and its anchorage, a convenient place to break the journey. The majority of this suggested route from Derry to Iona is overland and a large part of the remaining sea journey is within the protection of Lough Foyle and Loch Indaal. Perhaps this is the route that Librán followed when he sailed from Derry to Iona to meet St Columba (*Vita Columbae* II.39)(Adomnán of Iona 1995, 191-2).

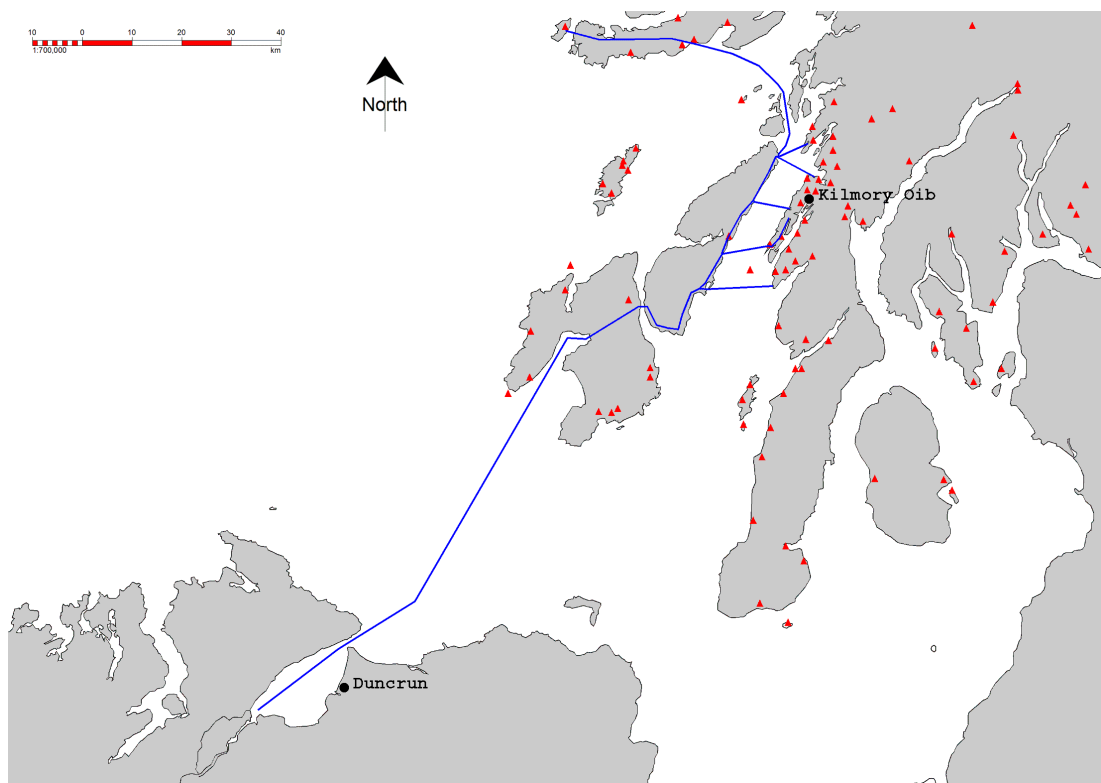


Figure 8.6: suggested route from Derry ultimately to Iona, with sites of Early Christian carved stones (in Scotland)

The research carried out in the 1930s and 40s by Crawford and by Davies (Crawford, O G S 1936; Davies 1946), on the subject of the Atlantic seaways, still makes interesting reading. Both suggested that the narrows of the North Channel between Antrim and Kintyre would have been avoided because of adverse tides and dangerous overfalls, and that overland routes were employed to avoid such hazards. Davies even proposed that:

..megalithic builders of western Britain and eastern Ireland came up the Irish Sea from the south, skirting the coast and rarely losing sight of land.' (*ibid*, 40).

She under emphasises the importance of staying close to land, for this was true not only in the Neolithic but until the time of steam powered vessels millennia later. In the National Library, a chart of 1804 of the west coast of Scotland clearly marks the track to be followed from the Kintyre/Islay region to Norway and the Baltic (Heather 1804). This hugs the mainland and crosses many notorious tidal gates such as the Dorus Mór (off Crinan), the Sound of Luing, the Sound of Mull, and the Inner Sound between Skye and the mainland, where the tide can reach 6 knots (Admiralty Hydrographic Office 1976). With local knowledge and experience this was not considered a problem even though it required waiting for long periods in temporary anchorages for favourable tides. The open sea was avoided whenever possible.

8.4 The voyaging saints

The historicity of Early Christianity in Argyll tends to focus on St Columba, and almost ignores the missionary and voyaging activities of other monks and saints – of which there must have been many. Voyaging monks had a propensity to depart from western Mayo, possibly because of associations with St Brendan and St Patrick (Tipp & Wooding 2010, 242). This is an area in which early drystone churches are found. In the sixth century, monks and saints departing from the west coast of Ireland seeking a 'Desert in the Ocean', 'the Garden of Eden' or 'the Promised Land of the Saints' may have established churches on the islands and sea lochs of Argyll in the process. This is all the more likely because at times in the medieval period, the western coast of Ireland formed one province with western Scotland. The west coast, then, is a place in which the voyaging saints appear to be jostling with each other for space, often departing from the same locations (Wooding 2009, 194-5).

Although the surviving lives of the voyaging saints are clouded with political overtones, miraculous happenings and otherworld experiences (see for example the two sources above),

there is little doubt that the prevailing south-westerly winds would have powered Irish clergy towards Islay and the Argyll islands.

8.5 Islay and Ireland in the First Millennium

During the latter part of the twentieth-century, early medieval historians re-interpreted the sources and the literature, and published conflicting theories about the arrival of the *Scotti* in northern Britain and the politics of the Dál Riata in Scotland. These ranged from reiteration of the long accepted Iona-centric revelations of Adomnán (Bannerman 1974; Sharpe 2000) to the critical re-interpretations of the source material by Dumville, the politically more aware re-examination of the literature by Fraser (Dumville 2002; Fraser, J E 2004) and the ‘no-migration’ hypothesis of Campbell (Campbell 2001).

In 1974, Bannerman authored *Studies in the History of Dalriada*, which was largely based on work carried out in the 60s for his Cambridge doctoral thesis; the book soon became a standard text for historians and remains so today. It is widely applauded for making available to scholars the prime origin legend and genealogy of Dál Riata (Dumville 2002, 198). The majority of the book is devoted to a translation of, and commentary on, a document referred to by Bannerman as *Senchus Fer nAlban*. This includes the famous origin legend associated with Fergus mór, son of Erc and his dynastic migration to Scotland from Ireland about 500 AD.

In his recent paper, sub-titled ‘Contexts for *Miniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban*’, Dumville notes that ‘we live in a rather different climate of historical and Celtic scholarship from that in which John Bannerman pursued his pioneering work in Nora Chadwick’s Cambridge a generation...ago’. Compared with previous generations, current scholars have a more developed appreciation of medieval literary practise associated with origin tales and a more broad-minded attitude to the European Celts, who are now recognised for their contribution to European thought and literature rather than their uniqueness. Dumville continues on to reject some of Bannerman’s propositions and statements. Notably, that Fergus mór mac Eirc was the founder of Dál Riata; that under him the Dalriadic dynasty removed from Ireland to Scotland, and that Fergus may be considered the earliest historically authenticated person

mentioned in *Míniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban* (*ibid.* 198; Bannerman 1974, 73). Dumville strongly prefers that the title of this genealogical tract be translated as ‘The Explanation of the Genealogy of the (Gaelic) Men of Britain’, and that it should be referred to by its manuscript title *Míniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban* (hereafter, *MSFA*) rather than the shorter title *Senchus Fer nAlban*, which is in common scholarly use. He explains that the phrase *míniugud senchasa* leads us into the world of genealogical exposition and offers manuscript comparanda. He notes that the correct context for such a tractate is probably a corpus of Gaelic genealogy (Dumville 2002, 197).

The major part of the tract is devoted to recording three leading kindreds in Scottish Dál Riata:

- i. The descendents of Fergus Mór mac Eirc who became the Cenél nGabráin and Cenél Comgaill – named after the two sons of Domangart, Fergus’s son and successor.
- ii. Cenél Loairn - descended from the brother of Fergus, Loarn mac Eirc.
- iii. Cenél nÓengusa – placed in Islay by Bannerman and *MSFA*, and named after Oengus mac Eirc, another brother of Fergus.

The Gaelic genealogical tractate beginning *Cethri prímchenéla Dáil Riata*, ‘The four principal kindreds of Dál Riata’ is sometimes described as a continuation of the genealogical section of *MSFA* but is now considered to be a discrete text. In the manuscripts, this tractate is preceded by another called *Genealogia Albanensium* or *Genelach fer nAlban* or *Genelach ríge nAlban*. Before Dumville, all translators of *Cethri Prímchenéla Dáil Riata* have assumed that the titles *Genealogia Albanensium* etc. refer to it also (Bannerman 1974, 108-10; cf. Dumville 2000, 170). Dumville shows that there is no connexion before the fourteenth century between the texts of *Cethri prímchenéla Dáil Riata* and *MSFA*, and that their political doctrines differ. In the latter, there is frequent mention of the three *cenéla* of Dál Riata (above) while in contrast the opening of *Cethri prímchenéla Dáil Riata* refers to the four principal kindreds. Their eponyms are Gabrán, Loarn mór, Oengus, and Comgall and it is they that together are called *Dál Riata*; Cenél Loairn máir is represented by two lineages originating from Boetán mac Echdach meic Muiredaig meic Loairn. It is therefore difficult to interpret *Cethri prímchenéla Dáil Riata* as a continuation of *MSFA* (Dumville 2000, 171). We will return to *MSFA* in Section 8.7 (167).

8.5.1 Origins

For at least eleven hundred years, historians have believed that Fergus mór, son of Erc, founded the Kingdom of Dál Riata in modern Argyll by means of an Irish folk migration in a single event around AD 500. Furthermore, Adomnán implies that the kings of Dál Riata came exclusively from the dynasty of the Cenél nGabráin who he considered the sole dynasty - the *genus regium* - a dynasty that thrived under the patronage of Iona and its saint. Adomnán was a descendant of St Columba's grandfather. He became the ninth abbot of Iona in 679, about 80 years after the death of St Columba.

The Annals of Tigernach record that:

Feargus mór mac Earca cum gente Dál Riata partem Britanniae tenuit,
et ibi mortuus est.

Fergus mór son of Erc with the people of Dál Riata seized part of Britain,
and he died there.

'The Annals of Clonmacnoise' and 'The Annals of the Four Masters' offer related details of this event in the entries for the years 501 and 498 respectively (Dumville 2002, 191). This conquest saga originates in 'The Chronicle of Clonmacnoise' composed at Clonmacnoise in the tenth-century, but now lost. The evidence shows that its author added material to passed-down chronicle-texts from genealogical collections including origin-stories and king-lists. Dumville finds no support that such material provides historical evidence about the fifth and sixth centuries, although for many years some modern scholars, who believed that ancient tales were accurately transmitted by oral tradition, found this origin legend attractive. The explanation for this may well be that the alternative pseudo-historical origin legends are chronologically difficult to accept while the concept of a migration around 500 is plausible within the context of Gaelic conquest and settlement in Britain in the late Roman and sub-Roman periods (*ibid*, 191).

A similar chronological story is found in a collection of synchronisms of Gaelic kings of eleventh or twelfth-century date in which the kings of Alba are prominent (Dumville 2002, 201). The chronicles reveal another version of the origin story in which someone called Mac Nisse was either a brother of Fergus or simply another name for Fergus (*MSFA* §3 and §6 respectively) (Dumville 2002, 201). This origin tale may have been composed for some political reason with Mac Nisse as the central figure rather than Fergus. It is possible that a version of this tale may have existed in the seventh century because Mac Nisse occurs as

Mac Nisse Réti in ‘The Annals of Ulster’ (*ibid*, 193). Both of the origin legends survive in a number of versions none of which deserves chronological priority. Furthermore:

nor is there any evidence that a Dalriadic origin-story entered the chronicling tradition before the tenth century. Stories of Dalriadic origins cannot be held to be worthy of acceptance as history (*ibid*, 194).

Therefore, medieval written sources cannot provide answers to questions about the process and chronology of the gaelicisation of early medieval Dál Riata; historians’ attitudes to medieval historicising literature have changed substantially since the 1960s when Bannerman’s research was carried out. ‘It is now regarded as historically significant for the period of its composition and not as the repository of prehistoric ‘tradition’ (*ibid*, 194).

8.5.2 Gaelicisation of north Britain

In early medieval north Britain, the Gaelic historicizing literature frequently questions how and when Gaelic culture and language came to Britain. The survival of the title of a saga, *Tochomlad Dail Riátai i nAlbain*, ‘the progress of Dál Riata into Britain’ implies that by the end of the tenth century a formal story existed (Dumville 2002, 185). The pseudo-historical text, *Historia Brittonum*, written in Wales in 829/830 contains the statement that the Gaels came to Dál Riata when Brutus was ruling the Romans – that is around 500 BC (Dumville 2002, 185). In addition, in 731, Bede retells a story that must have originated from a Gaelic source about the leading of the Gaels of Britain into the island by *Reuda*, eponym of Daal Reuda or Dál Riata (Dalreudini in Bede’s Latin).

Procedente autem tempore Britannia post Brettones et Pictos tertiam Scottorum nationem in Pictorum parte receipt, qui duce Reuda de Hibernia progressi uel amicitia uel ferro sibimet inter eos sedes quas hactenus habent uindicarunt; a quo uidelicet duce usque hodie Dalreudini uocantur, nam lingua *daal* partem significant.

In the course of time, after the Britons and Picts, *Britannia* received a third people (*natio*), that of the *Scotti*, who came from *Hibernia* under the leader Reuda and won among the others, either by concord or by iron, the seats that they still possess; from this leader they are still called *Dalreudini*, for in their language *daal* signifies ‘a part’. (Colgrave & Mynors 1969, i.I; Fraser, J E 2006, 1)

Following the wide distribution of Bede’s tale, attempts were made in Gaelic texts to identify the *dux* who led the Gaels to Britain. However, Dumville has concluded that these texts are too late in origin to provide useful material for the historians of Gaelic Scotland in the centuries before Bede (*ibid*, 186-8). Neither does *Reuda* feature in the Gaelic genealogies contained in *MSFA* (Dumville 2002) and *Cethri primchenéla Dáil Riata* (Dumville 2000).

However, in Adomnán's *Vita Sancti Columbae* there is a reference to the *populus Korkureti* (in populo Korkureti), a people whose members identified themselves as the *corcu* (seed) of Réti (Fraser 2006, 1; Anderson, A O & Anderson 1961, i.47). Possibly *corcu* is a synonym for *dál* and Réti an old form of *Riatai*. *Korkureti* could therefore be another form of the name Dál Riata (Dumville 2002, 186; MacNeill, E 1911/12,; Charles-Edwards 1993a, 146, 582). Many years ago, MacNeill noticed that the chronicles from the time of Adomnán preserved the related ethnonym *Moccu Réta*, designating a seventh-century male member of the *gens* or people. The existence of the two forms of the same ethnonym make it highly probable that the Hebridean zone was home to a seventh-century Gaelic kindred that traced its descent from Bede's *dux Reuda* (Fraser, J E 2005, 102-3). Fraser identifies *dux Reuda* with Domangart Réti whose death is assigned in the chronicles to c.507 and refers to MacNeill, who noted that personal names of this form, with a by-name like *Réti*, tend to denote the eponymous ancestor of that group (MacNeill 1911/12, 64). Furthermore, both *MSFA* (Dumville 2002, 201) and *Cethri prímchenéla Dáil Riata* (Dumville 2000, 175) include Domangart at the apex of the seventh-century pedigrees of the Cenél nGabráin (mainly Kintyre) and the Cenél Comgaill (principally in Cowal). Fraser proposes that if one accepts that Domangart was *Reuda*, then according to the chronicle record these two kindreds were Adomnán's Corcu Réti and the chronicler's Moccu Réta. This conclusion is supported by Bede who described how it was on the north shores of the Clyde estuary - in other words in Kintyre and Cowal - the homelands of these Dalriadic kindreds - that *Reuda* and the *Dalreudini* first settled in Britain (Fraser 2005, 103-4).

Bede described the *Dalreudini* as a single Gaelic group of all northern Britain, and referring again to Adomnán's *Vita Sancti Columbae*, Fraser notes that we have become accustomed to equate Adomnán's *Scoti Britanniae* with his *populus Korkureti* and suggests that this should be discarded or at least re-thought for the seventh-century. At that time, it seems that only those Gaels who were descended from Domangart Réti were Moccu Réta, in other words the Cenél nGabráin and Cenél Comgaill, the leaders of southern Argyll. A significant conclusion from this suggestion is that the kindreds of Cenél Loarn (Firth of Lorn) and Cenél nOengusa (Islay and elsewhere) were not included in the Moccu Réta because these groups did not trace their descent from Domangart Réti; they traced their ancestry back to Loarn Mór who they believed was Domangart's brother – at least according to *Cethri prímchenéla Dáil Riata*, which was created by their followers (Dumville 2000, 177). Fraser detects a

seventh-century political doctrine in Argyll whereby there were kindreds amongst the *Scoti Britanniae* who were not Moccu Rétai. This contradicts much of the literature of the last fifty years about the Dalriadic people, which maintains that there was a homogeneous single polity where one major kindred, Cenél nGabráin, was dominant for more than two centuries, and the church on Iona governed the ecclesiastical affairs of the region. This is now referred to as the ‘centralist thesis’, which Fraser illustrates by quoting the Andersons on the subject of the origins of the Scottish Gael:

The north-east corner of Antrim was the homeland of the Dál Riata...As an indirect result, one would suppose, of Uí Neill pressure in the fifth century, the Dál Riata had expanded in the only direction open to them, across the sea. In genealogical tradition this was the work of a single generation, ‘sons of Erc’, whose settlements became the dominant part of the now bipartite kingdom of the Dál Riata (Anderson, A O & Anderson 1961, xvi).

Acceptance of this model may also lead to the related conclusion that subsequent generations belonged to a homogeneous colonial polity (Fraser, J E 2006, 4). However, as we shall see, it may no longer be wise to give much credibility to this (centralist) hypothesis.

8.6 The North Channel Region

8.6.1 The Goidelic Migration

Recently, Campbell has suggested that colonisation by a single Irish population during the first half of the first millennium AD did not happen, and stresses that the Goidelic ‘invaders’ are invisible in the archaeological record (Campbell 1999, 11-15; Campbell 2001). He attributes the claimed migrations of the Irish into Argyll to the documented origin myths and suggests that there is no archaeological evidence to support such an event. This would have supposedly displaced a native Pictish or British population from an area approximately coterminous with modern Argyll. There is no interruption in the normal settlement type in Argyll at any point in the first millennium AD, and no foundation for suggesting any significant population movement between Antrim and Argyll. Instead the evidence reveals a homogeneous cultural region from at least the Iron Age, with some divergence later in the millennium. There is even an indication that cultural influences, for example, Crannogs, actually originated in Scotland before crossing to Antrim (Campbell 2001, 285-7).

Not long after Campbell published his hypothesis, Dumville proposed:

that the Gaelic culture of Argyll, Arran, Bute and the Inner Hebrides represents the northernmost extension ...of the gaelicisation (however achieved) of Ireland in the first millennium BC.

Perhaps influenced by Campbell, he continues:

that it would be wise to cease speaking of an 'Irish' conquest or settlement of Argyll and its islands, and even more of a 'Scottish' takeover of the region. The word which stresses the early medieval linguistic unity of Ireland and Dál Riata is 'Gaelic' (Dumville 2002, 195).

A similar suggestion had been made by Sharpe; 'that not all of the Gaelic population of Argyll need to have come from Irish Dál Riata' and 'that sixth-century data from the sources could allow one to surmise that there had been a Gaelic people in Argyll for generations' (Sharpe 2000 , 50).

The *Scottic* migration also had been questioned some years before the publication of Campbell's hypothesis by Neike & Duncan (Nieke & Duncan 1988, 8-9), who noted that the conventional origin tale 'does not stand critical examination', and proposed that there must have been a population in Argyll of Irish descent long before 500 AD. They suggested that the recorded migration of that time should be seen as a continuation of a political process which had started far earlier, and involved a limited dynastic movement instead of a large scale movement of people. They propose that strong social links existed between northern Ireland and Argyll that would have included the founding of strategic marriage alliances between powerful families. This would result in a population with Irish connections long before 500 AD. Such a scenario would not appear in the archaeological record. It also helps us to understand why Irish connections and ancestry in Scottish Dál Riata were so important, and why the king-lists and genealogies were 'edited' to support claims to leadership. The writer finds this very plausible indeed.

Campbell's major concern is that the supposed migration is invisible in the archaeological record. Recently, the question of how archaeologists should interpret the historical record of Dalriadic settlement has also been raised by Harding (Harding 2006, 71). He proposed that if it represented the culmination of long-standing cross-channel links between related kin groups over a few centuries, then the documentary record could be considered to be correct, serving simply to symbolise a long and convoluted process of cross-channel integration.

Harding concludes that archaeologically such a process would be unlikely to leave a record of radical innovation, and evidence for change might be very hard to detect. This is a very similar hypothesis to that of Nieke & Duncan, and the writer finds the suggestion of small scale dynastic, movement(s) across the channel credible.

8.6.2 Philology and the North Channel Region

Today, not many historians would consider the Fergus mór origin legend factual, however Campbell suggests that because the linguistic evidence appears so strong there is a willingness to accept the concept of an Irish invasion even if the details of it are rather hazy (Campbell 2001, 289). We know from the form of the personal and place-names in Adomnán's life of St Columba that the language spoken in Argyll in the late seventh century was Gaelic - Adomnán's language was archaic Old Irish (Anderson, A O & Anderson 1961, 132.). We also know from Adomnán that an interpreter was required in order for Columba to communicate with the Picts (*ibid*, I 33, 275; II 32, 397). Campbell (Campbell 2001, 289-91) notes the Goidelic origin of the modern place-names of Argyll, in contrast to those in eastern Scotland where there is a substantial Brittonic foundation. He stresses that Gaelic replaced Pictish in eastern Scotland only a few hundred years after the time of Adomnán, therefore one would expect to see a Brittonic substratum in the place-names of Argyll too. This has been traditionally explained by the elimination of aboriginal Brittonic Gaelic speakers by Gaelic speaking incomers (see for example, Ritchie, J N G 1997, 61-2). Campbell suggests that:

Such a complete obliteration without substantial population movement, which as we have seen, is archaeologically invisible, would be almost unparalleled in onomastic history.

He offers an alternative scenario; the Irish Sea and North Channel have come to be perceived as the line between Gael and Briton, only to be crossed by force, whereas in the early medieval period the linguistic barrier was actually *Druim Albin* (the Grampian Mountains). This formed a serious obstacle to travellers, whereas for the sea-based society of Argyll, the North Channel was a 'linking mechanism rather than a dividing one'. Communication by sea dominated, which allowed a common archaic language to be maintained on both sides of the North Channel, isolated from the linguistic advances taking place to the east of the Highland massif; *Druim Alban* was the true linguistic border between the Q-Celtic and P-Celtic languages during the Iron Age and early medieval period.

8.6.3 Archaeology and the North Channel region

Although Armit suggests that the archaeological evidence in support of contacts across the North Channel ‘runs deep from at least the Neolithic to the early centuries AD’ (Armit 2008, 3), in my opinion it is only the occasional trickle rather than a flood that is found in the Iron Age and Early Historic periods. There is evidence of prehistoric trade in porcellanite artefacts and flint axes from north-east Antrim to Scotland, including Islay, Colonsay, Kintyre, Jura, Cowal and Mull (Clough & Cummins 1988, 230-45, 273; Sheridan et al 1992, 402, 405, 410). A hoard of 36 Late Bronze Age gold armlets discovered on the farm of Coul on Islay in 1780 were of Irish type found in Co. Donegal and throughout Ireland (Coles 1960, 34). Evidence for trade in the first millennium AD is harder to find. Dress pins with spiral rings have been found throughout Ireland, particularly in the north-east, but only one is known from Scotland (Campbell (1999, 14). Likewise, the zoomorphic penannular brooch which is distributed widely in Ireland is not found in Argyll (Campbell 2001, 287). A workshop for Type G3 penannular brooches was excavated at Dunadd; other production sites have been found in Ireland, at Dooney, Co. Donegal and Moynagh Lough, Co. Meath, although the dendrochronological date available from the latter site suggests that the workshop there may be c.100 years later than that at Dunadd (*ibid*). This suggests that (in this instance) any cultural influence was from Scotland to Ireland.

The lack of archaeological evidence to support a migration by a single Irish population during the first half of the first millennium AD was noted by many archaeologists in the latter part of the twentieth century (e.g., Alcock, L 1972, 102; Ritchie, J N G 1997, 62; Campbell 1999, 14; Harding 2006, 71). Harding notes that:

Leslie Alcock is attributed with the memorable observation that the Irish Scots settlers of historical record came without any baggage, since archaeologically there was no diagnostic material assemblage or settlement type by which they might be identified. In fact, of course, they had no such assemblage at home either, which simply underlines the fact that ethnic groups need not be distinguished by an exclusive material culture’.

In Ireland, the earthen enclosure appeared as the principal domestic dwelling in the northern part of the region during the first millennium AD. A revised radiocarbon chronology for raths that reclassified them and removed unreliable dates has been published recently. This shows that the majority of univallate raths date from the period 600-900, with multivallate types starting slightly earlier and platform raths appearing later from mid-eighth to mid-tenth

century (Kerr 2007, 98-100). The earthen rath contrasts markedly with the rectilinear and irregular shaped drystone dwellings in Argyll which probably also date from the 1st millennium AD (Henderson 2007, 162-4). The writer suggests that the difference in domestic architectural styles between northern Ireland and Argyll is more associated with the sensible application of available materials to long established local architectural ideals, than any lack of contact across the North Channel.

The extent of the communication between population groups during the first millennia BC and AD in the North Channel region has been evaluated recently through a comparison of settlement evidence (Werner 2007). Werner applied a common classification scheme to site morphology in her three study areas: Argyll, Northern Ireland and Co. Donegal in Ireland. Similar architectural features and viewshed analysis for sites during the first millennia BC and AD suggest contact between Argyll and Co. Donegal. Overall, the results of her analysis suggest that there was contact and exchange of ideas between Scotland and Ireland, however, communication between Argyll and Co. Donegal was stronger than with Northern Ireland, particularly during the 1st millennium BC (*ibid*, 176-7). Werner's results suggest that there was contact across the North Channel throughout the first millennia, but particularly during the first millennia BC. The proposed trade and communications route (*supra*, 155) between Lough Foyle and Islay (and onwards) would have facilitated contact and communication between Co. Donegal and Argyll.

Many have suggested that the contrasting architectural traditions of the earthen raths and the stone *cashels* in Ireland, is due to local geology rather than cultural or societal preferences (summary in Henderson, 2007, 175-7). Although there are no drystone sites in areas of high concentrations of raths, there is an absence of drystone sites in some mountainous areas in Ireland and a presence in other areas where there are no local sources of stone. Earthen enclosures are found with the drystone sites in the west, particularly in the central and south-west regions of Co. Donegal. The western distribution of such drystone sites indicates a deliberate expression of architectural style that had a high degree of cultural (or personal) significance for the builders (*ibid.*). Furthermore, Henderson suggests that the two types may not be contemporary and that the drystone sites probably date from an earlier period. He argues that the onset of drystone oval and circular styles of domestic enclosure was an

Atlantic western event, because the majority of the early Iron Age dating evidence comes from the west. Werner provides evidence to show that the ratio of curvilinear drystone sites to earthen enclosures is highest in Argyll, lowest in Northern Ireland and c.50/50 in Co. Donegal. She provides data from excavations to support her proposal that in Argyll this could signify the continuation into the first millennium AD of a long drystone architectural tradition. The drystone sites in Co. Donegal suggest a shared architectural tradition with sites from Argyll and western Ireland during the first millennium BC (Werner 2007, 166).

8.6.4 North Channel - conclusions

Campbell's proposal that there was no mass migration of *Scotti* from Ireland into Argyll during the first half of the first millennium AD has been widely accepted, as we have seen, but some have suggested that a limited dynastic movement may have occurred between related kin groups that had enjoyed close contact for a considerable time. The lack of a definable material culture assemblage for northern Ireland in the first millennia has already been noted (*supra*, 165-6), and Harding has suggested that a long and convoluted process of cross-channel integration might be very hard to detect archaeologically (Harding 2006, 71). In this thesis it is assumed that the lands bordering the North Channel developed into a homogeneous Gaelic-speaking region rather than independent cultural areas, as a result of long term kinship, strategic intermarriage, and trading links reaching back into prehistoric times. This was facilitated by a common language. Campbell's creative relocation of the linguistic barrier from the North Channel to *Druim Alban*, allows one to understand how the sea permitted a shared archaic language to be maintained in Argyll and northern Ireland. Notably, as Dumville said, we should consider the Gaelic culture of Argyll and the Inner Hebrides to be the northern limit of the gaelicisation of Ireland in the first millennium BC (Dumville 2002, 195).

8.7 Míniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban

Hereafter referred to as *MSFA*, this tractate is of great importance for the study of the Early Historic period in Argyll. Bannerman's translation is based on *H.2.7* (1928) Trinity College Dublin (henceforth H) with omissions supplied from the *Book of Ballymote* (henceforth B), the *Book of Lecan* (henceforth L) and *MacFirbis's Book of Genealogies* (henceforth McF).

Here follows his translation of the Islay section of the survey and assessment of British Dál Riata:

§26 Fergus Bec, moreover, son of Erc; his brother killed him. He had one son .i. Sétna, from whom are the Cenél Conchride in Islay .i. Conchriath son of Bolc, son of Sétna, son of Fergus Beck, son of Erc, son of Eochaid Munremar.

§29 Oengus Már and Loarnd and Mac Nisse Már, these are the three sons of Erc.

§30 Oengus Már, son of Erc, had two sons .i. Nadsluaig and Fergna. Fergna had seven sons .i. Tuathal, Aed Letho, Rígán, Fiacha, Guaire, Cantand, Eochu. Nadsluaig, moreover, had two sons .i. Barrfhind and Capléne. Two sons of Barrfhind .i. Ném and Tulchán. Tulchán had four sons .i. Crónán, Breccán, Damán, Conmend. Others say that this same Barrfhind (son McF) of Nadsluaig, had three sons .i. Lugaid, Conall, Galán. Capléni, son of Nadsluaig, had four sons .i. Aedán Lugaid, Crumine, Genténe, who is also called Ném. Barrfhind, son of Nadsluaig, had three sons, Lugaid, Conall, Gálan, a Cruthnech his mother. It is they who divided land in Islay.

§39 Oengus Becc, moreover, son of Erc, had one son .i. Muridach.

§40 A *cét treb* in Islay, (Oidech McF) twenty houses, Freg a hundred and twenty houses, (Calad McF) Rois sixty houses, Ros Deorand thirty houses, Ad hEs thirty houses, Loch Rois thirty houses, Ath Cassil thirty there, Cenél nOengusa thirty houses, Callann.....But small are the *feranna*. The expeditionary strength of the hostings of the Cenél nOengusa .i. five hundred men.

§65 Cenél nOengusa has four hundred and thirty houses, two seven-benchers every twenty houses in a sea expedition (Bannerman 1974, 48-9).

Bannerman dates the original, which was apparently compiled in Dál Riata, to the seventh century and provides evidence to demonstrate that it is a tenth-century document in its present form (*ibid*, 39).

The basis of the civil survey is *tech* or 'house', which often appears in sub-totals in multiples either of 20, or of lots of 30. Many historians have written extensively about the interpretation of *tech*, and we may never know its precise meaning, although the assumption that it is an abbreviation is attractive. Ó Corráin proposes that *tech* represents the land and household of a freeman. He notes also that in one version of the text (McF) *tech*, *tellach* and *treb* are treated as synonyms, and adds that Charles Edwards has suggested that the Irish *treb* and *tech* from the early law-tracts, the hide and the *terra unius familiae* of Bede have identical origins and signify the land of the free commoner. A twenty house unit survived

until the later medieval period in Scotland as the *davach*, *urisland* and *tir unga* (Ó Corráin 1980, 172, 178-80).

MSFA provides us with the total number of ‘houses’ belonging to each of the three principal kindreds of Dál Riata; Cenél nGabráin, 560 ‘houses’; Cenél nOengusa, 430 ‘houses’, and Cenél Loairn, 420 ‘houses’. It is significant for this thesis that the totals for the Cenél nOengusa, which Bannerman places on Islay, are territorially subdivided. The ‘houses’ of the Cenél Loairn are also sub-divided, but by the generations of Loarn’s named descendents (*ibid*, 71). This leads Dumville to suggest that parts of more than one text have been combined (Dumville 2002, 207). Bannerman realised that there is a problem, for in neither case do the sub-totals add up to the total. He offers three different possible solutions to this (*ibid*, 57-8); none is very satisfactory (Ó Corráin 1980, 171; Sharpe 2000, 57). His solutions relate to possible lacunae in the transmitted text. Scholars continue to analyse this to this day (for example Ó Corráin 1980, 171-3; Swift 1987, 158-67; Sharpe 2000, 57).

In 1980, Ó Corráin reviewed Bannerman’s *Studies in the History of Dalriada* - six years after its publication. He offers a tentative translation of the critical section of the text concerned with the survey and military assessment of Islay. The section in question is that which introduces the assessment of the Cenél nOengusa. Bannerman’s transcription reads:

§40 Cēt treb i n-īle Odeich .xx tech. Freg .cxx. tech Cladros .lx. tech
Rois deorand .xxx. tech. airdhes xxx. tech loich rois xxx. tech Aitha
cassil xxx. in sin cenīul óengusa xxx tech caillnae
§44 acht it beca inna feranna taiga .i. cenēoil oengusa .i. fer trīchot
fec[h]t (Bannerman 1974, 42).

Ó Corráin is of the opinion that *i n-īle* was added intrusively by a later editor; his reading of Bannerman’s §§ 40-42 is as follows:

A hundred houses in Odeich, twenty houses of Freg (gen[itive]), one hundred and twenty houses of Cladros (? Calathros), sixty houses of Ros Deorand, thirty houses of Ard Es, thirty houses of Loch (?) Rois, thirty houses of Áth (?) Cassil (that thirty [belongs to] Cenel nOengusa), thirty houses of Callann (?) (Ó Corráin 1980, 171-2).

Sharpe discusses the problem of the number of houses per kindred and stresses that Ó Corráin’s resolution of the arithmetic for the total number of houses of the Cenél nÓengusa is attractive and plausible. The discrepancy is reduced to only ten – one digit (x) difference

in Roman numerals between 420 and 430 - easily lost in transmission (Ó Corráin 1980, 173). Ó Corráin is also relaxed about equating *tech* and *treb* and reminds us that in the Irish law-tracts *treb* means precisely the land of the normal freeman. He also points out that *tech* is only spelled out in full once in *MSFA*; he offers the suggestion that the change from *treb* to *tech* happened during later copying and that the original manuscript may have read *cét t. inOdeich*, or *c. t. i nOdeich*.

Ó Corráin also addresses another intrinsic problem with the apparently small number of ‘houses’ of Cenél nÓengusa in *Átha Cassil* - who we know were the dominant lineage in Islay. He examines §39 and §43 of Bannerman’s transcription and translation.

§39 Oengus Becc dano mac Eirc unum filium habuit .i. Muridach
Oengus Becc, moreover, son of Erc, had one son .i. Muirdach

§43 acht it beck[c]a inna feranna Ceníuil Óengusa .i. fer trichot
But small are the *feranna* (lands) of the houses of the Cenél nÓengusa

He proposes that a small lineage, Cenél nÓengusa, known to be of different descent from the dominant Cenél nÓengusa occupied part of Islay, and that the seventh-century genealogist was aware of this. They were referred to as Cenél nÓengusa Bicc (or Becc). This explains their presence in the genealogy, and also accounts for the comment in the tractate about the small size of the lands of Cenél nOengusa (Ó Corráin 1980, 172).

Referring to this part of *MSFA*, which has made this text ‘famous far and wide’, Dumville firmly comments that he ‘does not believe a single word which has been written in interpretation of it’ (Dumville 2002, 207). He suggests that ‘Bannerman’s text serves nobody’s interest: that (it) is a diplomatic edition without modern punctuation and modern capitalisation, yet it also embodies at once too many and too few emendations’ (Dumville 2002, 200). He presents a new version of the text, without translation, with sentences individually numbered and started on a new line, and clearer markings of emendations. However, bearing in mind, Dumville’s comment that he does not believe ‘a single word’ of the available interpretations of this section of *MFSA* (*ibid*, 202), the author believes that there is a very small probability that the survey and assessment, with its arithmetic, survives close to its original form after suffering textual losses, insertions, translation, merging, editing and rewriting over the course of hundreds of years. Therefore, the number of

‘houses’ in *MSFA* will not be used as a tool to analyse settlement patterns on the island in the first millennium AD.

According to Dumville, we have been taught too simplistically by Bannerman to think of Cenél nÓengusa whenever we think of Islay.

Sentences §§18-19 of Dumville’s transcription read:

§18 Fergus beck dano mac Eirc, gegnaï a brát<h>air.
Fergus Bec moreover son of Erc, his brother killed him

§19 Oenmac leis, .i. Sétna a quo Cenél Cronchride I nHile, .i. Conchriath mac Boilc meic S<h>étnai meic F<h>ergusa bic meic Eirc meic E<chd>ach Munremair.
He had one son, that is, Sétna, from whom Cenél Conchride in Islay, that is, Conchriath son of Bolc, son of Sétna, son of Fergus Beck, son of Erc, son of Eochaid Munremar (Dumville 2002, 201).

(This extract corresponds to §§26-29 of Bannerman’s transcription (Bannerman 1974, 42)).

The presence of the Cenél Conchride in Islay reinforces the conclusion that Cenél nÓengusa was indeed not the only population group on the island. Bannerman also notes that the Patrician Tradition records the place-name Telach Ceniuil Oengossa in Dál Riata in Ireland, thus revealing that Cenél nÓengusa possibly occupied land there and was already established in the time of St Patrick (before the traditional arrival date of Fergus mór in Scotland) (Dumville 2002, 206; Bannerman 1974, 122).

The genealogical section of *MSFA* contains a comment that the lineage of Oengus Mór is recorded differently by *alii* (others); viz. his grandson Barrfind had two sons, Ném and Tulchán, however *alii* say that Barrfind had three sons, Lugaid, Conall and Galán (§26 above). The following transcription is from Dumville.

§24 Dá mac Barrf<h>ind, .i. Nem ocus Tulchán.
§25 Cethri meic la Tulchán, .i. Crónán, Breccán, Damán, Conmend.
§26 Alii dicunt Barrfhind eundem <filium> Nadsluaig tres filios habuisse, .i. Lugaid, Conall, Galán
§27 Capléni mac Nadsluaig quattuor filios habuit, .i. Aedán, Lugaid, Crumíne, Genténe qui et Nem.
§28. Barrfhind mac Nadsluaig tres filios habuit – Lugaid, Conall, Galán.
§29. Cruthnech mater eius.
§30. I<t é> ade randsaite orba I nÍle.

There follows the interesting comment by *alii* that it was the three sons of Barrfind that divided land in Islay; this implies that the lands of Cenél nÓengusa Mór in Islay were subdivided by the three sons of Barrfhind, (Dumville 2002, 207; Bannerman 1974, 48). Sentence §29 is ambiguous, and we do not know whether it was the mother of all three sons or simply Galán's mother who was a Pict. Ó Corráin believes that terms such as *alii dicunt* often introduce older and perhaps more reliable traditions, which, for whatever reason, are not in favour with the redactor (Ó Corráin 1980, 171).

Thus in Islay in the late seventh century we have the principal kindred, Cenél nÓengusa, and one or two minor lineages - possibly Cenél nÓengusa Bicc in the district of *Átha Cassil*, and Cenél Conchride. We must assume that the specific reference in *MSFA* to the mother of Lugaid, Conall, and/or Galán as 'Pictish' is significant for some reason, and that she was of relatively high status. Unfortunately, the lineage of Cenél nÓengusa is problematical; the genealogical details in *Cethri prímchenéla Dál Riata* agree, with only minor differences, with that in *Míniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban*, however, no individual member of Cenél nÓengusa is attested in other annals, and thus no dates may be given to any individual member of the lineage (Dumville 2000, 185).

8.8 Place-names from *MSFA*

The place-names of the districts or townships on Islay mentioned in *MSFA* are as follows:

Oideich
Freg/Freag
C(a)ladrois
Rois Deorand
Aird Hes
Loich Rois
Átha Cassil
Caillnae

Since *MSFA* was transcribed by Reeves and Skene (Reeves 1857, 123; Skene 1867, 308-14), historians – including Reeves and Skene - have attempted to locate the districts of the *Cenél nÓengusa* in Islay by dividing the whole Island into the districts named in the text, and ignoring the presence of any other tribal groups (for example, MacNeill, J G 1899, 8-10; Lamont 1966; Níeke 1983, 306; Maceacharna 1976, 29-32; Thomas, F W L 1882, 248-54). We know from *MSFA* that Cenél Conchride occupied parts of the island and that possibly the

Cenél nÓengusa Bicc did so too. We understand that the lands of Cenél nOengusa Mór in Islay may have been subdivided by the three sons of Barrhind. Furthermore, Cenél nOengusa may have held lands in Northern Ireland, and if Ó Corráin is correct that *i n-īle* was added intrusively by a later editor (see lines §§ 40-42 of Bannerman's transcription) to 'the Islay' section of *MSFA*, it is possible that some of the district names were located in Ireland and not in Islay.

Scholars have searched for territories on too large a geographical scale – attempting to identify a major part of the island from one place-name. In so doing they have ignored the original Old Irish topographical meaning of the elements in the district names in *MSFA*. For example, the element *ros* occurs in *Cladrois*, *Rois Deorand* and *Loich Rois*. According to the *DIL*, Old Irish *Ros* refers to a wood, a wooded height or a promontory on the shore of a river or lake and is common in place-names.

Thus *Rois Deorand* may mean the 'wood' or 'small wooded promontory' or 'height of the stranger, pilgrim or saint', and *Loich Rois* 'loch of the small wooded promontory or height'.

Thomas and Maceacharna both place *Cladrois* and *Loich Rois* in the Rhinns of Islay because of the modern place-names, Claddach and Cladville, at the south-east end of the Rhinns of Islay, which also has Loch Gorm towards its north-east end. Thus Thomas derives 'shore of the promontory' from *Cladrois*, *Cladach-rois* (Thomas, F W L 1882, 252; Maceacharna 1976, 30). In my opinion, the Rhinns of Islay do not conform topographically to the Old Irish meaning of *ros*.

Maceacharna suggests that *Ros Deorand* means 'Pilgrim's Promontory' and identifies it with the Ardnave peninsula at the northern end of the Rhinns because of the ecclesiastical sites at Kilnave and Nave Island. He also reasons that Ardnave 'is the only suitable 'ros' remaining' on the island – referring to his attempt to divide the whole island into the territories that appear in the *MSFA* (Maceacharna 1976, 30). This low lying treeless machair peninsula hardly conforms to Old Irish *ros* either.

Maceacharna is positive about his derivation of Loch Gorm on the Rhinns of Islay as *Loich Rois*, the ‘loch of the promontory’, and Thomas unequivocally identifies the ‘Lake of the Ros or Rinn’ with Loch Guirm (Gorm) (Maceacharna 1976, 30; Thomas, F W L 1882, 252).

A search in ICD confirms that on Islay the word *ros* is not used as a name for a large promontory; it finds Rosquern, Aros, An Ros, Carraig Rossan and Ros Mhic Mhaolein. Examination of the OS *Object Name Book* entry for these, and a study of their location on OS maps, confirms that on Islay *ros* is used as the name for a small wooded promontory or height, precisely as described in *DIL*.

Rosquern (NR 3845 6106) occurs in rentals west of Barr as *Roskirwd* (1686) (Smith 1895, 511) and as *Rosker* (1499) (*ibid*, 29, 30). It is marked on Langland’s map of 1801, but appears as an unnamed ruin on the first edition OS map (NLS; OS 6-inch, CCIX, 1881). It sits at the foot of a wooded hillside. Macniven observes that there is an absence of features which could be described as a promontory in the vicinity of Rosquern and offers ‘wood/highland of the cairn’ as the meaning of this place-name from a hypothetical *Ros a’chùirn* (Macniven 2006b, 401). Relic woodland survives to the north of the ruin and the place-name Coill a’ Ghuail occurs nearby.

Aros Bay is situated at the mouth of the Kintour River. Macniven suggests that the local topography favours Old Norse *Áross*, ‘mouth of the river’ (Macniven 2006b, 506). It is therefore not a *ros* name.

An Ros is not marked on modern OS maps, however it does appear on the OS Six-inch sheet (CXC VIII, 1882)(Figure 8.5). It is the name given to a small wooded intrusion into Loch Ballygrant and conforms precisely to the Old Irish usage of the word.

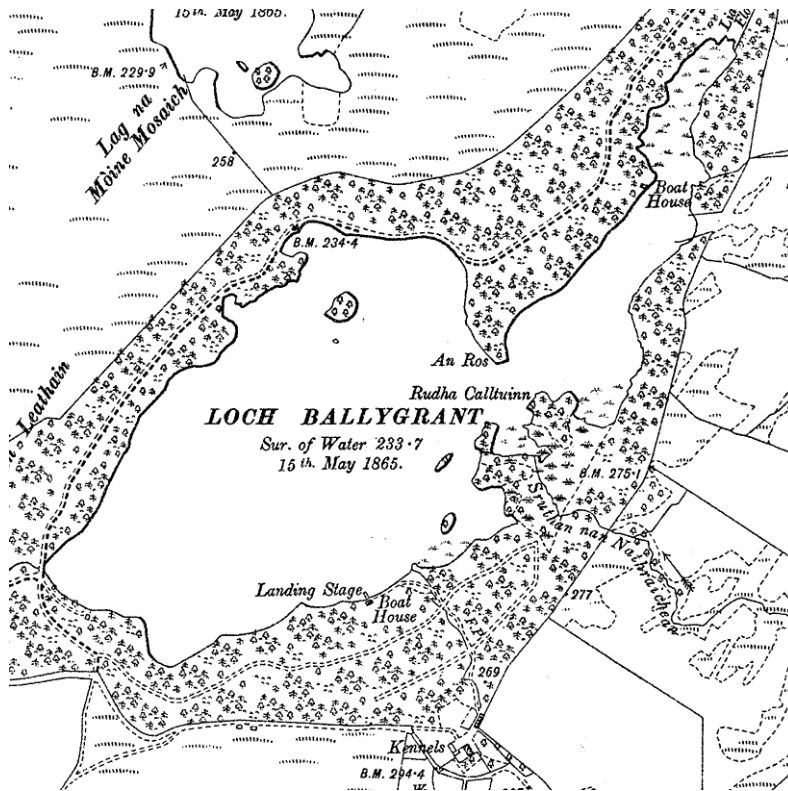


Figure 8.7: An Ros, Loch Ballygrant; OS Six-inch sheet CXC VIII, 1882 (detail)

Carraig Rossan is the name given to a small rock in the sea off Tornamoine (NR 3380 4281); here the usage probably denotes the colour of the rock rather than its topography. *Ros Mhic Mhaolein* is the name of a small reef situated between the high and low water lines off Ardlarach (NR 2929 5901) traditionally this is associated with the wreck of a ship called ‘Rose’, which belonged to a man of the name of McMillan (ICD).

8.8.1 Freg/Freag

There is however some rent roll evidence that positions *Freag* in the vicinity of Dail, and the survival of the place-name itself, has credible support from **Dall Ochdamh na Freighe* in a series of early sixteenth to early eighteenth-century rentals (Maceacharna 1976, 29-30; Thomas, F W L 1882, 252-3; Smith, G G 1895, 485; Burnett 1889, 588; ICD; Macniven 2006b, 378-9). At a conference in 2007, Andrew Jennings included *Freag* in his list of pre-Norse place-names in the Scottish west (Jennings & Kruse 2009, fig. 4.1, 83).

8.8.2 *Átha Cassil*

Bannerman interprets *atha* as the genitive singular of *átha*, ‘ford’, and *cassil* as the genitive singular of *casel* – ‘a stone wall, an earthen wall faced with stone, or a stone fort’ (Bannerman 1974, 57).

Thomas suggests that *Oa*, *Add*, *Aithe* appear to be contracted forms of Gaelic *Adhbha*, *Adb a*, ‘palace, house, fortress’ and claims that the word ‘has ancient authority’; he provides an unusable citation from O’Reilly (Thomas, F W L 1882, 250-1). He notes that the local Gaelic pronunciation of the name of the Oa of Islay corresponds exactly with the Irish pronunciation of *atha*. He explains that the genitive of *an O* is *na h’Oatha* – pronounced ‘Aw Na Hawa’. Twenty years later McNeill reiterates this, and adds that the Mull of Oa, *Maol na h-Otha*, is sometimes called locally the Mull of Kinnouth, *Ceann na h-Otha*. He believed that ‘Oa’ is derived from Norse *haugr*, ‘a howe or burial tumulus’ (MacNeill, J G 1899, 9).

The coastal promontory fort of Dùn Athad is located on the south-west shore of the Oa (NR 2849 4070). Thomas provides historic forms of the Dùn Athad place-name as *Dunad*, *Dun Add*, *Dunaid*, and *Dunayut*. He identifies this site with the township of *Átha Cassil*. He comments that it is strange that the same word is pronounced ‘after the Irish mode when applied to the district, but with the *t* not aspirated (*aita*, *Ata*) when applied to the dùn’. He proposes that ‘the ancient district of *Aitha Cassil* was probably coincident with the modern Oa, the former parish of Kilnachton’ (Thomas, F W L 1882, 250-1). His evidence of the pronunciation of the name of the Oa was obtained from residents of Islay who were born in the late 18th century.

Macniven is influenced by his (mistaken) assumption that the fort of Dùn Athad is post medieval and suggests that the place-name may have been coined in later times in commemoration of the fort of Dunadd in Mid Argyll (Macniven 2006, 213).

Although lacking modern philological inputs, the available evidence, particularly from Thomas, would seem to support the possibility that the district of *Átha Cassil* was part or all of the Oa of Islay. There are only two forts recorded on the Oa, Dùn Mór Ghil on its western shore and Dùn Athad on the southern shore. The latter is situated on a coastal stack which is accessed by means of a narrow (c.2m) land-bridge. Topographically, perhaps this could conform to the original Old Irish meaning of *atha* in a transferred sense of ‘space or hollow between two objects’ rather than the usual meaning of ‘ford’ (eDIL).

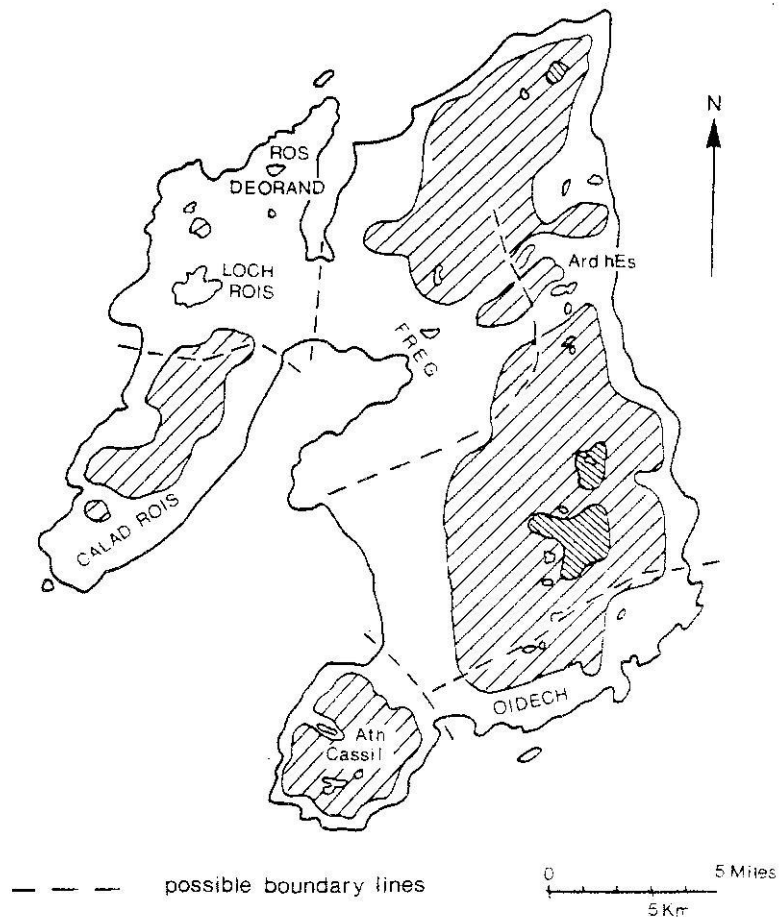
8.9 Conclusions

The survival of pre-Norse place-names is relevant to my study of the impact of the Norse settlement on Islay, therefore it is noted that the names *Freag* and *Átha Cassil* from *MSFA* possibly survived until modern times. The evidence for *Freag* is more convincing, being based on 16th to 18th-century rentals.

Unfortunately, like the origin tale of the Scots, and the analysis of the houses of the ‘Islay section’ of *MSFA*, the toponymic analyses produced by Reeves, Skene, Lamont, Maceacharna and Thomas are unreliable and of limited use in my research. With the exception of *Freag*, and possibly *Átha Cassil*, it will not be feasible to locate seventh-century territories in Islay, or to use this as a comparison factor for the chapels.

Nieke used the toponymic analyses of the district names in *MSFA* carried out by Lamont (1966), Maceacharna (1976) and Thomas (1882), to create a map of Islay on which she believed the districts were located ‘fairly accurately’ - with unfortunate results according to Dumville (Nieke 1983, 305-8, 318 fig 3; Dumville 2000, 206). Following Lamont, Maceacharna and Thomas, she divided the island up entirely between the districts named in the ‘Islay part’ of *MSFA*. She suggested where the boundaries between the various districts may have been (Figure 8.8), and noted that ‘the relative number of settlements (duns, crannogs & brochs) within each area do not always correspond well with the pattern of ‘houses’ indicated by the *Senchus Fer nAlban* (sic.)’ (*op. cit.*). Nieke’s work on the Islay part of *MSFA* influenced other archaeologists in their analysis of settlement patterns (for

example, Alcock, A & Alcock 1987, 134-6; Swift 1987, 158-167; Meredith-Lobay 2009, 47-55).



LISTING CONTAINED IN SENCHUS FER n ALBAN

Oidech	20 houses
Freg	120 houses
Calad Rois	60 houses
Ros Deorand	30 houses
Ard hEs	30 houses
Loch Rois	30 houses
Ath Cassil	30 houses
Cenél nOengusa	30 houses

Figure 8.8: The boundaries between districts in *MSFA* from Nieke 1983, 318

The writers' conclusions from the material covered in this chapter impacted his methodology. He became aware that much of the prior published analyses – both historical and toponymical - of the Islay section of *MSFA* were unreliable, and that he was not going to be able to locate the territories of the townships/districts in Islay of the principal kindreds referred to in it. Therefore, they could no longer be used as a comparison factor for the Argyll chapels. However Campbell's hypothesis is important for this thesis. His suggestion that Goidelic Gaelic was spoken on both sides of the North Channel and that there was no colonisation by a single Irish population during the first half of the first millennium AD, has stimulated others to suggest that a limited dynastic movement may have occurred between related kin groups that had enjoyed close contact for a considerable time. This long and convoluted process of cross-channel integration might be very hard to detect archaeologically. The lands bordering the North Channel formed a homogeneous cultural region from at least the Iron Age. This has implications for communications, the spread of Christianity, and strengthens the possibility that some of the place-names in 'the Islay section' of *MSFA* may not be in Islay, for example, the place-name Loughros may be found in Donegal on modern maps!

Chapter 9: The Norse

9.1 Introduction

This chapter primarily addresses the Norse archaeology and settlement of Argyll with a focus on Islay. The emphasis is on the Viking–Age which has been dated by Morris from AD 793 to 1050 (Barrett et al 2000, 1). The Late-Norse period, which traditionally dates from c. 1050 to 1350 and beyond, is of decreasing importance as far as both Islay and my research is concerned.

Almost every facet of the Norse migration to Scotland remains controversial. Theories and counter-theories continue to be published despite the documentation of the diaspora in Irish and Anglo-Saxon annals, and Scandinavian sagas. As far as the writer is concerned, the controversies have come closer to home following recent doctoral research into the Norse in Islay (Macniven 2006b). The debate about what happened to the ‘natives’, and the ‘peace or war’ debate, has now reached the southern Inner Hebrides after having been focussed for many years on the Northern and Western Isles. These issues are discussed below.

9.2 Hoards, settlements, and burials

There are at least 36 gold or silver Norse hoards from Scotland and about 65 pagan burial sites containing 130 or more Norse graves (Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998, 47). Norse coin-hoards primarily date from the late tenth century and early eleventh. The earliest is that found at Storr Rock; it was buried c. 935-40 near to the Old man of Storr on Skye. The latest of the Viking hoards in Scotland was buried c. 1032-40 (Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998, 234).

Because of increased activity in the last ten years, the total number of recorded settlement sites is growing. CANMORE lists about ninety reasonably convincing Norse or Viking settlements in Scotland. The majority of Norse settlement sites are in Orkney, followed by the Outer Hebrides. The site at Freswick Bay, Caithness is the only site with structural remains excavated on the mainland; however settlement is implied by the finds from a midden in Smoo Cave, Durness and the fragmentary remains of a probable late Norse-period

settlement excavated at Sangobeg, Durness, Sutherland. Nearby, fragmentary settlements of Norse date at Dunnet Bay and Robert's Haven were investigated in 2001 and 1992 respectively. (Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998, 48; Pollard 2005, 43-5; Brady et al 2007, 57-82; Lelong 2003,8).

The largest concentration of pagan Norse burials in Scotland is in Orkney where, in addition to individual graves, there are several cemeteries and boat burials.

Lane has revisited his distribution map of Viking-period pottery in the Hebrides. By 1983, he had identified 29 sites; in 2007, the number had increased to about 50 sites from Lewis to Tiree. This includes 21 surface erosion sites in the machair of South Uist found during fieldwork in the 1990s, however the number of actual settlements represented may be smaller – perhaps no more than six to eight (Lane 2007, 11; Sharples & Parker Pearson 1999, 47, Figure 3).

9.3 Southern Region and Dál Riata

Graham-Campbell & Batey refer to a Viking warrior burial (or cenotaph) on the west side of Loch Lomond at Glen Fruin – this comprised a bent sword, damaged shield-boss and a spear-head, found in 1851 in the top of a mound and now lost. There was no record of an associated skeleton. They suggest that the skeletal remains may have disappeared or the burial may have been a cremation. Whether this mainland burial should be included on their distribution map of Norse pagan burials is debatable, it was the only known pagan Norse 'burial' on the western mainland from Cape Wrath to the Mull of Galloway, however, a totally unexpected boat-burial was found and excavated in 2011 on the Ardnamurchan peninsula in north Argyll (Cobb et al 2011). Although Norse pagan burials are found in the islands of Argyll, hitherto the alleged ones on the adjacent mainland have been dismissed (Brown 1997, 207; Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998, 85).

The islands contain Norse farm-names indicative of settlement while the Norse names of the adjacent mainland are mainly topographical such as *dalr* (*ibid*, 72, 85). The few stray finds on the mainland reflect this; a ‘thistle-brooch’ was found beside a burn close to Loch Leven, Glencoe, although there always the possibility that it was not lost by a Viking! A few tenth or early eleventh-century coins were found in one of the Kilmartin cairns and a suggested Norse gold ring from Inverary park is now lost (*ibid*, 84-7).

There are no stray finds of Norse artefacts from Kintyre. Other than two Norse place-names in *erg* ‘shieling’ in Kintyre, the remaining 30 are topographical and include 19 in ‘*dalr*’ (Jennings 2004, 100). Jennings suggests that the Norse moved into Kintyre to a territory inhabited by Gaelic speakers and avoided the areas of densest native settlement. They did not settle in sufficient numbers to become dominant. He proposes that the absence of the most common Norse habitative generic *bólstaðr* in Kintyre is because after a short time the Norse were naturalized and no secondary settlement occurred. This is a plausible argument. Some scholars believe that the generic *bólstaðr* represents the division of an older, larger farm, and certainly my own research supports this hypothesis (Jennings 2004, 114). This theory may be applied to much of the Argyll mainland, although there are *bólstaðr* place-names at Resipole (NM 721 640), situated close to Salen on the north shore of Loch Sunart and Arnabol (NM 743 840) near Arisaig. After reading Jennings’ suggestion that the Cenél nGabráin could have allowed the Norse to settle in Kintyre, the author began to consider if something similar may have happened on Islay. This is discussed below in Section 9.10. In Kintyre, this could have taken place in the second half of the ninth century following the repercussions caused by the storming of Dunseverick (871) by the *Gail* and Cenél nEógain from Tyrone and Armagh (Woolf suggests that Dunseverick may have been defended by Gaelic kings from Kintyre (Woolf 2007, 115)).

The ratio of Norse to Gaelic place-names in the islands of Coll and Tiree is high at 50%. Here, many farm names bear Norse topographical names and fiscal analysis of rentals has established primary and secondary settlements (Johnston 1995, 111-4, 119-20). However, this is not reflected in the archaeological record. A search in CANMORE (NL94NE 1) reveals that an oval brooch and pin from a lost grave are the only surviving objects of the

Norse period from Coll and Tiree. What may have been a high status Norse burial at Cornaigbeg was reported in 1794 but all finds are lost (NL94NE 3).

The southern Inner Hebrides includes the islands of Colonsay, Oronsay and Islay. Their Atlantic machair coastlines resemble those of the Outer Hebrides and it is not surprising therefore that they are relatively rich in pagan Norse burials. However, they offer no firm evidence for Scandinavian settlement. In contrast, with the exception of some Norse topographical place-names, Jura is archaeologically sterile during this period although its name most likely stems from Old Norse *dýr-øy*, 'Deer Island' reflecting its use as a hunting reserve by the Norse. Colonsay and Oronsay are particularly rich in Viking burials with at least 11 authenticated and several more possible (Fisher 2001, 136; RCAHMS 1984, 150-1; Brown 1997, 223-7; Ritchie, J N G 1981,;Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998, 90-1).

One of the earliest burials from Scandinavian Scotland (ninth century) is among the four or five Viking period burials from the small tidal island of Oronsay. At Carn a' Bharraich, 'cairn of the Barra men', three burials were found in the mound of a boat burial. The two primary inhumations were found in 1891 and the third in 1913, inserted into the edge of the mound. The primary burials were those of a male and a female – both elderly. Among the objects found with the female were two brooches made from the hinges of a shrine of insular craftsmanship. A third brooch of native type fastened the female's cloak. Attempts to burn the boat as a funeral pyre were unsuccessful. Although this was a common procedure in Scandinavia during cremation, it is otherwise unknown in Britain or Ireland. The secondary Early Viking period burial was of a middle-age female accompanied by two bronze brooches, a ringed pin of native Irish type, shears and a bone needle case. The brooches were of the 'Berdal type', produced in southern Scandinavia in the eighth century. Some consider these brooches to define the start of the Viking Age, although their subsequent use as heirlooms in graves is a problem. This writer defines the Viking-Age as the Scandinavian diaspora of the late eighth to mid-eleventh centuries, but one should remember that there is some evidence for trading activities in the centuries before this. A date between 750 and 800 AD for the start of the Viking-Age is argued by Myhre, although his evidence, first mooted in 1983, has not really been updated in his later papers (Myhre 2000, 44-5; Myhre 1998, 5; Myhre 1993, 186-8; Morris 1998, 87-8). Excavations in the Viking-age town of Ribe in Denmark have provided additional chronological inputs for the date of Berdal brooches.

About 360 fragments of moulds for these brooches were found in stratified deposits. The excavators suggest that the appearance of Berdal brooches, or in particular, a horizon of contemporary jewellery, should be used to define the start of the Viking period. This jewellery has been dated to c. 790-850 and they argue for an absolute start date of c. 790 for the Viking period and argue that an earlier date is impossible because of the West European ceramics that also occur in the Ribe stratigraphy (Feveile & Jensen 2000, 19). Using this argument, the boat burial at Carn a' Bharraich may not be assigned a date earlier than 790-800 AD, or allowing for the 'heirloom effect', some years later. It is proposed that in the Southern Inner Hebrides the early trading and raiding expeditions took place during the second half of the eighth century; support for this is suggested by a concentration of graves in Norway containing insular grave-goods dating to the decades around 800 – confirmed dendrochronologically. These are concentrated in central western Norway – directly opposite Orkney and Shetland. It was probably from this region that the initial Viking expeditions were made. The custom of wearing insular metalwork as female brooches spread over the whole of Norway within 1 generation (Wamers 1998, 51-3). Excavations in Shetland have confirmed the presence of groups of Norse at Norwick and Old Scatness in the early to mid-eighth century (Ballin Smith 2007, 287-97; Morris 1998, 73-103).

9.4 The Norse Archaeology of Islay

There is minimal archaeological evidence for Norse activity and settlement in Islay in spite of the survival of a substantial number of place-names, which imply Norse settlement there. Macniven found that 53% of the eighteenth-century farm-names contain Norse onomastic material (2006, 138). Although at least nine Viking burials are known from Islay, one would expect more, considering its relative size and greater availability of machair coastline compared to Colonsay and Oronsay. Nevertheless, after Oronsay, the other major group of burials in Argyll are the several high status burials from Ballinaby, which is situated midway between Loch Gorm and the western coast of the Rhinns. The evidence suggests the presence of a Viking cemetery – if a slightly dispersed one - approximately centred at NR 218 672. This group of burials was discovered over the course of almost 200 years. A pair of oval brooches was discovered in 1788 beneath one of the standing stones at Ballinaby. Two standing stones remain, the third is now lost – probably as a result of this treasure hunting activity.

Later in 1788, part of the sand-hill close to the tallest standing stone at NR 2199 6720 was dug into, and one or two swords, a pike-head and a collection of human bones were found (all lost). It is assumed that these came from a Viking burial.

Two high status Viking inhumations were discovered at Ballinaby in 1877. The burials, of a man and a woman, were accompanied by rich grave-goods. The finds have been reinterpreted by Graham-Campbell and Batey. With the male was a superior conical shield boss of Irish Sea type with a decorated bronze grip similar to one in iron from a boat burial in the Isle of Man, and to another in bronze from Northern Ireland. A rare example of an Irish bronze ladle accompanied the female burial. The man's drinking horn was also of Irish (or Scottish) manufacture. Tinned bronze mounts also accompanied the woman. Their function is unknown, but the workmanship is not Scandinavian. Similar mounts are known from Ireland. The woman's cloak was fastened with a silver pin, the tubular chain of which may be of Insular manufacture (Anderson, J 1879-80, 51-71; RCAHMS 1984, 147-9; Brown 1997, 217-22; Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998, 122-5). In 1932, a large cist was found about 360m west of the above burials, near the top of a knoll covered by drifting sand. It contained a skeleton in an extended position. The grave-goods included an iron axe, sword and shield-boss (RCAHMS 1984, 148-9). A Viking burial was found in 1845 near Newton distillery, Islay (NR 344 626). It was accompanied by two bronze brooches and an amber bead; their whereabouts are no longer known (RCAHMS 1984, 153; Brown 1997, 212-3). Surface finds collected by the IASG in 1958 and 1959, and by teams from Glasgow University in 1976 and 1977, from a deflation hollow in the machair at Cruach Mhór (NR 308 545), Laggan Bay, Islay, indicate the presence of a female Viking burial. The remains of two brooches, beads and weaving equipment with a few small sherds of thin-walled grass-tempered pottery were found in an area of multi-period midden material and stone walling (Gordon 1990, 151-60; Alcock, L & Alcock 1980, 66-7; Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998, 89).

A large hoard of Anglo-Saxon pennies, silver ingots (lost) and hack-silver was found in 1850 on Machrie farm (NR 327 491) situated at the southern end of Laggan Bay. They were deposited between 960 and 970. Only a small part of the hoard was recovered from the

finders – about 90 coins. This is the only recorded Viking period hoard from Islay (Scott 1855, 74-81; Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998, 89).

9.5 The pottery sequence in western Scotland

The absence of archaeological evidence for Norse settlement on Islay is discussed in Section 9.11.1, however contemporary artefactual evidence from the plough soil and sand dunes is simply not found. Although little pottery seems to have been used in Scotland in the Iron Age, the situation was different in the north and west. An advanced and productive ceramic tradition was centred on the western Isles. This pottery is found in a range of forms and is highly decorated. Similar pottery is found in Orkney, Shetland and the northern mainland (Armit 2008, 9). The southern extent of this pottery is determined by small numbers of sherds from Kintyre, Islay, Oronsay and Iona (Lane 1990, 127). During the first millennium AD pottery production continued but with fewer forms and decreasing amounts of decoration. By the eighth century, Hebridean pottery was undecorated and consisted of straight-sided buckets sometimes with flared rims, which was referred to by Lane as ‘Hebridean Plain Style’ (Lane 1990, 127; Lane 2007, 4-6; Armit 2008, 9). Lane’s doctoral dissertation (1983) outlined a Hebridean ceramic sequence for the period from AD 400-1100. He analysed the pottery from the Udal, excavated in the 1960s and 70s, where it was common to find 40,000 sherds in the best stratified deposits (Lane 2007, 4). The chronology for his Plain Style was dependent on problematical dating evidence from the Udal, North Uist, and he originally suggested 400-800 AD for its date range, but this was determined from radiocarbon dates with wide standard deviations, which were also obtained from sample of whalebone (*ibid*, 6). Scientific dating from recent excavations at Eilean Olabhat and Loch na Beirgh has been used by Armit (2008, 9) to establish a chronology for the appearance of Plain Style, which may be no earlier than the seventh century AD. In contrast, Lane (2007, 8) used recent scientific dates from Eilean Olabhat and other sites to suggest a date of 550-600 AD for the inception of Plain Style derived from the end of the cordoned-ware that preceded it. Although the centre of the Plain Style distribution stayed in the Western Isles, outlying sherds are known from Iona, Dunadd, and Islay.

Lane (2007, 11; 1990 123) has also identified a clearly definable ‘Viking Age’ pottery grouping in the Western Isles from his work at the Udal, North Uist. Large collections of sherds from open bowls and cups with sagging and flat bases, and flat platters, often grass-marked, have been found throughout the islands from Lewis to Tiree. The chronology of this

‘Viking Age’ pottery also became a problem (Lane 2007, 11-13). Lane suggested a beginning in the ninth century, which unfortunately was based on a single radiocarbon date, and some unpublished stratigraphical relationships from the Udal in North Uist. The distribution zone of the find spots of his ‘Viking Age’ pottery includes the Outer Hebrides, Skye, Coll and Tiree. The writer had initially intended to use the fact that Islay was excluded from this map (Lane 1990, 128) as an element of his argument to suggest that there was no extensive settlement on Islay by the Norse. The recent papers by Lane (2007) and Armit (2008) in which scientific dating from recent excavations is discussed, dashed this hope. The platters are the most recognisable elements of the ‘Viking Age’ pottery assemblage. Excavations of a Norse site at Cille Pheadair revealed that although they were absent from the earliest levels, they were found associated with imported Wiltshire pottery of the late eleventh or early twelfth century, and were still present in the thirteenth century when the settlement ended (Campbell 2002, 142). Platters first appear at Bornais Mound 3, South Uist, in levels dated to the late thirteenth to late fourteenth centuries, and are notably absent from tenth and early eleventh-century levels (Armit 2008, 12). This all suggests that the change from Lane’s Plain Style to his ‘Viking Age’ pottery, took place anywhere between the ninth and twelfth centuries, and in all probability after the end of the first millennium AD. The uncertainty about dating means that the distribution of Lane’s ‘Viking Age’ pottery should not be interpreted as a Viking period distribution but rather as roughly dated evidence of site occupation in the Viking to medieval period (Lane 2007, 13). Islay appears almost aceramic in the first millennium, with the exception of the few sherds of pottery referred to above, and one would expect to see evidence of a transition in this if the island was occupied by substantial numbers of incoming Norse.

9.6 Burials and place-names

The distribution of burials in Argyll does not correlate with that of settlement place-names. Brown recognized that the Norse burials on Islay, Colonsay, Oronsay, Tiree and Coll, with very few exceptions were discovered eroding from sand dunes, and yet Norse settlement names are found distributed throughout these islands. The writer finds her suggestion that the burials may date to an early period of trading or raiding activity rather than a later phase of settlement very credible (Brown 1997, 212). We saw above that there is an increasing amount of evidence to support the hypothesis that the Viking period started c.800; there is also supporting evidence from Norway regarding the chronology of insular imports. Approximately 75% of burials in Scandinavia, which contain insular grave-goods, date from

c.800 to late ninth century (Wamers 1998, 51-3) and only about 25% from the late ninth to tenth century. Wamers suggests that this corresponds to the documented Viking raids on Ireland. The first wave of attacks took place c.800 – c.830; this was followed by raids, wars and settlements until the expulsion of the Norsemen from Dublin in 902. He notes that there was a significant reduction in Scandinavian activities in the 10th century.

During the early years of the Viking attacks it was portable wealth that was the attraction, not land, and regular sea journeys to Ireland and its monasteries were undertaken. The majority of the boat-burials and high status burials in the islands of the west coast could be associated with a period of early trading and raiding. They are found along the safest routes from Norway (and Orkney/Shetland) to Ireland and adjacent to intermediate sheltering and landing points. Some were used for resting, or while waiting for suitable weather and favourable tides; others became over-wintering haunts. The excavation of a ninth to twelfth-century midden in a small cave off Smoo Inlet, Durness, Sutherland, shows that in the Viking period large fish were eaten, cereals processed and boats repaired (Pollard 2005). Initially this cave would have been used for shelter. Nearby inlets, such as Loch Erribol, while attractive to modern-day sailors, would offer little shelter to Vikings in open boats in stormy weather. Gradually, one can imagine the establishment of boat repair facilities and the provision of food and water to sailors using the nearby trade route from Norway to Ireland.



Figure 9.1: 'Tracks to Norway' from Heather 1804 (detail)

The boat burials in Oronsay are located around the shore of the bay of Port na h-Atha at the south-east end of the island. Before the age of steam power, the recommended route for mariners from Norway to north-eastern and eastern Ireland via the Sounds of Islay and Mull would have passed close to Colonsay and this bay in Oronsay (Heather 1804).

9.7 Norse Place-Names

The interest in Scandinavian settlement toponymy and chronology was slow to develop. In the 1930s Hugh Marwick investigated the chronology of Orkney farm-names based on the pioneering work in Norway of Rygh (1898) and Olsen (1928) who studied the farm-names of their country (Crawford, B E 1987, 236 n59). Nicolaisen adopted Marwick's approach and extended it to the Western Isles and Shetland and other areas in which the Norse are known to have settled (Nicolaisen 1976, 85). Nicolaisen used four place-name elements for his investigation, three of which were included with those examined by Marwick. The method attempts to create a relative chronology for place-name elements commonly used by Scandinavian speakers during the colonization of the Scottish isles; dates are allocated to different farm-names, and early names are separated from those belonging to the period of expansion and land division. Crawford notes that this method is 'fraught with difficulties' (Crawford, B E 1987, 105). In spite of this, Nicolaisen's distribution maps and chronological conclusions have become legendary and only in recent years have some place-name scholars seriously challenged his work (e.g., Kruse 2004; Fellows-Jensen 2000, 136-8). The place-name elements used by Nicolaisen in his research were *strathr*, *setr*, *bólstaðr* and *dalr*. Years after it was first published, his *Scottish Place-Names* is still 'the authority' on onomastic theory and the interpretation of individual Scottish names (Kruse 2004, 97).

In the Northern Isles and Caithness the Norse language seems to have rapidly become dominant, replacing the native languages of the whole area, which were eventually lost almost without trace (Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998, 37). In the West Highlands and islands, the situation is more complex and scholars disagree about how long Norse survived as a spoken language and the degree of Gaelic-Norse bilingualism prevalent during the Viking period. Similarly, Norse settlers in the Western Isles used Gaelic personal names but those in the Northern Isles did not adopt Pictish names (*ibid*)

The distribution of Norse place-names is an indicator of the extent of Norse settlement and activity; however, they are extremely difficult to date. Furthermore, analysis may be problematical because of secondary migrations of Norse settlers after their initial settlement, and any attempt to use place-names to derive a settlement sequence should proceed cautiously (Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998, 39).

It has become customary in place-name studies to distinguish between habitative names and topographical names. Examples of habitative place-name elements introduced by Norse settlers are *stathr*, *setr*, *bólstaðr*, *dalr*, *skáli* and *býr* – all of which roughly mean ‘farm’. In contrast, it has also been shown that some important early settlements in Orkney and Iceland were named from major natural features, for example, those ending in *-ness*, ‘headland’ or ‘point’ (Crawford, B E 1987, 111). Some would have us believe therefore that areas rich in Norse topographic names such as *dal*, rather than habitative names might have been more intensively settled than it would appear initially (Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998, 37-9).

In recent times, this discussion has focussed primarily on the northern and western coasts of the mainland; in the north-west, habitative names are rare whilst in the west they are almost absent. To demonstrate this, Graham-Campbell and Batey include a distribution map of *bólstaðr* names in north and west Scotland based on Nicolaisen’s original (*ibid*, 40, Fig. 3.2; Crawford, B E 1987, 99, Nicolaisen 1976, 93).

Without specifically referring to Nicolaisen, Graham-Campbell and Batey add ‘the explanation given for this in the past is that these coastal regions were exploited primarily for their natural resources on a seasonal basis by the Norse settlers of the Western Isles – for summer grazing, fishing and hunting and for felling trees’ (1998, 39). This hypothesis would seem to have been first mooted by Nicolaisen who believed that the distribution of Norse topographic place-names such as *dalr* is ‘not a map of permanent settlement but rather a sphere of Norse influence.... in which seasonal exploits such as hunting and fishing and summer grazing were carried out’ (Nicolaisen 1976, 96).

Scholars agree that the Norse place-name pattern in the west Highlands and Islands differs from that in the Northern Isles. Mainland names are predominately topographical. The landscape of Lewis was almost totally renamed by the Norse (80% pure Norse; 9% partly Norse); in the Hebrides however, it is generally assumed that the proportion of Norse to Gaelic names reduces from north to south and from the Outer to Inner Hebrides. In the north-east of Skye, approximately two thirds of the settlement names are Norse (Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998, 40; Andersen 1991, 132; Fellows-Jensen 1984, 151). There is a notable density of Norse names in Coll and Tiree where the ratio is about 50% (Johnston 1995, 111). These percentages are much higher than those from the regions of England where Scandinavian settlement was densest. Recent research by Macniven also affects this north-south hypothesis. He carried out a case study on settlement history, which forms a substantive study of the Norse place-names of Islay. For more than 125 years, Captain F W L Thomas' seminal work 'On Islay Place-Names' has been the prime reference concerning the island place-names; his ratio of the Norse to 'native' farm names on the island (34% or approximately 1:2) has been used by researchers up to recent times (Thomas, F W L 1882, 273). His research is based on contemporary County Valuation Rolls. MacNiven used 161 farm names - derived from Old Norse or Gaelic onomastic material - from MacDougall's map of Islay of 1749-51 (Smith, G G 1895, 552-3). He concluded that the ratio of Norse to Gaelic names was considerably higher at almost 1:1 or 53% (Macniven 2006b, 138).

From a recent analysis of early 16th-century rentals for Kintyre, Jennings found that about 17% of farm names are Norse (about 1:6). However they are predominately topographical; there are very few habitative generics. He suggests that the answer to the problem of the missing habitative generics lies in the relative chronology of topographical and habitative names (Jennings 2004, 110-4). Jennings add his criticism to that of others who note that Nicolaisen's hypothesis ignores the topographical generics which many now recognise as being early (Kruse 2004, 97; Crawford, B E 1987, 111; Fellows-Jensen 1984, 160; Jennings 2004, 114).

Jennings follows other scholars and proposes that in Norse regions there was a tendency for topographical names to be used initially to name farms (Fraser, I 1995, 92-3; Crawford, B E 1995, 111; Fellows-Jensen 2000, 137-8). Therefore, later settlement in the same area *had* to

use habitative names. There is a strong body of support that suggests that the most widespread habitative generic *bólstathr* – used by Nicolaisen to identify the densest area of Norse settlement may represent the division of an earlier, larger farm or township that probably bore a topographical name (MacGregor 1986, 99; Thomson 1995, 58; Jennings 2004, 114-5).

My own cursory inspection of McDougal's c.1750 map of the farms of Islay seems to confirm this hypothesis. Figure 9.2 shows detail from this map for the Oa of Islay; Cragabus and Lurabus seem to be sub-divisions of a larger (Norse) farm that may have been the original holding of *Ballyhatricum* (modern Ballychatrigan NR 323 419).

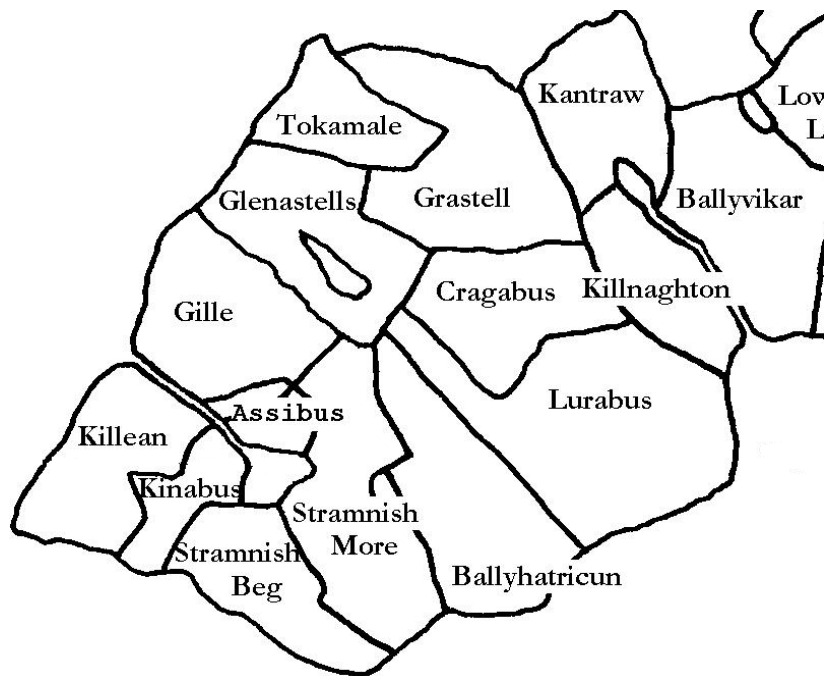


Figure 9.2: Oa of Islay; farm-names and divisions adapted from McDougal's map of c.1750

Similarly, the farms of Kinabus and Assibus clearly represent subdivisions of a larger farm.

Jennings suggests that if *bólstaðr* - the widest occurring habitative generic - represents secondary Norse settlement, then its distribution reflects the density of settlement rather than the total area of settlement in Scotland. He also defines the area containing topographical elements but without *bólstaðr* names as an area of restricted Norse settlement where secondary settlement did not occur for reasons unknown. As an example, he refers to Kintyre, which he suggests is extendable to the western littoral. The distribution of Norse

place-names there clearly shows that the Norse settlement avoided the area of densest native settlement (determined by distribution of duns). He suggests that a Gaelic speaking population existed alongside the Norse settlers, who would have been rapidly absorbed into the Gaelic-speaking environment. His conclusions suggest that the Norse established a community amongst the native Gaelic-speaking population and created the topographical settlement names. Unlike in other areas of Scotland, they were not dominant and were naturalized before secondary settlement could occur, perhaps in a matter of one or two generations. In the absence of any settlement archaeology, he is aware that this could have taken place at any time during the Norse era, although, at the time of the Norse expansion in the early ninth century, Kintyre was a major part of the powerful kingdom of Dál Riata which was to conquer Pictland in the 840s. He suggests that possibly the Dál Riata allowed the Norse to settle in Kintyre or this Norse settlement was secondary from colonies elsewhere. Jennings notes that the generics *-gil* and *-erg*, which occur in Kintyre place-names suggest the latter. Time is required for a semantic shift in the Norse meaning of *gil* from ‘ravine’ to ‘small valley’. Likewise time is necessary for *Erg* to be borrowed from Old Gaelic *airge*, ‘shieling’ – he sees this as a ‘good marker for a secondary wave of settlement (Jennings 2004, 114-5).

Kruse (Kruse 2004, 97) offers a strong theoretically-based counter-argument to Nicolaisen’s theory that habitative names supply the only fitting evidence for primary Scandinavian settlement in Scotland. Kruse looks into the very premise of an area of Norse onomastic influence without settlement. He notes that traditionally onomastics has been dominated by etymology. The association between the place-name and the user-group of the name, and the role of the name as a tool of communication have largely been ignored until recently (*ibid*, 98). Kruse refers to the work of Olsen, an early pioneer in user-group theory, who divided the place-names of an area into three types according to the creator and/or user of the names.

- Names connected with the farm
- Names used within the village
- Names used by travellers

A farmer knows the names associated with his own farm, but may not know the names of all locations on a neighbouring farm. The population of a neighbourhood of farmers will be aware of the names of locations within the village. Travellers (including fishermen) would not be aware of the names of farms as they passed through an area or along a coast, but

would know the names of important waypoints and landmarks related to their journey. Sailors may have had their own onomasticon as a user-group, but their inventory of names may not become generally accepted.

This work of Kruse is admirably summarised by Jennings:

In his discussion of user-group theory he [Kruse] shows the unlikelihood of a resident farming population adopting place-names from an itinerant one...if one applies user-group theory to western Scotland, one has to accept that the only explanation for Norse place-names in any given area is a resident Norse community (Kruse 2004, 101-107; Jennings 2004, 112-3).

This revisionist theory of Kruse assists Jennings to state that: 'it is logical to propose that a modern settlement with a Norse name in Kintyre can be traced back to a Norse settlement'. Kruse's conclusions from his paper are important; he agrees with Nicolaisen that the discrepancy between habitative names and topographical names is significant and may even be important regarding the sequence of events during the Norse period. However, he does not accept the usual (Nicolaisen's) explanation of the discrepancy, mainly because it would assume that the Norse on the west coast of Scotland established naming patterns that were significantly different to those that they used elsewhere. He suggests that the discrepancy could indicate an intense but brief Norse occupation of the mainland during which a range of settlements was established using prestigious topographical naming elements from home for farms in a rugged landscape (Kruse 2004, 106-7).

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Kruse's paper was critically examined two years later by archaeologist Graham-Campbell (2006). Although his paper focuses on north-west Sutherland and Wester and Easter Ross it has implications for the Inner Hebrides and Islay. He examines both the distribution of Old Norse *dalr* and the limited archaeological evidence for Scandinavian settlement in these areas. Looking at the Cape Wrath region, he notes that there are only two known Norse burials from this part of the northern coast, which is perhaps to be expected because of the small group of habitative place-names along this section of it. In Wester Ross he refers to the work of Fraser (1995) on place-names; there is only one Norse (traditional) habitative name from the Kyle of Lochalsh to north of Ullapool – that of *Ullapool* itself, and an absence of pagan Norse burials. Graham-Campbell stresses that there is not even a stray-find to suggest the presence of permanent Norse settlement in this area. There are 13 names in *-dalr* in Wester Ross. Fraser is positive that the area attracted Norse settlement: 'since there are substantial numbers of topographic names which are clearly of Norse origin' (Fraser, I 1995,

97). On the other hand Graham-Campbell reviews Fraser's evidence and very plausibly proposes that the numerous topographical names, and the small number of names that Fraser believes are indicative of husbandry (for example, *hross-vollr* 'horse-field') are as a result of seasonal exploitation of natural resources – hay in the case of *hross-vollr* – and not settlement. Graham-Campbell remarks that this is precisely what prompted Nicolaisen to explain the lack of habitative names along the west coast of the mainland with his 'sphere of Norse influence' of nature names (Graham-Campbell 2006, 103-4; Nicolaisen 1976, 94). The writer notes that with the exception of the recently discovered boat burial on the Ardnamurchan peninsula, there are not any certain pagan Scandinavian burials recorded on the mainland from Cape Wrath to the Mull of Kintyre (Brown 1997, 229; Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998, 115). Graham-Campbell (2006) also makes this observation, to which he adds a note that Lane's (1990) research reveals an absence of Viking-Age and Late Norse pottery from the western littoral (see Section 9.11.3).

He notes that in the Uists, the first Norse farmstead at Cille Pheadair (c. 1000 AD) was built with timber and the pre-Norse ninth-century native settlement at the Udal had pallisaded enclosures constructed from substantial timbers. This timber must have been brought from the mainland as seasonal exploitation because the woodlands on South Uist disappeared in the mid third millennium BC. These facts go some way towards explaining the support for Nicolaisen's explanation of this place-name evidence among archaeologists; however Graham-Campbell is aware of the current state of research into the habitative – topographical name debate already described above. He accepts that Nicolaisen's hypothesis clearly requires revising because of recent onomastic research by Kruse, citing Jennings' work on Kintyre as an example of the need for modification. Whilst acknowledging Kruse as the current leader of this revisionist approach, he questions the assumption that the whole of the western littoral was settled to the same extent along its length. In his examination of Kruse's conclusion (*supra*, 194) he sees quantification problems for the archaeologist and historian with Kruse's 'intense but short-lived Norse period on the mainland'; he asks 'what, where and when questions'. Graham-Campbell questions the fundamental assumption made by Kruse as well as some other linguists - that Norse naming practices were standardised from Iceland to Scotland. He suggests that the process of land taking in an uninhabited Iceland was necessarily different to that in Scotland; therefore the process of naming the landscape would have been different. Referring to the work of Buteux (1997) and Iain Crawford

(1977), Graham-Campbell notes that while in the Northern and Western Isles, Scandinavians seized major native estate-centres, archaeological evidence is lacking to show what actually happened on the ground for the western littoral. His final comment, which is totally in agreement with my own views on this subject, is important:

There is no way (on both topographical and archaeological grounds) that a Viking settler can have established himself and his family on every *nes* and up every *dalr*, in Scotland during the ninth/tenth centuries. If that had been so, much of mainland Scotland would have been densely populated with Scandinavian settlers - and that was clearly not the case, if only on the basis of the archaeological evidence (or rather lack of it) (Graham-Campbell 2006, 104-8).

He stresses that the recognition that Nicolaisen's conclusion was flawed, raises cause for concern – part archaeological and part methodological:

Historians and archaeologists are now being asked to accept that, because a name in *-dalr* might be given to a primary Norse settlement in Iceland (and elsewhere), all names in *-dalr* in north Scotland are likely to represent the same phenomenon – and are now to be “more generously treated as proof of settlement” rather than of Norse control of the resources of the valley concerned. We have, however, seen that there are still no strong archaeological or historical reasons to support this suggestion for widespread permanent settlement in Wester Ross. As far as Easter Ross is concerned, not all *-dalr* names are to be regarded as ‘primary’, for some at least appear to be the inland extensions of coastal estates. The danger is therefore that one onomastic orthodoxy is in the process of being replaced by another.

We should proceed cautiously recognising that names in *-dalr* are intrinsically nature names that may not necessarily be associated with primary Norse settlement and could be accounted for because of the alternative hypothesis of Norse ‘control and exploitation’ (*ibid*, 115-6).

Although Graham-Campbell's conclusion helps to explain the apparent discrepancy between the lack of archaeological evidence for Norse settlement along the western coast of the mainland and the high density of topological place-names in the same area, it does not help with the situation on Islay. On the island, more than 50% of the farm-names are Norse, yet with the exception of the burials and hoard described in Section 9.4 (*supra*, 184-6), the Norse are archaeologically invisible. After extensive reading of the literature on Norse place-names in Scotland, the writer is no closer to understanding this issue. It is also difficult to disagree with Kruse, even when archaeological evidence suggests that the Norse did not settle on substantial parts of the mainland west coast, when he suggests:

Place-names usually survive a language shift, because names, contrary to words, need not carry meaning. As long as there is population continuity within a given area, the fundamental onomasticon of the population is likely to survive, even if the population happens to switch languages. For example, the names of major settlements and large natural features are still Gaelic in areas of Scotland where the Gaelic language has succumbed to English. Therefore language shift in itself cannot explain why so many important place-names on the Scottish west coast are of Norse origin. The most reasonable explanation...is an ethnic (and with it a linguistic) discontinuity which would have seen the taking over substantial parts of the mainland west coast in the form of settlements (Kruse 2004, 101-2)

As a result of Macniven's research, toponymists (Macniven 2006b, 14) and historians (for example, Woolf 2007, 297-7) suggest that an ethnic and linguistic discontinuity occurred on Islay, and that the Norse impact on the island should now be considered to be as intense as that on the Northern isles and Outer Hebrides. Archaeologically, that was clearly not the case.

9.8 War or peace?

The classification of the Islay chapels in this thesis is influenced to a degree by my interpretation of the ethnicity of the population on the island during the eighth to tenth centuries, and the question of the survival of the native inhabitants of the areas settled by the Norse must be addressed. Many have correctly described this as an ethnic enigma; in several areas of Scotland there are hundreds of Norse place-names, yet as Graham-Campbell and the writer, frequently note, little, if any, archaeological evidence to suggest settlement. Some see Norse settlement as a peaceful event; others suggest that it was an extremely violent process and suggest that annihilation of the natives took place. Both groups are probably correct, for the mechanism of contact was not simple and undoubtedly it varied from region to region. Population continuity remains a controversial subject. Tens of thousands of words have been written on the topic and scholars are no closer to finding a mutually acceptable hypothesis. Much of the published material is focussed on the Northern Isles, followed quantitatively by the Western Isles, with little specific discussion about the Inner Hebrides until the recent research by Macniven (Cox 1988; Andersen 1991; Smith, B 2001; Bäcklund 2001; Fellows-Jensen 2005; Kruse 2005; Jennings & Kruse 2005; Macniven 2006b; Macniven 2006a; Cox 2007; Macniven 2008).

The debate about the nature of the contact between natives and Vikings is ancient; however, two recent, frequently cited, papers by Smith and by Bäcklund reach opposing conclusions about the subject (Smith, B 2001; Bäcklund 2001). Smith finishes his paper with the words:

There is no reason to suppose that Viking behaviour in the Northern Isles was more amiable than Viking behaviour in Iona or Lindisfarne. We should expect the worst (Smith, B 2001, 24).

On the other hand, Bäcklund concludes with:

This does not mean that every single Pict welcomed the Vikings as new best friends, but generally speaking the settlement appears to have been peaceful.....To some Picts, the Scandinavians probably constituted a threat, but to others a golden opportunity (Bäcklund 2001, 43).

Their papers focus on Orkney and Shetland – some distance away from the southern Inner Hebrides and Islay, recently however, Macniven has added his voice to the annihilation campaign in connection with the Norse settlement in Islay (Macniven 2006a, 14). This was noted by Woolf who suggests that Macniven's work changes the frequently heard belief that the Norse impact on the southern Hebrides was less intense than that on the Northern and Outer Hebrides. Woolf refers to the hitherto generally accepted 70% and 30% proportion of names of Norse origin in the Outer Hebrides and southern Hebrides respectively (*supra*, 191). This led many to think that the Norse settlement of the southern isles and Islay was carried out by an aristocratic elite and that the bulk of the inhabitants maintained their Gaelic language and culture. However, the currently accepted figure for the Outer Hebrides is actually closer to 90% (already discussed above). Woolf's statement that as late as the 16th century 'the vast majority of Islay farm names were of Norse origin' reveals a slight over enthusiasm in the interpretation of Macniven's data. Macniven was able to increase the percentage of Norse names in Islay from 39% to 53%. This is still substantially less than the 90% figure from the Outer Hebrides. Therefore, the writer supports the hypothesis that the Norse settlement of the southern isles and Islay was carried out in a manner, which allowed the majority of the inhabitants to preserve their Gaelic language and culture. He finds it difficult to agree with Woolf, that in the tenth and eleventh centuries, Islay (and possibly Kintyre) was as Norse as Lewis (Woolf 2007, 296-7).

Archaeologists are not immune from the 'war or peace' debate and there have been a number of raised voices. At the eighth Viking Congress in 1977, Crawford delivered the eponymous lecture (Crawford, I A 1981). He was concerned because earlier Ritchie had concluded from

the results of her excavation at Buckquoy that there appeared to have been a peaceful relationship between the Norse immigrants and the native inhabitants. Ritchie found that integration between native Picts and incoming Norsemen was suggested because of the domination of native artefacts in the late Norse levels (Ritchie, A 1979, 192). Graham-Campbell and Batey stress that because this evidence is less precise for the (Norse) primary phase one must be 'somewhat circumspect about the use of this small artefactual assemblage from Buckquoy in this connection' (Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998, 163). Ritchie found three Norse phases at Buckquoy. The early phase is represented by part of a byre/barn, although it is not possible to attribute finds from its interior to its occupation period. The finds from the middle Norse farmstead include bone pins and combs widely used in post-Roman *and* Viking-age contexts, and also gaming boards from a Norse cultural assemblage. However, the finds from the latest surviving Norse building at Buckquoy were clearly dominated by a native/Pictish assemblage (Ritchie, A 1979, 184-9).

Crawford apparently had been content with the posthumously published conclusions of Wainwright who in 1962 argued that the inhabitants of the Pictish Northern Isles were 'overwhelmed and submerged beneath the sheer weight of the Scandinavian settlement' the Picts 'were overwhelmed politically, linguistically, culturally and socially' (see Smith, B 2001, 7). Crawford did not win his case in 1977, and during the following 25 years, the 'Peace School' became louder and larger. Gradually, other archaeologists reached similar conclusions to Ritchie. Sharples and Parker Pearson strongly emphasise that in South Uist:

the settlement evidence does not support the argument for a widespread slaughter of the indigenous population when the Norse arrived on the islands. Instead, we would argue that continuity is the principal feature of the archaeological record in the later part of the first millennium AD (Sharples & Parker Pearson 1999, 57).

At Old Scatness, Shetland, excavation suggests that important Iron Age/Pictish estates were targeted by incoming Norse (e.g., Old Scatness, Jarlshof and Eastshore and possibly North Taingpool). These estates appear to have continued in use during the Viking period. At some Northern sites, such as Pool, Orkney, Pictish arable activity intensified. Both native and Scandinavian artefacts were found in the buildings at Old Scatness – buildings that had gone out of use or had not been rebuilt in native style. They had not been destroyed (Turner et al 2005, 248).

Armit, in his review of Scandinavian settlement, considers Crawford's ethnic cleansing 'a little extreme'. Furthermore, he suggests that in some areas sites were not abandoned; for example, at the Udal, North Uist, the settlement sequence appears to confirm the continuation of a strategic site (Armit 1996, 202-3). The scale of the debate is demonstrated by these conflicting opinions about the Udal. This site was actually excavated by Crawford himself, who concluded that it had witnessed violent conquest and population replacement (Crawford, I A & Switsur 1977, 131). Lane believes that in the Northern Isles and the Hebrides, the identification of continuous structural and artefactual sequences, without intervening blown-sand, suggests that a lively culture continued from the Late Iron Age into the Viking phase. Referring to the Udal, he notes that these sequences do not support Crawford's proposal that the Viking impact was 'sudden and totally obliterative in terms of local material culture' (Lane 2007, 14-5).

Referring to their machair survey in South Uist, Sharples and Parker Pearson conclude:

There seems to be little evidence for any significant disruption to the settlement pattern when the Norse artefacts appear. The mounds that have Norse material are intimately associated with those producing evidence of Late Iron Age occupation. This settlement continuity is very difficult to understand if one believes that the indigenous population fled or was massacred (Sharples & Parker Pearson 1999, 55-7).

The Viking settlement at Norwick, Unst, Shetland was built on top of the long abandoned remains of an Iron Age settlement. There is no evidence that the Vikings came as raiders. Ballin Smith suggests the finds show that the inhabitants enjoyed a peaceful settled existence. (Ballin Smith 2007, 287-97; Morris 1998, 73-103).

9.9 War or Peace; a conclusion

Evidence presented above suggests that in some places annihilation of the indigenous population by the Norse occurred, and in others a peaceful joint existence (in terms of material culture) was enjoyed. Thus, there is probably not a single explanation for the ethnic enigma. The writer is aware that physically the population of Shetland look different to the people of Islay; the latter do not look as Scandinavian. This is not an academically supported answer, only an observation. However, unpublished DNA analysis suggests that 15-20% of a sample of Islay men had paternal lineages of Norse origin (J Wilson *pers com*). There were

also many which showed a deep ancestry in Ireland and others with pre-Pictish roots. Norse ancestry is a specific signal which is found at the highest frequencies in Orkney and Shetland, then lower in Lewis/Harris and Caithness, followed by Skye, parts of the north and west coast, and probably other Inner Hebridean islands; results for Norse input from Islay are similar to those for Skye. The fact that Iona survived as a monastic centre and royal burial ground of the kings of Dál Riata suggests that there was an unsuppressed Gaelic population during the Viking Age in the region. Although in 849, Iona ceased to be the political centre of the Columban Church the annals indicate that notable ecclesiastics and Scottish kings continued to be buried there (Jennings 1998, 42-3). From 825 until 986 Iona was free of attacks from the Norse (*ibid*). Evidence presented in this section suggests both large scale Norse migration as well as the joint existence of indigenous and immigrant groups in terms of material culture, biology language and by implication, possibly self-conscious ethnicity as well (Barrett 2004, 215).

9.10 The Norse in Islay – a hypothesis

My hypothesis regarding the Norse settlement in Islay is that it occurred largely as a peaceful plantation of Norse immigrants over a short period, many years after the early raiding and trading expeditions of the late eighth and early ninth centuries – a period with which we may associate the boat-burials discussed above. An attractive scenario is that the plantation took place following the appearance of the Danes in the Irish Sea in 849, or the expulsion of the Norse from Ireland 53 years later, or sometime during the traumatic years between. The Annals of Ulster for 849 describe the arrival of a Danish naval expedition of 140 ships who came to exact obedience from the Norse who were already in Ireland. The activities of the Danes were directed more at the Norse than the Irish, and the entry for 851 reports:

(T)he dark heathens came to Áth Cliath (Dublin), made a great slaughter of the fair-haired foreigners, and plundered the naval encampment, both people and property. The dark heathens made a raid at Linn Duachaill, and a great number of them were slaughtered (AU 851.4).

Linn Duachaill was the site of the Viking base or longphort. The annals for 852 record a great sea battle; a fleet of 160 Norse ships arrived at Snám Aigneach (Carlingford Lough) to fight with the Danes and lost the battle. There is a suggestion that the Danes were in liaison with the Irish because they only clashed with the Norse. Incidences of fighting between groups of Norse increased. In 893, the annals report a ‘great dissension among the foreigners of Áth Cliath’, which resulted in a splitting and weakening of their forces and the departure

of a large number of Vikings from Dublin. This episode was to culminate in the expulsion of the Norse from Ireland by the Irish in AD 902 (Ó Corráin 1995, 250, 254; Corpus of Electronic Texts: <http://www.ucc.ie/celt/online/T100001A/>). Parallels for peaceful settlement by Vikings may be found in England, where evidence suggests that the Viking settlers in the Irish Sea area inhabited land that was part of an existing landholding pattern (Griffiths 2010, 60), for example, in Lancashire and Cumbria, the territorial holdings retained 'Celtic' features into the medieval period. In Cheshire, with local consent, Viking settlers occupied land within a local mixture of holdings and groupings (*ibid*, 52). In Cumbria, Norse place-names which suggest 'bought land' occur in two areas; this led to Gillian Fellows-Jensen proposing that great estates as well as small settlement units were purchased by the Vikings (*ibid*, 52). Griffiths stresses:

it is by no means unlikely that land transfer was taking place (in the early tenth century) through negotiation and purchase, amidst a (now historically largely invisible) mosaic of local allegiances and disputes, buy-offs, and transient political opportunities, rather than by armed conquest.

He continues, apparently rather surprised to discover, that in the Irish Sea region it is not possible to find examples of Scandinavian settlers obliterating and totally re-establishing local political boundaries, after defeat and subjugation of the existing population. There is thus strong support for a substantial degree of continuity in the form of the landholding system, and for the opinion that the first Viking settlers occupied existing estates, with secondary settlement taking place later in marginal areas. In the Irish Sea region, the names of the earliest estates and churches bought or taken by Viking settlers mostly remained unchanged from their original pre-Norse forms. In her study of north-west England, Fellows-Jensen found that it is the later or secondary Scandinavian settlements that have the most unambiguously Norse place-names. Newly created, they lack the established identity of the initial Viking landholdings (Griffiths 2010, 53).

The Islay plantation may have comprised a group of Norse exiles from Ireland. During the second half of the ninth century, Dublin and the Irish Sea became the main area of Norse activities. This may have instigated an invitation to a Norse political group to settle in Islay, which may have been militarily, politically and economically under-populated at the time. This would increase the number of fighting men available to defend the island. The numbers of Norse involved would not have been large, perhaps one or two hundred at most. They would have been granted land on which to settle and would have joined the elite members of

the islands society. This would have initiated a renaming exercise for farm and topographical names. It is noted that the population of Viking Dublin has been estimated at only a few hundred on the basis of the 80-90 known burials (Ó Floinn 1998, 142). One cannot imagine an illiterate Norse population, having killed or removed most, if not all, of the inhabitants of Islay – as some scholars believe - setting up an administration, governing the island, dividing farms, cultivating crops, controlling thousands of slaves, and initiating Norse-naming exercises, without utter chaos prevailing for a very long time. There were not vast numbers of Norse in the Irish Sea area. Apart from the burials from Dublin there are fewer Pagan-burials recorded from the rest of Ireland than from Colonsay and Oronsay! Likewise, outside the mainly Late-Norse proto-towns of Cork, Limerick, Wicklow, Wexford, Waterford and the first Longphort at Dublin, settlements are elusive. The total number of Norse resident in Ireland may never have been that high and the fleets of hundreds of ships sometimes mentioned in the annals may represent a mustering of forces from a wide geographical area. Scientific data supports the historical evidence that the founding populations of the Faeroe Islands and Iceland consisted primarily of Scandinavian males with females from the British Isles. This is where the slaves ended up. This researcher has difficulty comprehending the annihilation of the Gaelic population of Islay and resulting total ‘Norsification’.

9.10.1 Norse farm-names in Islay

However, the issue of the large number of Norse farm-names on Islay must be addressed. Since Thomas’ work towards the end of the 19th century the percentage of Norse place-names in Islay was assumed to be 34% (Thomas, F W L 1882, 273). Macniven’s analysis increased this to 53% (85 out of 161 names), however both researchers only looked at farm-names. In addition, the islands place-name lexicon consists of thousands of nature-names. Like Macniven, the writer uses the Islay Cultural Database (ICD) of historical, genealogical and archaeological information. This is accessible on-line from the Finlaggan Trust (<http://www.finlaggan.com/culturedb/>). It includes almost 6000 place-names. A cursory examination of this by Macniven suggests that less than 15% of these names are Norse (Macniven 2006b, 199). Therefore, the island’s onomasticon is Gaelic. My opinion is that the Norse plantation resulted in a significant increase in the number of land-owning aristocrats on the island. An approximate doubling would account for the coining of 53% Norse habitative names. Although the population of Islay is currently about 3400, in the first half of the nineteenth century it reached almost 15,000. It seems sensible to follow Macniven and assume that in the second half of the first millennium the population size was similar to that of the pre-improvement population and numbered about 5000 (Macniven 2006b, 49;

Caldwell 2008, 119). Even allowing for immigrant Norse family groups it is difficult to envisage that the Norse population of Islay was ever more than 10% of the total.

Because of the Gaelic cultural renaissance of the McSorley period, many Islay farms were given new Gaelic names. This makes the task of identifying pre-Norse farm-names more complex. Estimating the age of Gaelic-names is exceedingly difficult. Cox suggests some techniques and indicators, but without the appropriate linguistic skills this is a minefield (Cox 2002, 111-24). While it may be possible by following Cox to identify Islay Gaelic farm-names that may be 'very old' or 'archaic', such as Carn, Lossit, Machrie, Eacharnach, An Dùn, An Ros, Carn Bheannachaidh, and Dùn Atha, in the end this cannot offer final confirmation of the age of a name.

9.11 Factors and arguments supporting a 'peaceful plantation hypothesis'

The following factors support my hypothesis – most have been discussed in full in this chapter:

9.11.1 Archaeology - lack of surface finds and evidence for settlements.

Islay is a large island of approximately 650 km². It has a few Viking-burials, many habitative place-names and yet a total absence of settlement archaeology in the form of structures or random surface finds of Norse artefacts. Much of the island was under cultivation into the twentieth century. If, as some scholars believe, the island was taken over by the Norse and the original population exterminated or removed, one would expect Norse artefacts to have been found in the plough soil or in the course of earth-moving activities of any sort over the centuries, on a scale similar to that which occurs in Orkney (Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998, 54-62). In 1978, the Alcocks posed the question 'can we use (these) Scandinavian place-names as a guide to the location of individual Scandinavian settlements in the field?' (Alcock, L & Alcock 1980, 61). They initiated fieldwork on several islands including Islay to search for Norse houses. They carried out an intensive survey of all of the deserted settlements with Norse-names in the Oa, looking for houses of the types known to be Norse in the Northern Isles. They did not recognize any. However, they did observe faint traces of 'primitive' houses with an orthostatic ground course at Stremnishmore, and at Stremnishbeg they noted turf-walled buildings with rounded corners. The author visited these settlements in June 2006 and noted that similar 'Fermtoun' remains occur throughout Argyll and the

highlands and islands. There are also many shielings on Islay that are similarly constructed (for example, see Margadale; RCAHMS 1984, 314-5). The Alcocks suggest that large and developed deserted settlements may not be the best place to look for Norse houses, because they would have been totally robbed of stone to construct later dwellings. Following their work at Cruach Mhor, Islay (*supra*, 185), they stress the potential of sand-dune and machair areas. In a deflation hollow they noted a two metre depth of stratified humus-rich stabilization horizons separated by blown sand from which pottery spanning about four thousand years was found including a few grass-tempered pottery sherds along with stone walling of unknown date (Alcock, L & Alcock 1980, 62-7). Stray finds suggestive of a female Viking-burial came from this area a few years earlier (*supra*, 185). The Alcocks are correct; however the writer suggests that more attention should be given to remoter settlements on the island with Norse farm-names that were unattractive for settlement during the population bulge of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. There are for example earlier houses at Margadale, and also at Doodilmore (NR 3671 7416), both in the far north-east of the island.

9.11.2 Distribution of burials and settlements.

The distribution of burials does not correlate with that of settlement place-names in the Inner Hebrides. The fact that the Norse burials on Islay, Colonsay, Oronsay, Tiree and Coll, with very few exceptions, have been discovered eroding from sand dunes suggests that they may date to an early period of temporary residence associated with trading or raiding activity rather than a later phase of settlement. If Islay was totally occupied by the Norse, one would expect Norse burials with Scandinavian grave-goods to be found on ecclesiastical sites during grave-digging, such as are recorded in England, Isle of Man (Brown 1997, 213), and the Northern and Western Isles (Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998).

9.11.3 Viking pottery distribution suggests less intense settlement in Argyll and the southern islands.

In spite of similar machair shorelines, there is a marked difference between the evidence for Scandinavian settlement in Islay and within Lane's Viking/Late Norse pottery zone. Hundreds of thousands of sherds of Viking pottery have been found in the Western Isles and although a few sites on Islay have organically tempered pottery, this is either of Iron Age date or has been dated to the first few centuries AD. At Ardnave, a plain organically tempered vessel is associated with a hearth dated to 126-410 calAD (95.4%, Oxcal v4.1.7; GU-1443, 1755 bp +/- 60; Ritchie, J N G & Welfare 1983, 317-8). A few sherds of grass-

tempered pottery were found in a deflation hollow in the machair at Cruach Mhor, Laggan Bay, near the site of a multi-period midden (*supra*, 185).

Lane proposes that his pottery zone suggests a difference in the nature of the Viking impact in the Outer Hebrides to that in the southern islands and Argyll. It is difficult not to find this argument plausible, although it is noted that the inception of his Viking-Style pottery is now thought to date from sometime between the ninth and twelfth century (*supra*, 186-7).

9.11.4 Relative land quality of farm-districts with Norse and Gaelic names

Macniven's research includes an analysis of land quality with respect to the farm-districts from MacDougal's map of the farms of Islay, c.1750. He found that compared with farms with Norse names, a greater number of farms with Gaelic names were situated on the highest quality land but that they tended to be relatively smaller (Macniven 2006b, 159). He justified this by suggesting that large areas of high quality land were taken by incoming Gaels in the post-Norse period which were subsequently sub-divided during the Gaelic cultural renaissance of the McSorley period. In addition, he found that Old Norse farm-districts tended to be at a higher mean altitude (58 m) compared with the Gaelic-named farms (52 m) (Macniven 2006b, 152-61). This data strongly supports my suggestion of a coordinated plantation of Norse. The Gaelic-speakers retained the best land throughout this process. Macniven was unable to prove (Macniven 2006b, 205) that any of the Gaelic farm names on MacDougall's map of c.1750 are pre-Norse, however an analysis must be made of the island's total onomasticon rather than the farm-names before concluding that pre-Norse names do not survive.

9.11.5 Secondary settlement in Islay by Norse from Ireland.

Old Norse generic *Bólstaðr* is the most common Norse generic in Islay farm-names (Macniven 2006b, 181), with 18 occurrences of it. It is also the most frequently found generic among the farm-names on MacDougall's map (*ibid*). This supports the idea of a secondary settlement. In place-name contexts this name occurs when a primary farm is sub-divided (*supra*, 192). This is also supported by Jennings' suggestions; that the Norse settled in Kintyre at the invitation of the Dál Riada, and that this was a secondary settlement from the Norse colonies from Ireland or elsewhere in the Hebrides (Jennings 2004, 118-9). Macniven also notes that the three tight groupings of *Bólstaðr* farm-names on high quality

land in Islay may represent 'fine-tuning' of settlement in response to a single political event (Macniven 2006b, 198).

9.11.6 Where are the Norse?

There is now an increasing amount of evidence for patterns of human migration from isotopic analysis of teeth, and DNA analysis of bone from Viking Age burials in Atlantic Scotland. In some cases, the results are surprising. Evidence of direct immigration from Scandinavia is elusive (except to Iceland) and there seems to have been a movement of 'Norse' groups around the Atlantic seaboard and the Irish Sea. It is even possible that immigrants to the Outer Hebrides originated from the Isle of Skye notwithstanding burial with Viking grave-goods that suggest otherwise! The genetic impact of the Viking diaspora is proportional to the distance from Scandinavia, and at the limit (Ireland) is negligible (McEvoy B et al 2006, 1292-3). These perspectives are supported by the following data:

Sr isotope analysis of teeth from Norse burials from Cnip, Lewis (687-1060calAD $\pm 2\sigma$) shows that this group was of mixed origins (raw radiocarbon data unavailable). They were mainly indigenous, but two, of opposite sexes were immigrants, not from Norway but raised separately in an area of Tertiary volcanic rocks for example the islands of Skye, Mull or much of County Antrim in Northern Ireland, or in the case of the female, on chalk or limestone. There is a possibility of a third immigrant - a female buried with full traditional Pagan-Viking grave-goods also may have originated from an area of Tertiary volcanic rocks (Montgomery & Evans 2006, 127-139).

A recent study (Helgason et al 2001, 731-5) compared mitochondrial DNA control-region sequences in the North Atlantic island populations of Orkney, the Western Isles, the Isle of Skye, and Iceland, with those observed in the rest of the British Isles, Scandinavia, and other areas of Europe. The results show that the ancestral contributions of mtDNA lineages from Scandinavia to the populations of Iceland, Orkney, Skye and the Western Isles are 37.5%, 35.5%, 12.5% and 11.5% respectively. In Scotland, Orkney shows the closest matrilineal links with Scandinavia (*ibid*). The Western Isles, Skye, and the coastal population of north-west Scotland all demonstrate low and comparable levels of Scandinavian mtDNA ancestry (*ibid*). The Icelanders have a similar high percentage of mtDNA to that of Orkney suggesting

that the majority of Icelandic females came from the British Isles (*ibid*). A second experiment by the same team (Goodacre et al 2005, 133-4) analysed this mtDNA data together with Y-chromosomal DNA from the North Atlantic region in order to obtain additional data regarding the genetic legacy of Shetland and Orkney. Their results show an overall Scandinavian ancestry of around 44% for Shetland and approximately 30% for Orkney, with about equal shares from Scandinavian males and females in both regions. This contrasts with the results for the Western Isles, where the overall Scandinavian ancestry is less than 15%. Here, the data reveals a disproportionately high contribution from Scandinavian males. Once again, Iceland reveals the greatest overall amount of Scandinavian ancestry at 55%. The team's results suggest that family groups settled areas close to Scandinavia, such as Orkney and Shetland. Areas farther away from the Scandinavian homeland were probably settled by lone males who subsequently established families with females from the British Isles.

A study of the Y-chromosomes of a group of men in Ireland with Irish surnames, which are thought to have Norse roots, together with a general Irish population sample detected little trace of Scandinavian ancestry in either. There is no evidence of major Scandinavian ancestry in the Norse-surname group. The results of the experiment indicate that a relatively small number of Norse settlers (and descendants) migrated to Ireland during the Viking period, and suggest that Norse settlements may have consisted mainly of indigenous Irish (McEvoy B et al 2006, 1290-4). This may explain why most of the Scandinavian place-names in Ireland are topographical rather than habitative.

Y-chromosomal DNA and/or mtDNA data is not available for Islay, however, unpublished DNA analysis suggests that 15-20% of a sample of Islay men had paternal lineages of Norse origin (*supra*, 200-1). This is a much lower figure than one would expect if the island population had been replaced by incoming Norse.

9.11.7 Christianised Norse on Islay

A major factor in the writer's decision not to analyse the keeills of the Isle of Man and to compare them with the chapels on Islay, was the high density of cross-slabs in Man bearing Scandinavian ornament and the virtual absence of them on Islay. The Christian landscape differs substantially between the two islands. On Man, there are probably about 100 cross-slabs bearing Scandinavian ornament (Wilson 2008, 57-86), whereas only one (Section

6.2.9) is known from Islay. The Manx cross-slabs may be dated mainly to the tenth century by their ornament (*op cit*, 59), whereas the Islay Dòid Mhàiri cross-slab has been dated to the late eleventh century (Fisher 2001, 136). This suggests to the author that the Norse population on Islay was much smaller than that on Man and this is offered in support of his hypothesis that an ethnic discontinuity did not occur on Islay in spite of the high density of Norse settlement names.

Chapter 10: Discussions and Conclusions

10.1 Drystone Chapels of Ireland and Argyll

In Chapter Three, Ó Carragáin's theory of a geographical distribution of church constructional techniques in Ireland was introduced. This resonates very much with my own impression - that in regions, such as Islay, with a stone building tradition stretching back hundreds or thousands of years, early chapels would have been built in stone. It is shown by analysis that the L/W ratios of a selection of Scottish churches that are expected to be early is less than those which are known to be Romanesque. This is a powerful tool. My analysis of Irish drystone churches and oratories in Chapter Two revealed that, with a few exceptions, they have an L/W ratio of c.1.5 or less. They are predominately found on the Dingle and Inveragh peninsulas in the south-west with outliers along the western coasts. Chapter Three also introduced Rourke and White Marshall's typology for the Irish corbelled drystone churches along with an associated chronological model, which suggests a construction range from the seventh to the eleventh century. A local style of corbelled roof construction may have been used in some chapels in Islay.

10.2 The Islay Drystone Chapels

The measurable drystone chapels in Islay were analysed in Chapter Three.

The initial list comprised twenty seven possible chapels which are numbered in Table 3.1 and annotated on the map in Figure 3.6. A programme of field work included visits to all but four of these sites and also to two newly identified chapels. One chapel (Ardilistry) is surrounded by an impenetrable thicket of scrub-woodland. Some chapels (Kilennan and Lossit) have been lost since they were described by the OS in 1878, and one (Laggan) has been washed away by the river. Also, as a result of fieldwork six sites were rejected as unmeasurable or unidentifiable (Cill an Ailein (Loch Gruinart), Ballitarsin, Laphroaig, Cnoc Grianail, Tayandock and Craighfad), and two (Kilbride and Cladh Eilister), described as drystone-built by RCAHMS, were found to be mortared, and twice the size of the writer's limit for drystone construction of c.24m². The remaining 17 drystone chapels were analysed (Table 3.3) and found to have a mean L/W ratio of 1.81. This suggests that typically the Islay chapels have a more rectangular ground plan than the Irish oratories. This implies that the majority of them may either not have been corbelled or used a different corbelling technique such as slab lintelling, which is used in the oratory on North Rona. Five out of six of the Islay chapels with the lowest values of L/W ratio have entrances in the west wall. Also, their

L/W ratio is within the range of the 90 measured Irish pre-Reformation churches (1.3-1.95). In Ireland, with one or two exceptions for topological reasons, all 186 pre-Romanesque churches, mortared and drystone, have western entrances.

The reason for the change to entrances in the north and/or south walls must be liturgical. It has not been possible to discover the motivation behind it. Although south doorways appeared in parts of Anglo-Saxon England before the arrival of the Normans, the change in Islay was probably driven by the introduction of the parochial system in Argyll in the 12th century (Bridgland 2004, 88).

In Chapter 3 it was shown that the mean orientation of the Islay chapels is 255.67 degrees. The range of the orientations is very wide and measures from 213 to 288, or 75 degrees. The majority of the chapels are orientated south of true west. It was argued in Chapter 3 that chapels possessing western entrances and north-east/south-west orientation are likely to be early in the chronological sequence for the Islay chapels.

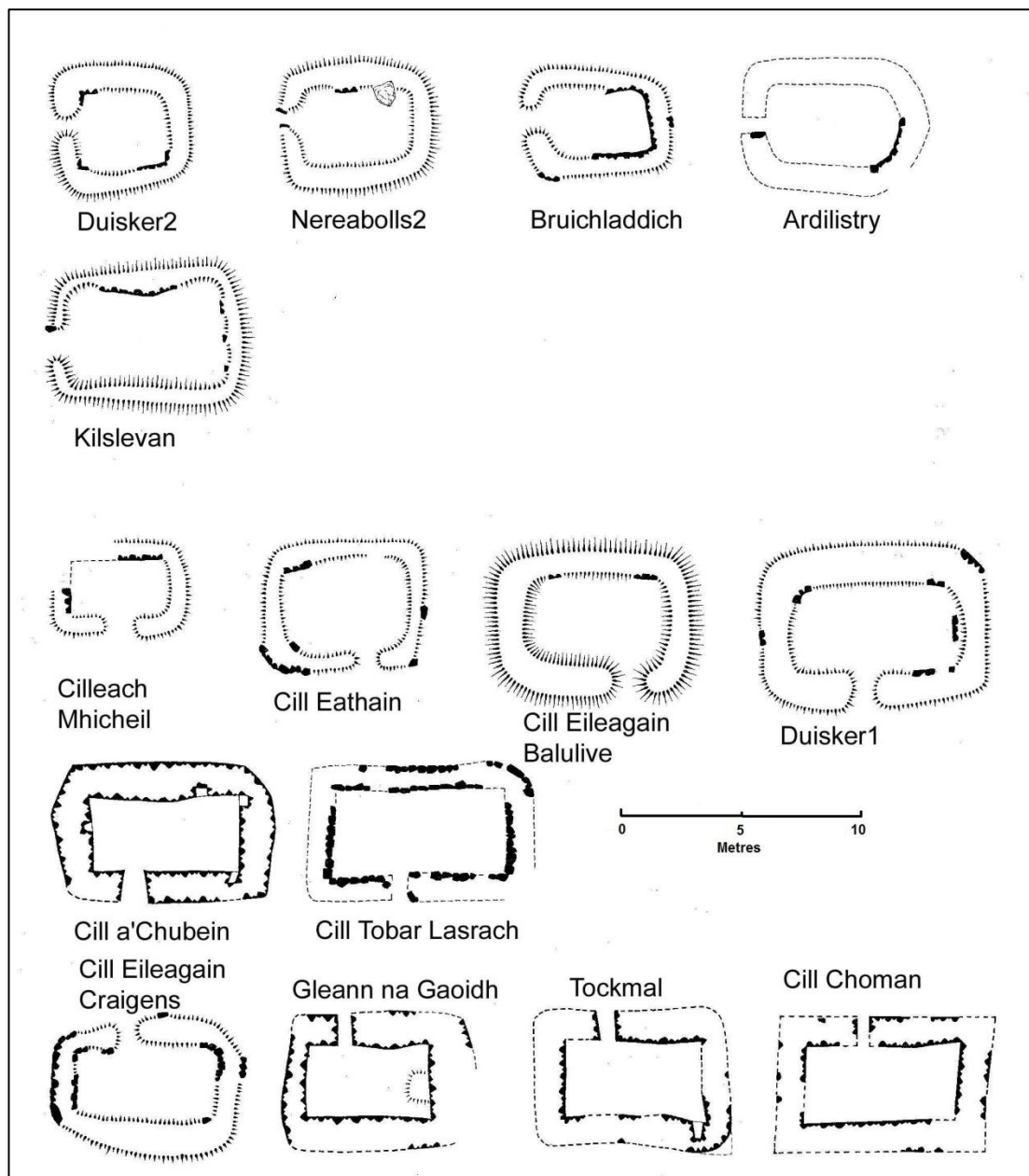


Figure 10.1: Comparative plans of the measureable chapels surveyed by the RCAHMS (adapted from RCAHMS 1984, 26)

10.2.1 Duisker 2, Cill Eathain and Kilslevan

In Chapter Five it was proposed that churches that are aligned north-east/south-west are potentially early. It is therefore suggested that three of the six chapels with (liturgical) western entrances are in that category; Duisker 2 (L/W ratio of 1.29), Cill Eathain (L/W ratio of 1.43) and Kilslevan (L/W ratio of 1.70). Cill Eathain and Kilslevan both possess dedications that are rarely encountered in western Scotland. This also supports an early

foundation. They also have circular enclosures. On the basis of L/W ratio, and a comparison with the Irish data in Chapter Two, it is conceivable that Duisker 2 and Cill Eathain were corbelled. In Chapter Two, we saw that the corbelled oratories in Ireland have L/W ratio values of 1.5 or less. Duisker 2 may be compared with the excavated oratory at Illaunloughan (see Figure 2.12 (*supra*, 36), which demonstrates features associated with the earliest form of the Irish drystone oratory (Rourke & White Marshall 2005, 112-5), such as rounded eastern corners down to ground level with a bowed or slightly rounded western wall. It is cautiously suggested that Duisker 2 and Cill Eathain may date from the sixth or seventh century.

The plan of Duisker 2 is illustrated in Figure 10.1, which shows the comparative plans of the fifteen Islay chapels surveyed by the RCAHMS and analysed in this thesis. The plans of Duisker 2, Cill Eathain and Kilslevan within their burial enclosures are illustrated in Chapter Three, in Figures 3.16, 3.14 and 3.26 respectively.

The L/W ratio of 1.7 for Kilslevan is towards the extreme of the range for Irish corbelled churches and it may have been a rectangular drystone chapel with a thatched or slab-lintelled roof, rather than fully corbelled. However, the plan suggests that the north wall may have slumped inward. This supports the hypothesis, proposed in this thesis that with an area of 23.3m² it is almost at the stability limit of c.24m² for drystone construction. Kilslevan is later than Duisker 2 and Cill Eathain, and is tentatively dated to the eighth or ninth century, with a date associated with St Slébhine, who was abbot of Iona from 752 until his death in 767 AD a distinct possibility.

10.2.2 Ardilistry, Nereabolls 2 and Bruichladdich

The remaining three chapels with western entrances are likely to be earlier than the twelfth century when entrances in lateral walls are assumed to appear. They could also be pre-Norse, and although all three demonstrate features that imply that they could have been corbelled, their L/W ratios (1.83, 1.63 and 1.68 respectively) suggest that, like Kilslevan, they were probably rectangular chapels constructed in a manner similar to blackhouses and with thatched or turf roofs.

Ardilistry (Figures 10.1 & 3.25) has an almost apsidal eastern end and a curved western wall. There are also unexpected features; it is aligned accurately on east-west, has no burial enclosure and the walls incorporate some orthostatic boulders. This chapel is difficult to access because of impenetrable thickets of undergrowth; consequently the author has not visited it. Access from the sea would be relatively easy. It may date from the Christian Norse period (tenth century) and could be an example of a private estate chapel that was not intended to be used for burials. Swift's arguments about the use of private chapels by the Norse are persuasive. She provides evidence from the *Landnámabók*, where we hear about the building of a church by Orlyg Hrappsson upon his arrival in Iceland, under the corner post of which, he placed consecrated soil given to him by a bishop in the Hebrides (Pálsson & Edwards 1972, 23-4; Swift 1987, 252-3). In support of her suggestion that private chapels did not have burial rights Swift describes the story of Aud the Deep-Minded from *Landnámabók*, who appears to be either Irish or Hebridean. She eventually dies in Iceland and requests to be buried at the high water mark rather than in the un-consecrated ground of her settlement (Pálsson & Edwards 1972, 50-55). Swift concludes from this saga that it is implicit that Aud could not be buried in her private chapel (1987, 253). The argument is convincing.

Bruichladdich chapel (Figure 3.22) is situated within an unusually shaped enclosure from which the name of the chapel, *Cill Uilleann* is derived. Together with the name *Cladh Dhumhan*, 'burial-ground of the mounds, barrows or tumuli', collected at the end of the nineteenth century, this suggests that it may have been founded in the Norse period. Nearby is the farm of Conisby, 'the King's farm' in Old Norse.

The enclosure at Nereabolls 2 (Figure 3.24) has been ploughed in parts and interfered with, and the RCAHMS plan may not be representative. Originally, it may have been oval or perhaps sub-rectangular.

Cautiously, it is suggested that these three chapels were founded in the eighth to tenth century and retained their western entrances when modified to administer to an enlarged

population that included (particularly in the Rhinns) Norse incomers. At this time the burial grounds may have been extended. Ardilistry may never have had a burial ground.

10.3 Chapels with entrances in the lateral walls

The remaining chapels date from a time after the introduction of north and south entrances in place of the western doorway. In this thesis it is assumed that this happened sometime in the late twelfth century associated with the introduction of the parochial system in Argyll (Bridgland 2004, 88). The chapels will not be discussed in detail individually and all are described in Chapter Five. However from the plans in Figure 10.1, it is possible to observe that they fall into two categories; closer in form to the earlier chapels with western entrances, or to the later mortared medieval churches on Islay.

10.3.1 Cilleach Mhicheil, Cill Eileagian (Balulive), Cill Eileagian (Craigens), and Duisker 1

These are closer in form to the chapels with western entrances. Excavation, or at least clearance and de-turfing, is required to confirm that these sites were not originally provided with western entrances. Cilleach Mhicheil (Figure 5.16) is the smallest chapel on the island at 3.75m by 2.25m or 8.4m². There hardly seems space for burials between the chapel and the enclosure wall. However, excavations at High Island, Co. Galway, (White Marshall, J & Rourke 2000, 121-4) revealed that a church 3.5m east to west by 3.15m transversely situated within a trapezoidal enclosure c.9m east to west by 8.5m average width provided sufficient space for eight burials between the east wall and the enclosure. This relatively small church was also rebuilt on the same footprint three times between the ninth and twelfth century; the dates are from the burials. The distance between the east wall of the church and the enclosure wall is little more than two metres. This example not only reveals that small churches were constructed in the twelfth century, but also confirms their use for burials. One can deduce that any burials at Cilleach Mhicheil were those of generations of incumbents in what was probably a private chapel. The dedication to St Michael also supports a foundation date in the twelfth century following the change from Celtic to Latin Christianity introduced by Queen Margaret in the late eleventh century (MacKinley, 1910, 11).

10.3.2 Cill Choman, Tockmal, Gleann na Gaidh, Cill Tobar Lasrach and Cill a'Chubein

These chapels are closer in form to the later mortared medieval churches on the island. They may have been founded as part of a proto-parochial organisation sometime after the twelfth century. They are more rectangular on plan and tend to have square corners. Aumbries are

found in Cill Tobar Lasrach, Cill a'Chubein and Tockmal chapels. Aumbries appear in Irish churches in the late 11th century and are associated with the appearance of stone altars, which perhaps replaced wooden chest altars (Ó Carragáin 2010, 51, 191-2). Only 5, from almost 200 pre-Romanesque churches in Ireland, have aumbries. Tockmal (Figure 5.5) and Cill a'Chubein (Figure 5.6) chapels are better preserved than the rest of the Islay chapels, and may have continued in use into the nineteenth century as places of worship for nearby townships. There is some evidence to support a late pilgrimage role for Cill a'Chubein in the form of the holy well and possible outdoor *leacht* and/or cross-base. The chapel at Gleann na Gaoidh (Figure 5.14) may also have been provided with a *leacht*. Cill a'Chubein is different from all of the other chapels in wall thickness and batter. Its wall survives to a greater height than many other chapels, and this fact alone may make comparisons unreliable.

10.4 New and reclassified sites

During the research for this thesis, two new chapels were identified. These were described in Chapter Four, and one burial ground reclassified.

10.4.1 Kilcavan, Kelsay

Evidence for the existence of the chapel of Kilcavan (Section 4.2.1) is provided by rentals (Macniven 2006, 336; Maceacharna 1976, 52) where it is listed with Kelsay. This was known to local historians, however there is no suggestion that anyone knew where it was. Caldwell (*pers com*) suggested that it may be a feature shown on the first edition OS map near to the farmhouse at Kelsay. It was confirmed that the remains are those of a chapel, which has survived better than most with walls standing to over one metre in height. Unusually, however, there is a remarkable amount of turf and earth covering the walls and it is possible that turf was used in its construction, either as roofing material or as revetting for the stone walls. The entrance of Kilcavan chapel is in the south wall and it has an L/W ratio of 1.94. The chapel probably dates to the twelfth century or later and may have been constructed in a Scandinavian style with external turf cladding to the drystone walls (Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998, 156, 161, 165).

10.4.2 Airigh Ghuaidhre

This site (Section 4.2.2) was identified as a potential chapel on aerial photographs and confirmed as the probable site of a chapel in 2006. Little remains of the chapel other than a stony oval mound aligned roughly east-west, much of which could be field clearance

material. The enclosure however survives much better. The chapel is situated in an important lead mining area.

10.4.3 Cill Ronain, Braigo, Burial ground, Chapel (possible)

In the 1970s field investigators reported that this burial ground was too overgrown to interpret effectively (RCAHMS 1984, 167). Today, the field has been improved and is now grazed by stock; it has also been used for the dumping of large field clearance boulders and smaller stones. There is no doubt however that the remains of a structure exist on top of the raised up burial ground, the orientation of which is c.13 degrees south of true west-east (Figures 4.5 & 4.6). However the eastern half of the structure is not clearly visible and it is possible that, like at Cill Eathain, half of the chapel has disappeared as a result of extended field clearance dumping. Little more can be said, however it does lend some credence to the presence of a chapel in burial grounds with a *cill* place-name, in spite of the writer's observation that *cladh* and *cill* are used interchangeably in Islay as the name for a burial ground (*supra*, 42).

10.5 Place-names and Early Christian Monastic Sites

Two important sites on the island that no longer possess a drystone chapel are described in Chapter Seven to add to the distribution of ecclesiastical activity on the island in the first millennium. It was suggested that Orsay and Nave islands were the locations of eremitic monastic sites. This is supported by early carved stones and some physical remains.

The site on Nave Island (Section 7.3.2) is an example of an early monastic enclosure that may be compared with sites in Ireland and elsewhere in Scotland. Unfortunately it was cleared, damaged and modified as a result of the activities of the kelp industry in the nineteenth century. However, among the standing remains inside the enclosure, there is an example of a *leacht* and possibly a corbelled cell. A fragment of carved stone from the floor of the medieval chapel suggests that at one time there was a cross on the island similar in size to the eighth-century standing cross at Kilnave chapel nearby on mainland Islay. The writer argued that the remains of Hugh Mackay's grave on Orsay are probably those of a first- millennium *leacht* rather than a sixteenth-century burial.

There is also some evidence of place-names in Islay that could be associated with the early church; these were discussed briefly in Section 7.2. In 1695, Martin (Martin 1934, 274)

recorded that there was a chapel and well one mile south-west of the great cave at Boslsa. This chapel has been searched for on the ground and with the help of aerial photography, and a possible location for it was suggested (Section 7.2.4) however, because of its remote situation this remains ‘work in progress’.

10.6 Simple burial grounds containing cairns

We have seen that some of the recorded burial grounds in Islay may have once possessed chapels. Occasionally the OS or RCAHMS investigators noted level areas of ground in burial grounds where chapels may once have stood. However, Section 4.4 includes descriptions of two burial grounds of a different type that contain cairns and are delineated by, rather than enclosed by, a single thickness stone boulder wall. It was suggested that burial grounds such as Cill an Ailein and Cill Luchaig, could be Early Christian undeveloped cemeteries.

10.7 Cemetery of Penannular Barrows, Newton, Islay

During the transitional period between the Iron Age and the Early Christian period in north Britain and Ireland there are examples of the very rare practice of burial in penannular ditched enclosures or barrows of which the cemetery at Newton is one. The literature suggests that in the late seventh and early eighth century, pagan practices were still tolerated and the bulk of the population were still buried in ancestral or familial burial places rather than in formal Christian cemeteries (O'Brien 2009, 135; O'Brien 2003, 67).

It was suggested in Section 4.4.4 that the Newton barrows are the graves of Christians in the style of their pagan ancestors in a familial burial ground overlooking a tribal boundary (the River Sorn?). They probably date to the seventh or eighth century AD, but could be earlier. They suggest a different model of ecclesiastical organisation to that found elsewhere on the island. The Newton cemetery would also overlook the overland section of the hypothetical trade route from Ireland to Argyll introduced in Chapter Eight. Burials and trade-routes were associated with boundaries in Irish law texts (Ó Riain 1972, 25; Ó hÓgáin 1999, 49-50; Charles-Edwards 1976, 83-4)

10.8 Christianity, Origins and Gaelicisation: history and myths

In Chapter Eight, a hypothesis was introduced for the route of Christianity to Islay and Argyll. It was suggested that this spread from the south- west of Ireland northwards along the western littoral to Donegal, and then crossed the North Channel to Islay and Argyll. This may have happened around the same time that Patrick was active in north and west Ireland. Support for my hypothesis comes not only from the archaeology but from the corpus of early medieval carved stones from Argyll, many of which find parallels in western Ireland. This has been studied in depth by Fisher:

Many of the linear crosses recorded here (Argyll) are indistinguishable from those in similar geographical settings in Kerry and Donegal, an example being the equal armed crosses with barred terminals that are found in the Loughros peninsula in the latter county (Fisher 2001, 21).

Similar parallels exist in the same areas for simple cruciform stones, occasionally with crosslets; crosses of arcs are especially common in Kerry, and simple outline crosses are found in Donegal (*ibid*). The distribution of stones inscribed with a Greek or Latin cross, to which the *Chi-Rho* monogram is appended, follows the western coast of Ireland, and continues into Argyll (*supra*, 150-1). Contact between Gaul and Dál Riata is suggested by the survival of a number of carved stones in Mid Argyll of two types that are common in Gaul and relatively scarce in Scotland (Alcock 2003, 368-70; Fraser 2009, 106). At Kilmory Oib, Argyll (Figure 8.4), there is a cross with two cross-arms, above and below which there are pairs of birds (Fisher 2001, 150-1). The double-armed cross is found throughout the Mediterranean and the birds – especially in pairs – are found in Gaul (Alcock 2003, 368-9), but rarely in Ireland. There is a possible example in Northern Ireland (Figure 8.5) near Lough Foyle at Duncrun, Co. Derry (NISMR: LDY005:002; C6817032410). Evidence of contact between Gaul and Dál Riata supports the writer's hypothesis that there was a trade route (Figure 8.6) from Lough Foyle to Loch Indaal on Islay, which crossed Islay and used one of several later ferry routes from Jura to Mid Argyll and Knapdale (where the double armed cross and the five hexafoil inscribed stones are found).

In this thesis it is assumed that Dál Riata was a kingdom that occupied lands either side of the North Channel and that the inhabitants enjoyed close contact and intermarriage from at least the Iron Age until the medieval period, and during this period they were Gaelic speakers. Recent research on the subject of settlement patterns, migration and gaelicisation

was presented in Chapter Eight. The suggestion of limited, or a single dynastic, movement across the channel rather than a mass folk migration, was found to be credible.

One of the initial objectives of my research was to use the *Míniugud Senchasa Fher nAlban* (*MSFA*) to identify the location of district-names and territories of the principal kindreds of Dalriada. However, it became apparent from material studied and presented in Chapter Eight that much of the prior published analyses – both historical and toponymical - of the Islay section of *MSFA* were unreliable, and that it was not going to be possible to locate the territories of the townships/districts in Islay referred to in it. Therefore, they were not used as a comparison factor for the Argyll chapels.

10.9 The Norse on Islay

In Chapter Nine, the writer suggested that the ecclesiastical impact of the Norse on Islay was minimal. There are no dedications to Scandinavian saints and only one carved stone showing Scandinavian influence. This is in contrast to the Isle of Man where there are hundreds of examples. Evidence was presented in Section 9.11 in support of my hypothesis that a peaceful plantation of Norse settlers occurred rather than ethnic cleansing or wholesale removal of the Gaelic population. The presence of a high density of Norse farm-names on the island and the virtual absence of archaeological evidence of a Norse population, remains unexplained, as it does in the case of other Hebridean islands, and the west coast of the Scottish mainland, where place-names associated with the Norse are also found in high densities with little archaeological evidence of their presence except for a small number of burials.

10.10 A prototype chronological model

It was suggested in Chapter Eight that ‘Irish’ Dál Riata received Christianity in the second half of the fifth century. For the purposes of defining a prototype chronology for the Islay chapels it is assumed that Christianity would have spread to Islay by the early sixth century. In the Irish south-west, scientific dating confirms the establishment by the late fifth or early sixth century of the ecclesiastical settlement at Caherlehillan (Sheehan 2009, 194-6). This was complete with an enclosed church and cemetery; there was no evidence to suggest that the site started out as a secular settlement. The wooden church was a primary feature. There are other examples of ecclesiastical enclosures in Ireland that have been dated to the fifth or sixth century, however unlike Caherlehillan, it is uncertain if they were originally associated

with the ecclesiastical development or an earlier secular site (O'Sullivan, A et al 2008, 123-6). Even in Ireland, remains of the early church have proved elusive. With the exception of Caherlehillan, excavations of wooden churches, many of which are described as 'possible churches' because of a limited number of recovered post-holes, have provided dates no earlier than the earliest suggested dates in the seventh or eighth century for drystone churches (*ibid*, 130; Rourke & White Marshall 2005, 120-1).

The lack of evidence for the early church in Argyll was discussed in Chapter Two. There are radiocarbon dates from Iona that hint at pre-Columban and Columban activity and some scattered largely undated burials (Barber 1981a; McCormick 1989). Other than the seventh-century burial under the Time Team's chapel on Mull (Wessex Archaeology 2010), there is only the excavation carried out in advance of the construction of a car park at Killevin, Crarae, Loch Fyne, where a possible monastic *vallum* was found, which was dated to the seventh to ninth century (Kirby & Alexander 2009).

Without excavation and scientific dating it is not possible to establish a reliable chronology for the Islay chapels. Instead, the results of my research will be used to establish a hypothetical chronological model for the drystone chapels and related sites.

The plans of all chapels may be compared with Figure 10.1. In the following sections, figure numbers are given for individual chapels which refer to overall plans including burial grounds.

10.10.1 Possible sixth or seventh-century chapels

A relatively small L/W ratio, a north-east/south-west orientation, a western entrance, and a circular burial ground, are chronological elements discussed in this research that support the classification of Duisker 2 (Figure 3.16) and Cill Eathain (Figure 3.14) as the earliest surviving chapels on the island. It is possible that they were constructed with a corbelled roof. The chapel at Kilslevan (Figure 3.26) is also orientated north-east/south-west and sits within a circular burial ground. However, its L/W ratio of 1.7 and the relatively thin walls suggest that it was not corbelled. It is relatively large and more rectangular than Duisker 2 and Cill Eathain, and almost at the stability limit proposed during this research for drystone construction. The plan shows that the north wall has slumped inwards, perhaps as a result of

stability problems. Compared with Duisker 2 and Cill Eathain it was a community church, probably the earliest surviving example on the island. Duisker and Kilsleven are both situated less than 2km from the old road from the head of Loch Indaal to Port Askaig.

10.10.2 Phase 2: Possible eighth to tenth-century chapels

Slightly later is Nereabolls 2 (Figure 3.24); although there is evidence to suggest that the burial ground may have been extended, and the present irregular shape hides the form of the original, the chapel is small, is aligned closer to true west and possesses an L/W ratio of 1.63. This is an example of a chapel that may have been remodelled and the burial ground extended following the conversion in the tenth century of the Norse settlers on the Rhinns of Islay.

One of my assumptions is that chapels with an entrance in the west wall are predominately earlier than the chapels with an entrance in the north or south wall. Substantial support is found for this from the Irish data (*supra*, 51). There are a few exceptions, for example the mortared chapel at Kilnave, Islay has a western entrance, but architecturally it has been dated to the late medieval period (RCAHMS 1984, 219-23).

The remaining two chapels with western entrances have unusual enclosures and are accurately aligned to east-west. In the case of Ardilistry (Figure 3.25) there is no evidence of an enclosure at all, and it is suggested that this was a private chapel without burial rights perhaps established at the time of the conversion of the Norse settlers in the tenth century. It is readily accessible from the sea and is close to one of the few available safe anchorages (Loch Knock, Loch a'Chnuic, NR 441 480) around the island. The chapel at Bruichladdich has a rhomboid shaped burial ground with one side (east) curved and the others straight (Figure 3.19). At the end of the nineteenth century, burial cairns survived in the field in which the chapel is located (MacNeill, J G 1899, 105). This chapel is aligned accurately east-west and may have been established in the late eighth or ninth century to respect burials similarly aligned. The present shape of the burial ground may date from the Norse period of settlement in the area or could be much later.

The distributions of Phase 1 and 2 chapels are shown in Figures 10.2.

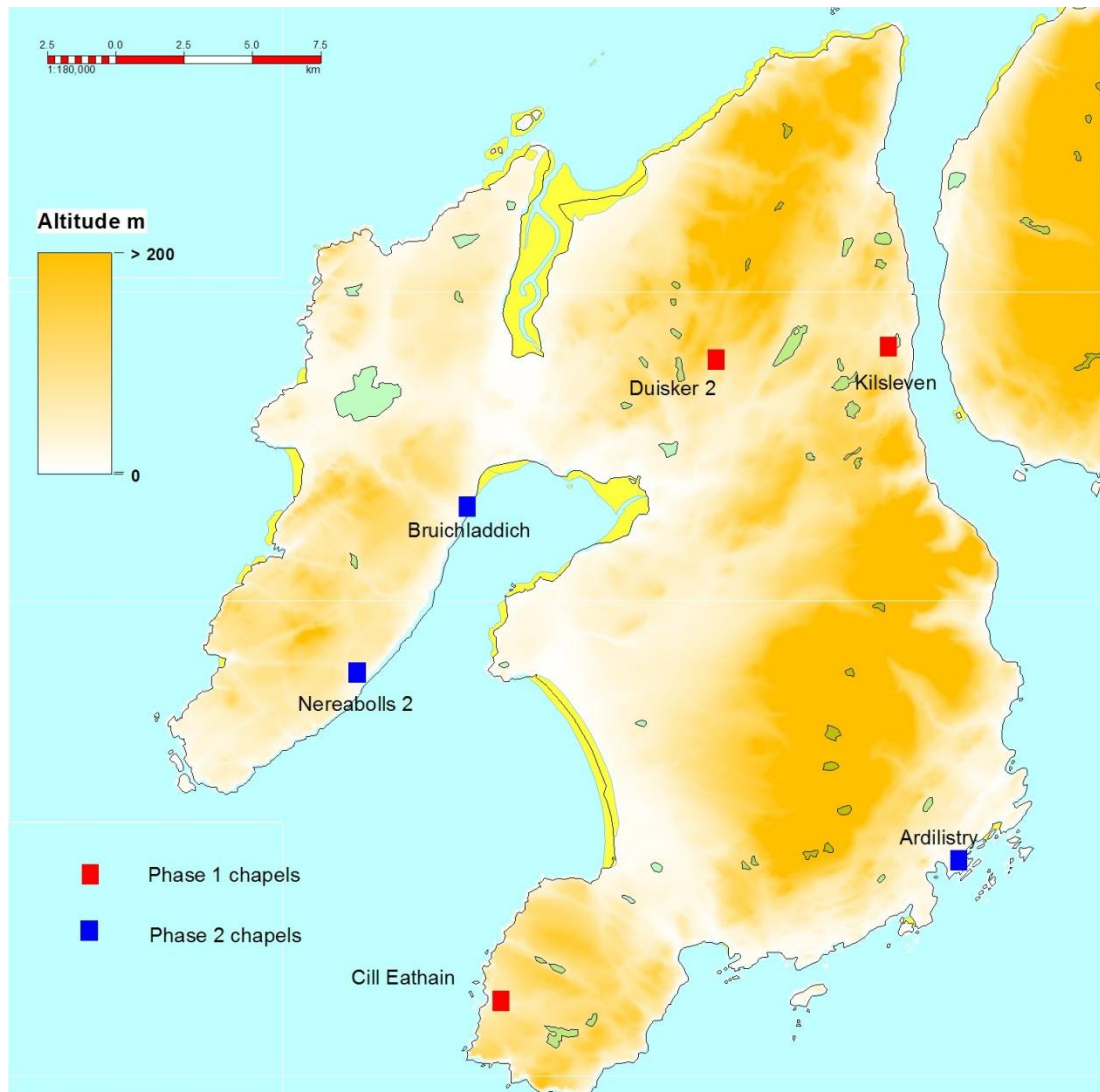


Figure 10.2: Phase 1 chapels 6th - 8th centuries; Phase 2 chapels 8th - 10th centuries

10.10.3 Phase 3: Late 12th-century chapels

Cilleach Mhicheil (Figure 5.16), Cill Eileagian, Balulive (Figure 5.18), Cill Eileagian, Craigens (Figure 5.17), and Duisker 1 (Figure 5.4) are closer in form to the chapels with western entrances, but have the entrance in either the north or the south wall. They were probably founded in the late twelfth century associated with the introduction of the parochial system in Argyll (Bridgland 2004, 88). Cilleach Mhicheil is the smallest chapel on the island and may have been a private chapel, with a burial ground just large enough to bury several generations of priests.

10.10.4 Phase 4: Post twelfth-century chapels

Cill Choman (Figure 5.3), Tockmal (Figure 5.5), Gleann na Gaoidh (Figure 5.14), Cill Tobar Lasrach (Figure 5.10), and Cill a'Chubein (Figure 5.6) are closer in form to the later mortared medieval churches on the island. They may have been founded as part of a prototype parochial organisation sometime after the late twelfth century. They are more rectangular on plan and tend to have square corners (see Figure 10.1). Aumbries are found in Cill Tobar Lasrach, Cill a'Chubein and Tockmal chapels. The earliest aumbries in Ireland are dated to the eleventh century (Ó Carragáin 2010, 51, 191-2); it is suggested that in Scotland they are associated with the change to lateral entrances in the twelfth century.

Because of the considerable overburden of turf on the walls of the newly recognised chapel at Kelsay it is difficult to accurately classify as Phase 3 or 4, but it is later than the twelfth century. It does appear to be constructed from squared stones and until further information is available it will be classified in Phase 4. The distribution of Phase 3 and 4 chapels is shown in Figure 10.3.

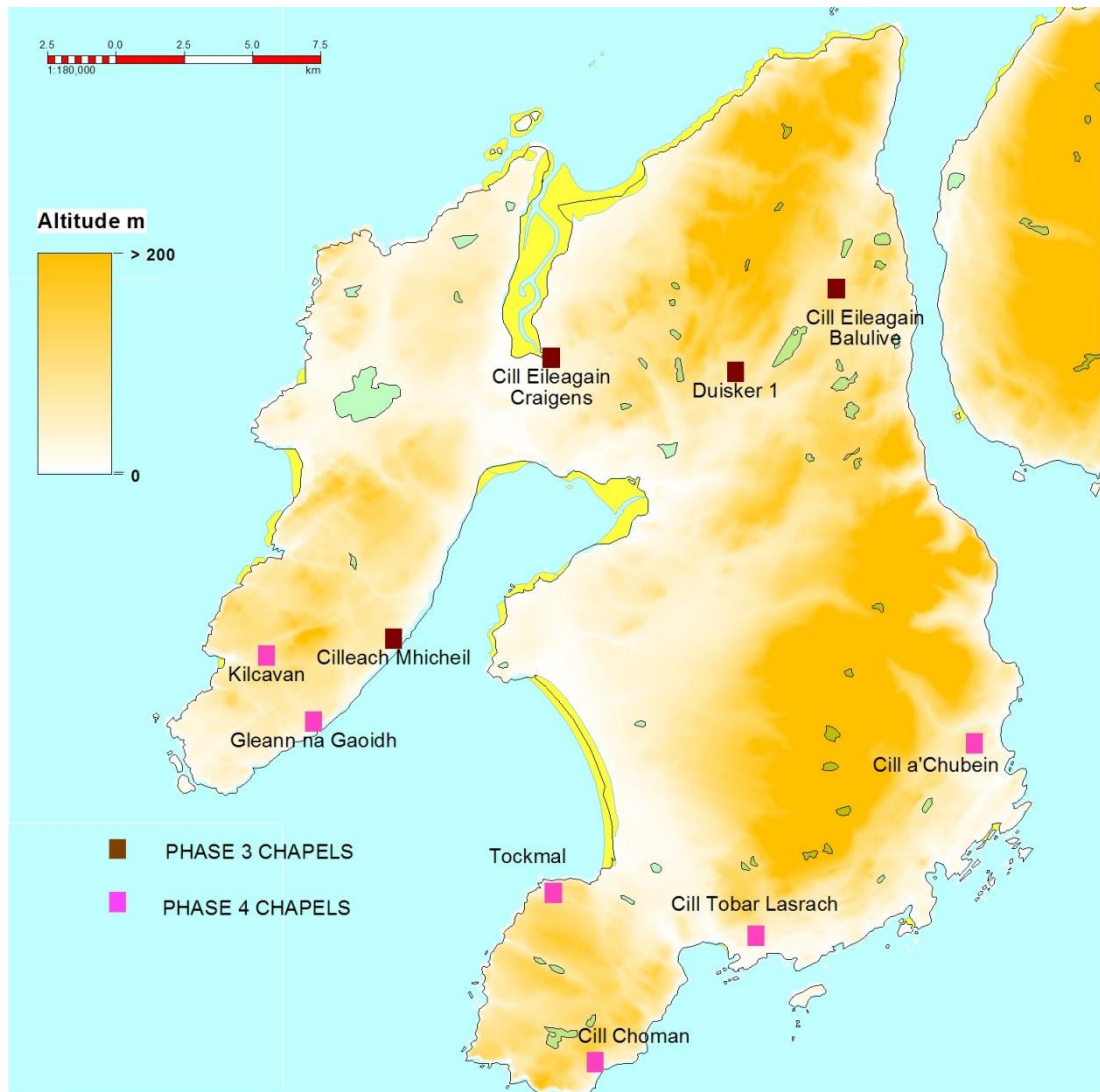


Figure 10.3: Phase 3 chapels late 12th century; Phase 4 chapels post 12th century

10.11 Early Christian Carved stones from Islay

These were described and illustrated in Chapter Six to allow a more complete understanding of the distribution of early ecclesiastical activity on the island. Guidance with the chronology was sought from Fisher (2001) who is at least able to offer tentative suggestions in a world where ‘the chronology of early sculpture in Britain and Ireland is still controversial’ (*ibid*, 12). Fisher however must not be held responsible for the dates suggested here; any howlers are my own. The earliest carved stones from Argyll are probably the hexafoil examples from Knapdale referred to in Chapter Eight (*supra*, 152-3). Nothing similar is known from Islay where the earliest stone may be one bearing a Latin outline cross, found during pipe-laying

near Trudernish (Figure 6.14). There are about one hundred similar stones in the west Highlands and islands; they are also common in Donegal. Stones very similar to the one from Trudernish are recorded from Tullich, in north-east Scotland where they are thought to be associated with the activities of St Columba (*ibid*, 13). Hence a date in the sixth to seventh century is suggested for the stone from Trudernish. The free-standing crosses at Kildalton (Figure 6.8) and Kilnave (Figure 6.7) are of eighth-century date and the example at Kilnave may have been re-located from Nave Island in the later medieval period. Free standing crosses are commonly associated with monastic sites, and although there is no evidence of a monastery at Kildalton, there are a number of other Early Christian stones (Figure 6.9). The seventh to eighth-century possible sanctuary marker at Kilchoman (Figure 6.10), which bears a ringed-cross on each side, is suggestive of former monastic use of the site. The fragment of a cross-slab from Balulive (Figure 6.5) is also assumed to be later than the tenth century. The cross-slab from Dóid Mháiri (Figure 6.12) near Port Ellen, carved in characteristic Scandinavian Ringerike style may be dated to the second half of the eleventh century (*ibid*, 15, 136) .

Earlier Carved Stones					
Key	NMRS	SITE	NMRS NAME	NGRE	NGRN
5	NR25NE	1	Laggan, incised outline ringed cross	2942	5588
26	NR34NE	6	Kilbride, Latin cross within circular frame	3844	4648
35	NR34NE	4	Brahunisary, Cnoc na Cille, equal-armed cross	3780	4625
28	NR15SE	1	Orsay Island; cross at tomb and two stones found at Gleann na Gaoidh (see text)	1640	5168
29	NR27NE	1	Nave Island; cross arm fragment	2920	7587
30	NR45SW	3	Kildalton, free-standing cross (also 3 thin slabs bearing outline crosses)	4580	5083
31	NR27SE	1	Kilnave free-standing cross	2851	7152
34	NR45SE	19	Trudernish outline Latin cross	4609	5252
32	NR26SW	1	Kilchoman 1; cross-slab; Latin cross, superimposed linear cross	2197	6314
32	NR26SW	9	Kilchoman 2, Disc headed slab	2135	6301
Later carved stones					
Key	NMRS	SITE	NMRS NAME	NGRE	NGRN
4	NR25SW	1.01	Glean na Gaoidh, cross-slab	2116	5361
6	NR46NW	4	Balulive, Cill Eileagain; incised ribbon cross with plaited centre	4031	6948
33	NR34NE	18	Port Ellen, Dòid Mháiri; cross-slab, 'Ringerike' style	357	458

Table 10.1: Earlier and later carved stones from Islay

The cross-slab from Gleann na Gaoidh (Figure 6.2 (ii)) carved from a local outcrop may date from the time of the construction of the chapel, which in this thesis is placed sometime in the

years after the late twelfth century. Likewise the carved stone found near Cill Eileagain, Balulive may be contemporary with the chapel, otherwise there is no correlation between the distribution of the early stones and the assumed contemporary chapels. The carved stones are grouped broadly in Table 10.3 into those earlier than the end of the millennium and those likely to be later, and added to the distribution maps of the chapels. Evidence was provided in Section 6.2.1 to support the tradition that two early stones discovered in 1959 at the chapel of Gleann na Gaoidh had been removed from Orsay Island. One is a small cruciform stone (Figure 6.2 (iii)) and the other bears an outline cross (Figure 6.2 (i)).

10.12 The Distribution of Ecclesiastical Activity

10.12.1 The First Millennium

The activity up to approximately the end of the first millennium is shown in Figure 10.4. This includes the Phase 1 and Phase 2 chapels and the earlier carved stones.

Nave Island

This is the only upstanding Early Christian enclosure on Islay. It almost certainly was associated with a monastic settlement. The dating of similar enclosures in Ireland is not well defined, and although the evidence from several sites suggests that enclosures were being constructed as early as the fifth or sixth century, it is still unclear if the initial use was secular rather than ecclesiastical. However, in general they date from well before the eighth century (O'Sullivan, A et al 2008, 123). A fragment of a cross similar to the one at Kilnave on the Islay mainland was found in the floor of the medieval chapel on Nave Island. This may be dated to the eighth century (Fisher 2001, 140). A low rectangular platform, which at the time of the RCAHMS (1984, 226) survey was covered in small stones and quartz pebbles is an accurate description of what must have been a *leacht*. On some Irish sites it has been found that the enclosure was a late addition to an ecclesiastical settlement (O'Sullivan et al 2008, 124). The date of the site therefore must remain uncertain, nevertheless the probability is that it is the remains of an early monastic site that could date from the early sixth century but almost certainly is earlier than the eighth. Boats sailing from Lough Foyle to Iona, rather than using the author's proposed partly overland trade route (*supra*, 155, Figure 8.6), would be able to anchor temporarily in the lee of Nave Island to break the journey. An anchorage is shown in 3 fathoms of water on a marine chart of 1804 (Heather); one of the few useable anchorages around Islay.

Orsay Island

The ecclesiastical remains on this island met a similar fate to those on Nave Island, except this time the island was cleared to build the lighthouse, enclosed garden and cottages. However evidence from carved stones suggests an early foundation and there is a tantalising suggestion of an enclosure on satellite images (*supra*, 134, Figure 7.4). It has been suggested in this thesis that Hugh MacKay's grave represents a *leacht* complete with cursing stones used by pilgrims. *Leachta* have been dated to the end of the first millennium AD on Inishmurray, but one on Illaunloughan Island pre-dated the stone oratory and is believed to date to the eighth century (*supra*, 135).

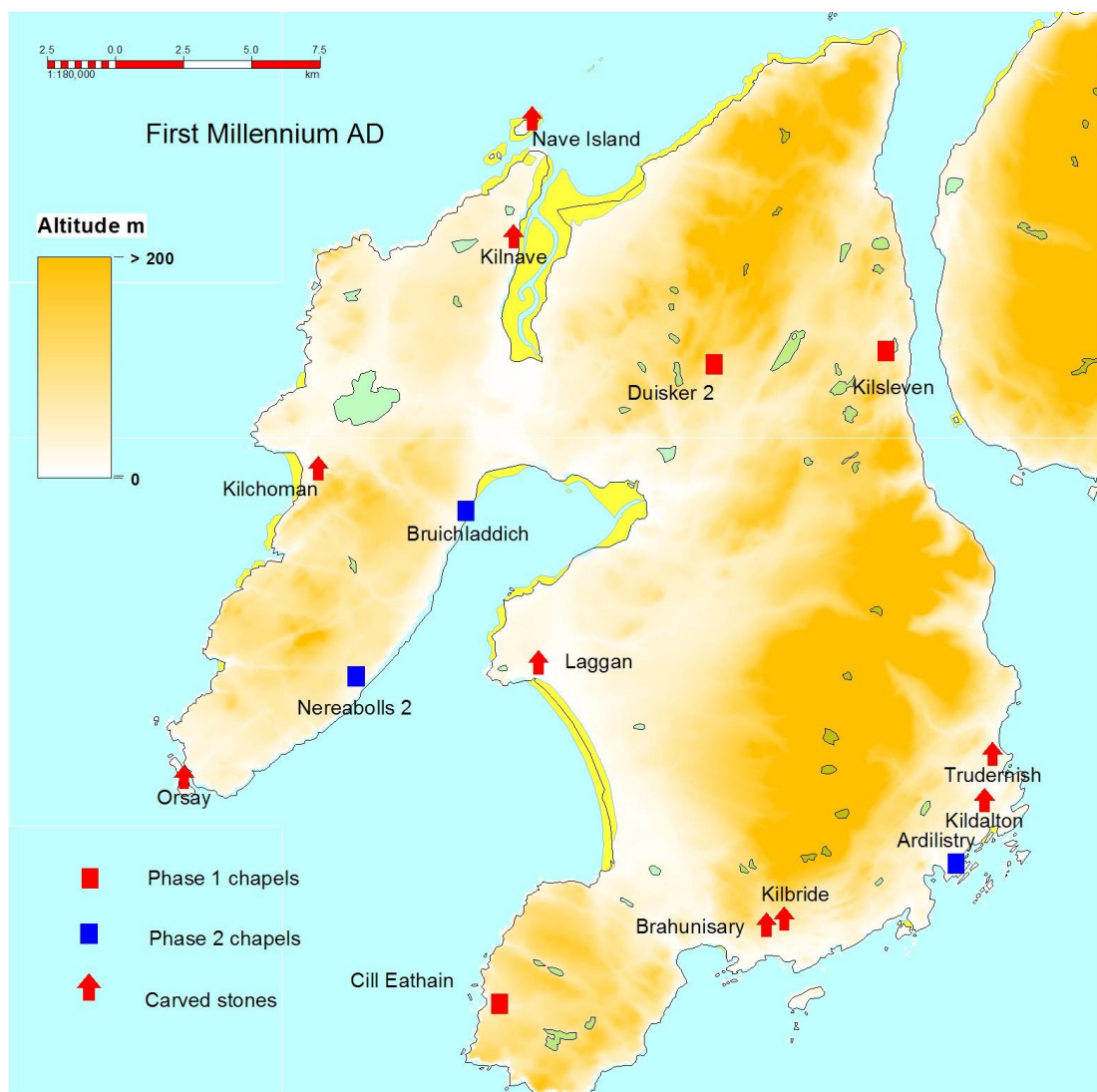


Figure 10.4: Ecclesiastical sites - first millennium AD

Orsay and Nave Island are included on the first millennium distribution map as possible monastic sites; Nave Island is of major importance as an archaeological site and may hold the key to a better understanding of the Christianisation of Islay and Argyll.

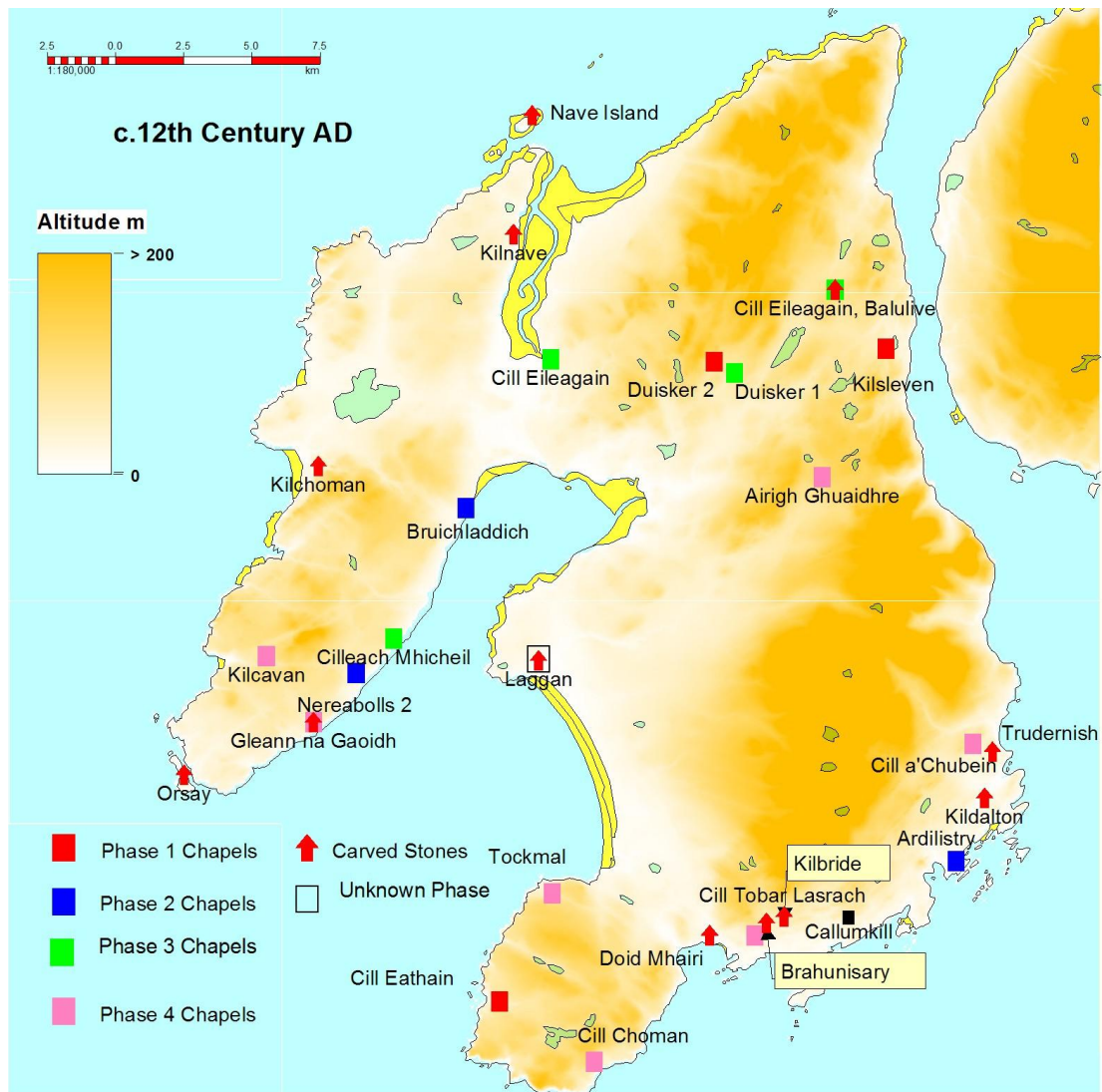


Figure 10.5: Pre-parochial situation - c.12th century

10.12.2 The Twelfth century

Figure 10.5 shows the situation immediately before the establishment of the medieval parish churches at Kildalton, Kilchoman, and Kilarrow, in the late twelfth or early thirteenth centuries. The architectural style of Kildalton suggests that it was constructed during that period (RCAHMS 1984, 206), however Kilarrow and Kilchoman medieval churches have disappeared although their burial grounds survive. The remains of the medieval chapels at

Kilmeny, Kilnaughton and Kilchiaran are no earlier than the fourteenth century and, at various times, may have been dependencies of Kildalton, Kilarrow and Kilchoman, or independent parish churches. However, my research was restricted to the period before the establishment of the parochial system and little more will be said on that subject. The remainder of the late cross-slabs and the new chapels identified during this research have been added to the distribution map to provide the overall picture of ecclesiastical activity on the island. The date of the chapel at Airigh Ghuaidhre cannot be determined without clearance or excavation, however it is assumed to be twelfth century or later. Although we know that there was a chapel at Laggan, which was eroded away by the river, the date of it is not known, however the site is an Early Christian foundation; it is annotated 'unknown phase' on the 12th century distribution map. The place-name *Callumkill* is included on the map for completeness, although the date of the foundation of the lost site at Callumkill is not known.

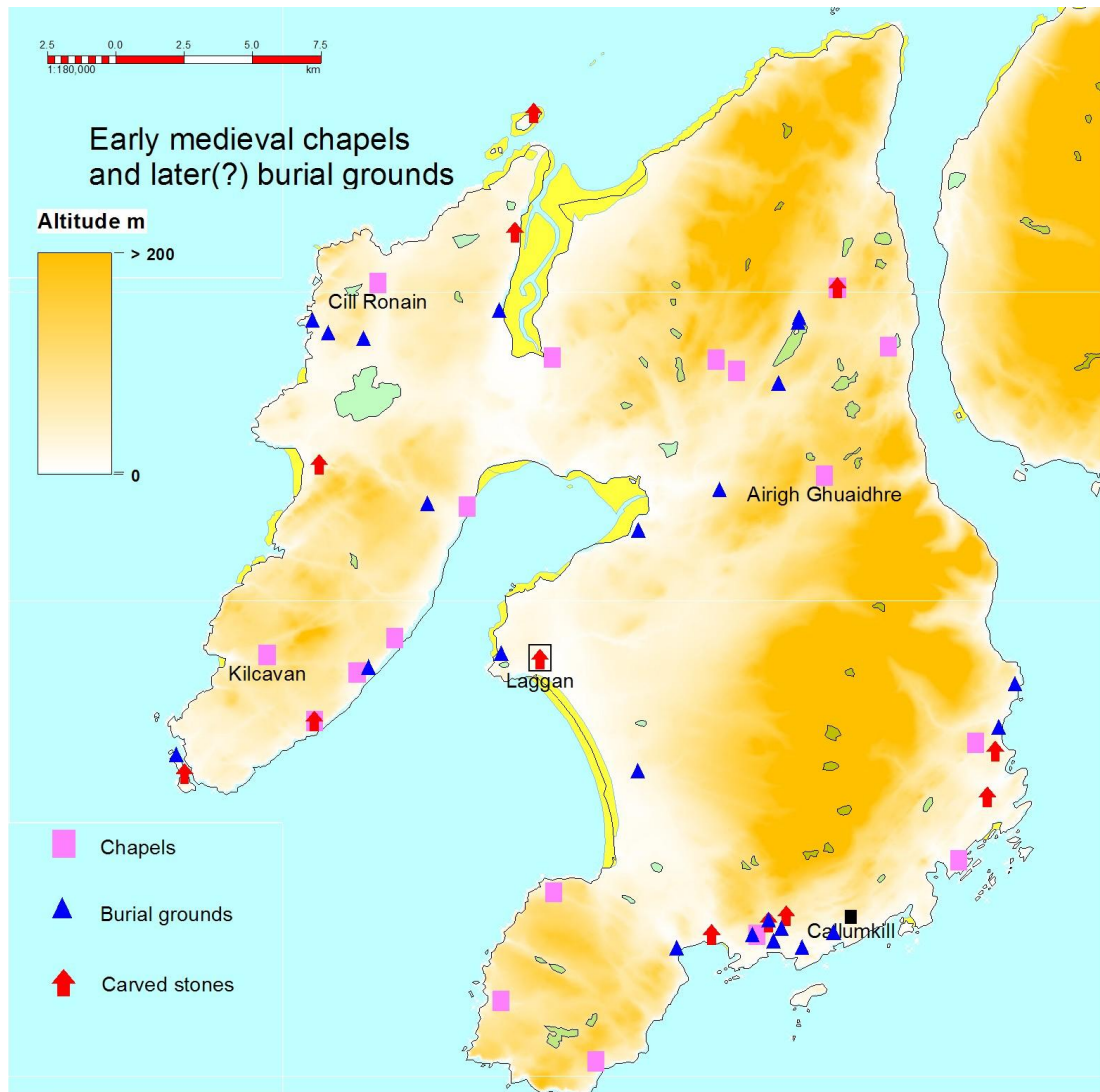


Figure 10.6: Early medieval sites and burial grounds of unknown date

10.13 The total distribution of ecclesiastical activity on Islay

The recorded burial grounds, of unknown date, are added in Figure 10.6. These unfortunately had to be largely ignored in my research. However, the burial ground of Cill Ronain, which fieldwork suggests should be reclassified as a chapel, albeit of unknown date, is labelled. By inspection, there seem to be three zones of activity; the Rhinns; the Sorn Valley, along the route from Loch Indaal to Port Askaig; and Kildalton and the Oa. This is partly determined by topography (altitude), but it also reflects the geography of the later parishes of Kilchoman, Kilarrow and Kildalton respectively. The map also shows an area to the east of

Port Ellen with a high density of ecclesiastical sites. This area also includes a large number of prehistoric ritual sites and high density of duns and small forts.

10.14 *Leachta* on Islay

During the research for this thesis it became clear that *leachta* must have been commonly found on ecclesiastical sites on the island. The monument known as Hugh MacKay's Grave on Orsay was interpreted by the author in Section 7.3.1 as a *leacht* rather than a sixteenth-century burial. The tops of *Leachta* are typically covered with cursing stones and are often surmounted by a cross slab. *Leachta* are outdoor memorials, often constructed on top of non-specific graves, and frequently used as pilgrimage stations.

There is little doubt that an example of a *leacht* exists within the enclosure on Nave Island (which may be compared with that on Eileach an Naoimh in the Garvellach Islands (*supra*, 143). The 'cairn' outside the liturgical east end of the chapel Duisker 2 (section 3.5.2) may represent the remains of a *leacht* or a cross-base. The variously described lintel-grave/cell/platform within the enclosure at Gleann na Gaidh (Section 5.2.6) could be another. There are two possible stone foundations outside the chapel at Cill a'Chubein (Figure 5.6) that may be the remains of a *leacht* and a cross-base, although they only survive as spreads of stones. If the writer's conclusion about these features is correct, a date in the later medieval period would be appropriate for the *leachta* at the two last-mentioned sites, and possibly earlier for the others, although a date in the medieval period for all of them would still not be unreasonable on the basis of Inishmurray (*supra*, 135). Whenever they were established, they are likely to have been maintained through medieval times, and in certain cases into the nineteenth or twentieth century.

10.15 Some reflections

The author believes that his objectives (Section 1.2) for this thesis have been met. A relative chronology for the Islay drystone chapels has been presented, and the impact of the Norse on the chronology and distribution has been examined. It is proposed that three of the chapels with western entrances but unusual burial grounds (Ardilistry, Bruichladdich and Nereabolls 2) may have been constructed to service Norse incomers towards the end of the first millennium, and the newly identified chapel at Kelsay (Section 10.4.1) may have been constructed in later centuries in a Scandinavian style with substantial turf revetting as found on the Isle of Man and in Iceland (see for example the church reconstruction at Geirsstaðir,

Iceland (<http://www.hurstwic.org>). It is perhaps significant that the farm adjacent to the chapel at Buichladdich is Conisby (the ‘king’s farm’ in Old Norse).

The remaining three chapels with western entrances (Duisker 2, Cill Eathain and Kilsleven) form an earlier notable group oriented north-east/south-west, which the writer argues supports an early foundation by comparison with the orientation of burials, elsewhere, dated to the 6th and 7th centuries. Another notable observation concerns the distribution and close spacing of the chapels along the eastern shore of the Rhinns, indicative of some form of church organisation (see Figure 10.5). This, coupled with the *leachta* already mentioned, leads the writer to suggest that there may have been a pilgrimage route along the shore of the Rhinns in medieval times, perhaps associated with the burial grounds and undocumented later chapel at Nerabus, and the monastic sites on Orsay and Nave islands. Orsay would never have made a reliable or safe landing place because of tidal rips and overfalls, and it is possible that the chapel at Cladh Eilisteir (Section 3.6) was founded there by the community from Orsay as an alternative reception point for pilgrims landing at nearby Port Eilisteir. Likewise, in medieval times Kilnave may have been founded by the community from Nave Island, and the standing cross transported from there to Kilnave, as an alternative destination to the island itself.

An interesting conclusion from the L/W ratio analysis of the Irish chapels is that corbelled construction allowed c.50% of them to be constructed close to a ratio of 1.5:1, whereas with standard non-corbelled drystone construction, masons struggled to achieve a ratio of 1.5 (*supra* 31) i.e., they found difficulty with rectangular drystone construction. By the 12th century, when Islay chapels with entrances in the north or south walls were being constructed, masons were able to reliably construct larger and more rectangular chapels in drystone up to a L/W ratio of 2 and with an internal area of 24 m² – the author’s suggested maximum for drystone construction (*supra* 50).

10.16 Further research

Other than excavation of one of the proposed early chapels to obtain calibrated radiocarbon dates, there are a number of topics that could be investigated further.

10.16.1 Orsay

Although sixteenth-century descriptions (Smith 1895, 481) refer to hermits living on Orsay, no further descriptions were published before the island was totally cleared to construct the lighthouse, associated buildings and enclosures. Orsay may have been comparable to Inismurray where a ‘rounding ritual’ associated with a constellation of *leachta* was established by the end of the first millennium AD (O’Sullivan & Ó Carrágain 2008, 10). It is possible that the dedication to Odrán on Orsay was in deliberate emulation of Columba, and that the ancient cemetery (with chapel) was known as *Relickoran* for which parallels are found on Inishmurray and Iona. There is an underlying possibility that contact between Inishmurray and Orsay – as well as Iona – was firmly established in the latter half of the first millennium AD (*supra* 139-40).

10.16.2 Burial grounds of unknown date

Many ancient burial grounds have been ploughed out in modern times, and the locations of others are unclear, however there are some notable survivals that deserve further investigation. Situated on the old northern boundary of Ballinaby farm, itself, the site of a small Norse cemetery, are two burial grounds, Cladh Haco (burial ground of King Hakon) and Cladh Dhubhain (‘burial-ground of the tumuli’) (see Figure 10.6 south-west of Cill Ronain). King Hakon’s fleet stopped at Islay on their return from the battle of Largs in 1263, and imposed a tax of 300 head of cattle on the island (Caldwell 2008, 41-2); it is possible that these burial grounds were in use by Christianised Norse and were used for the burial of dead from the battle. Excavation may provide valuable evidence of the elusive Norse on Islay.

Between Port Ellen and Callumkill (see Figure 10.6) there is a high density of burial grounds and chapels in an area of chambered cairns, standing stones, duns, small forts and a newly identified broch. This deserves further study as a historic ritual landscape.

10.16.3 *Cill an Ailein* and other lost sites

A church at Killinallan is included in Martin’s list of churches in use at the end of the 17th century (Section 3.7.1). The writer doubts that the site of this could be within the small burial ground of *Cill an Ailein*; perhaps a thorough documentary search might shed more light on the location of this lost church. Other lost sites include: the chapel and well associated with the place-name *Callumkill*, and the chapels at Killennan (Section 3.8.2), Lossit (Section 3.8.1) and Cnoc Grianail (Section 3.7.4) noted by the OS in 1878.

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