

Gaelic in the Landscape

Place-names in Islay and Jura

A' Ghàidhlig air Aghaidh na Tìre

Ainmean-àite ann an Ìle agus Diùra

Jacob King and Michelle Cotter

Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba



Scottish Natural Heritage
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba

All of nature for all of Scotland
Nàdar air fad airson Alba air fad



Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba
Gaelic Place-Names of Scotland

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Duncan Clark, Port Charlotte
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Peter Wotherspoon, Àird Fionn

Gun robh math agaibh uile.



Port na Ceasaich, Port Sgioba
Port na Ceasaich, Port Charlotte



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Introduction

What do the names Islay and Jura evoke? The distinctive peat-smoke flavour of their world famous whisky? The windswept raised, beaches along the Jura coast where George Orwell completed *1984*? Birdsong as the sun rises over expanses of moorland and machair? Part of Scotland's Southern Hebrides and Argyll, Islay and Jura's natural heritage attracts visitors from all over the world, and this natural heritage is celebrated in the islands' rich Gaelic cultures.

Although English is spoken on the islands today, this part of Scotland was a stronghold of Gaelic until quite recently. Islay is the fifth largest of the Scottish islands and has a population of about 3,500. Roughly 25% of the population of Islay speaks some Gaelic and the language is taught in schools and at Ionad Chaluim Chille Ìle, the Gaelic cultural centre in Bowmore.

Jura is considerably more sparsely populated (fewer than 200 inhabitants over 142 square miles). Fluent native speakers are few, but many residents have some knowledge of Gaelic and others are learning the language. Islay and Jura have even been identified as growth areas for Gaelic.

Islay and Jura's Gaelic place-names are alive with descriptions of the local plants and wildlife, people's activities on the land and at sea, and in some cases they immortalise some colourful local characters. For this book, members of the community have shared their precious and intimate knowledge of the islands that has been passed down, in Gaelic, over generations.

The names discussed in these pages are all names that have been gathered by local researchers and tend to denote small features, some of which do not appear on OS maps. In fact, many names appear here in print for the first time.



Ro-ràdh

Dè tha na h-ainmean Ìle agus Diùra a' samhlachadh dhutsa? A bheil blas mònach an uisge-bheatha, a choisinn cliù air feadh an t-saoghail a' nochdadh nad bheul? A bheil thu a' faicinn chladaichean togte, loma Dhiùra far an do chuir Deòrsa Orwell crìoch air 1984? No a bheil thu a' cluinntinn ceilearadh nan eun mar a dh'èireas a' ghrian thar monadh is machair? Boinidh Ìle is Diùra do dh'Earra-Ghàidheal – sgìre a bhios a' tàladh dhaoine bho air feadh an t-saoghail air tàilleabh a dhùthchais shònraichte, dùthchas nàdarra a tha air a dhealbh dhuinn sa Ghàidhlig.

Ged a tha Beurla ga bruidhinn anns na h-eileanan an-diugh, b' e a' Ghàidhlig prìomh chànan a' cheàrna seo de dh'Alba gu o chionn goirid.

'S e Ìle an còigeamh eilean as motha ann an Alba, le sluaigh de mu 3,500 a' fantail an seo. Tha co-dhiù beagan Gàidhlig aig cairteal de na daoine a tha a' fantail ann an Ìle agus tha an cànan ga theagasg anns na sgoiltean agus aig Ionad Chalum Chille Ìle, ionad dualchas na Gàidhlig ann am Bogh Mòr.

Tha mòran nas lugha de dhaoine a' fantail ann an Diùra (nas lugha na 200 de luchd-còmhnaidh thar

142 miltean ceàrnagach). Tha Diùraich a tha fileanta sa Ghàidhlig gann, ach tha beagan Gàidhlig aig mòran de luchd-còmhnaidh an eilein, agus tha cuid eile ann a tha ag ionnsachadh na Gàidhlig. Fhuair Ìle agus Diùra fiù 's aithneachadh mar sgìrean far a bheil a' Ghàidhlig a' dol am meud.

Tha ainmean-àite Gàidhlig Ìle agus Dhiùra loma-làn de dh'ainmean lusan is fiadh-bheatha ionadail. Tha iad cuideachd a' toirt iomradh air na h-obraichean san robh daoine an sàs air tìr is aig fairge, agus uaireannan tha iad a' cumail air ar teangaidhean ainmean caractairean sònraichte ionadail nach maireann. Airson an leabhair seo thug muinntir an àite dhuinn an t-eòlas mionaideach, prìseil a th' aca air na h-eileanan seo, eòlas a thugadh sa Ghàidhlig bho ghinealach gu ginealach.

Chaidh na h-ainmean air fad a tha rin deasbad an seo a chruinneachadh le luchd-rannsachaidh ionadail agus tha iad mar as trice a' comharrachadh chomharraidhean-tìre beaga, cuid dhiubh nach eil a' nochdadh air clàir-dùthcha OS. Gu dearbh, 's e seo a' chiad turas a nochd mòran de na h-ainmean-àite ann an clò.

The ebb and flow of language

The linguistic and political history of Scotland is rich and varied, and Islay and Jura are no exception. Various waves of people have left their mark on the linguistic landscape, each in their own way. The oldest name is probably that of the island itself: known in English as Islay and *Ile* in Gaelic, and although it is not known what language this derives from, it is undoubtedly ancient. (The 's' in Islay is from a modern English spelling, based on an analogy with the word 'isle'.)

The traditional view holds that Dalriadic settlers brought Gaelic from Northern Ireland to Scotland from around the 5th and 6th centuries, but recent work has suggested that parts of Argyll have been Gaelic speaking since at least Roman times. In any case, these people seem to have had a negligible effect on surviving place-names. The next earliest recognisable layer in place-names is that of Old Norse, the language of the Vikings. Originally raiders, the Vikings later settled and began farming the land, leading to an assimilation of Gaelic and Norse cultures and people.

Old Norse was a Germanic language, more closely related to English than Gaelic. Old Norse has influenced place-names in two ways. The first is through loan words adopted into Gaelic and then used in place-names. Such a name is *Na Sgeirean Fiaclach*, 'the jagged skerries'. The word *sgeirean* or *sgeir* is borrowed from Norse *sker*, but has been adopted as a word into Gaelic (much the same as the word *skerry* in English). The second type of influence is where settlers coined names in Norse, which were successively adopted into Gaelic and



Na Sgeirean Fiaclach near Lagavulin
Na Sgeirean Fiaclach faisg air Lag a' Mhuillinn



English. Persabus derives from *presta-bólstaðr*, 'priest's farmstead', whilst *Asgaig* in the name *Port Asgaig* reflects *ask-vík*, 'ash-tree bay'. The name 'Jura' itself is Norse, from *dýr-øy*, 'deer island', a suitable name to this day. These names tend to be 'nonsensical' so to speak in Gaelic, as they are not Gaelic in origin, although some names are re-analysed by folk etymology to 'make sense' (see *Beinn Tart a' Mhill*).

The Lordship of the Isles was a power base that operated out of Islay between the 12th and the 15th centuries, and Gaelic was its language. Most of the names on Islay and Jura were coined in this period, giving us a rich linguistic landscape for those who are willing to understand it. A few common elements include Kil-, *cille* 'church'; Loch, *loch*, 'lake'; Drum-,

druim 'ridge'; mor, *mòr*, 'big', and Ard-, *àird*, 'height'.

Around the 15th century Gaelic fell into decline as a national language, giving way to Scots and then English. These languages too have left, and continue to leave, their mark on the linguistic landscape. These can be entirely new names, for example near *An Cnoc Fada* some vegetation is known simply as 'The Hedge'. Alternatively, English names can be translations of older Gaelic names, such as Gatehouse, *Taigh a' Gheata* and Blackrock, a small settlement that overlooks *A' Charraig Dhubh*, a 'black rock' in the sea. (The pumping station here was named after this, it is said, because they could not spell Uiskentuie or *Uisge an t-Suidhe*.) These names are fewer in number and necessarily newer than Gaelic names.



A' Charraig Dhubh with Bowmore in the background
A' Charraig Dhubh agus Bogh Mòr ris a' chùil

Lìonadh is tràigheadh chànan

Tha eachdraidh chànan is phoilitigs na h-Alba beairteach is ioma-dhathte agus tha eachdraidh Ìle is Dhiùra air an aon dòigh. Tha iomadach treubh air an comharraidhean fhèin fhàgail air ainmean na dùthcha nan dòigh fhèin. 'S dòcha gur e ainm an eilein fhèin an t-ainm as sine: sa Bheurla *Islay* agus sa Ghàidhlig Ìle, ged nach eil fios cò an cànan às an tàinig e tha e gun teagamh aosta. (Tha an 's' ann an *Islay* a' tighinn bho litreachadh ùr Beurla, agus stèidhichte air coimeas ris an fhacal *isle*.)

Tha a' bheachd thraidiseanta ag innse mar a thug luchd-tuinnichidh Dhàil Riata a' Ghàidhlig leotha às Èirinn a Tuath gu Alba bho thimcheall air a' 5mh is air an 6mh linn, ach tha obair nas ùire a' cur air adhart gun robh a' Ghàidhlig ga bruidhinn ann an cuid de dh'Earra-Ghàidheal bho linn nan Ròmanach co-dhiù. Ach tha e coltach nach robh buaidh ro mhòr aig na daoine seo air na h-ainmean a tha air mairsinn. 'S e an dàrna sreath as tràithe de dh'ainmean-àite a dh'aithnichear an fheadhainn a thàinig bho Sheann Lochlannais, cànan nan Lochlannach. Ged a bha iad nan creachadairean sa chiad dol-a-mach, thuinich mòran de na Lochlannaich an dèidh làimh agus thòisich iad air am fearann àiteachadh, gus an tàinig dualchas is muinntir na Gàidhlig is na Lochlannais còmhla.

'S e cànan Gearmailteach a bh' ann an Seann Lochlannais, is bha i na b' fhaisge air a' Bheurla na a' Ghàidhlig. Bha buaidh aig Seann Lochlannais air ainmean-àite ann an dà dhòigh. 'S e a' chiad dòigh san do thachair seo, gun do ghabh a' Ghàidhlig ri faclan Lochlannais (sin faclan air iasad) 's gun deachaidh na faclan sin a chleachdadh an uair sin

airson ainmean-àite. Mar a thachair mar eisimpleir leis an ainm na Sgeirean Fiaclach. Chaidh am facal *sgeirean* no *sgeir* a ghabhail air iasad bhon Lochlannais *sker*, ach ghabh a' Ghàidhlig ris (car mar a thachair ris an fhacal *skerry* sa Bheurla). 'S e an dàrna seòrsa buaidh far an do chuir luchd-tuinichidh ainmean Lochlannais air àiteachan air an do chuir luchd na Gàidhlig is luchd na Beurla



Gatehouse on Jura
Taigh a' Gheata ann an Diùra





an dreach fhèin. 'S e *presta-bólstaðr*, no 'baile an t-sagairt' a bh' air Pearsabus bho thùs agus tha am facal *Asgaig* anns an ainm Port Asgaig a' tighinn bho *ask-vík*, no 'bàgh an uinnsinn'. 'S e ainm Lochlannais a th' ann an Diùra fhèin, bho *dýr-øy*, 'eilean nam fiadh', ainm a tha freagarrach gus an latha an-diugh. Mar as trice cha bhi na h-ainmean seo a' dèanamh ciall sa Ghàidhlig ann an dòigh, seach nach ann bhon Ghàidhlig a thàinig iad, ged a bhios cuid air an atharrachadh airson gun gabh am mineachadh ann am beul-aithris (faic Beinn Tart a' Mhill).

'S ann an Ìle a bha riaghaltas Tighearnas nan Eilean stèidhichte – rioghachd chumhachdach le Gàidhlig aig a cridhe – bhon 12mh linn gus an 15mh linn. Boinidh a' mhòr-chuid de na h-ainmean-àite a mhaireas ann an Ìle agus Diùra don àm seo, a' fàgail aig an fheadhainn a tha comasach air a thuigsinn dualchas chànan a tha beairteach. 'S iad cuid de na faclan as cumanta a tha a' nochdadh: *Kil-* cille; *Loch,* loch; *Drum-* druim; *mor,* mòr agus *Ard-* àird.

Timcheall air a' 15mh linn thòisich a' Ghàidhlig air crìonadh mar chànan nàiseanta, 's chaidh a h-àite a ghabhail le Albais agus an uair sin leis a' Bheurla. Bha agus tha buaidh aig na cànanan seo cuideachd air ainmean-àite na dùthcha. Dh'fhaodadh iad a bhith nan ainmean buileach ùr, mar eisimpleir faisg air a' Chnoc Fhada tha lus ann air a bheil an t-ainm simplidh *The Hedge*. Air an làimh eile, dh'fhaodadh cuid de dh'ainmean Beurla a bhith air an eadar-theangachadh bho sheann ainmean Gàidhlig, mar a tha *Gatehouse*, 'Taigh a' Gheata', agus *Blackrock*, baile beag le sealladh thairis air a' Charraig Dhuibh, 's e sin creag dhubh a tha san fhairege. (Chaidh an stèisean pumpaidh an seo ainmeachadh an dèidh seo, thathar ag ràdh, seach nach b' urrainn dhaibh 'Uiskentuie' no 'Uisge an t-Suidhe' a litreachadh.) Tha an leithid seo de dh'ainmean gu math gann agus mar a thuigeadh tu nas ùire na na h-ainmean Gàidhlig.

Havens and hazards

The people of Islay and Jura have always been heavily dependent on the sea, and this relationship is reflected in the coastal place-names. These names are not limited to cliffs, beaches and harbours. Almost every skerry and reef has a name revealing an intimate local knowledge of the coastal geography, tides, weather and marine life.

As the Vikings were a seafaring people, many of their words borrowed into Gaelic concern the coast and the sea. *Geodha* is from the Norse *gjó*, which means 'a coastal gulley' and is seen in names such as *Geodha na Bà Ruaidh*, 'gulley of the red cows'. *Ùig* is a common word for bay in the Hebrides

and comes from the Norse *vík* and off the point of Ardmor is *An Glas-Ùig*, 'the green bay'. *Acarsaid Cholla* means 'Coll's harbour', as *acarsaid* is from a Norse word *akkar-sæti* meaning 'anchor seat' or 'anchorage'.

Caolas Uspraid (*Caolas* means 'narrows' or 'sound', *Uspraid* is a form of *ùpraid* meaning 'confusion') is a channel between Frenchman's Rock and *Rubha na Faing*, 'headland of the fank', northwest of Portnahaven, where tides and currents collide to create a dangerous channel. *Cnoc na Faire* is a hill from where people watched their cattle as well as the boats coming into both Port Wemyss

Cnoc na Faire near Port Wemyss
Cnoc na Faire faisg air Bun Othann

Càlaidhean is cunnartan

Bha muinntir Ìle is Dhiùra riamh an urra ris an fhairge agus tha am buntainneas seo air a riochdachadh leis na h-ainmean-àite air a' chost. Chan e dìreach creagan, tràighean is càlaidhean air a bheil ainmean. Tha ainm air cha mhòr a h-uile sgeir is bodha, a' sealltainn mion-eòlas ionadail air cruth a' chost, na tìdean-fairge, an aimsir agus creutairean na fairge.

Seach gur e maraichean a bha sna Lochlannaich, tha mòran de na faclan aca a thàinig a-steach don Ghàidhlig co-cheangailte ris a' chost agus an fhairge. Tha *geodha* a' tighinn bhon Lochlannais *gjó* a' ciallachadh 'clais air a' chost' agus chithear e ann an ainmean mar a tha Geodha na Bà Ruaidh. Tha am facal ùig cumanta mar fhacal airson bàgh anns na h-eileanan agus tha e a' tighinn bhon Lochlannais *vík* agus far Rudha na h-Àirde Mòire tha an Glas-Ùig. Tha am facal *acarsaid* a' tighinn bhon Lochlannais *akkar-sæti* a' ciallachadh 'suidheachan acair' agus tha seo ri fhaicinn anns an ainm Acarsaid Cholla.

Tha Caolas Uspraid (tha Uspraid a' ciallachadh ùpraid) na chaolas eadar Rubha nam Frangach agus Rubha na Faing, an iar-thuath air Port na h-Abhainne far am bi tìdean-fairge agus sruthan a' bualadh na chèile gus caolas cunnartach a chruthachadh. Tha Cnoc na Faire na àite far am biodh daoine a' cumail sùil air an crodh a bharrachd air na bàtaichean a thigeadh a-steach don dà chuid Bun na h-Abhainne agus Port na h-Abhainne. Tha cnocan eile ann an Ìle air a bheil an aon seòrsa ainm, a tha a' sealltainn gum b' e cleachdadh cumanta a bh' ann a bhith ri faire thar na fairge bho na cnocan. Tha Port Duine na h-Èiginn' na phort far am b' urrainn do dh'iasgairean

tarraing a-steach gus am biodh na tìdean-fairge agus na sruthan freagarrach dhaibh 's gum b' urrainn dhaibh cumail orra air an slighe. Anns an aon dòigh bha Bealach na Fròige na chaolas far am faigheadh bàtaichean fasnadh.

Tha am facal *port* sa Ghàidhlig mar as trice a' ciallachadh àite nas lugha na tha e sa Bheurla. A thaobh Port na Ceasaich faisg air Port Sgioba, 's e facal ionadail a th' ann an *ceasach* a' ciallachadh drochaid neo-mhairsinneach airson slighe a dhèanamh thar allt no dig gu ruige na mòintich'. Tha an t-ainm *gailleann* anns an ainm Port nan Gailleann a' ciallachadh 'stoirm' agus tha an t-ainm a' freagairt air oir 's ann an seo ann an 1915 a chaidh bàtaichean-teasairginn an *Tuscania*, long a bhoineadh don Anchor Line, a spealgadh is chaill 166 neach am beatha.



and Portnahaven. There are other similarly named hills on Islay, which demonstrate that watching the sea from the hills was a common practice. *Port Duine na h-Èiginn*, 'port for the man in difficulty', is a port where fishermen could pull in to until tides and currents were suitable for them to continue their journey. Similarly, *Bealach na Fròige*, 'pass of the niche', was a sheltered passage for boats.

The term *port* in Gaelic generally represents a smaller anchorage than the English word. As for *Port na Ceasaich* near Port Charlotte, *ceasach* is a word used locally to describe a temporary bridge across a burn or ditch to allow access to peat. *Port nan Gailleann* means 'port of the storms' and is aptly named as the lifeboats of the *Tuscania*, a ship belonging to the Anchor Line, were smashed here in 1915, resulting in the loss of 166 lives.

Some names are simply coined for resembling something else. For instance, *Creag Bhealach na Caillich*, or Granny's Rock, is a very large overhanging rock which bears the profile of an old woman's face. It overlooks the scene where the *Otranto* sank in October 1918 and is located on the coast road between Kilchiaran and Kilchoman.

Carraig means a rock, often off-shore, whilst *geodha* is a word of Norse origin denoting a small coastal gulley. The rocky cliffs round Port Wemyss contain several examples of both of these terms: *Carraig MhicCruimen* is 'MacCruimen's rock', while *Carraig an t-Solais* is 'rock of the light', possibly for guiding boats. Coastal place-names also tell stories or commemorate particular incidents. *Port nam Brogan* literally means 'port of shoes', as it is said that shoes were washed ashore here. Elsewhere in the Port Charlotte area is *Geodha nan Cisteachan*, 'gulley of the kists', although why it has this name is not now known.



Granny's Rock
Creag Bhealach na Caillich

Tha cuid de dh'àiteachan air an ainmeachadh seach gu bheil iad a' coimhead car coltach ri rudeigin eile. Mar eisimpleir, 's e Creag Bhealach na Caillich (sa Bheurla *Granny's Rock*) stalla mòr air a bheil cruth aodann cailliche. Tha i a' coimhead a-null thar an àite far an deachaidh an *Otranto* fodha anns an Dàmhair 1918 agus tha i ri faicinn air rathad a' chost eadar Cille Chiarain agus Cill Chomain.

Tha *carraig* a' ciallachadh creag, mar as trice san fhaire, ach 's e facal Lochlannais a bh' ann an *geodha* bho thùs, a' comharrachadh clais bheag air a' chost. Tha grunn eisimpleirean de gach

facal ri fhaotainn am measg nan creagan garbha timcheall air Bun Othann, mar eisimpleir Carraig MhicCruimein is Carraig an t-Solais – 's dòcha gun deachaidh a' charraig seo a chleachdadh airson bàtaichean a stiùireadh. Bidh cuid de dh'ainmean-àite a gheibhear air a' chost cuideachd ag innse sgeulachdan no tha iad nan cuimhneachain air rudan àraid a thachair. Thathar ag ràdh gun deachaidh brògan fhàgail air a' chladach aig Port nam Brògan agus faisg air Port Sgioba tha Geodha nan Cisteachan, ged nach eil fhios ann tuilleadh ciamar a fhuair e an t-ainm seo.

Port Duine na h-Èiginn (port for the man in difficulty)



Moor and bogland

Moorland and bog dominate the landscapes of Islay and Jura. On both islands, peat from the bogs was and still is an important source of fuel. It is the peat smoke that gives the whisky from the islands its characteristic flavour. Different names describe moor and bogland throughout Islay and Jura; a common term *mòine*, as seen in *A' Mhòine Mhòr*, for example, which means the big moorland and refers to an expansive area near Port Ellen golf course. *Sliabh* is another term used to denote an upland moor; *An Slèibhe* by Ballygrant is such an example, as is *Na Sliabhan Riabhach* on Jura, 'the speckled or striped moorland', a brindly place of heather and white grass. *Badag* is a name found on Jura that means 'soft ground' such as *A' Bhadag Mhòr*. By Bunnahabhain there is the figuratively named *Sùil-chrith*, literally the 'shaking eye', which refers to a quaking bog.









Monadh is mòinteach

'S e monaidhean is mòintich as motha a tha ri fhaotainn ann an Ìle is Diùra. Air gach eilean 's e connadh cudromach a tha sa mhòine fhathast agus 's e toit mhònach a bhios a' fàgail blas àraid air an uisge-bheatha às na h-eileanan. Thathar a' cleachdadh caochladh ainmean airson monaidhean is mòintich air feadh Ìle is Diùra; mar eisimpleir tha am facal cumanta *mòine* ann, mar a chithear san ainm a' Mhòine Mhòr, sin monadh farsaing faisg air raon goilf Phort Ilein. 'S e *sliabh* facal eile a chleachdar airson monadh àrd; am measg eisimpleirean dhe seo tha an Slèibhe faisg air Baile a' Ghràna, agus na Sliabhan Riabhach ann an Diùra, àite a tha làn fraoich is feur geal. 'S e *badag* ainm a gheibhear ann an Diùra 's tha e a' ciallachadh 'talamh bog' mar a gheibhear far a bheil a' Bhadag Mhòr. Faisg air Bun na h-Abhainne tha an t-ainm samhhlachail *Sùil-chrith*, ainm a tha a' comharrachadh seòrsa de ghainmheach bheò.

Peat stacks drying - once a common sight on Islay and Jura where peat was an important source of fuel

Cruachan-mònach a' tiormachadh - sealladh a bha uaireigin cumanta ann an Ìle agus Diùra far an robh mòine cudromach mar chonnadh

Bens and knocks



Scottish Gaelic abounds with different names for mountains and hills. Some of the common terms on Islay and Jura include *beinn*, 'mountain'; *cnoc*, 'hill'; *druim*, 'ridge'; *creag*, 'rock'; and *meall* 'lump or mound'.

The quartzite peaks of the Paps of Jura, known as *Beanntan Dhiùra* or *Na Beanntan Diùrach*, dominate the skyline as one approaches the islands; they comprise *Beinn an Òir*, 'mountain of gold' (785 m); *Beinn Shiantaidh*, 'holy mountain' (755 m) and *Beinn a' Chaolais*, 'mountain of the narrows,' (734 m). Islay cannot boast mountains of great height but it has plenty of hills and upland terrain.

South of Kilchoman towards Portnahaven is *Beinn Tart a' Mhill*, where *tart* is Gaelic for drought or thirst. 'When there is mist on Beinn Tart a' Mhill the cattle of Kelsay will not be thirsty,' is a local saying (Kelsay farm is located at the foot of this hill).

In origin, however, this is probably a Norse name which has been re-analysed as Gaelic; after all, what would 'hill of the thirst of the mound' really mean? While the first element is unclear, the *mhill* element probably represents Norse *fjall*, 'hill', related to English 'fell'.

Meall na Coille Beithe, 'mound of the birch wood', is a place on the Ard by Port Ellen where old horses were blinded and pushed over the edge of the cliffs when they had come to the end of their use. *Druim an t-Sil* is the ridge of the seed, by Keills.

Knockrome on Jura is now understood in Gaelic as *An Cnoc Crom*, 'crooked hill', but there is really nothing crooked about it. Moreover, references to this hill in old manuscripts show forms such as *Knokrowin*, suggesting that the second element originally had another meaning altogether.

Beanntan is cnocan

Tha an t-uamhas de dh'ainmean eadar-dhealaichte ann airson beanntan is chnocan ann an Gàidhlig na h-Alba. Am measg cuid de na faclan cumanta air Ìle agus Diùra tha *beinn*, *cnoc*, *druim*, *creag* agus *meall*.

Mar a theannas tu ris na h-eileanan 's e sgòrran èiteagach nam Beanntan Diùrach no Beanntan Dhiùra, as motha a lionas an t-adhar; nam measg tha Beinn an Òir (785 m); Beinn Shiantaidh (755 m); agus Beinn a' Chaolais (734 m). Ged nach eil beanntan anabarrach àrd ann às am faodadh Ìle bòstadh, tha gu leòr de chnocan agus bràighean ann.

Mu dheas air Cill Chomain, a' dol a dh'ionnsaigh Port na h-Abhainne, tha Beinn Tart a' Mhill, far a bheil *tart* a' ciallachadh turadh no pathadh.

Tha seanfhacal a bhoineas don sgìre ag innse, 'Nuair a bhios ceò air Beinn Tart a' Mhill cha bhi tart air crodh Cheallsa,' (tha tuathanas Ceallsa stèidhichte aig bun a' chnuic seo). Bho thùs getà, 's dòcha gur e ainm Lochlannais a bha seo, air an deachaidh dreach is mìneachadh Gàidhlig a chur: oir dè a' chiall a dhèanadh ainm mar 'Beinn a' Phathaidh'? Ged a tha ciad phàirt an ainm mì-shoilleir, 's dòcha gu bheil *mhill* a' tighinn bhon t-Seann Lochlannais *fjall* no *cnoc*, facal a tha càirdeach do *fell* sa Bheurla.

Tha Meall na Coille Beithe air an àird faisg air Port Ilein far an rachadh seann eich a dhalladh 's a phutadh thar oir nan creagan nuair nach biodh iad gu feum tuilleadh. Tha Druim an t-Sil faisg air a' Chill.

Tha muinntir na Gàidhlig a' gabhail ri *Knockrome* ann an Diùra mar an Cnoc Crom, ged nach eil e

idir crom. A bharrachd air sin, tha iomraidhean air a' chnoc seo ann an seann làmh-sgrìobhainnean 's e air a litreachadh *Knokrowin*, a' toirt oirnn smaoineachadh gun robh ciall gu tur eadar-dhealaichte air an dàrna pàirt den ainm aig aon àm.



Norse dales and Scottish glens

Where there are hills there are also glens, and Islay and Jura have many of these. Some names are Norse in origin, with those ending in *-dale* representing the Old Norse *dalr*, 'a valley'. Cattadale is *Catadal* in Gaelic and meant in Norse 'valley of the cats'. There is a story that Margadale near Bunnahabhain comes from *Margadh an Dall*, 'market of the blinded or blind-folded slaves', although the real Gaelic pronunciation *Margadal* suggests a name of Norse origin. Likewise, Doodilmore, a related name in the same location, is thought of as *Dubh*

Dall Mòr, 'big black blinded one'. This is probably folk etymology, although there is evidence of the slave trade operating here.

Gleann is the usual term for a valley and appears throughout Islay in names such as *An Gleanna Dorcha*, 'the dark glen', as well as *Gleann a' Mhort* or *Gleann nam Marbh*, which is 'glen of the murder or of the dead'. The story goes that a girl was sent to find a lost cattle beast and came across a thief in this glen who had killed the beast; he then killed the girl as well.



Gleanntan ann an Lochlannais agus Gàidhlig

Far a bheil cnocan tha gleanntan cuideachd, agus tha mòran dhiubh seo ann an Ìle agus Diùra. Thàinig cuid de na h-ainmean aca bho Lochlannais, an fheadhainn a tha a' tighinn gu crìch le *-dale*, a' riochdachadh na seann Lochlannais *dalr* no 'gleann'. 'S e Catadal a th' air *Catadale* sa Ghàidhlig agus ann an Lochlannais bha e a' ciallachadh 'gleann nan cat'. Tha sgeulachd ann gu bheil *Margadale* faisg air Bun na h-Abhainne a' tighinn bho Mhargadh an Dall, 's dòcha a' ciallachadh 'margadh nan tràilleann dalla', ged a tha am fuaimneachadh ceart sa Ghàidhlig *Margadal* a' toirt oirnn creidsinn gum b' e ainm Lochlannais a bh' ann bho thùs. Anns an aon dòigh thathar ag ràdh gu bheil dàimh eadar *Margadal* agus *Doodilmore* no *Dudal Mòr*, àite a tha san aon sgìre agus a tha ga mhìneachadh sa Ghàidhlig mar *Dubh Dall Mòr*, às leth fear a bha dubh, dall agus mòr. Tha e coltach nach eil an seo ach beul-aithris, ged a tha dearbhadh ann gun robh obair nan tràilleann a' dol an seo.

'S e *gleann* am facal àbhaisteach a tha a' nochdadh air feadh Ìle ann an ainmean-àite, mar eisimpleir an Gleanna Dorcha, agus Gleann a' Mhort no Gleann nam Marbh. Tha sgeulachd na lùib a tha ag innse gun deachaidh caileag a chur a-mach a lorg bò a bha air chall 's gun do thachair i ri mèirleach anns a' ghleann seo a bha air a' bhò a mharbhadh; mhurt e an uair sin a' chaileag cuideachd.



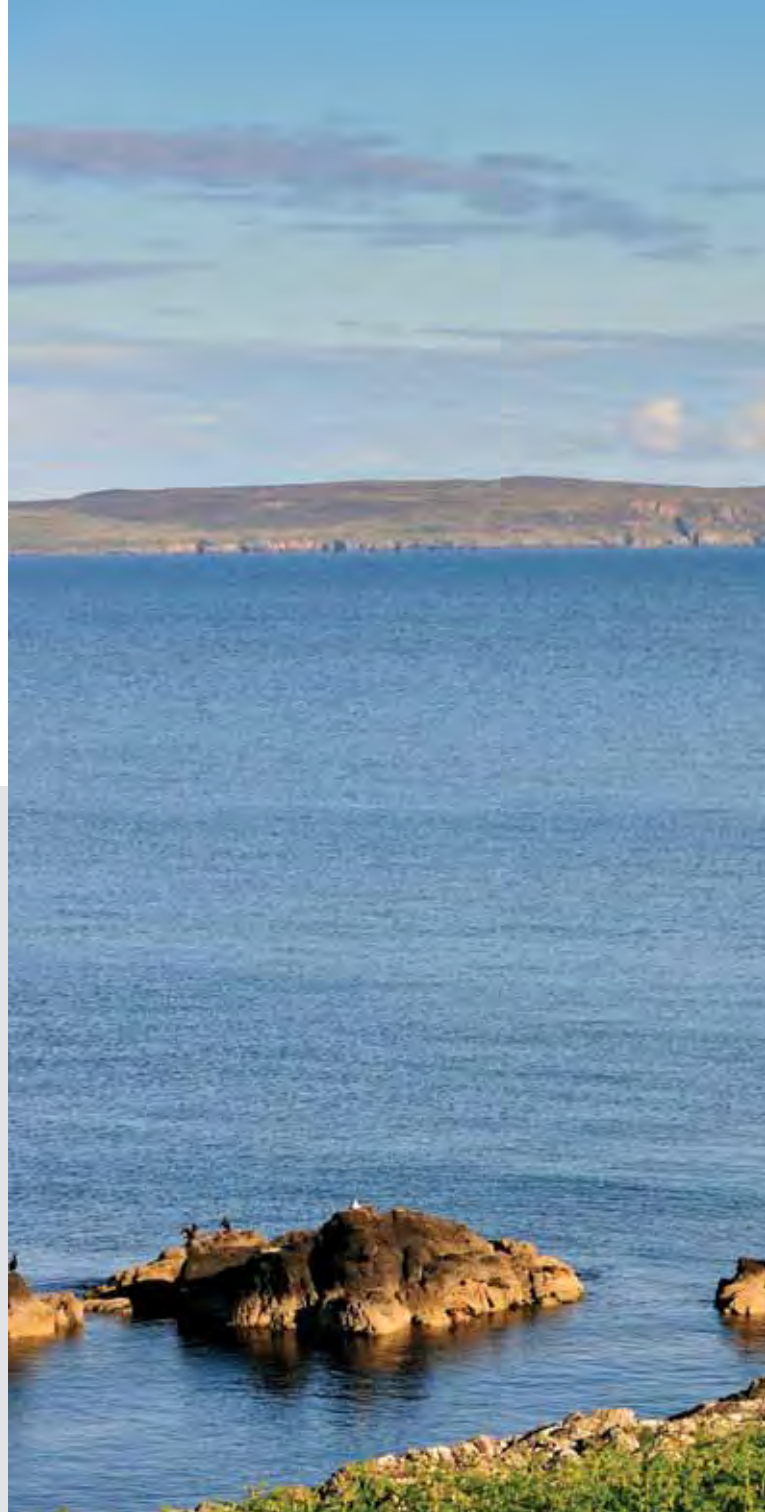
Lochs and burns / Lochan is uillt

Loch Indaal or *Loch an Dàil* is said to mean the loch of delaying because it takes three quarters of an hour longer to ebb and flow than Loch Gruinart. In the woods by Finlaggan is *Loch Àirigh nan Caisteal*, 'loch of the shieling of the castle'.

Watercourses also tell their own stories: Avenvogie is a settlement by *Abhainn Bhogaidh*, meaning 'river of the muddy place'. *Sruthan* is also present on Islay, meaning a burn, such as *Sruthan an Fhaing Shalaich*, 'burn of the dirty fank'. *Eas na Fola*, 'waterfall of blood', has a violent tradition its name arose because this was where the MacDonalds attacked the MacLeans after the Battle of Gruinart in 1598.

Thathar ag ràdh gu bheil 'Loch Indaal' no Loch an Dàil na chruth de loch na dàlach seach gu bheil e a' toirt trì chairteil na h-uarach nas fhaide ri tràigheadh is lionadh na tha Loch Ghruinneart. Anns na coilltean faisg air Port an Eilein tha Loch Àirigh nan Caisteal.

Tha sgeulachdan ri innse cuideachd mu na slighean-uisge: 's e ainm baile a th' ann an *Avenvogie* Abhainn Bhogaidh – 's e sin abhainn ann an àite a tha bog le poll. Tha *sruthan*, a' ciallachadh 'allt', cuideachd ri fhaotainn ann an Ìle ann an ainmean mar a tha *Sruthan an Fhaing Shalaich*. Tha sgeulachd fòirneirt air cùlaibh Eas na Fola. A rèir na sgeulachd a tha na lùib, seo an t-àite far an d' rinn Clann Dòmhnail ionnsaigh air Clann 'Illeathain an dèidh Blàr Ghruinneart ann an 1598 agus sin mar a fhuair i a h-ainm.





Plants and wildlife

Place-names describing or alluding to plants, animals, birds and marine life are very common on Islay and Jura. Some notable examples include *Sruthan nan Nathrach*, 'burn of the snakes'; *Lag nan Losgann*, 'hollow of the toads or frogs'; *Tom na Feannaig*, 'bush of the crow'; *Baile a' Chlamhain*, 'township of the buzzard'; and *Cnoc nan Seabhag*, 'hill of the hawk', in the vicinity of Ballygrant and Port Askaig.

Islay and Jura attract birdwatchers from all over the world, so *Suidhe nan Eun* or 'seat of the birds' is a very suitably named spot on the Oa, the location of an RSPB nature reserve.

Along the Rinns of Islay, coastal names often refer to marine life. Examples include *Rudha a' Phartain*, 'headland of the crab', in the Port Charlotte area, or *Cladach nan Easgann*, 'shore of the eels', south of Saligo Bay. *An t-Eilean Ruadh*, 'the red isle', is a small island at the mouth of the gullies of Port Wemyss and is named after the colour of the seaweed on the rocks.

Some names refer to vegetation. *Mòine Sheilich* on Jura is 'moor of the willow' and *Port an Draighinn* near Port Askaig is 'port of the blackthorn'. *Port na Craoibh* on the Oa is 'port of the tree'. *Camas nam Meanbh-Chuileag* means 'bay of the midges' and tradition says that people were tied up here as a punishment, although whether this is true or not is another matter.

An Daimh-Sgeir is the site of a house on the south coast of Jura. This may look like a combination of *damh*, 'deer', and *sgeir*, 'skerry', but clues to the meaning are apparent from older spellings and the local pronunciation: *Dàisgeir* or *Dàisteir*. The original OS map spelled the name *Dàimh Sgeir* as if meaning 'house of the skerry', and this spelling is still used for the name of the river next to the now ruined house. In origin, however, the name is most likely Norse and has nothing to do with *damh* or *dàimh*.

Red deer
Fèidh ruadha



Lusan is fiadh-bheatha

Tha ainmean-àite a tha a' dèanamh dealbh de no a' toirt iomradh air lusan, beathaichean, eòin agus creutairean na fairge glè chumanta ann an Ìle agus Diùra. Am measg nan eisimpleirean as fhollaisiche tha Sruthan nan Nathrach, Lag nan Losgann, Tom na Feannaig, Baile a' Chlamhain agus Cnoc nan Seabhag faisg air Baile a' Ghràna agus Port Asgaig.

Bidh Ìle agus Diùra a' tàladh luchd-coimhid nan eun bho air feadh an t-saoghail, mar sin 's e ainm glè fhreagarrach a th' ann an Suidhe nan Eun, àite air an Obh far a bheil tèarmann nàdair aig an RSPB.

Fad Roinn Ìle, tha ainmean air a' chost tric a' toirt iomradh air creutairean na fairge. Am measg nan eisimpleirean tha Rudha a' Phartain faisg air Port Sgioba no Cladach nan Easgann mu dheas air Bàgh Shailigeo. 'S e eilean beag aig beul clais Bhun Othann a th' anns an Eilean Ruadh agus e air ainmeachadh an dèidh dath na feamainne air na creagan.

Bidh cuid de dh'ainmean a' toirt iomradh air lusan. Ann an Diùra tha Mòine Sheilich, faisg air Port Asgaig tha Port an Draighinn agus air an Obh tha Port na Craoibh. A rèir beul-aithris bhiodh daoine air an ceangal 's air am fàgail mar pheanasachadh ann an Camas nam Meanbh-Chuileag, ach chan eil fios a bheil seo fìor gus nach eil.

'S e an Daimh-Sgeir tobhta air cost a deas Dhiùra. 'S dòcha gu bheil seo a' coimhead coltach ri damh agus sgeir còmhla, ach tha e soilleir a rèir seann litreachadh agus an fhuaimneachaidh ionadail gur e Dàisgeir no Dàisteir a tha còir a bhith ann. Bha an t-ainm a nochd sa chiad chlàr-dùthcha OS air a litreachadh Taigh Sgeir agus tha an litreachadh seo fhathast ga chleachdadh mar ainm na h-aibhne ri taobh an taighe a tha a-nis na thobhta. Tha coltas ann ged-tà, gun tàinig e à Lochlannais bho thùs agus chan eil gnothach sam bith aige ri fèidh.

Lag nan Losgann (hollow of the toads or frogs)



Parks and fields

Names of individual fields rarely appear on maps these days, but knowledge passed down over generations reveals a wealth of information in these names. Islay Gaelic has a number of terms to represent a field or enclosure. The term *pàirc* is one such term (this mirrors the Scots usage of this term rather than the modern English one). *Pàirc Chanada* is perhaps where people watched their relatives emigrate to Canada, as is the case with Canada Hill on Bute. *Pàirc Cùl a' Bhaile* is the park of the place behind the village (Finlaggan in this case).

Gart, and its diminutive *goirtean* or *gairtean*, often translated as 'garden', is a specific agricultural unit of land related to the growing of corn, and is seen in several settlement names now. *An Goirtean Dubh* is 'the small black enclosure' and on Jura there is *Goirtean Seileach*, 'small reedy enclosure'. Gartloist is *An Gart Loisgte*, 'the burnt enclosure'.

A name for a shieling, or summer pasture is *àirigh*, and this appears on Islay in names such as *Àirigh Sgallaidh*, where *sgallaidh* is a local term for bog cotton. Field names can take a wide variety of forms, however, and many are simple, such as the last field on the way to Craighouse, which is *An Seasgan*, 'the moory ground'.

The term *achadh*, is the traditional term for a field through much of the Highlands, but hardly seems in evidence on Islay. Auchnaclach is actually *Uchd nan Clach*, 'breast of the stones'.





Pàircean is goirtean

'S ann ainneamh a bhios ainmean achaidhean leotha fhèin a' nochdadh air clàir-dùthcha sna làithean seo, ach tha eòlas a chaidh a thoirt a-nuas bho ghinealach gu ginealach a' sealltainn beairteas de dh'fhiosrachadh anns na h-ainmean seo. Tha grunn fhaclan ann an Gàidhlig Ìle airson achadh no pàirc. 'S e am facal *pàirc* fear dhiubh (ga chleachdadh mar a tha i ann an Albais seach sa Bheurla). 'S dòcha gur ann à Pàirc Chanada a bhiodh daoine a' coimhead air an luchd-dàimh aca a' seòladh a-null a Chanada coltach ri 'Canada Hill' ann an Eilean Bhòid. Tha Pàirc Cùl a' Bhaile, air cùlaibh Port an Eilein, na eisimpleir eile.

Tha *gart* agus a mheanbh-chruth *gairtean* no *goirtean*, a tha tric air eadar-theangachadh mar 'lios', a' ciallachadh an seo roinn àraid de thalamh-àiteachais far am bi arbhar a' fàs, agus chithear e ann an grunn ainmean bhailtean an seo a-nis. 'S e an Goirtean Dubh aon eisimpleir dhe seo agus ann an Diùra tha Goirtean Seileach agus *Gartloist* no an *Gart Loisgte*.

Tha am facal *àirigh* a' nochdadh ann an Ìle ann an ainmean mar a tha Àirigh Sgallaidh, far a bheil *sgalladh* a' ciallachadh 'canach' ann an Gàidhlig na sgìre. Dh'fhaodadh caochladh fhaclan a bhith gan cleachdadh airson ainmean achaidhean ge-tà, agus tha mòran dhiubh sìmplidh, mar an t-achadh mu dheireadh air an t-slighe gu Taigh na Creige air a bheil an Seasgan, 's e sin talamh monadail'.

'S e am facal *achadh* am facal àbhaisteach a tha ga chleachdadh air feadh mòran den Ghàidhealtachd, ach 's gann gu bheil e a' nochdadh ann an Ìle. Mar eisimpleir, 's e Uchd nan Clach a tha còir a bhith air *Auchnaclach*.

Ways through the landscape

It is not just names of settlements and natural features that tell stories within a Gaelic context; newer street names are also present in place-names. These are different from most Gaelic names because most of them were coined within an English or bilingual context rather than being Gaelic (or Norse) in origin. There are some bilingual street signs in the larger settlements on Islay, such as Charlotte Street or *Sràid Theàrlag*.

Other streets or roads have new English names signs, but are still known by locals in their Gaelic form, including *Sràid na Laimhrig* or *Laimrig*, 'Pier Road'. Other names are translations of one another, so Miner's Row in Ballygrant is *Sràid na Mèinne*. Other streets are not signed and are known only

in Gaelic: in Port Charlotte there is *Bruthach an Diolladair*, known as Saddler's Brae. Likewise the track from Keills to Persabus, unnamed on maps, is *Rathad nan Dròbhar*, the drove road. In these cases, street names reflect the activities of the community and how people lived off the land and sea; fishing, mining, smiddies, saddleries and various forms of agriculture.

Other roadside features also have names: Three Arch Bridge is the largest bridge by far on Jura, and unsurprisingly is known in Gaelic as *An Drochaid Mhòr*, 'the big bridge'. In Kilchoman there are three small gates known locally as *aig an Drochaid*, 'at the bridge'; *An Geata Meadhan*, 'the middle gate', and *Fagaid*, explained as 'clover'.



Slighean tron dùthaich



Chan e dìreach ainmean bhailtean agus comharraidhean nàdair a bhios ag innse sgeulachdan bho thaobh na Gàidhlig; tha ainmean-sràide ùra cuideachd a' nochdadh am measg ainmean-àite. Tha iad seo eadar-dhealaichte ge-tà bhon mhòr-chuid de dh'ainmean Gàidhlig, oir chaidh a' mhòr-chuid dhiubh a chruthachadh ann an co-theacs dà-chànanach no Beurla, an àite a bhith sa Ghàidhlig no ann an Lochlannais bhon chiad dol-a-mach. Tha cuid de dh'ainmean-sràide dà-chànanach anns na bailtean as motha ann an Ìle, mar a tha Sràid Theàrlag.

Tha ainmean-sràide ùra Beurla air cuid de shràidean no rathaidean, ged a tha cruth Gàidhlig aig muinntir an àite orra, nam measg Sràid na Laimhrig no Laimrig, *Pier Road*. 'S e eadar-theangachadh a th' ann an cuid de na h-ainmean eile, mar sin 's e Sràid na Mèinne a th' air *Miner's Row* ann am Baile a' Ghràna. Tha sràidean eile ann air nach eil ainmean oifigeil Beurla ach air a bheil ainmean Gàidhlig aig muinntir an àite: ann am Port Sgioba tha Bruthach an Diolladair, no mar a chanas cuid *Saddler's Brae*. Anns an aon dòigh ged nach eil

ainm oifigeil air an t-slighe bhon Chill gu Pearsabus air na clàir-dùthcha, 's e Rathad nan Dròbhar a th' aig muinntir na Gàidhlig oirre. Le eisimpleirean mar seo tha na h-ainmean-sràide a' sealltainn obraichean na coimhearsnachd agus mar a bhiodh daoine a' dèanamh teachd-an-tir air tir is aig fairge tro iasgach, mèinneadarachd, goibhneachd, diollaideachd, agus iomadh seòrsa de dh'àiteachas.

Tha ainmean cuideachd air comharraidhean an cois rathaidean: 's e *Three Arch Bridge* an drochaid as motha air fad ann an Diùra, agus chan eil e na iongnadh gur e an Drochaid Mhòr a th' oirre sa Ghàidhlig. Ann an Cill Chomain tha trì geataichean beaga ann air a bheil aig muinntir an àite Aig an Drochaid; an Geata Meadhan; agus Fagaid a tha air a mhineachadh mar 'chlòbhar'.





Local characters / Caractairean ionadail

Place-names have immortalised certain local characters from all walks of life, with Port Charlotte one of the best known examples. The original Gaelic name for this place was *Sgioba*, and this is preserved in the Gaelic form, but Port Charlotte was named for Lady Charlotte Campbell, daughter of one-time owner of Islay, Campbell of Shawfield in 1829.

Features on the landscape are often named after the person with whom they were associated. For instance, *Tobar Thuraidh* by Caol Ila is 'Toorie's well', as *Turaidh* or Toorie was the nickname of the man who owned the well. Similarly, *Clach Dhonnchaidh Mhòir* by Kilchoman is 'Big Duncan's rock'. Balulive or *Baile Uilbh* near Port Askaig is named after John Ulive, the landowner who founded the township. His workers were housed at *Baile Ghillean*, the township of the young men. By Beinn Bhreac in the same locality is *Àirigh Màiri Thormoid*, 'pasture of Mary Norman'.

Sometimes places recall people's occupations. An example of this would be *Beinn a' Mhinisteir* by Kilchoman, 'the minister's hill', which does indeed have a manse nearby. Near Ballygrant is *Geata Cheàrd*, 'traveller's gate', although it is unclear whether this refers to one or many travelling people. The name, however, tells us that travelling people were significant in the community.

Tha ainmean-àite air cuid de caractairean ionadail de gach seòrsa a chumail beò nar cuimhne, agus 's e fear de na h-eisimpleirean as fheàrr air a bheil fios Port Sgioba no sa Bheurla *Port Charlotte*. 'S e an t-ainm Gàidhlig a bh' air seo bho thùs *Sgioba*, agus tha seo air a ghleidheil san ainm Ghàidhlig, ach chaidh an t-ainm *Port Charlotte* a chur air an dèidh na Ban-Tighearna Teàrlag Chaimbeul, an nighean aig Caimbeulach *Shawfield* aig an robh sealbh air Ìle ann an 1829.

Tha comharraidhean-tìre tric air an ainmeachadh an dèidh an duine aig an robh buntainneas riutha. Mar eisimpleir, 's e 'Turaidh' am far-ainm a bh' air an duine aig an robh an tobar air an robh Tobair Thuraidh faisg air Ruadhphort. Anns an aon dòigh tha Clach Dhonnchaidh Mhòir ann faisg air Cill Chomain. Tha Baile Uilbh faisg air Port Asgaig air ainmeachadh an dèidh Iain Uilbh, an t-uachdaran a stèidhich am baile. Fhuair an luchd-obrach aige taighean ann am Baile Ghillean. Faisg air a' Bheinn Bhric, anns an aon sgìre, tha Àirigh Màiri Thormoid.

Uaireannan tha àiteachan a' toirt dar cuimhne obraichean dhaoine. 'S e aon eisimpleir dhe seo Beinn a' Mhinisteir faisg air Cill Chomain, far a bheil dha-rìribh mansa faisg air làimh. Faisg air Baile a' Ghràna tha Geata Cheàrd, a' sealltainn gun robh ceàrdairean cudromach anns a' choimhearsnachd.

Commerce and industry

Fishing, agriculture and whisky distilling dominated the economy of Islay and Jura in the past. Distilling is still an important source of revenue, but tourism has overtaken agriculture and fishing. Place-names reveal the variety of activity on the islands over the centuries, and in some cases long after any visible evidence has disappeared.

Not far from where the Bruichladdich Distillery stands today is *Loch nam Bruaithearan*, 'brewers' loch', which tells us that brewing was important to the islanders as well as distilling. In this area *Toll nan Each*, 'pool of the horses', can be found. This is where the working Clydesdale horses were watered.

Cnoc Innein, 'hill of the anvil', near Persabus is one of several names that refers to farriers and smiddies. *Port nan Gobha* on the Oa means 'port of the smiths'. There were smiddies at Smaull near Saligo Bay and *Cnoc a' Chròtha* by Loch Gorm.

Lag Luaidhe by Woodend Farm is 'lead hollow'. Lead mining was carried out on Islay. Lead has been mined at Mulreesh since Norse times, but not on an industrial scale until the 18th century. The names Cabrich from *A' Chabraich*, 'area of logs' and its wood *Coille Chabraich* on Jura show evidence of forestry on the islands. Indeed there is a sawmill near Cabrich.

Malairt agus gnìomhachas

Bha buaidh làidir aig iasgach, àiteachas agus taighean-staile air eaconamaidh Ìle is Dhiùra san àm a dh'fhalbh. Tha taighean-staile fhathast cudromach mar thobar airgid ach tha turasachd air a dhol seachad air àiteachas agus iasgach. Tha ainmean-àite a' sealltainn caochladh de dh'obraichean a bha a' dol anns na h-eileanan thar nan linntean agus uaireannan fada an dèidh do dhearbhadh faicsinneach dhiubh dol à sealladh.

Faisg air far a bheil Taigh-staile Bruach a' Chladaich an-diugh tha Loch nam Bruaithearan, a tha ag innse dhuinn gun robh bruthas cudromach do mhuinntir an eilein a bharrachd air obair-staile. Anns an sgìre seo gheibhear cuideachd Toll nan Each. Seo far am faigheadh na h-eich-obrach 'Clydesdale' deoch uisge.

'S e Cnoc Innein faisg air Pearsabus fear de ghrunn ainmean co-cheangailte ri goibhnean. Tha Port nan Gobha ann cuideachd air an Obh. Bha ceàrdaich ann cuideachd aig Smeall faisg air Bàgh Shailigeo agus Cnoc a' Chròtha faisg air Loch Gorm.

Tha Lag Luaidhe faisg air Tuathanas Chnoc na Coille. Bha mèinneadarachd luaidhe a' dol air adhart ann an Ìle. Bha mèinne luaidhe aig a' Mhaol Ris bho linn nan Lochlannach, ach cha do dh'fhàs i gu bhith na gnìomhachas mòr gus an 18mh linn. Tha na h-ainmean *Cabrìch*, 's e sin A' Chabraich no 'sgìre de chabraichean', agus a' choille a tha na lùib *Coille Chabraich* air Diùra a' toirt dearbhadh dhuinn gun robh coilltearachd anns na h-eileanan seo. Gu dearbh fhèin tha muileann-sàbhaidh faisg air a' Chabraich.

A fishing boat off Portnahaven
Bàta-iasgaich thar Port na h-Abhainne





Churches and beliefs

The parish names of Islay contain the element Kil-, from *cill(e)* an old word meaning a church or chapel, although it is not now in use as a word. Kil- names are common throughout Scotland and Ireland. The sheer number of this type of name on Islay shows its religious heritage: for example, Kilchoman or *Cill Chomain* means church of St Coman. *Sgreuch a' Chlèirich*, west of Port Ellen is the site where the cleric called the community to prayer. Ardnave Point, at the northeast tip of Islay, is *Àird an Naoimh* or, 'height of the saint'.

Place-names do not exclusively refer to Christian beliefs or practices; they often reveal superstitions, folklore and pre-Christian beliefs. *Tobar an t-Sithein*, 'fairy well', by Baile a' Chlamhain, is where a local man says his grandmother had seen fairies dancing. *Toll na Caointich* by Port Wemyss is 'pool of the banshee': local belief is that she can be heard crying here. On the Oa there is a tale about a three-headed cat that is preserved in the township name, Ballychatrigan or *Baile Chat nan Tri Ceann*.

Place-names also inform about death and the afterlife, so on Jura there is *Geata Àth nam Marbh*, 'gate of the ford of the dead'. Were these places passages between this world and the afterlife through which the dead could travel, or the route taken by funeral processions? Either way, they indicate that there were ritual practices around death.

The ruins of Kilchiarain church
Tobhta eaglais Cille Chiarain

Toll na Caointich: the banshee is not visible in this photo
Toll na Caointich: chan eil a' bhan-sith ri fhaicinn san dealbh seo

Eaglaisean agus creideamhan

Tha am facal *cille* – sin seann fhacal airson eaglais no seapail – a' nochdadh ann an ainmean-sgìre Ìle, ged nach bi luchd-bruidhinn na Gàidhlig an latha an-diugh ga chleachdadh. Tha ainmean le cille cumanta air feadh na h-Alba agus na h-Èireann. Tha an àireamh mhòr de dh'ainmean anns a bheil *cille* ann an Ìle a' sealltainn cho làidir 's a tha dualchas na h-eaglaise an seo: 's e eisimpleir dheth seo Cill Chomain a tha air ainmeachadh an dèidh an naoimh fhèin. 'S e Sgreuch a' Chlèirich, an iar air Port Llein, an t-àite far an gairmeadh an clèireach air a' choimhearsnachd tighinn airson ùrnaigh agus aig ceann an ear-thuath Ìle tha Àird an Naoimh.

Chan eil ainmean-àite dìreach a' toirt iomradh air a' chreideamh Chrìosdail; bidh iad tric a' foillseachadh ghiseagan, beul-aithris agus creideamh ro-chrìosdail. A rèir fear de mhuinntir an àite 's ann aig Tobar an t-Sithein faisg air Baile a' Chlamhain a chunnaic a sheanmhair sithichean a' dannsadh. Tha Toll na Caointich ann, 's e sin seòrsa de bhan-sith, faisg air Bun Othann. Tha muinntir an àite den bheachd gun cluinnear i a' caoineadh an seo. Air an Obh tha baile ann leis an ainm *Ballychatrigan*. 'S e Baile Cat nan Trì Ceann a chanar ris sa Ghàidhlig agus canar gu bheil e air ainmeachadh an dèidh cat air an robh trì cinn a tha a' nochdadh ann an sgeulachd bhon sgìre.

Tha ainmean-àite cuideachd ag innse dhuinn mu dhèidhinn a' bhàis agus na tha a' tachairt às a dhèidh. 'S e eisimpleir dhe seo Geata Àth nam Marbh ann an Diùra. 'S dòcha gum b' e seo slighe a ghabhadh na mairbh bhon t-saoghal seo don ath-shaoghal no 's dòcha gum b' e seo slighe a ghabhadh na tòrraidhean? As bith dè bh' ann tha àiteachan mar seo a' sealltainn dhuinn gun robh cleachdaidhean àraid ann co-cheangailte ris a' bhàs.



Place-name gazetteer / Clàr ainmean-àite

Most of the names mentioned in the text are small features not recorded on maps. This guide is based on local pronunciation and recordings of Gaelic speakers on Islay and Jura. CH represents 'ch' as in Scots 'loch', TCH represents 'ch' as in English 'church'. Names in brackets after the main name represent the English or variant OS form. The letter in brackets after the meaning denotes the language of origin. Where none is stated, the name is Gaelic. (N = Norse, S = Scots/English)

'S e comharraidhean-tìre beaga a tha sa mhòr-chuid de na h-ainmean a tha a' nochdadh san teacs, nach deachaidh a chlàradh air clàir-dùthcha cheana. Tha an stiùireadh seo stèidhichte air fuaimneachadh an àite agus air clàraidhean de luchd-bruidhinn na Gàidhlig ann an Ìle agus Diùra. Tha na h-ainmean ann an camagan an dèidh a' phrìomh ainm a' sealltainn cruth na Beurla no an cruth OS far a bheil sin eadar-dhealaichte. Tha an litir ann an camagan an dèidh ciall na Beurla a' sealltainn cànan an ainm bho thùs. Far nach eil litir ann 's e ainm Gàidhlig a th' ann.

Name Ainm	Meaning (if known) Ciall (far a bheil e againn)	Pronunciation guide (approximate) Stiùireadh fuaimneachaidh	Grid reference (approximate) Clàr-stiùiridh
Abhainn Bhogaidh (Avenvogie)	river of the muddy place	aw-een VOA-kee	NR360564
Acarsaid Cholla	Coll's harbour	ahkarsaitch CHOLa	NR458477
aig an Drochaid	at the bridge	ek an drochitch	NR2561
Àird an Naoimh (Ardnave)	height of the saint	aart NAOIV	NR293749
Àirigh Màiri Thormaid	Mary Norman's pasture	A-ree ME-ree HORamitch	NR364717
Àirigh Sgallaidh	pasture of the bog cotton	A-ree skull-ee	NR176552
A' Bhadag Mhòr	the big soft ground	a vatak VOAR	NR487640
Baile a' Ghràna (Ballygrant)	town of the grain	bala GRANa	NR394662

Baile a' Chlamhain (Ballachlaven)	town of the buzzard	bala CHLAVin	NR371675
Baile Chat nan Tri Ceann (Ballychatrigan)	town of the three-headed cat	bala chat na tree CYEN	NR324419
Baile Ghillean	town of the young men	bal YEELyin	NR408697
Baile Uilbh	town of (John) Ulive	bal OO-liv	NR406699
Bealach na Fròige	pass of the niche	byalach na FRO-eekah	NR176550
Na Beanntan Diùrach / Beanntan Dhiùra (The Paps of Jura)	the hills of Jura	na BYAN-tan JOO-ra / BYAN-tan YOO-rach	NR4974
Beinn a' Chaolais	the mountain of the narrows	bayn a CHOO-leesh	NR487734
Beinn a' Mhinisteir	hill of the minister	bayn a VINishtayr	NR225634
Beinn an Òir	the mountain of gold	bayn an OR	NR496749
Beinn Shiantaidh	the mountain of the saint	bayn HEE-yantee	NR514748
Beinn Tart a' Mhill	understood as: 'hill of the thirst' (N)	bayn TART a veel	NR208568
Beul an Àtha (Bridgend)	mouth of the ford	byal an EH	NR336624
Bruthach an Diolladair (Saddler's Brae)	saddler's brae (S)	broo-ach an JEE-ladar	NR253581

Bun na h-Abhainne (Bunnahabhain)	foot of the river	bun na HEVinya	NR420732
Bun Othann (Port Wemyss)	foot of 'Othann'	bun Oh-an	NR168517
A' Chabraich (Cabrach)	area of the logs	a CHAPreech	NR490640
Camas nam Meanbh-Chuileag	bay of the midges	kamas na MENav choolak	NR661895
Caolas Uspraid	narrows of confusion	koolas OOS-pritch	NR155538
Carraig an t-Solais	rock of the light	karrik an TOLash	NR201527
A' Charraig Dhubh (Black Rock)	the black rock	a charik GOO	NR303626
Carraig MhicCruimein	MacCrimmon's rock	karrik vihc KREEmen	NR167517
Catadal (Cattadale)	valley of the cats	KAHTaTUL	NR387602
Ceallsa (Kelsay)	keel farm (N)	KYALLsa	NR191561
Cill Chomain (Kilchoman)	church of Coman	keelye CHO-min	NR216632
Cille Chiarain (Kilchiarain)	church of Ciaran	keelye CHEE-ran	NR205603
Clach Dhonnchaidh Mhòir	big Duncan's rock	klach dunnachee VOAR	NR208649
Cladach nan Easgann	strand of the eels	klatach nan ESS-kan	NR197655
Cnoc a' Chròtha	hill of the enclosure	krohk a CHRO-a	NR411710

An Cnoc Crom (Knockrome)	the crooked hill	en krohk KROAM	NR555717
Cnoc Innein	hill of the anvil	krohk EEN-yin	NR410691
Cnoc na Faire	hill of the watch	krohk na FAR-a	NR180514
Cnoc nan Seabhag	hill of the hawk	krohk na SHEV-ok	NR385724
Coille Chabraich	wood of Cabrach	kul-yah CHAPreech	NR489639
Creag Bhealach na Caillich	rock of the pass of the old woman	krehk vyalach na KALyeech	NR205613
An Daimh-Sgeir	meaning unclear (N)	en DIE-shter	NR442672
Diùra (Jura)	deer island (N)	JOO-ra	–
An Drochaid Mhòr (Three Arch Bridge)	the big bridge	en drochitch VOAR	NR544720
Dudal Mòr (Doodilmore)	meaning unclear (N)	DOOtul moar	NR367741
Druim an t-Sil	the ridge of the seed	droom an tchEEL	NR417680
Eas na Fola	waterfall of the blood	ess na FOALa	NR428699
An t-Eilean Ruadh	the red island	antCHELan ROO-a	NR174512
Fagaid	clover	FA-gitch	NR2561
An Gart Loisgte (Gartloist)	small burnt enclosure	an gart losht-ya	NR334609

Geata Àth nam Marbh	gate of the ford of the dead	geyhtha aah nam MARav	NR506647
Geata Cheàrd	gate of the tinkers	geyhtha CHYARD	NR396666
An Geata Meadhan	the middle gate	an geyhta MEE-an	NR2561
Geodha na Bà Ruaidh	gully of the red cow	gyoh na bah ROO-eye	NR198526
Geodha nan Cistichean	gully of the cists	gyoh na KEESHT-ichen	NR232554
An Glas-Ùig	the green/grey bay	an glass OO-EEk	NR471515
An Gleanna Dorcha	the dark glen	an glena DUR-acha	NR356610
Gleann a' Mhort	glen of the murder	glawn a VORHT	NR503669
Gleann nam Marbh	glen of the dead	glawn na MARav	NR503669
An Goirtean Dubh	the small black enclosure	an gortchayn DOO	NR398684
An Goirtean Seileach	small reedy enclosure	an gortchayn SHELach	NR487639
Ìle (Islay)	meaning unclear	EE-la	–
Lag Luaidhe	lead hollow	lak LOOEE-yi	NR395663
Lag nan Losgann	hollow of the frogs/toads	lak na LOSS-kan	NR419726
Loch an Dàil (Loch Indaal)	loch of the delay	loch in DAAL	NR2658
Loch Àirigh nan Caisteal	loch of the pasture of the castle	loch A-ree na cashtchel	NR380697

Loch Gorm	blue loch	loch gorrum	NR230657
Loch Ghruinneart (Loch Gruinart)	shallow ford (N)	loch GROO-nyart	NR293712
Loch nam Bruaithearan	brewers' loch	loch na BROO-haran	NR301635
Margadal (Margadale)	meaning unclear (N)	MARGatul	NR393744
Meall na Coille Beithe	the mound of the birch wood	myal na kul-ya BEY-he	NR375451
A' Mhòine Mhòr	the big bog	a von-ya VOAR	NR3645
Mòine Sheilich	moor of the willows	moan-yah HEYLL-eech	NR560733
An Obh (The Oa)	meaning unclear (N)	an O	–
Pàirc Chanada	Canada field	parhk CHANada	NR219666
Pàirc Cùl a' Bhaile	field at the back of the village	parhk kool a VALa	NR394689
Pearsabus (Persabus)	priest's farmstead (N)	PERsabuss	NR416690
Port Asgaig	port of Asgaig	port ASkik	NR431693
Port Duine na h-Èiginn	port of the man in difficulty	port DOO-nya na HAY-kin	NR160539
Port Ilein (Port Ellen)	port of Ellen	port EE-lin	NR365453
Port an Draighinn	port of the blackthorn	port an DRAY-in	NR431679

Port na Ceasaich	port of the temporary bridge	port na KAYSS-eech	NR253581
Port na Craoibh	port of the trees	port na KROOEEV	NR343436
Port nam Brògan	port of the shoes	port na BROKIn	NR174513
Port nan Gailleann	port of the storms	port na GAH-lyan	NR281411
Port nan Gobha	port of the smiths	port na GOH-ah	NR341432
Rathad nan Dròbhar	road of the drover	ra-ad nan DROA-ver	NR412687
Ruadhphort (Caol Ila)	red port (from Ruadhphort in Gaelic)	roofort	NR428698
Rubha na Faing	point of the fank	roo-ah na FENG	NR156537
Rudha a' Phartain	point of the velvet crab	roo-ah FAR-tayn	NR2355
An Seasgan	the moory ground	an sheskan	NR494637
Na Sgeirean Fiaclach	the jagged skerries	na skAYran FEE-ahklach	NR401446
Sgreuch a' Chlèirich	cleric's call	skrEch a CHLAY-reech	NR339448
An Slèibhe	upland moor	an shlay-vah	NR4169
Na Sliabhan Riabhach	the brindly upland moors	na SLEE-van REE-vach	NR490638
Smeall (Smaull)	meaning unclear (N)	smyall	NR214685

Sràid na Laimhrig	pier road	sraatch na LAYrik	NR252582
Sràid na Mèinne (Miner's Row)	miner's street	sraatch na MEEen-yah	NR395662
Sràid Theàrlag (Charlotte Street)	Charlotte street (S)	sraatch HYAAR-lok	NR364453
Sruthan an Fhaing Shalaich	burn of the dirty fank	SROO-an aneng HAL-eech	NR376645
Sruthan nan Nathrach	burn of the snakes	SROO-an nan NA-rach	NR410659
Suidhe nan Eun	seat of the bird	sooya nan EYN	NR332417
Sùil-chrith	shaking eye	sool chree	NR392746
Taigh a' Gheata (Gatehouse)	the gatehouse	tay a YEYhta	NR584771
Tobar an t-Sithein	fairies' well	topar an TCHEE-in	NR362673
Tobar Thuraidh	Toorie's well	topar HOO-ree	NR422697
Toll na Caointich	pool of the banshee	toal na CAOIN-tcheech	NR174513
Toll nan Each	pool of the horses	toal nan ECH	NR254613
Tom na Feannaig	bush of the crow	toam na FYEN-ak	NR401676
Uchd nan Clach (Auchnaclach)	breast of the stone	oochk nan klach	NR409681
Uisge an t-Suidhe (Uiskentuie)	water of the seat	ooshk an TOO-ee	NR296630

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The Gaelic language is deeply embedded in the landscape of Islay and Jura. The place-names of these islands reveal a rich tapestry of stories, memories and local characters, along with the relationship of the islanders with the land and the sea. Although migrations and settlements over the centuries have left their mark on the islands' place-names, it remains predominantly a Gaelic landscape to this day.

In this unique publication, Gaelic speakers from Islay and Jura – working together with Scottish Natural Heritage and Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba – share their precious knowledge of some of the islands' Gaelic names, passed down over generations. They also provide an insight into the special natural and cultural heritage of these remarkable islands.

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Tha dlùth-cheangal eadar a' Ghàidhlig agus cruth-tìrean Ìle is Dhiùra. Tha na h-ainmean-àite a' nochdadh measgachadh beairteach de sgeulachdan, chuimhneachain, characteran ionadail, agus an ceangal eadar muinntir nan eilean, an tìr agus an fhairge. Ged a tha imrichean agus tuineachaidhean air comharraidhean gu leòr fhàgail air ainmean-àite nan eilean, 's e cruth-tìre an ìre mhath Gàidhlig a th' ann chun an latha an-diugh.

Anns an fhoillseachadh sònraichte seo, tha luchd-labhairt na Gàidhlig ann an Ìle agus Diùra – ag obair còmhla ri Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba agus Ainmean-àite na h-Alba – a' toirt seachad eòlas prìseil air cuid de dh'ainmean Gàidhlig nan eilean, a chaidh a libhrigeadh bho ghinealach gu ginealach. Tha iad cuideachd a' toirt sealladh sònraichte dhuinn air an dualchas nàdarra agus chultarail anns na h-eileanan mìorbhaileach seo.



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Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba
 Gaelic Place-Names of Scotland



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