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A Few St Kilda Toponyms and Forms

Eric P. Hamp

For Kelsie Harder on his Retirement

DAVID A. QUINE has followed up an earlier book on St Kilda as an island and as a (former) habitation of a small, isolated population with a fascinating and sympathetic collection of accounts of those inhabitants (or rather, of many of them) in their own words.¹ Many a reader will agree with the author of the medieval Welsh tale *Lludd and Llevelys* that St Kilda is not to be found at the centre of the Island of Britain, but few would willingly pass up the opportunity to savour the poignant charm of such a close look at the sublime drama of human experience.

Quine reproduces some language forms from St Kilda Gaelic ['ga:lɪk] (p.111). He does not claim to be a linguist, and disclaims a knowledge of Gaelic; he is a marvellous ethnographer and naturalist. His forms are taken from, and occur in the account of, Lachlan MacDonald, one of the three dozen persons evacuated from the island in August 1930, at the age of 24, and now the last surviving speaker of that dialect as well as beloved friend of many of us.

I have been fortunate in working since 1984 with 'Lachie' for the *Atlas of Scottish Gaelic Dialects*², and I intend to make all my results available to scholarship and the public; my material includes a modest collection of toponyms which Lachie recalls. I offer here my equivalent of Quine's list for whatever interim use or interest.

I first present Quine's text (p.111):

'Here are some examples:-

Place Names

Cambir
Gob na h-Airde
Tobar nan Buadh
Stac Biorach
Below the Cambir,
Suisle

Soay
Bearradh na cloiche

Lachlan's Pronunciation

Han Cambelyer
Gob na Hartcher
Tobar na mourg
Stac of Biorach
Soosh-shla

Soa
Beren a quasha mora
(Lover's Stone)

Bearradh na h-Eige (Ridge or cliff of the gap)	Beren-ee-haykee
Rubha an Uisge	Roo Nischa (Point of the Water)
Oiseval Geo	Oysheval Gayo (g hard as in gannet)
Dun	Doon
Boreray	Boyra
Tobar Gille Chille	Tobar Ille Heelee
Tigh an t'sithiche (Earthhouse)	Toy na she-ish (House of Fairies)
<i>Birds</i>	
Gannet	Sular
Puffin	A Bujilla
Guillemot	Warmi.'

My own notation in phonetic and phonological representation follows, accompanied by notes:³

['kã:(m)ɣil'ə]	kã: bil'ə ⁴
with article	
[(ə)'ɲhã:(m)ɣil'ə]	ən-kã: bil'ə
['gɔ̃ɣ nə'ha>:ɣ̃ɣ̃^]	gɔb nə-ha:rǵə (nə ^h -a:rǵə) ⁵
['toɰər nə'muəɣ]	tɔbər nə-muəɣ (nən-buəɣ) ⁶
['sɔ̃ɰɰk ə'ɰirəx]	sdak ə-birəx ⁷
['su:sl'ə̃]	su:sl'ə̃ ⁸
['sɔ̃^ʌç], ['sɔ̃^əç]	sɔ̃ əx ⁹
['el'en 'sɔ̃^ʌç]	el'en sɔ̃, əx
'Soay island'	
['ɰerəɣ nə'kɰɔ̃çə 'mo:rə]	berəɣ nə-kwɔ̃xə mo:rə
~['mo:ləɣ]	~mo:ləɣ ¹⁰

['ɰerə(ɣ) nə'heǵɣ<(ɣ)]	berə(ɣ) nə-heǵə(ɣ) ¹⁰ (nə ^h -eǵə)
['ru: n'ɣ<st'+]	ru: ən-ɣstǵə ¹¹
['ɔ̃sɪ>vaɣ]	ɔ̃sɪvaw
['ǵeɔ̃^ə] when clause-final; ['ǵeɔ̃^:] ¹² when not	ǵeɔ̃, ə
['nu:n]	nū:n (ən-du:n) ¹³
['bɔ̃jre>ç]	bɔ̃jreɰ ¹⁴
['toɰər il'i'hi:lɪç]	tɔbər il'ə-hi:liç
·[ɪtɣ<ɪ nə'si:lɪs]	tɣy nə-si:lɪs 'House of the Fairies'
['su:(ɣɪ)l'ʌ]	su:(wi)l'ə < su:wil'
plural ['su:(ɣ)l'ən]	su:(w)l'ən < su:w'l'ən ¹⁵
['mū:ǵe>rə]	mū:ǵərə (ən-bu:ǵərə) ^{13,16}
['ɰa<vi]	wā:vi = ləmhaidh ¹⁷
plural ['ɰa<i+n]	wā:vi, ɪn

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NOTES

1 *St Kilda Portraits* (1988) available from the author, at Stickle Cottage, Dungeon Ghyll, Ambleside, Cumbria LA22 9JY.

2 I owe all that I know of Scottish Gaelic to my work with the *Atlas* over the past three decades in the framework of the Survey of Scottish Gaelic conducted by the University of Edinburgh; on these matters see *Scottish Gaelic Studies* XV (1988), 1-19. I cannot thank Lachlan and Nancy MacDonald heartily enough for all their friendship that makes our joint enterprise not just an act of scholarship but a major event in one's spiritual life.

3 For an explanation of the slight divergences from the International Phonetic Alphabet in the phonetic notations that follow, see my article, 'On the representation of Scottish Gaelic dialect phonetics', *Scottish Gaelic Studies* XV

(1988), 6-19.

4 Definitely three syllables. Lachie: 'In English it's just cut short.' In St Kilda, non-initial weak *r' > l; I cannot explain the exact source of l' here.

5 In St Kilda, Gaelic t'/d' and k'/g' are neutralized (merge).

6 Pre-stress nasal + (lenis) stop gives nasal, while fortis yields aspiration as in *Cambir* with the article (r here is ə in Quine).

7 Quine's *of* must be read ə.

8 There is no need to divide this word.

9 The succession of vowels is disyllabic; I write a lowered tick for the systemic syllable border. This involves a very complex question of Gaelic phonology.

10 Lachie shows optional -y not infrequently on unstressed -ə, especially in inflected forms.

11 The place of stress onset betrays an elided -ə.

12 The sharp decrement in stress marks the second, and unstressed, syllable.

13 See n. 5 for the nasal.

14 As also in *Soay*, the final x reflects devoicing of the y in Norse *ey* 'island', which the English fails to show.

15 The word shows St Kilda w < velarized *ɫ and l' < non-initial weak *r', i.e. *sùlair*, pl. *-ean*.

16 The long vowel contrasts with *buiguire*, given in Dwelly's *Illustrated Gaelic-English Dictionary* (generally regarded as a standard authority) as a St Kilda variant for *budhaigir* / -e. Therefore we must posit the development *bu₁əgər'e > *bu₁əgər'ə (> *bu₁əgəl'ə) > *bu₁u₂gərə > bu:ḡərə.

17 Quine's r is intended to show lengthening of the preceding ə.

Breandán S. Mac Aodha

THE city of Limerick, last outpost of Irish resistance, was surrendered to the forces of William III on 3 October 1691, after a siege that had lasted many months.¹ Despite the fact that the war ended on apparently generous terms, the native Catholic population was soon to learn that the Treaty of Limerick would afford them and their religion very little protection. The so-called Irish Parliament—an exclusively Protestant body representing English colonists in Ireland—set about enacting measures which were unparalleled in their viciousness of their anti-popery.² The economic change brought about by the implementation of these Penal Laws reduced the Irish to beggary; nevertheless, the vast bulk of them clung to their traditional religion. This all the more astonishing in that the full rigour of the law was directed at the Catholic clergy, and before long most parishes lacked priests. The Banishment Act of 1697 had driven most bishops and diocesan clergy from the land: death was the penalty for returning. Priests were hunted like wild game. The education of replacements was forbidden. Public celebration of the Mass was prohibited.

The Irish response was to train new priests in the Irish seminaries abroad. These institutions proliferated and expanded in the early years of the eighteenth century: heroic scholars were smuggled out to Lisbon and Louvain, to Rome and Rouen, to Prague and Poitiers, to Salamanca, Santiago and Seville, to Antwerp and Alcalá, to Nantes, Lille, Bordeaux, and elsewhere. After ordination they returned to minister in secret to the Irish people.³

This tragic but glorious period in Irish history is reflected strongly in the place-names. The word *sagart* 'priest' is linked with numerous physical features, especially hills, ravines, moorlands and remote spots where the clergy found refuge when the persecution was at its most intense. Most of the examples which follow are drawn from the north and west of the country (particularly from counties Donegal and Tyrone), but such toponyms are to be found in every corner of Ireland, though many are fading from memory. Best preserved, of course, are the names of territorial units. Such townland names include *Meenataggart* (Donegal 84)⁴ [*Mín*⁵ a' *tSagairt* 'the priest's smooth land'], *Carrickataggart* (Donegal 91) [*Carraig* a' *tSagairt* 'the priest's rock'], *Monataggart* (Cork 61 and Waterford 20) [*Móin* a' *tSagairt* 'the priest's moor'], *Knockataggart*