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The Archaeology of Finlaggan, Islay

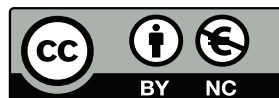
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PART II

THE FINLAGGAN STUDY AREA

DAVID H CALDWELL & MICHAEL CRESSEY

Loch Finlaggan is central to our study area (Illus 3.1, 3.2). It is situated in the north-east of Islay and is the longest loch in the island with a length of approximately 1km, an area of 63.4 ha and a catchment of approximately 610ha.

Islay is one of the main islands of the Inner Hebrides, 19 miles (30.6km) wide and 25 miles (40km) from north to south, with an area just over 600 sq km. It is the furthest south of the group, lying at about the same latitude as Glasgow and Edinburgh, about 15 miles (24km) to the west of the peninsula of Kintyre, and only about 23 miles (37km) from the north-east coast of Ireland, which is often clearly visible. It is separated from the neighbouring island of Jura to the east by the narrow Sound of Islay. The climate is maritime and influenced by predominantly westerly winds. The average rainfall tends to be high, between 1300mm and 1600mm per year.

Islay has a variety of different landscape types, including sand dunes and machair, Lowland bog and moor, rocky moorland, coastal parallel ridges and, predominantly, moorland plateau (Environmental Resources Management 1996: 63ff). It is also, compared with the other Hebrides, a fertile island. In a memorial prepared for the Laird of Islay in 1780 (Ramsay 1991: 180) it was reckoned that the island had 114,000 acres, of which 27,720 (24.3%) were in tillage and 8,507 (7.5%) grass or green pasture. The figure for tilled or arable land is likely to have risen even higher at the time of maximum population density in the early 19th century. There is farmland on the raised beaches around Loch Indaal, and on the machair in the northern half of the Rhinns around lochs Gorm and Gruinart. Some of the best is to be found in areas where the underlying rock is metamorphosed limestone, including the north end of Loch Finlaggan. Very little of this farmland is now cropped with anything but grass, and none of it is rated highly in the land capability map produced by the James Hutton Institute for Soil Research. At best, a little of it is deemed suitable for producing a moderate range of crops, and most of it is only considered appropriate for improved grassland and rough grazings.

However, pre-improvement farmers with limited equipment may not have found that this apparent soil poverty affected them adversely. Many of the soils on the island could readily be dug by spade and were light enough to be cultivated with primitive ploughs. Ready local supplies of limestone for use as a fertiliser

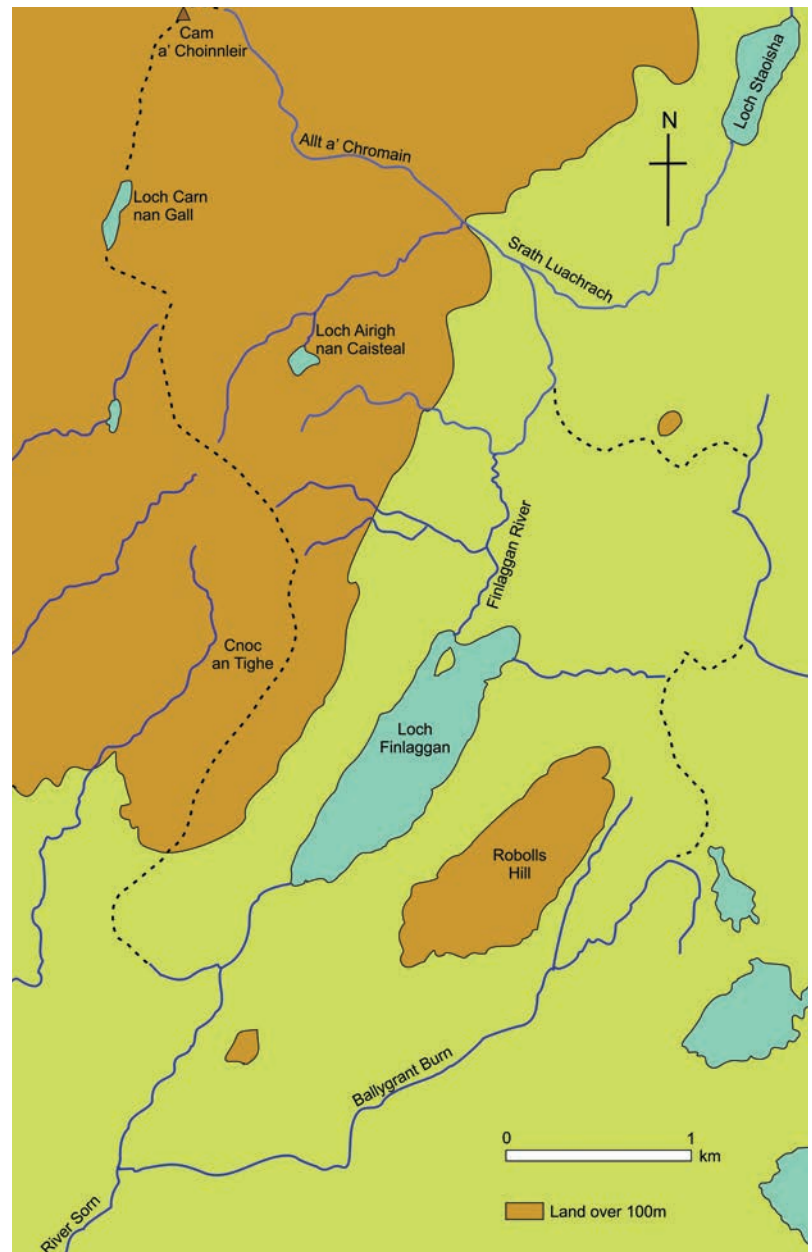


Illustration 3.2
Map of study area with high ground

FINLAGGAN

were also a significant factor. Extensive tracts of peat, covering as much as 25% of the island, are still a valuable source of fuel.

The Finlaggan loch basin is a glacially deepened valley running south-west by north-east along a major fault line (the Bonahaven Fault). The west side of the loch rises from 50m to the summit of Cnoc an Tighe at over 170m above sea level. The east shore rises to 130m at Robolls Hill. In general, the east and west shores are stony with little in the way of established marsh. The catchment area is mostly rough grazing, with 45.7% now planted with conifers.

There are numerous springs and small burns feeding into the loch from both sides of the valley. The major inlet of water into the loch is via a burn, rather grandiloquently named the Finlaggan River on Ordnance Survey maps. It flows along the aforementioned fault line, entering the loch opposite the tip of Eilean Mór in one clearly defined channel. There are two other channels, now silted up, suggesting that the regime of the burn may have changed considerably over the years. There are also

clear signs around the loch edge of a shoreline over a metre higher than the present one. Agricultural drainage of the fields of Finlaggan Farm, mining activity and afforestation may all be causes of this. The burn is 2.5m wide where it enters the loch, but in adverse conditions the discharge can be extreme when the burn bursts its banks and becomes a torrent over 10m wide. The difference in winter and summer water level on Loch Finlaggan is estimated to be in excess of 0.5m, varying between about 52.40 and 51.90m OD (on the basis of the site benchmark on Eilean Mór). Three islands are situated within the loch: Eilean Mór and Eilean na Comhairle at the north end, and Eilean Mhuireill about halfway along the east shore.

Note

Sites and monuments numbered 1 to 75 in the study area are described in Chapter 4 (1 to 21) and in the inventory in Chapter 5 (22 to 75).

Chapter 3

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

DAVID H CALDWELL & MICHAEL CRESSEY

Geology

Nigel A Ruckley

The solid geology of the Finlaggan study area consists of rocks of the Dalradian assemblage, thought to represent a marine rather than an estuarine environment such as that of the Grampian Moines. All the rocks were metamorphosed during the Caledonian period of mountain building about 500 million years ago, when the sandstones, limestones and shales were metamorphosed into quartzite, crystalline limestones and slates respectively. The lower part of the Dalradian sequence – all that is represented on Islay – is probably of shallow water, possibly shelf sea in origin with characteristic rock types of current-bedded quartzites, limestones and pelites. At Finlaggan the rocks are almost vertical in dip or very steeply dipping to the south-east. They form part of the Islay anticline, the crest of which has been eroded away to reveal underlying slates (phyllites), quartzites and limestones.

An easily identifiable rock type is the Port Askaig tillite, covering a large area to the west of Loch Finlaggan. In geological sequence it lies between the younger Islay quartzites and the older underlying limestones. This tillite represents the boulder clay or till of an ice age of late Precambrian times, metamorphosed to produce a rock exhibiting pebbles, including granites and Nordmarkite, that are not derived from local material. They are set in a coarse quartzitic matrix.

The Port Askaig tillite and quartzite to the west of Loch Finlaggan are separated from the limestone around Finlaggan Farm by a north-east/south-west fault, the Bonahaven Fault, not visible above ground (Illus 3.3). There are other areas of limestone to the east, south and around the west of the loch. These limestones, blue-grey in colour when fresh, with prominent thin veins of calcite, often exhibit slight mineralisation in the form of cubes of iron pyrites, less than 2mm across.

The bay at the head of the loch, as well as much of the area to the east, consists of grey-blue dark silty slate or phyllite with cubes of iron pyrites up to 5mm across.

Vulcanism to the north-west of Islay caused a series of north-west/south-east quartz-dolerite dykes to be intruded into the already metamorphosed Dalradian rocks. Several of these are prominent features in the landscape on both sides of Loch Finlaggan.

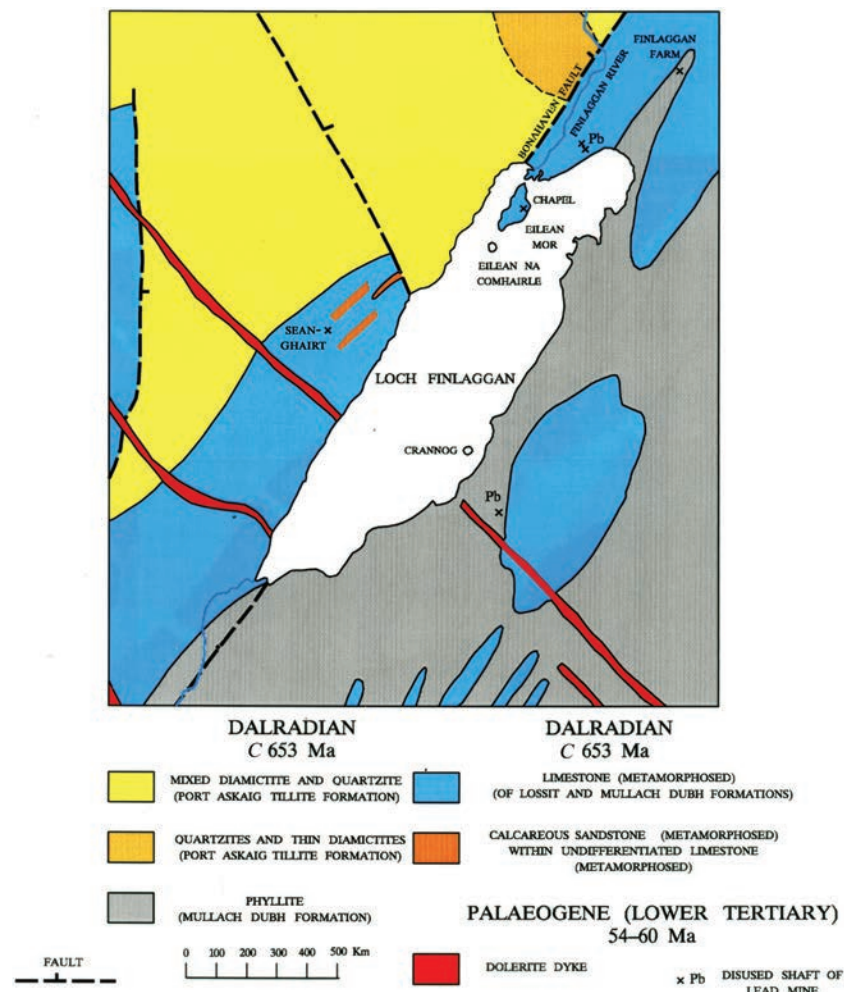


Illustration 3.3

Solid geology of area around Loch Finlaggan based on Ordnance Survey mapping

Islay was heavily glaciated at least three times during the Pleistocene, with the general trend of the ice movements towards the west or south-west. Glacial deposits such as boulder clay, hummocky moraines and eskers can be found on the island – including an area of boulder clay on the west side of the loch.

Soils, vegetation and catchment land use

Within the Finlaggan catchment four soil-types were classified by the Macaulay Institute for Soil Research (now the James Hutton Institute). The soils most useful for arable and grazing are designated as map unit 165 of the Deecastle Association. This type borders the north-east and west regions of the catchment, including Eilean Mór, and is derived from underlying Dalradian limestone and phyllite.

A soil section observed beside the road to the Finlaggan farm-steading appears to be a typical example of a podzolic brown forest soil, as defined by Ragg et al (1978). A thin humic A horizon (topsoil) is separated from a very dark greyish-brown (Munsell soil chart 10YR 3/2) layer of stony silty sand by a band of small stones, representing the maximum depth of intensive earthworm activity. It also indicates that the ground here has not recently been broken up by tillage. The dark greyish-brown layer is the B horizon. Beneath the stone line is an iron pan, which in turn overlies a deposit of yellowish-brown (10YR 5/4) silty clay with some small stones, mostly flakes of phyllite. This is the C horizon. Under it is the phyllite bedrock.

These soils are not rated highly for modern agricultural purposes. The ridges of rock which often break through to the surface inhibit the use of modern farm machinery. The James Hutton Institute has classed them as grade 5, land fit only for improved grassland and rough grazings. As pasture, however, their quality should not be underestimated for stock raising, and crops of oats, barley and potatoes were evidently successfully grown on them in the past by traditional farming means. A series of broad curvilinear rigs, probably the result of intensive ploughing in the modern period, are evident in the field with the standing stone (*Pàirc an Loch*) to the east of the road to the Finlaggan Visitor Centre, stretching southwards to the loch (Illus 4.17).

Much of the region to the south and east of Loch Finlaggan is of the Foudland Series, its soils derived from the same phyllites and metamorphosed limestone as the Deecastle Association. Map unit 242, covering much of the land of Kepollsmore, includes gleys and brown forest soils. Map unit 253, including Robolls Hill, consists of poorly drained acid soils, mostly gleys. Soils of the Foudland Series are now classed (6/2, 6/3) as suitable only for rough grazing, though it is clear from the remains of old rigs and field systems that they have been extensively farmed in the past.

Organic soil, map unit 4, has developed on blanket peat overlying the quartzite bedrock at the north end of the loch. Neighbouring it on the west side of the loch is an area of soils, map unit 188, belonging to the Durnhill Association – peaty gleys and peat formed over glacial drift. These soils are now deemed to be of very limited value (class 6/3), fit only for rough grazing or afforestation. Evidence for these soils having been farmed in the past is restricted to a small area just to the west of the Finlaggan River, before it enters the loch.

In the study area the predominant herbaceous plants are the blanket bog flying-bent communities with a mixture of herb-rich



Illustration 3.4

Mixed oak and hazel coppice to south-west of Loch Finlaggan

fescue grassland. *Calluna vulgaris* is established over most of the acid soils. Marshland communities thrive in the regions susceptible to waterlogging with *Carex sp* and *Juncus conglomeratus*. The shrubs *Salix sp* and *Myrica gale* are well established along the sides of small burns that run down to the shoreline.

Meadow communities on the improved pasture include *Ranunculus repens*, *Cirsium arvense*, *Vicia lutea* and *Rumex acetosa*. To the north-west of Loch Finlaggan on the peat and peaty gley soils of the Durnhill Association (map unit 188), an area of approximately 45.5% of the catchment was afforested with Sitka spruce and lodgepole pine by the Forestry Commission in 1982. At the south end of the loch a tract of abandoned coppice woodland survives with stands of *Corylus avellana* and wind-stunted standards of *Quercus sp* (Illus 3.4). In all probability the coppice may have been formed from secondary woodland. No records survive of when this woodland was managed. Solitary wind-stunted birch and oak trees survive on the eastern side of the loch. At the northern end of the loch a well-established tract of *Phragmites australis* forms a belt around the northern shore of Eilean Mór. At the southern end of the loch a mixture of *Phragmites australis* and *Nymphaea alba* give way to an extensive tract of marshland through which the outflow meanders eventually to form the River Sorn.

Places and people in the study area

Note: there is considerable variation within the documentary sources in regard to the spelling and form of the names of people and places in the study area. In this volume both have been standardised to acceptable modern forms. This has not always been straightforward in the case of some place-names for which more than one spelling remains in use. The author hopes that where spelling variations are encountered in this text and illustrations it will be clear which places are intended.

The main documentary sources of information for the study area are a series of surviving rentals and other documents. To save

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

repetitive reference to them in the text, their details are given here in date order:

- 1494 Charter by King James IV to John MacIain of Ardnamurchan of lands in Islay and elsewhere, and the office of bailiary of Islay (*RMS* 2: no. 2216; Smith 1895: 24–26)
- 1499 Charter by King James IV to John MacIain of Ardnamurchan of lands in Islay and elsewhere (Smith 1895: 28–30)
- 1506 Charter by King James IV to John MacIain of Ardnamurchan of lands in Islay and Jura (*RMS* 2: no. 3001; Smith 1895: 32–33)
- 1507 The fermes of Islay (*ER* 12: 587–90)
- 1509 The fermes of Islay (*ER* 13: 219–221; Smith 1895: 484–5)
- 1541 Rental of Islay (*ER* 17: 633–41)
- 1542 Accounts of the receivers of fermes of Islay (*ER* 17: 541–56)
- 1562 Tack by Mary Queen of Scots to James MacDonald of Dunyvaig and the Glens of lands in Islay and Kintyre (*RSS* 5/1: no. 1112; Smith 1895: 67–69)
- 1563 Tack by Mary Queen of Scots to James MacDonald of Dunyvaig and the Glens of lands in Islay and Kintyre (*RSS* 5/1: no. 1259; Smith 1895: 70)
- 1564 Tack by Mary Queen of Scots to James MacDonald of Dunyvaig and the Glens of lands in Islay and Kintyre (*RSS* 5/1: no. 1879; Smith 1895: 73)
- 1614 Charter by James VI & I to Sir John Campbell of Cawdor of the lands and island of Islay (*RMS*, 1609–20: no. 1137; Smith 1895: 199–230)
- 1628 Rental of Islay (Cawdor muniments, bundle 655)
- 1629 Rental of Islay (Cawdor muniments, 655)
- 1630 Rental of Islay (Cawdor muniments, 655)
- 1631 Rental of Islay (Cawdor muniments, 655)
- 1632 Rental of Islay (Cawdor muniments, 655)
- 1641 Rental of Islay (Cawdor muniments, 655)
- 1642 Rental of Islay (Cawdor muniments, 655)
- 1643 Rental of Islay (Cawdor muniments, 655)
- 1654 Rental of Islay (Cawdor muniments, 655)
- 1686 Rental of Islay (Smith 1895: 490–520)
- 1694 A list of the hearths within the shires of Argyll and Bute (*NRS* E69/3/1: Islay, pp 55–59)
- 1722 Rental of Islay (Smith 1895: 521–44)
- 1733 Rental of Islay (Smith 1895: 545–54; Ramsay 1991: 9–20)
- 1741 Rental of Islay (Smith 1895: 554–59; Ramsay 1991: 37–44)
- 1780 Rental of Islay (Ramsay 1991: 194–204)
- 1798–99 Rental of Islay (Ramsay 1991: 206–13)
- 1826–27 Rental of Islay (Mitchell Library)
- 1841 Census
- 1851 Census
- 1854–55 Valuation of wood [doors, window frames, joists, etc in houses on Islay farms] (Mitchell Library: TD 1338/2/2/34)
- 1861 Census

Extents and rentals

The study area corresponds to the area of the touns or farms of Sean-ghairt, Portanellan, Mulreesh, Robolls and Kepollsmore (Illus 3.5), as shown on the map of Islay derived from the surveys by Stephen McDougall in 1749–51 (Smith 1895: between pp 552 and 553). This map does not show the lesser units of land like Cùl

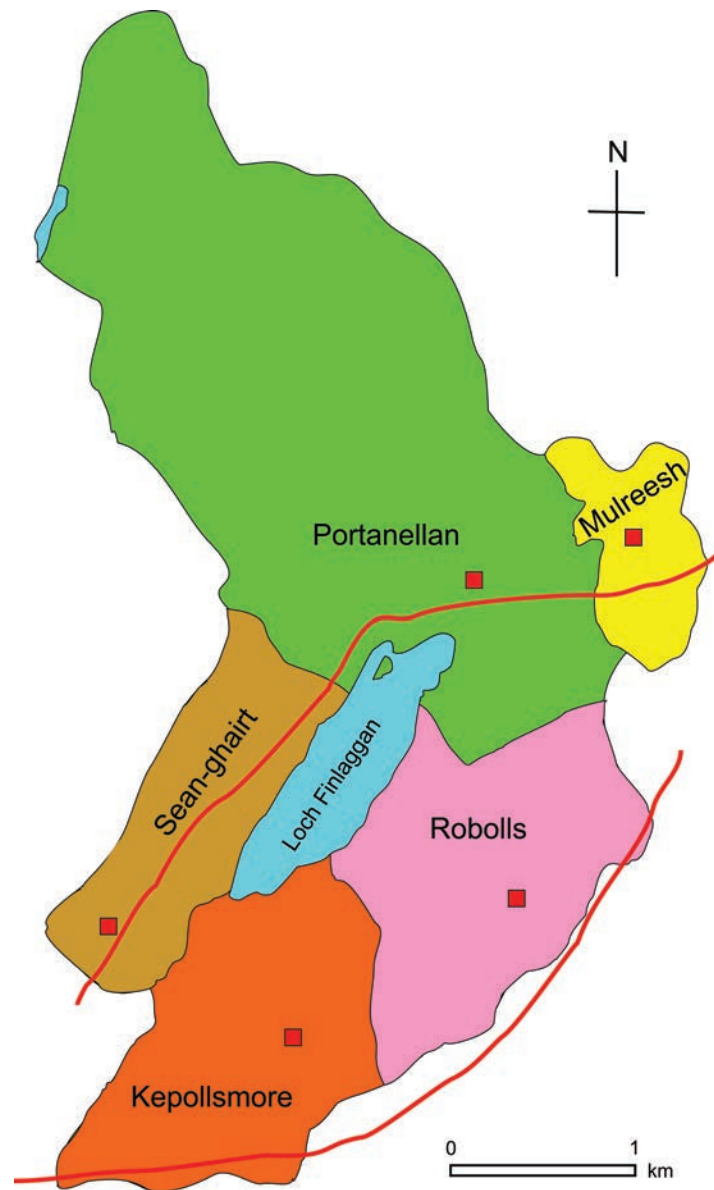


Illustration 3.5
Map of study area showing the main lands

a' Bhaile included in the main farms, and failed farms like Quinskirn, all memory of which has long since disappeared.

Prior to the mid-18th century, Islay farms were measured not in terms of their area but their 'extent', the sum of money the tenants of each were to produce each year for the landholder. These extents or valuations became a convenient way of describing the worth of different lands. Whereas the extent for many holdings remained the same from the 16th to the 18th century, the actual rent paid by the tenants increased with time and inflation. Thus the tenants of Sean-ghairt, a land with an extent of £1 13s 4d, were by 1722 required to pay £120 17s 4d Scots (£10 1s 5d sterling).

The earliest surviving extent of the island dates to 1507, when it was assessed in a crown rental at £212 5s 4d Scots, including both the church lands and those in lay hands. It is possible that this

is an under-valuation, consequent on the difficulties experienced by the crown in taking over the administration of the lands of the Lordship of the Isles. Reckoned as marks, this extent amounts to a bit over 318, whereas another estimate of Islay made at the end of the 16th century assesses it as 360 merks, that is, £240 (Smith 1895: 111). By 1733 the Stent Committee for Islay reckoned the island amounted to 135 quarterlands, equivalent to an assessment of £225 (Ramsay 1890: 1), a figure nearer the extent of 1507.

The variations in these figures should teach some caution in interpreting fluctuations in the extent of individual lands over time. We should accept that individual farms might have their assessment changed because they were deemed more or less profitable, and not just because segments of land had been added or subtracted. It should also be said that rentals do not always include some of the lands for reasons including they were wadset (mortgaged), in different ownership or not currently rented. Nevertheless, as outlined below, it is possible to use the information provided by the rentals to suggest the location of otherwise unknown holdings.

The rental of 1507 was made for the crown by John MacIain of Ardnamurchan, who had been bailie of Islay for the lords of the Isles. Various attempts have been made over the years to interpret the origins of this system of land valuation and how and why MacIain went about updating it (Macniven 2015: 89–93; Caldwell 2017: 143–49). MacIain may have set out with a list of the lands and their ‘old extent’. He also had instructions as to either what the new overall valuation for the island should be, or the rate at which it should be set – neither necessarily much different from what had gone before. In any case, as far as was practical, he listed the lands in ones or twos with a valuation per unit of 2½ marks (£1 13s 4d). It is probable that many of these units only made sense fiscally, and either contained other unnamed lands or were split among more than one tenant. This way of grouping Islay lands is already evident in the charter of lands and office of bailie awarded to MacIain by King James IV in 1494 (RMS 2: no. 2216). Units of land valued at 2½ marks were from then on one of the key features of Islay rentals.

These were the so-called quarterlands. Half a quarterland was an aughtenpart, or 16s 8d land, and quarter of a quarterland was a leorthas, or 8s 4d land (there were even smaller fractions as well). The equation of a 2½ mark land with a quarterland is an underlying principle for understanding Islay extents and rentals. It might be noted that there is no obvious record or understanding of larger types of units of which quarterlands were a quarter. There are also other small units of land called cowlands, which have been thought to be evidence for another, perhaps earlier, system of land assessment. They each had an extent of 3s 4d (Caldwell 2017: 145).

Feudal superiors

All the lands in the study area were part of the Lordship of the Isles until John II Lord was forfeited in 1493, and thereafter passed to the crown. All were included in the charter by King James VI of the lands and island of Islay to Sir John Campbell of Cawdor in 1614 that heralded over 200 years of Campbell control of the island. The Campbell Lairds of Islay retained all these lands, setting them to tacksmen (leaseholders) or tenants. Some were

wadset for long periods but were eventually redeemed. Islay was sold to James Morrison in 1853 and these lands still form part of the Islay Estate held by Morrison’s descendants.

Although no documents relating to these lands survive from the time of the Lordship of the Isles, it is possible, using information from later sources, to piece together how some were granted by the lords to their leading followers. Who legally held these lands, or actually did so, in the 16th century is a difficult problem to unravel.

The land of Sean-ghairt does not figure in any documentary sources between the rental of 1509 and the charter of Islay to Campbell of Cawdor in 1614. The fact that it is not included in the 1541 rental might mean that it had already been feued at that time or was effectively in the hands of James (Canochson) MacDonald of Dunyvaig and the Glens, chief of Clann Iain Mhóir. Perhaps before that it had been demesne land of the lords of the Isles.

The lands of Laichtcarlane, Portanellan, Quinskirn, Kepollsmore and Kepollsbeg were included in tacks of lands extending to 163 marks and 8d given by Mary Queen of Scots to James MacDonald in 1562, 1563 and 1564 (Illus 3.6). These tacks only gave the MacDonalds temporary possession until 1579. They seem to have included all the lands of Islay not already granted to James MacDonald as part of his barony of Bar, created in 1545 (RMS 2: no. 3085; Smith 1895: 50–53), or then belonging to the Macleans and the Church. There is no evidence that James MacDonald sought these lands in 1562 by ancestral right. Indeed, since the Islay lands included in the barony of Bar extended to almost 60 marks’ worth, it would seem reasonable to conclude that they were the same 60 marks’ worth of land granted to his ancestor John by his father, John I Lord of the Isles, in the 14th century (MacPhail 1914: 32). Many of the lands given in tack in the 1560s may, therefore, have been retained prior to 1493 by the lords of the Isles as demesne. By leasing them to James MacDonald, the crown was effectively recognising where power lay on Islay at the time.

Martin Martin’s late 17th-century description of Finlaggan mentions the ruins of the houses of the lord of the Isles’ bodyguard, or *luchd-taighe*, on the side of the loch nearest to Eilean Mór (Martin 1703: 240). The *luchd-taighe* were thus almost certainly housed on Portanellan, and it would follow from this that this land was held in demesne by the lords of the Isles.

The story of who held Kepolls, Little Kepolls, Kepollsmore and Robolls in the period from the late 15th century through to the end of the 16th century is complex and full of uncertainties. Here it is only possible to give the bare bones of a process that involved many other people, lands and events. Little Kepolls (Kepollsbeg), Kepolls and Robolls were among the Islay lands, extending in total to £20, that John MacIain of Ardnamurchan was given in 1494 by King James IV along with the office of bailie of Islay, a re-grant of lands and office already held by him from the lord of the Isles. He was then granted the Two Kepolls in 1499, identifiable as the land of Kepollsmore, along with the Little Kepolls and Kepolls already given him in 1494 (Illus 3.6). Since this charter of 1499 was a reward for the capture of Sir John MacDonald of Dunyvaig and his son, the implication might be that Kepollsmore was land forfeited by the MacDonalds.

MacIain was slaughtered by Alexander MacDonald of Dunyvaig and others about 1518 and the Earl of Argyll was granted ward, nonentries and relief of his possessions, along with the

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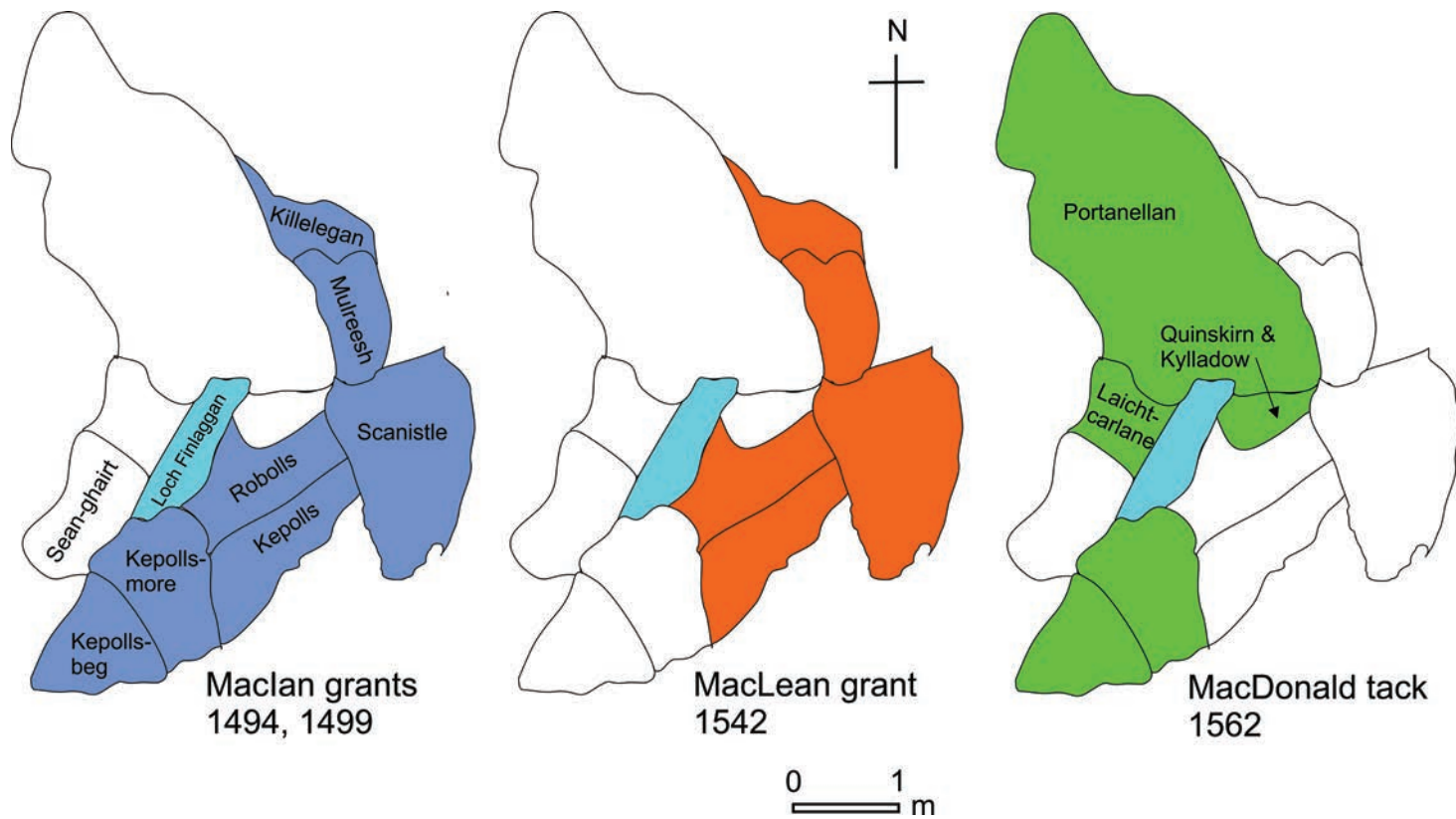


Illustration 3.6
Maps of lands granted to John MacIain, Hector MacLean and James MacDonald

marriage of his son and heir, Alexander – thus allowing Argyll to supervise and enjoy the MacIain inheritance until Alexander MacIain came of age (RSS 1: no. 3048). A bond of gossipry in 1520 between John Campbell of Cawdor and Alexander MacDonald of Dunyvaig indicates that actual control of some of the MacIains' Islay lands was quickly passed to Alexander MacDonald, for he was given a five-year tack of lands, including 45-mark lands in Islay, in return for the support of Clann Iain Mhóir by land and sea (Innes 1859: 133–35). Cawdor, as in many other affairs at this time, was acting on behalf of his uncle the Earl of Argyll.

Alexander MacIain was given sasine of his Islay lands in 1528 (ER 15: 675–76), but it is probable that Alexander MacDonald, his brother-in-law through marriage to Alexander's sister Catherine, remained in actual possession of the Islay 45-mark lands until his death in 1536. There is no evidence as to which lands were among these 45-mark lands, but since Kepollsbeg and Kepollsmore were included in the 1562 tack to James MacDonald, it might be supposed that they were also in the tack of 1520, with actual MacDonald possession from 1520 all the way through to 1562 and beyond.

Alexander MacIain died sometime between 1534 and 1538 (Munro & Munro 1986: 285), and documents dating to 1538 and 1540 in the archives of the Dukes of Argyll (Argyll transcripts: vol 4) chronicle a process by which the MacIains' heritage, including Robolls, Kepolls and Kepollsmore, was granted to another sister, Mariota MacIain, only to be resigned in favour of the Earl of Argyll. It is probable that Argyll was trying to engineer a more

permanent settlement of the MacIain Islay lands on Alexander MacDonald's son and heir, James. His attempts were to come unstuck with the purchase by King James V of the MacIain inheritance in 1541 (TA 7: 470).

In November 1542 Robolls and Kepolls were among the lands, including others in the 1494 MacIain charter, which King James V granted to Hector Maclean of Duart (Illus 3.6), since he had been informed that they had belonged to Hector's grandfather but that the documents to prove this had been burnt and destroyed by Angus Òg, Master of the Isles, at a time of a deadly feud (RMS 3: no. 2835). The feud in question must refer to the struggle between Angus Òg and his father, John II Lord of the Isles, in the early 1480s. At the Battle of Bloody Bay (1481?) off Mull, Maclean of Duart supported John II against Angus Òg (Maclean-Bristol 1995: 70–71). Assuming that the Macleans' claim to these lands was justified, it therefore must date to a period before possession was given to MacIain, and certainly before the murder of Angus Òg in 1490.

The MacIains and Macleans both claimed that Robolls and Kepolls had been granted to them in the time of the lordship. Alexander MacDonald's son James may not have taken kindly to the re-establishment of the Macleans' claim to Robolls and Kepolls in 1542. This must have been a major factor in the feud between the two families that was to occupy the rest of the 16th century. Hector's father, Lachlan, had been in trouble with the government in 1516 and 1517 for uplifting the king's rents in Islay and elsewhere, perhaps an indication that the Macleans were then

trying to establish their rights to these lands by force (*ALC*: 81, 88). They were incorporated into their barony of Duart (*RMS*, 1607–33: no. 1610) and with the neighbouring lands of Scanistie and Killelegan made a tidy estate in this region of Islay. The Macleans would have controlled it from their island dwelling, ‘Ellan Charrin’, according to Monro in 1549, in Loch Ballygrant (Loch a’ Chùirn) (Munro 1961: 56; Caldwell 2017: 83).

Despite the documents stretching beyond 1614 showing that the Macleans held Robolls and Kepolls, the reality may have been that these lands, along with Kepollsmore and Kepollsbeg (held in tack by the MacDonalds from 1562), and most or all of the lands in our survey area, were effectively under the control of the MacDonalds for most of the 16th century. Indeed, there is a petition of c 1600 by Islay tenants to the Privy Council, expressing their continued support for the rule of the MacDonalds. The signatories include ‘Neill Makphetr. [?] of Kepposiche’ (Neil MacPhedran of Kepolls) (Smith 1895: 450–51). The 1614 charter of Islay to Campbell of Cawdor, along with later rentals, demonstrates that any continuing Maclean claim was not realised.

The farms

The study area (Illus 3.5) has already been defined as the area of the farms of Sean-ghairt, Portanellan, Mulreesh, Robolls and Kepollsmore, as shown on the map of Islay surveyed by Stephen McDougall, 1749–51. Of these farms, only Portanellan and Kepollsmore developed into improved single-tenancy farms, the former being renamed Finlaggan from the 1860s. The land of Sean-ghairt is now farmed by the tenant of the neighbouring farm of Ballimartin, and much of Robolls is joined with Kepollsmore. Mulreesh is farmed with Auchnaclach.

A ledger in the Islay Estate papers (Mitchell Library: TD 1338/2/2/34) containing valuations of the wood in houses and barns, byres, etc across the estate covering the years 1854–55 appears to relate to a large-scale clearance of tenants at that time. This was not total and immediate, on the basis of evidence from rentals, but only Kepollsmore seems to have been left as a functioning joint tenancy farm, until the end of the 19th century. Several of its houses are still shown as roofed on the Ordnance Survey 1st edition map of 1878. The woodwork listed, including roof timbers, window frames and doors, was considered the property of the tenants who therefore had to be compensated for it. All the lands in our study area, with the exception of Robolls, are included in the ledger under the date February 1855 (Table 14.2). Occupation of Robolls by tenants who farmed the land may have ceased at an earlier day to make way for lead mining.

Sean-ghairt

Sean-ghairt is Gaelic for ‘the old field’, in the sense of one long cultivated (Macniven 2015: 281). Earlier variants include Sengart in 1507 and Shengart in 1722. Five other Islay farms recorded as early as the 16th century also contain this word *gart*, for field. Sean-ghairt appears from 1507 as a 16s 8d land, but by 1722 was assessed as a quarterland because, as we suggest below, it by then included the land of Laichtcarlane.

The marriage contract of Margaret, daughter of George Campbell, wadsetter of Ballachlaven, with Mr John Darroch,

minister of Gigha, was signed at Kilarrow and Sean-ghairt on 29 and 31 October 1632 (Campbell 1926: 283, no. 104). It is clear from contemporary rentals that Sean-ghairt was then rented by this George Campbell, the progenitor of an Islay family that held the lands of Ballachlaven well into the 18th century. The signing of such a document at Sean-ghairt might suggest that he had a residence there. Sean-ghairt continued to be held by Campbell gentlemen into the 18th century, including Donald (1654 x 1676) and John of Ballachlaven from 1698. The hearth tax of 1693 lists three hearths for Sean-ghairt. In 1722 it was divided between Archibald Campbell, brother of Campbell of Elister, and Colin Campbell of Dail. In 1733 it was held by Neil Maclean.

The whole of Sean-ghairt was leased jointly to Duncan, Colin and Archibald MacCallum, John, Archibald and Neil MacLachlan, Finlay MacArthur and Donald MacNeill for 23 years from Whitsunday 1778 (Mitchell Library: TD 1338/2/1/4, no. 56). Then in 1815 half of Sean-ghairt was taken on by the farmer, Donald Campbell, of the neighbouring farm of Ballimartin. It was either he or one of his successors, James McAlpine, who developed Ballimartin as an improved farm. There is a note in the 1834 rental that the latter was repaying a loan for the building of stone dykes, and a plan of Ballimartin of about this time apparently shows some of the drystone dykes on the Ballimartin half of Sean-ghairt already in place. The journalist John Murdoch, born 1818, wrote that in his boyhood Campbell of Ballimartin, with his sister and brother, was reckoned among the small group of gentry in Islay (Murdoch & Hunter 1986: 47).

From 1841 Ballimartin was farmed by Robert Cross. Unlike his predecessors, he may have been an incomer to the island, first of all farming for two or three years at Carrabus. In 1839 he had exhibited Ayrshire cows in a sweepstake organised by the Islay Association (Storrie 1988: 3, 6), suggesting, perhaps, that he was primarily a dairy farmer.

The other half of Sean-ghairt remained as a joint tenancy farm with as many as seven tenants. The 1841 census demonstrates there were then 11 houses occupied, dropping to 8 in 1851 and 2 in 1861. Sean-ghairt must have been abandoned fairly soon afterwards.

The snapshot provided by the 1841 census shows that there was a total of 56 men, women and children in residence. Four of the heads of households are described as farmers, four others as agricultural labourers, another as a tailor and the remaining two as spinning women. In 1851 there were four farmers (two of them widowers), a joiner, two widows and a farm labourer as heads of households. The farmers in 1851 were all different from those in 1841, and the only household to remain the same from 1841 to 1851 was that of the widow Elizabeth Carmichael, a spinning woman with her two daughters Janet and Christina, described as house servants.

The valuation of the wood lists the houses and outbuildings of four tenants. It is not clear whether these were the only occupied houses at that time, the surveyors’ job was incomplete or other houses contained no wood of any value. (The entries below and later in this section from the valuation of wood are not exact transcripts. Place-names and surnames have been standardised.)

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Sean-ghairt: Donald Lamont, February 1855

5 couples [pairs of roof supports] with rubbs [ribs: horizontal roof timbers joining couples] in room and kitchen

3 doors with cases [frames], 2 windows

Barn: 2 couples with rubbs, 2 doors and cases

Stable: 1 couple with rubbs, 2 doors and cases; cows ravell [rail fixed to the top of the stakes in a byre to which cows were tethered], 1 loft with 2 joists

Stirk house: 2 couples with rubbs, 1 door and case

Duncan MacNab, February 1855

3 couples with rubbs in room and kitchen

3 doors and cases, 2 windows, 1 loft with joists

Stable and byre: 2 couples with rubbs, 1 door and case; loft with 2 joists, 1 heck [rack for fodder] and manger

Stable no. 2: 1 couple and 1 joist, 1 heck and 1 door

Barn: 2 couples with rubbs, 2 doors and cases

Cart house: rubbs for roof with loft and door lintel

Sheep house: 2 couples with rubbs and 1 door

Neil MacCallum, February 1855

5 couples with rubbs in room and kitchen

Stable: 2 couples with rubbs, 1 door and case; 1 heck, 1 manger and 2 travishes [partitions]

Sheep house and stirk house: 2 couples, 2 hecks, 1 manger

Son Donald's house: 1 loft with 3 joists, 1 chimney vent of wood

Laichtcarlane

Laichtcarlane makes its earliest appearance in the first crown rental of 1507. Later variations of the name include Leackharlun (1631) and Lekharlum (1651). Alan Macniven (pers comm) has suggested that this might be Gaelic *Leac Fhirléighinn ('lector's stone/learned man').

Laichtcarlane is linked in 1507 with a unit of Portanellan valued as an eighth. Since the two together were assessed at £1 13s 4d, Laichtcarlane must also have been a 16s 8d or eighth land. In the 1628 rental Laichtcarlane is joined with Sean-ghairt, also a 16s 8d land on the basis of the 1507 rental. Sean-ghairt and Laichtcarlane continued to be linked together in rentals at least until 1686. Laichtcarlane then disappears and Sean-ghairt appears in the 1722 rental as a quarterland, presumably because it now included the lands of Laichtcarlane.

On this basis it can be suggested that Laichtcarlane was located between Sean-ghairt and Portanellan. There is a ruined settlement to the south-west of Loch Finlaggan (no. 22) to which the late Mathew MacMillan, the farmer of nearby Ballmartin, gave the name Druim a' Chùirn (Gaelic for 'hill of the cairn'). This name does not appear in any rentals, census or suchlike. It was clearly part of Sean-ghairt as outlined by MacDougall, and, indeed, equates with the house symbol on his map. If this were the original Sean-ghairt settlement, then Laichtcarlane might have been in the region of the later Sean-ghairt settlement (nos 23, 24) overlooking Loch Finlaggan, where there is indeed evidence for a field system (no. 16), potentially of medieval date.

Portanellan/Finlaggan

Portanellan means 'the port of the island' in Gaelic. The earliest version of the name, in the rental of 1507, Portalanylnagane,

shows that it was the 'ferry point of Findlugán's Island'. It appears in the crown rentals of 1541 simply as Ellenynegane or Ellemyn-gane, the 'Island of Findlugán', confirming that Eilean Mór was part of Portanellan.

In the 1507 rental Portanellan is listed as two units: the £1 13s 4d land of Portalanylnagane and the eighth land of Portalanylnagane, which with Laichtcarlane was assessed at £1 13s 4d. The whole land of Portanellan should therefore have extended to £2 10s. This is the value set on the whole of it in the crown rentals of 1541, in the 1562 tack of Islay lands to James MacDonald of Dunyvaig and the Glens, and the 1614 charter of Islay to Campbell of Cawdor. Portanellan was of greater value than most other Islay lands.

In rentals from 1628 Portanellan was set with the lands of Mulreesh, Kylladow and Quinskirn. The total extent of these lands is given in 1628 as £3, made up of 3 aughtenparts and an 8s 4d and a 20d (1s 8d) land. Mulreesh, known in later times to have been valued at 16s 8d, was detached from this grouping by 1642. In 1695 there is no mention of Kylladow and Quinskirn, but the extent of Portanellan is given as 5 leorthas and a cowland (£2 1s 8d + 3s 4d = £2 5s?). Kylladow and Quinskirn make a last appearance with Portanellan in the rental of 1722 with an extent of £2 2s 8d defined as a quarterland, a leorthas and half a cowland. Thereafter, Portanellan appears in 1733 as a quarterland and 3 cowlands and in 1741 as 5 leorthas.

Quinskirn, if not Kylladow, was included in the bounds of Portanellan as defined in the mid-18th century. The apparent drop in value of Portanellan by a leorthas from the beginning of the 16th century to the middle of the 18th century may be caused, firstly, by the separate listing of Quinskirn and Kylladow, followed by their drop in value and merger once again with Portanellan. A marginal note on Portanellan in the 1722 rental describes it as a good large possession both for sowing and stock, and the core of it has remained in agricultural use until modern times.

The fate of Portanellan immediately after the 1493 forfeiture of the lords of the Isles is uncertain. In 1541 Donald MacGillespie was recognised as crown tenant of this land along with the nearby quarterlands of Staoisha and Balole (*ER* 17: 636). His grave-slab (R11; Illus 9.18) is still at the ruined chapel on Eilean Mór and gives his father as Patrick, otherwise unrecorded. The family's links with Finlaggan prior to the 1540s are suggested by the fact that one Sir Malcolm MacGillespie was chaplain of Finlaggan from February 1503 until his death sometime before 24 September 1508. His father was Dungal, possibly the same person as Dougald MacGillespie, who witnessed a charter of the lord of the Isles in Islay in 1479 and was one of the temporary sheriffs appointed in 1499 to give sasine of Islay lands to MacIain of Ardnamurchan (Munro & Munro 1986: 185; Argyll transcripts: 2.2.599).

It is tempting to speculate that Malcolm MacGillespie's ancestors might have been keepers of Finlaggan in the days of the lordship. His status as a gentleman of Clann Iain Mhóir is well illustrated by his image as a warrior on his grave-slab, along with a carving of a galley. There were still MacGillespies at Finlaggan in the early 1630s, but then reduced to the rank of joint tenants. In 1631 John MacGillespie had a 16s 8d land and Gillecillum MacGillespie an 8s 4d land. There were then five other tenants in the joint

holding of Portanellan, Mulreesh, Kylladow and Quinskirn. MacGillespies probably continued to live at Portanellan well into the 17th century. Only in 1642 does one reappear as one of six joint tenants – Gillecillum – possibly the same as was there in 1631.

Rentals indicate that this joint holding, along with Staoisha, Mullinmadagan and Margadale, was feued as early as 1628 to George Campbell. He was the younger son of Sir John, the first Campbell laird of Islay. He led the Islay contingent of troops to Ireland to do service with the Covenanting army but had to return late in 1642 to become tutor for his brother, John the Fiar. He wrote an anxious letter from Ballycastle in Ireland on 4 July that year expressing concerns about the reports he had heard of his lands in Islay being wasted by the rebels and his wife threatened. This lady was Janet, a daughter of Campbell of Dunstaffnage, notorious for rounding up MacDonald supporters in the night, binding them hand and foot, and transporting them to deserted rocks and islands where they were left to die (Innes 1859: 286–88; Campbell 1926: 248–9).

Also in 1642, George succeeded his uncle to the estate of Airds in North Argyll, and he seems to have ceased having a direct personal interest in holding Islay property. From then on the evidence points to Portanellan being set to tacksmen. In 1644 and 1645 it was held by Gillecillum MacGillreick. In 1654 Neil Og (MacNeill) and Hector MacNeill had it, and then from 1655 to 1686 Hector alone. This Hector was probably the same as Hector MacNeill of Ardbeg, a farm on the south coast of the island (Cawdor muniments, 590/41). He is also described in the accounts of the Chamberlain of Islay for 1684 to 1687 as a drover, paid for driving Islay cattle to Falkirk (Cawdor muniments, 655/129). Falkirk was one of the main trysts (markets) for cattle from soon after 1707 and well into the 19th century (Haldane 2002: 138–43).

By 1694 Portanellan was set to John Campbell of Ballachlaven, and from sometime after 1722 to Coll MacAlaster, until his death in 1747. Coll may have come from Kintyre to Islay in the service of the new laird, Daniel Campbell of Shawfield, when he acquired the island in 1723. In 1724 Coll was appointed bailie for the north part of Islay (Ramsay 1991: 4) and was later bailie for the whole island. By 1741 along with Portanellan he held Staoin, a leorthas of land in Kildalton parish, Eallabus, the Mill of Kilarow (also known as Eallabus or Glengeoy) and Knockans, all at the head of Loch Indaal.

Coll's last will and testament (NRS CC12/3/4, fols 62–68, 73–75) gives much useful information on him and his possessions. His main residence was possibly at Glengeoy (Eallabus), where he had 'ane new sclatehouse', that is, a house with a slate roof, an unusual feature on the island at that time. He also had a house at Portanellan and a byre. As tenant, he only claimed in his will the standing timber of this house, as was usual until the 1770s. Substantial pieces of timber for roof couples being of considerable value, tenants normally took them with them when they flitted (Ramsay 1991: 223). The roof covering was presumably of thatch. The only items of value in the byre which were claimed by Coll were the 'byre stakes' – the stakes to which the cattle were tied. The will also makes mention of some of Coll's tenants at Portanellan, including Duncan MacQuilkan, Neil MacQuilkan, Malcolm MacArthur, Donald Campbell, Donald MacEachern and John MacEachern. He also had there over 30 cows and

bullocks, as well as ten horses, some of which were presumably retained for ploughing.

Archibald MacLachlan, first noticed as a merchant in Kilarow in 1749, was tacksman of Portanellan by 1770 (Ramsay 1890: 36; Mitchell Library: TD 1338/3/4/1, Petition of Comprisement of Damages). He had, however, relinquished this farm by 1780, perhaps because it was a centre of attention by the lead miners. The rental of that year shows he had farming interests elsewhere in the island.

Rentals from 1780 onwards show Portanellan held jointly by several tenants, six in that year rising to as many as ten in 1826–27. The 1828 rental contains a note about the multitude of disorderly cottars and the removal of some to 'the muir', presumably meaning the lots at Glenegedale, Torra and Duich laid out at this time for displaced tenants (Storrie 1997: 130). The 1841 census lists 14 houses, with the occupants including seven farmers, two weavers and a carpenter. Many of the residents were surnamed Bell and Lamont. Unlike many other farms in Islay, Portanellan does not seem to have had a nucleated township in the late 18th or early 19th century. The key to why this was may lie in the preceding period from the mid-17th century, when it was continuously in the hands of a succession of tacksmen who may either not have lived on this toun or who may have had no interest in it apart from collecting the rents. Perhaps a pattern of dispersed settlement developed then was so well established that it could not readily be uprooted.

The census of 1861 gives some clues as to where the occupants of Portanellan were distributed right at the end of the farm's existence as a joint tenancy. Archibald Bell is listed as a farmer of about 100 acres, aged 73, along with his wife Janet, resident at Backton. This has to be the settlement (no. 37) of Cùl a' Bhaile, which means 'back of the toun' in Gaelic. Archibald first appears as a tenant at Portanellan in 1833.

There were three houses at 'Buall-vhic' in 1861, clearly an attempt at Buaille Mhic Iante. These houses must have been swept away a few years later to make way for the cottage, sheepfold and milking parlour (no. 2) that presently occupy the site.

There were also three houses at 'Lechacruath' or 'Leckchua', lived in in 1861 by Archibald Kennedy, a weaver, Archibald McPhail, an agricultural labourer, and Margaret McEachern, a pauper. The identification of this place is difficult, but the name may be a garbled version of Luachrach. The Abhainn an t-Srath Luachrach (Gaelic for 'the river of the valley of the rushes') forms the old boundary between Portanellan and Balulive, and on its tributary the Allt a' Chromain (Gaelic for 'stream of the kite') is a settlement (no. 35), perhaps the one in question. Archibald McPhail was still dwelling there in 1871.

There were two families living at 'Tomb' in 1861, that of Alexander Keith, a ploughman, and Duncan McDougall, a carpenter. This might be identified as the settlement at Cnoc Seannda, at the Finlaggan Visitor Centre. The prominent mound here had been considered by locals to be a burial place, and evidence for prehistoric burials has now been excavated on its summit (no. 46).

Other houses occupied in the 1840s and 1850s were presumably on the site of the present Finlaggan Farm, and it is probable that the houses at Airigh Iain Mhartuin, An Leacann and Goirtean Chailean (nos 31–33) were in use in this period.

The valuation of the wood lists five houses of tenants along with farm buildings and cottars' houses in February 1855:

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Portanellan: John Smith

4 couples with rubbs in room and kitchen
2 windows, 3 doors and cases, 1 loft with 3 joists
Stable: 2 couples and rubbs, 1 door and case; 3 joists with loft above
Barn: 2 couples with rubbs, 2 doors and cases
Pig house: rubbs for roof
Cottar's house: 2 couples, 2 doors, 2 windows

Archibald Bell

4 couples in room and kitchen with rubbs
1 loft in room, 4 doors and cases, 4 windows
Stable: 1 couple with rubbs, 1 door and case
Byre: 1 couple with rubbs, 1 door and case; 1 loft with joists, cows ravell
Byre no. 2: 2 couples with rubbs, 1 door and case; cows ravells for 9 cows
Stable no. 2: 2 couples, 1 door and case; 1 heck and 1 manger 13½ft (4.11m) long (new)
Barn: 3 couples with rubbs, 2 doors and cases
Cart house: rubbs for roof and door lintel
2 pig houses: containing 2 couples and 1 door
Cottar's house: 1 couple with rubbs
Cottar's house: 3 couples, 2 doors, 2 windows
Cottar's house: 3 couples with rubbs
Cottar's house: 3 couples, 2 windows, 2 doors
Cottar's house: 1 couple with rubbs

Malcolm Bell

4 couples in room and kitchen with rubbs
4 doors and cases, 2 windows, 1 loft with four joists
Byre: 2 couples with rubbs, 1 door and case; 1 loft with 5 joists, cows ravell for 5 cows
Byre no. 2: 1 couple with rubbs, 1 door and case; 4 joists with loft and cows ravell for 4 cows
Byre no. 3: 2 couples, 1 door and case, loft with 4 joists; cows ravell for 8 cows
Barn: 3 couples with rubbs, 2 doors and cases
Stable: 1 couple with rubbs, 1 door and case; 1 heck and manger and 1 travish
Cart house: rubbs for roof and door lintel
Pig house: rubbs for roof and 1 door
Sheep house: 1 couple with rubbs, 1 door and case
Cottar's house: 3 couples with rubbs, 1 door and case
Cottar's house: 3 couples with rubbs, 1 door and case

Neil Bell

6 couples in room and kitchen with rubbs
3 doors with cases, 2 windows, 1 loft in kitchen
Barn: 5 couples with rubbs, 2 doors and cases
Stable: 2 couples with rubbs, 1 door and case; 1 heck and 1 manger
Byre: 2 couples with rubbs, 1 door and case; cows ravell for 5 cows, 1 heck
Stirk house: rubbs for roof, 1 door, 1 heck
Calf house: rubbs for roof, 1 door, ravell for 4 cows
Cottar's house: 3 couples, 1 window, 1 door and case
Cottar's house: 3 couples, 2 doors and 1 window

Heirs of Gilbert Lamond

6 couples with rubbs in room and kitchen
1 loft with 7 joists, 15ft by 14ft 3in (4.57 by 4.34m)
3 doors and cases, 4 windows, 1 press in room

1 mantle piece, 1 press in room
Milk house: rubbs for roof and 2 doors with cases
Barn: 4 couples, 2 doors and cases
Byre: 2 couples with rubbs, 1 door and case; cows ravell for 5 cows, 1 loft with 3 joists
Byre no. 2: 4 couples with rubbs, 1 door and case; cows ravell for 11 cows
Byre no. 3: 2 couples with rubbs, 1 door and case; cows ravell for 6 cows
Byre no. 4: 4 couples, cows ravell for 5 cows, 1 heck
Byre no. 5: 1 couple, cows ravell for 5 cows
Stable: 2 couples with rubbs, 1 door and case; heck, manger and travishes
Potato house: 3 couples with rubbs, 1 door and case
Turnip house: 2 couples with rubbs, 1 door and case
Cart house: rubbs for a roof and door lintel
Stirk house: 1 couple with rubbs and 1 door
House for young cattle: 1 couple, 1 heck, 1 door and case
Sheep house and pig house: 1 couple in each
Potato house no. 2: 2 couples with rubbs, 1 door and case
Cottar's house: 3 couples with rubbs
Cottar's house: 3 couples with rubbs
Cottar's house: 3 couples with rubbs

In 1863 most of Portanellan, then all of it from 1865, was let to a single tenant, John Thomson. From 1867 a new name, Finlaggan, was adopted for the farm, and has been retained ever since. Thomson was followed from 1871 to 1885 by the brothers Alexander and James Greenlees, recorded in Islay Estate rentals and valuation rolls as having farmed Finlaggan, Mulreesh and Robolls. The Greenleeses were whisky distillers in Campbeltown, and in 1880 James Greenlees was one of the founders of the Bunnahabhain Distillery on the Sound of Islay (Mitchell Library: TD 1338/1/5/2/1). Perhaps they farmed separately, one using the steading at Finlaggan (no. 1), the other Buaile Mhic Iante (no. 2).

In the time of the Greenleeses, if not Thomson, much of Finlaggan, like much of the rest of Islay, was given over to sheep. The date can be determined by the remarks of John Nicolls, mine manager, Robolls, at an interview by the Royal Commission (Highlands and Islands, 1892) at Bridgend in 1894. He reported that he had lived in the island for the previous 18 years and in that time the present system of large sheep farms had proved rather disastrous for the island and the community. He said he had been told by the farmer of Finlaggan and Robolls, at the time he sold up, that after 15 years he had not made a brown penny (Royal Commission (Highlands and Islands 1892): 827).

Mulreesh

Mulreesh makes a first appearance in the rentals in 1628. Early versions of the name include Mulris (1631) and Mulreiss (1674). It has been explained as meaning 'the slope of the exposed hill' in Gaelic (Macniven 2015: 275). Prior to 1628 Mulreesh may have been part of the neighbouring farm of Scanistle. Scanistle, reckoned as a quarterland plus an aughtenpart land, was among the lands granted to MacIain of Ardnamurchan in 1494 and to Maclean of Duart in 1542. In rentals from 1628 to 1633 Mulreesh was set with other lands, including Portanellan. Its extent is first recorded in 1722 as 16s 8d or an aughtenpart. It was probably set to tacksmen, or held by the laird for his own cattle, as in the years from 1674 to 1676, all the way through the 17th and 18th centuries.

In the 19th century Mulreesh was rented to two, three or four tenants jointly before being incorporated in the new farm of Finlaggan rented by Alexander and James Greenlees from 1871 to 1885.

The valuation of the wood lists three houses of tenants along with farm buildings and cottars' houses in February 1855:

Hugh MacDermid

3 couples in dwelling house, 1 window, 2 doors and cases
 Son's house: 2 couples with rubbs, 1 door and case, 1 window
 Barn: 4 couples with rubbs, 2 doors and cases
 Stable: 2 couples with rubbs, 1 door and case; 1 heck, manger and travish
 Byre: 2 couples with rubbs, 1 door and case; cows ravell for 6 cows
 Potato house: 2 couples with rubbs, 1 door and case

Duncan MacDermid

4 couples with rubbs in room and kitchen
 6 joists of wood in room, 1 mantle piece
 6 joists of wood in kitchen, 1 loft in byre with 3 joists
 3 doors with cases, 2 windows
 cows ravell for 6 cows
 Barn: 4 couples with rubbs, 2 doors and cases
 Potato house: 2 couples with rubbs, 1 window
 Byre: 2 couples with rubbs, 1 door and case
 Stirk house: 2 couples with rubs; cows ravell in byre for 7 cows
 Turnip house: 4 couples with rubbs
 Stable: 1 couple with rubbs, 1 door and case, 1 heck
 Sheep house: 1 couple with rubbs, 1 door
 Cart houses: rubbs for roof in 2 cart houses
 Cottar's house: 2 couples with rubbs, 2 windows
 Cottar's house: 2 couples with rubbs, 1 door and case
 Cottar's house: rubbs for roof, 1 door and case

John Campbell

8 couples in room and kitchen with rubbs
 3 doors with cases, 2 windows
 Cows ravell for 5 cows, loft with 4 joists
 Byre: 3 couples with rubbs, 1 door and case; cows ravell for 12 cows
 Stable: 2 couples with rubbs, 1 door and frame; heck, manger and 2 travishes; 1 loft with joists
 Barn: 4 couples with rubbs, 2 doors and cases
 Sheep house: 2 hecks
 Cottar's house: 2 couples with rubbs, 1 door and case
 Cottar's house: 1 couple with rubs

In 1885 some of Mulreesh was detached and subdivided into eight crofts. In 1894 one of the Mulreesh crofters, Neil MacArthur, gave evidence in Gaelic to a meeting of the Royal Commission (Highlands and Islands, 1892). He read the following statement:

I am 54 years of age and reside at Mulrees, in the parish of Kilmeny, Island of Islay, county of Argyll. I know Mulrees and Portnellan well, and have for the past thirty-five years lived on it. When I first knew it, it was in the possession of six small farmers, viz, Mr Gilbert Lamont, Mr Neil Bell, Mr Godfrey Lamont, Mr Malcolm Bell, Mr John Smith, and Mr Archibald Bell. All these lost their farms, but how, I am not in a position to say. The whole of these holdings were

put into one large farm. At the expiration of the lease held by Messrs Greenlees, we applied to Mr Ballingal, factor, for a small park which was at that time overgrown with rushes, heather, and rough grass, with a lot of lime rock jutting through here and there, and all brought about for the want of turning over. I am now in possession of about three acres of aforesaid park, from which I derived a fair return, on account of the way in which I work and manure it. Only part of my time is now taken up with the cultivation of the land I now hold, it being so small: other parts of my time are occupied in working for other people when I can get it. Sometimes I have nothing to do, and would like a little more land to occupy my spare time. I could easily manage twice or thrice the quantity of arable land if I could get it. I find it a very serious drawback in consequence of having no hill pasture on which to graze my beasts. I would be quite satisfied if I could get the matter of a few acres more of arable land along with some hill pasture, which would enable me to keep a sufficient number of cattle to make dung to manure the land and keep up its strength. I have cows already and money to buy more could I get grazing for them. I have to send those I now have away for grazing, which is very expensive and difficult to get. In fact, I consider it a great favour to get it at all, and feel myself more or less under an obligation to the party granting it. I am fully persuaded that the land we ask for might be granted beneficially to me and the like of me without injuring any party.

In the ensuing examination MacArthur indicated that he was one of six crofters then living at Mulreesh. Two other crofts were then empty, and he and one of the other crofters farmed this land along with their own. None of the other five crofters had any hill pasture; only two of them, like him, had one or two cows. Only one of them had a horse and there were no sheep. MacArthur believed that these crofts had been created at least seven years previously (Royal Commission (Highlands and Islands 1892): 835–36).

The Royal Commission which took MacArthur's evidence was charged with inquiring whether any land given over for deer, grouse or grazing could be better used by crofters or other small tenants. Nothing came of this, as far as is known, for MacArthur and his fellow crofters, who were hemmed in by not only large farms but also the Mulreesh lead mine, then probably not being worked (Callender & Macaulay 1984: 13). The creation of small regular crofts like those at Mulreesh, while typical of much of the West Highlands and Islands at this time, was exceptional in Islay (Storrie 1997: 174), where it appears the landowners and the tenants of the new large farms were unprepared to release land that they might have used themselves.

Quinskirn

The name Quinskirn equates with Cuing-sgeir on the Ordnance Survey maps just to the north-east of Loch Finlaggan where there are substantial traces of earlier cultivation (no. 18). There is a rocky outcrop adjacent to a burn that may be the actual 'yoke skerry' (?) (Gaelic *cuing*, 'yoke'; *sgeir*, 'skerry'). As Quhymmsgyrme it is described as a 3/-land in a tack of 1562, that is a small holding,

possibly a cowland. Fluctuating extents for Portanellan and the other lands grouped with it might imply that Quinskirn had risen in value by the early 17th century and then declined prior to its disappearance from the rentals after 1722. By the middle of the 18th century it was clearly within the bounds of Portanellan as depicted on the MacDougall map. Its drop in value and abandonment for arable cultivation are possibly connected with lead mining activity (see no. 4).

Kylladow

The location of Kylladow is uncertain, as is its etymology – possibly Gaelic *cealla dubh(a)*, meaning ‘black cells’. The name seems to have disappeared with the farm, last included in rentals in 1722. It is first recorded in the rental of 1631 as *Kylledo* and is invariably grouped with Quinskirn and Portanellan as a joint holding. It is possible that it was adjacent to Quinskirn, and that some of the rigs and fields (no. 18) identified as belonging to Quinskirn are actually Kylladow. Its extent cannot be deduced from any of the rentals, but it was probably only ever a small unit of land, perhaps the same as Quinskirn. If we are right in seeing Quinskirn and Kylladow as small units detached from Portanellan, the two together might originally have extended to one *leorthas* (8s 4d), since that is the amount that Portanellan dropped from its early 16th-century extent of £2 10s.

Robolls

Robolls on the east side of Loch Finlaggan is one of the Islay farms with a Norse *bólstaðr* name. The specific is Old Norse *ró*, ‘a nook’ or ‘corner’ (Gammeltoft 2001: 143; Macniven 2015: 278). Robolls is grouped together with Kepolls as a quarterland in the MacInnes grant of 1494, each presumably being valued as an *aucht-enpart*. The main residence at Robolls was clearly the island dwelling of Eilean Mhuireill (no. 61). That the bailie should have had a residence, if not his main one, within sight and easy reach of Finlaggan makes good sense. Robolls is not included in the rentals of 1541–42 which might, tentatively, be taken as an indication that it was then in the hands of the MacDonalds of Dunyvaig or possibly the Macleans of Duart.

The 1614 charter of Islay to John Campbell of Cawdor includes the 16/8 land of Robolls. In the rental of 1628, Robolls is listed with two other properties, Kepolls Lachlane and Tawnach. In the rentals of 1630 and 1631, Tannach Robolls or Robolls Tannach is clearly a single unit. Tannach is Gaelic for a ‘green or fertile field’, especially in waste or heathery ground (Watson 1993: 148), and is represented on maps by the modern place-name, An Tàmhanachd, referring to the lower slopes of Robolls Hill facing Loch Finlaggan, where there is extensive evidence for earlier field systems (no. 20).

From at least 1628 onwards Robolls seems to have been in the possession of the Campbells of Ballachlaven, for most of the time as a wadset. An inventory of the feus and wadsets of Islay delivered to the new owner of Islay, Daniel Campbell of Shawfield, in 1727 includes two documents of relevance here (Cawdor muniments, 654/d 10–11). The first is a wadset, dated 20 July 1678, arranged between Sir Hugh Campbell of Islay and John Campbell of Ballachlaven of the lands of Ballachlaven and others,

redeemable for 2,200 merks (£1,466 13s 4d). The second is dated 5 September 1695 and is in the same terms as the first, but with the redemption figure upped to 3,000 merks (£2,000).

The rental of 1695 lists Ballachlaven, Keppolls and Robolls together as two quarterlands. The 1722 rental, however, has Ballachlaven and Robolls alone as two quarterlands. It thus appears that Robolls jumped in extent from 16s 8d to £1 13s 4d between 1695 and 1722.

The explanation in this case is that another extensive area of arable was now reckoned as part of Robolls. This would be the land now partially covered by the Ballygrant Plantation, Ballygrant Inn (formerly Robolls House) and the recent fields to the north-east of the inn. They are within the farm of Robolls as defined by the mid-18th-century map of Islay, which apparently locates the settlement of Robolls here rather than at An Tàmhanachd. Here too Andrew McLean probably had his inn. His gravestone in the Kilmeny burial ground records his death in April 1748 at the age of 48 (McWee & Ruckley 2002: 59).

The fact that ‘Tannach’ was early used to distinguish one part of Robolls might suggest that this land was always understood to consist of two parts amounting to £1 13s 4d in extent, but, if so, this other Robolls was not listed as such in any of the rentals. We will show below that it was Kepolls (McKeorie).

Robolls never developed into a joint tenancy farm but passed from the hands of tacksmen in the 19th century to those of new improved farmers. Andrew Campbell may have marked the transition in the 1820s and 1830s. He was one of the founder members of the Islay Association in 1838 and its first secretary (Storrie 1988: 3–4). Census evidence from 1851 shows that the land was still occupied by about 50 people living in 12 houses. None of them were listed as farmers, but they included a blacksmith, a seamstress, a tailor, a shoemaker, a merchant and a farm overseer. The blacksmith, Duncan Campbell, may have had his smiddy overlooking Loch Finlaggan among earlier (?) mine workings (no. 6). The farm overseer was Donald McKenzie, who from 1827 to 1833 had farmed part of Robolls. Now he may have managed all of it for Charles McNeill, the farmer from the 1840s to the 1860s.

Charles McNeill probably did not live at Robolls, at least from the late 1850s, when he also took on Rockside over at Kilchoman. The Greenlees brothers who had Robolls from 1871 lived at Finlaggan. McNeill and the Greenleeses had no modern farm-steading at Robolls and may only have used the land for grazing beasts. Robolls House was probably built soon after 1851, at the same time as the settlement of Robolls (no. 56) was deserted. Robolls House was from 1869 the house of the manager of the Islay Mining Company.

When the Greenleeses gave up Finlaggan, Mulreesh and Robolls in 1885, Robolls was taken on by Edward Fletcher, who also farmed at Kepolls. He purchased a share of the Greenleeses’ sheep for Robolls, amounting to 434 animals at a total cost of £736 3s 6d (Booth 1983: 74–75).

From the mid- to late 19th century the schoolteacher for the parish school of Kilmeny was Hector Maclean, a local man, the tutor and collaborator of the folklorist John Francis Campbell of Islay. The school and schoolhouse lay just within the bounds of Robolls.

Kepolls and Kepollsmore

Kepolls is obviously another Norse *bólstaðr* name with the Gaelic *mór* ('great') added to distinguish Kepollsmore. It has been suggested that Kepolls might mean farm of the gatherings of people (MacEacharna 1976: 119), but another scholar in a specialist study on *bólstaðr* names more recently considered that the specific is too worn to be readily determinable (Gammeltoft 2001: 128). Macniven (2015: 268) suggests that it might be Old Norse *kappi* ('champion'), *kjappi* ('billy goat') or else *keipr* ('rowlock'). It has also been Gaelicised as Ceapasadh, as in the name of the fort, Dùn Ceapasaidh Mór. Early spellings include Capolse (1494), Keipbolse (1499), Capollismoir (1509) and Keapolsaybeg (1562).

At least three different lands of Kepolls are listed in early documents: Kepollsmore, Kepollsbeg and Kepolls Mckeorie, according to the 1614 charter of Islay to Campbell of Cawdor. Kepollsmore is consistently reckoned in documents as a quarterland, and Kepollsbeg and Kepolls Mckeorie both aughtenpart lands, giving a total extent of 5 merks for a greater Kepolls.

Kepollsmore first appears in the 1507 rental. The rental of 1541 gives its tenant, along with Kepollsbeg and the nearby land of Baile Tharbach, as Doule McIlfee, presumably 'Dugalli Roy Makoffee, officarii et receptoris firmarum Medie Warde de Ilay' (Dugald Roy MacPhie, bailie of the Midward of Islay) (*ER* 17: 545). It is possible that the Archibald McKoffee to whom £5 worth of land in Islay was set in 1506 was an ancestor already in possession of Kepollsmore and Kepollsbeg (*ER* 17: 709), and that the MacPhies remained in these lands, tenants either of the MacIans, the MacDonalds or the crown from the beginning of the 16th century to the 1540s. The main base of the MacPhies (or MacDuffies) was the neighbouring island of Colonsay, but the foothold of one branch of the family here beside Finlaggan may not be unconnected with their traditional role as hereditary keepers of the records of the Lordship of the Isles (MacPhail 1914: 25).

Kepollsbeg, which first appears in the rental of 1541, is clearly the same holding as Little Kepolls, granted to John MacIan of Ardnamurchan in 1494. It had an extent of 16s 8d. Kepolls Mckeorie, also with an extent of 16s 8d, has to be the Kepolls granted to MacIan in 1494 and given to Hector Maclean of Duart in 1542. The 'Mckeorie' does not appear to be a surname, though it did give rise to the form 'Kelpolsmuckean' in 1662 (*Retours* 1: no. 68), an obvious attempt to relate the land to its possession by the MacIans. Mckeorie might possibly be a garbled attempt at the Gaelic (genitive *macharach*) for 'the low-lying parts of a farm'. It could then be identified as the same holding as the 'Keapols Lachlans' (Lachlans = Scots 'lowlands') included in the 1631 rental.

Confusion is caused by the appearance of 'duabus Keipbolse' ('the two Kepolls') with an extent of 5 marks (£3 6s 8d) in the charter of 1499, which rewarded MacIan of Ardnamurchan for capturing John MacDonald of Dunyvaig and the Glens and his son. It appears that the lands of Kepolls and Little Kepolls already granted to MacIan five years earlier are included, mistakenly, along with Kepollsmore. The error is not rectified in later documents concerning the MacIan inheritance, for example in the sasine of the MacIan lands given to Mariota MacIan in 1538 (*ER* 17: 750–51), which continue to list the five-mark lands of the Two Kepolls as well as the two aughtenpart lands of Kepolls and Little Kepolls. Rentals and the 1614 Campbell charter confirm that there is double counting in the MacIan documentation.

Kepolls (Lachlan = Mckeorie) remained linked with Robolls, for most of the 17th century wadset to the Campbells of nearby Ballachlaven, until redeemed by the new Laird of Islay after 1726. This farm of Kepolls ceases to appear as a named entity at the end of the 17th century (there is an exceptional reappearance as 'Robus and Keppolslachan' in the 1780 rental), while Robolls jumped in extent from an aughtenpart to a quarterland. It is clear that Kepolls Mckeorie had been subsumed within the latter. Since the original nucleus of Robolls was probably around Eilean Mhuireill on Loch Finlaggan, Kepolls Mckeorie must have been the land around the Ballygrant Inn (Robolls House).

In 1628 Kepollsbeg and Kepollsmore, along with the neighbouring lands of Ayen, Eorrabus, Balole, Duisker and Ballimartin, and Keirreishlaraich (unidentified) were feued to Mr William Campbell (Smith 1895: 388–90; Ramsay 1991: 57–59). This Mr William was sometimes described as 'of Eorrabus'. His title 'Mr' indicates he had a university degree, and he may also be the same William Campbell who was a servitor of the first Campbell laird of Islay, perhaps retained for his skills with documentation (Smith 1895: 240, 270).

Kepollsbeg and Kepollsmore apparently stayed with this family at least until the 1650s. By 1675 these lands are in the rentals as a joint tenancy called Kepolls, and from 1733 Kepollsmore, with a total extent given either as a quarter and an eighth, or three aughtenparts. The four tenants in 1675 included John and Edmond Beaton and John MacMurchie. There is no evidence that any of these three were anything other than tenant farmers, but it is perhaps worth recalling that others with these surnames practised medicine.

Beaton was the surname adopted by many members of the Islay-based family notable for producing doctors of medicine from the 14th to the 17th century, including the hereditary physicians to the lords of the Isles (Bannerman 1986: *passim*). The 1540–42 account for the fermes of the Mid Ward of Islay show that a medical doctor, Nigel (Neil) McMorquhar, held the land of Mullindry as his fee (*ER* 17: 549, 638). Another medical doctor with the same surname, 'Johne Oig McMurquhie, leiche in Ilay', witnessed a band by Ranald, son of Sir James MacDonald of Dunyvaig, in 1615 (Smith 1895: 239).

Kepollsmore remained a joint tenancy farm to the end of the 19th century. Census returns indicate there were 10 households in 1841, rising to 13 in 1851, but dropping to 2 in 1881. The rental of 1863 reveals that four of the tenants were roused since they were in desperate arrears. The tenants were mostly farmers, agricultural workers and their dependants, but included a tailor, James Currie (1841 census). One family, the Fletchers, remained tenants from the early 19th century all the way through to the 20th century. This was probably quite remarkable for Islay.

This family was probably originally surnamed McInleister or MacLeister ('son of the arrowmaker'), only adopting the name Fletcher in the 18th century since it had a more acceptable English form. Possible McInleister ancestors can be traced in Islay rentals of 1541 and 1686. Alexander Fletcher was a tenant at Kepollsmore from 1817 and one of the founder members of the Islay Association in 1838 (Storrie 1988: 4). He was one of the tenants roused in 1863. His nephew Hugh Fletcher was born in 1790 and was a tenant of Kepollsmore by 1833. In 1881, a year before his death, he is recorded as a farmer of 200 acres. His son Edward also took on the tenancy of Robolls from 1885.

The valuation of the wood lists eight houses of tenants along with farm buildings and cottars' houses in January–March 1855:

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Kepollsmore: Dugald MacNiven

6 couples with rubbs in room and kitchen, 1 press with shelves
 1 mantle piece, 3 doors and cases, 3 windows
 Byre: 2 couples with rubbs, 1 door and case
 Barn: 2 couples with rubbs, 1 door and case
 Barn: 2 couples with rubbs, 2 doors and cases
 Stable: 4 couples with rubbs, 1 door and case; heck, manger and travishes
 Sheep house: 2 couples, 1 door and case, 1 heck
 Cart house: rubbs for roof and door lintel

John Shaw

6 couples with rubbs in room and kitchen, 1 mantle piece
 3 doors and cases, 2 windows, 1 joist in kitchen
 Barn: 4 couples with rubbs, 2 doors and cases
 Stable: 4 couples with rubbs, heck and manger
 Sheep house: 2 couples with rubbs, 1 door and case

Donald MacKay, junior

4 couples with rubbs in room and kitchen, 1 mantle piece
 1 wooden partition, 15ft by 16ft 8in (4.57 by 5.08m) with a press and shelves
 1 loft 7 by 6½ft (2.13 by 1.98m)
 1 loft 7 by 6½ft (2.13 by 1.98m) in bedroom
 4 doors and cases, 4 windows
 Barn: 3 couples with rubbs, 2 doors and cases
 Stable: 1 couple with rubbs, 1 door and case; 1 heck and 1 manger
 Byre: 2 couples with rubbs, 2 doors and cases; 1 heck, 1 loft with joists
 Stirk house: 2 couples, 1 door, 1 loft and joists
 Sheep house: 4 couples, 1 door and lock
 Potato house: 1 couple, 1 door and case

Donald Shaw

5 couples with rubbs in room and kitchen
 2 doors and cases, 2 windows, 1 mantle piece
 Barn: 4 couples with rubbs, 2 doors and cases
 Stable: 2 couples with rubbs, 1 door and case

Hugh Fletcher

4 couples with rubbs in room and kitchen
 1 mantle piece, standards [uprights] and warpins [struts] of a partition
 4 windows, 4 doors and cases, 1 loft and joisting
 2 fixed beds with lining, etc
 Barn: 4 couples with rubbs, 2 doors and cases
 Byre: 3 couples with rubbs, 1 door and case; cows ravells for 12 cows
 Stable: 2 couples with rubbs, 1 door and case; 1 heck and manger and 2 joists
 Potato house: 3 couples with rubbs
 Sheep house: 3 couples with rubbs

Donald MacKay

3 couples with rubbs in room and kitchen, 1 press with shelves
 3 doors and cases, 3 windows, 1 loft with joisting
 Barn: 2 couples with rubbs, 2 doors and cases
 Byre: 2 couples with rubbs

John Smith, successor to Colin MacInnes

5 couples in room and kitchen with rubbs
 5 joists in room and kitchen, 3 doors and cases, 2 windows
 Barn: 4 couples with rubbs, 2 doors and cases

Byre: 1 couple with rubbs, 1 door with case
 Stable: 2 couples with rubbs, 1 door, 2 joists
 Pig house: rubbs for roof and 1 door

Donald Currie

1 couple in byre with rubbs, 1 door
 Barn: 2 couples with rubbs, 1 door

Surnames	In rentals from	Notes
Bell	1777	Formerly MacMillan, tenants by 1654
Brown	1686	Formerly Macbrayne, an old Islay kindred
Buie		An old Jura family
Cameron	1722	
Campbell	1541	
Carrick	1799	
Connell(y)		19th-century incomers?
Currie		Formerly MacVurich, an old Islay family
Darroch	1799	An old Jura family
Ferguson	1733	
Fletcher		Formerly Macinleister, an old Islay family
Freeman		18th-century incomers?
Kennedy		18th-century incomers?
Lamont	1686	
Lindsay		19th-century incomers?
MacAlister	1631	
MacArthur	1631	
MacCallum	1686	
MacDermid	1733	
MacDonald	1541	
MacDougall	1654	
MacEachern	1541	
MacGregor		19th-century incomers?
Macindeor	1541	
MacInnes	1741	
MacKay	1506	An old Islay kindred
MacKenzie	1541	
MacNab	1686	
MacNeill	1631	
(Mac)Niven	1686	
MacPhail	1686	
Morrison	1799	
Murdoch	1780	
Norrie		19th-century incomers?
Orr	1733	
Shaw	1733	An old Jura family
Smith	1631	English version of old Islay surname?

Table 3.1
Family surnames in the study area, from the 1851 census

The people, 1851

The census of 1851 provides the best opportunity to form an overall picture of how our survey area was populated, just at the time the tenants of the joint tenancy farms were being replaced by a much smaller group of farmers and farm employees. At that time there were 140 people, excluding visitors, but the true total may have been 10 to 20 more. The permanent population now is fewer than 20.

Census data from 1851 (Table 3.1) suggests that the majority of residents in the study area at that time were locals, descended from families present in Islay for two or more generations, and in some cases with roots extending back to the medieval period. A more detailed study of the rentals demonstrates, however, that there was considerable movement of tenants from farm to farm in Islay as leases expired.