

LANDLINE

FIVE WALKS IN SKYE

LOCH SHIANTA

From the Statistical Account 1791-99, by the Rev. Donald Martin, p. 556

In a low valley, there is a small hill, shaped like a house, and covered with small trees, or rather shrubs, of natural growth. At one side of it, there is a lake of soft water, from which there is no visible discharge. Its water finds many passages through the hill, and makes its appearance, on the other side, in a great number of springs, of the very purest kind. They all run into an oval bason (sic) below, which has a bottom of white sand, and is the habitation of many small fish. From that pond, the water runs, in a copious stream, to the sea. At the side of this rivulet, there is a bath, made of stone, and concealed from public view, by small trees surrounding it. Its name is Loch Shianta, or the sacred lake. There was once a great resort of people, afflicted with ailments, to this place. They bathed themselves, and drank of the water, though it has no mineral quality; and, on a shelf, made for the purpose, in the wall of a contiguous inclosure, they left offerings of small rags, pins, and coloured threads, to the divinity of the place.

STAFFIN ISLAND / FLADDA

About three Leagues to the North West of Rona, is the Isle Fladda being almost joyn'd to Skie, it is all plain arable Ground, and about a Mile in Circumference.

FLODIGARRY ISLAND / ALTVIG

A Description of the Western Isles of Scotland 1703 by Martin Martin

About a Mile to the North, lies the Isle Altvig, it has a high Rock facing the East, is near two Miles in circumference, and is reputed fruitful in Corn and Grass, there is a little old Chappel in it, dedicated to St. Turos. There is a Rock of about forty Yards in length at the North-end of the Isle distinguished for its commodiousness in Fishing. Herrings are seen about this Rock in great Numbers all Summer, insomuch that the Fisher-boats are sometimes as it were entangled among the shoals of them.

PLACE NAMES AROUND DUNANS

Flodigarry / Flòdaigearraidh – Float or Fleet garth; from Norse garðr – a garth or house and yard; diminutive gerðhi, adopted into Gaelic as gearraidh, that is the land between the machair and the moor

Loch Sheunta or Loch Shianta – the enchanted or sacred loch

Tobar Loch Sheunta – the well of Loch Sheunta/Shianta

A' Choille Mhòr – The Big Wood, above Loch Sheunta/Shianta

Eilean Fhlòdaigearraidh – Flodigarry Island. Also called Altaviag. From Norse Alpta-vik – Swan Island. Also Eilean a' Chinn Mhòir – Island of the big Head(land)

Sgeir na h-Èireann – The skerry of Ireland, the flat rock adjacent to and north of Flodigarry Island

Poll Dòrais – Doras's Pool, the water between Flodigarry Island and Flodigarry

Loch Leum nam Bràdh – Loch of the Leaping Quern Stones; beside the old Digg schoolhouse

Cuith-rang – round fold/pen

Na Dùnanan – The Dunans, dùnan being a small rounded hill.

Loch na h-Ìghne – the loch of the girl, about 100 years ago, a young girl (nighean Sheumais Lachlainn) was drowned in the loch

Cearrara – Ceàrr-àiridh, Kerrara, the sheiling to the left

Bhoilltir – possibly boill (lump(s) or bosses as on a shield) and tir (land) so, land of the lumps

An Crògan – possibly 'the hollow'

Cnoc Bhoilltir – hill of Voilteir

Dìg – Digg from Norse dik, a ditch

Stafainn – Staffin – the staff, from Norse stafr, a staff

Clachan from G. clach, a stone, pl. Clachan, also diminutive, a little stone. 1. The monk's or anchorite's beehive stone cell, built where wood or wattle was scarce 2. Developed into meaning oratory or kirk, and from the cluster of clachans making a monastic community, into a village

Cill Dòrais – Dorus's cell or kirk

Staffin or Stenscholl Island, formerly Flodda

TRANSCRIPTION FROM THE GAELIC BY MAOILIOS -

Lachie Gillies talking about fishing in the early 20th century

Lachie: There was fishing and crofting going on, they had specific times for the lobsters, starting in October till after New Year and into the beginning of February. Then the big line fishing would start and then the herring fishing in the summer around (the coast) here; Yes, I remember when I was a youngster going to the shore with my mother perhaps to get herring. The boats were coming in to the port with herring. They would give you ... you would ask for 100 herring. You would get a hundred herring for £1.

Interviewer: Where were the boats from?

Lachie: Well, from here itself, fishing boats.

Interviewer: As well as my uncles, were there other fishermen in Flodigarry?

Lachie: Och, yes, Lachlainn Theàrlach's folk were at the fishing, och, yes, all the time. Yes they had fishing boats, goodness me, yes, they had fishing boats. Also, Eàirdsidh Phàdraig's folk, they were at the fishing as well.

Interviewer: Where did they keep their boats?

Lachie: Just down below Lachlainn Theàrlach's house ... Again there was Port an Leathad, there were boats on Port an Leathad, big boats more than 20 feet, up to 22 or 23 feet. They had small boats as well, dinghies of 14-15 feet. They would be out in summer with them fishing for haddock, fishing with small lines and suchlike. Oh, yes, there was a lot of fish then, something we don't have today. Oh, yes, it's totally different nowadays.

Calum Nicolson talking about ploughing in Flodigarry in the early 20th century

Interviewer: Turning to crofting. You said people had horses when they came here. Did everybody have horses, when you grandfather first came here I mean?

Calum: It was after they came here that they got the horses. These people didn't have land (ie before they came to Flodigarry), it was after they came they got the horses. These people didn't have land, they were cotters. Some of them had a cow or two, or a few sheep on land around the place where their house had been, but they had no horses, it was after coming here that they got horses, and they worked in partnership with a neighbour, for at ploughing time you needed a pair of horses.

Interviewer: For the plough?

Calum: For the plough, we were here at number 8. It was Dòmhnall Sheòrais at number 5 who was with us. We had our horse and they had theirs for ploughing, that's the way it was all done. Always, the ones they partnered with, they did a lot of work together. If there was any help needed, very often these were the ones who would work together to do things, although there were others helping neighbours. But when the day for planting the potatoes came, all the households would gather, young people and everybody ... It was a day's work to plant the potatoes, I know here they would plant about 6 hundredweights of potatoes.

Interviewer: With the horses?

Calum: With the horses, and that took them all day. They would start in the morning and they would be ploughing and planting the potatoes. They had a system, there were three furrows going on ... There was a system that you closed one furrow and another one was opened. The last furrow in which you planted the seed potatoes, you waited until these were hidden and then you would open the next furrow there, and then you followed again with the seed potatoes putting them in the trench, and that's how they did it, and then they would stop at mealtime.

Interviewer: What kind of fertiliser was used?

Calum: Manure, cow's manure.

Interviewer: Would you put that in with the potatoes?

Calum: No, not here. That method was used before my day, where they put the manure in the trench, but from when I remember we spread the manure on the ground and it was ploughed into each furrow. It wasn't put in the furrow with the potatoes at all.