

IONA NOTES

(November 2020, Sources: Wikipedia, Google Maps)

Iona is a small island in the [Inner Hebrides](#) off the [Ross of Mull](#) on the western coast of [Scotland](#). It is mainly known for [Iona Abbey](#), though there are other buildings on the island. Iona Abbey was a centre of [Gaelic monasticism](#) for three centuries and is today known for its relative tranquillity and natural environment. It is a tourist destination and a place for [spiritual retreats](#). Its modern Scottish Gaelic name means "Iona of (Saint) [Columba](#)".



Etymology

The [Hebrides](#) have been occupied by the speakers of several languages since the [Iron Age](#), and as a result many of the names of these islands have more than one possible meaning. Nonetheless few, if any, can have accumulated as many different names over the centuries as the island now known in English as "Iona".

The earliest forms of the name enabled place-name scholar [William J. Watson](#) to show that the name originally meant something like "yew-place". The element *Ivo-*, denoting "[yew](#)", occurs in [Ogham](#) inscriptions and in Gaulish names and may form the basis of early Gaelic names like *Eógan*. It is possible that the name is related to the mythological figure, *Fer hí mac Eogabail*, foster-son of [Manannan](#), the forename meaning "man of the yew".

Mac an Tàilleir (2003) lists the more recent Gaelic names of *Chaluim Chille* and *Eilean Idhe* noting that the first named is "generally lengthened to avoid confusion" to the second, which means "Calum's (i.e. in latinised form "Columba's") Iona" or "island of Calum's monastery". The confusion results from *ì*, despite its original etymology as the name of the island, being confused with the Gaelic noun *ì* "island" (now obsolete) of Old Norse origin (*ey* "island", *Eilean Idhe* means "the isle of Iona", also known as *Ì nam ban bòidheach* ("the isle of beautiful women"). The modern English name comes of yet another variant, *loua*, which was either just Adomnán's attempt to make the Gaelic name fit Latin grammar or else a genuine derivative from *Ivova* ("yew place"). *loua*'s change to *Iona*, attested from c.1274, results from a transcription mistake resulting from the similarity of "n" and "u" in [Insular Minuscule](#).

Despite the continuity of forms in Gaelic between the pre-Norse and post-Norse eras, Haswell-Smith (2004) speculates that the name may have a [Norse](#) connection, *Híðe* meaning "island of the den of the brown bear". The medieval English language version was "Icolmkill" (and variants thereof).



Folk etymology [\[edit\]](#)

Murray (1966) claims that the "ancient" Gaelic name was *Innis nan Druinich* ("the isle of [Druidic](#) hermits") and repeats a Gaelic story (which he admits is [apocryphal](#)) that as Columba's coracle first drew close to the island one of his companions cried out "*Chì mi í*" meaning "I see her" and that Columba's response was "Henceforth we shall call her Ì".

Geology

The geology of Iona is quite complex given the island's size and quite distinct from that of nearby Mull. About half of the island's bedrock is Scourian [gneiss](#) assigned to the [Lewisian complex](#) and dating from the [Archaean](#) eon making it some of the [oldest rock](#) in Britain and indeed Europe. Closely associated with these gneisses are [mylonite](#) and meta-anorthosite and melagabbro. Along the eastern coast facing Mull are steeply [dipping Neoproterozoic](#) age [metaconglomerates](#), [metasandstones](#), [metamudstones](#) and [hornfelsed](#) [metasiltstones](#) ascribed to the [Iona Group](#), described traditionally as [Torridonian](#). In the southwest and on parts of the west coast are [pelites](#) and [semipelites](#) of Archaean to Proterozoic age. There are small outcrops of Silurian age pink granite on southeastern beaches, similar to those of the Ross of Mull pluton cross the sound to the east. Numerous [geological faults](#) cross the island, many in a E-W or NW-SE alignment. [Devonian](#) aged [microdiorite dykes](#) are found in places and some of these are themselves cut by [Palaeocene](#) age [camptonite](#) and [monchiquite](#) dykes ascribed to the 'Iona-Ross of Mull [dyke swarm](#)'. More recent sedimentary deposits of [Quaternary](#) age include both present day beach deposits and [raised marine deposits](#) around Iona as well as some restricted areas of blown sand.

Geography

Iona lies about 2 kilometres (1 mile) from the coast of [Mull](#). It is about 2 km (1 mi) wide and 6 km (4 mi) long with a resident population of 125. Like other places swept by ocean breezes, there are few trees; most of them are near the parish church.

Iona's highest point is Dùn Ì, 101 m (331 ft), an Iron Age hill fort dating from 100 BC – AD 200. Iona's geographical features include the [Bay at the Back of the Ocean](#) and *Càrn Cùl ri Éirinn* (the Hill/[Cairn](#) of [turning the] Back to Ireland), said to be adjacent to the beach where St. Columba first landed.

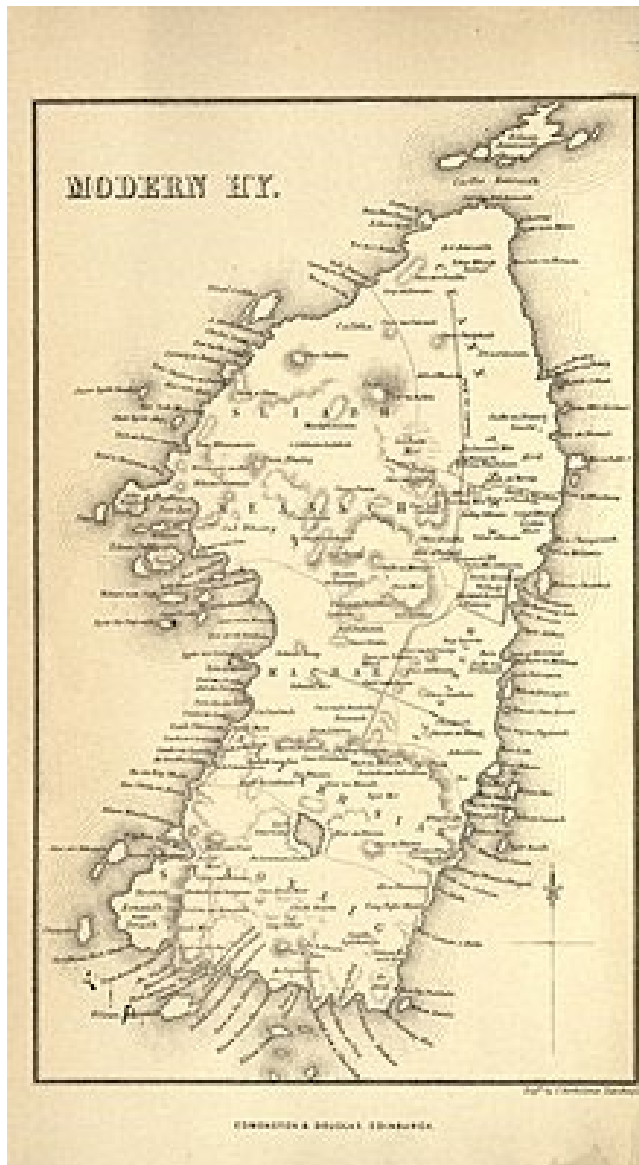
The main settlement, located at St. Ronan's Bay on the eastern side of the island, is called *Baile Mòr* and is also known locally as "The Village". The primary school, post office, the island's two hotels, the [Bishop's House](#) and the ruins of the [Nunnery](#) are here. The Abbey and MacLeod Centre are a short walk to the north. Port Bàn (white port) beach on the west side of the island is home to the Iona Beach Party.

There are numerous offshore islets and [skerries](#): Eilean Annraidh (island of storm) and Eilean Chalbha (calf island) to the north, Rèidh Eilean and Stac MhicMhurchaidh to the west and Eilean Mùsimul (mouse holm island) and Soa Island to the south are amongst the largest. The steamer *Cathcart Park* carrying a cargo of salt from [Runcorn](#) to [Wick](#) ran aground on Soa on 15 April 1912, the crew of 11 escaping in two boats.

Subdivision

On a map of 1874, the following territorial subdivision is indicated (from north to south):^[26]

- Ceann Tsear
- Sliabh Meanach
- Machar
- Sliginach
- Sliabh Siar
- Staonaig



Map of 1874, with subdivisions:

*Ceann Tsear *Sliabh Meanach *Machar *Sliginach *Sliabh Siar *Staonaig

History

Dál Riata



The [Book of Kells](#) – Gospel of John

In the early Historic Period Iona lay within the [Gaelic kingdom](#) of [Dál Riata](#), in the region controlled by the [Cenél Loairn](#) (i.e. [Lorn](#), as it was then). The island was the site of a highly important [monastery](#) (see [Iona Abbey](#)) during the [Early Middle Ages](#). According to tradition the monastery was founded in 563 by the monk [Columba](#), also known as Colm Cille, who had been exiled from his native [Ireland](#) as a result of his involvement in the [Battle of Cul Dreimhne](#).^[29] Columba and twelve companions went into exile on Iona and founded a monastery there. The monastery was hugely successful, and played a crucial role in the conversion to Christianity of the [Picts](#) of present-day [Scotland](#) in the late 6th century and of the [Anglo-Saxon](#) kingdom of [Northumbria](#) in 635. Many satellite institutions were founded, and Iona became the centre of one of the most important [monastic systems](#) in Great Britain and Ireland.^[30]

Iona became a renowned centre of learning, and its [scriptorium](#) produced highly important documents, probably including the original texts of the Iona Chronicle, thought to be the source for the early [Irish annals](#).^[30] The monastery is often associated with the distinctive practices and traditions known as [Celtic Christianity](#). In particular, Iona was a major supporter of the "Celtic" system for [calculating the date of Easter](#) at the time of the [Easter controversy](#), which pitted supporters of the Celtic system against those favouring the "Roman" system used elsewhere in Western Christianity. The controversy weakened Iona's ties to Northumbria, which adopted the Roman system at the [Synod of Whitby](#) in 664, and to Pictland, which followed suit in the early 8th century. Iona itself did not adopt the Roman system until 715, according to the Anglo-Saxon historian [Bede](#). Iona's prominence was further diminished over the next centuries as a result of [Viking](#) raids and the rise of other powerful monasteries in the system, such as the [Abbey of Kells](#).

The [Book of Kells](#) may have been produced or begun on Iona towards the end of the 8th century. Around this time the island's exemplary [high crosses](#) were sculpted; these may be the first such

crosses to contain the ring around the intersection that became characteristic of the "[Celtic cross](#)". The series of Viking raids on Iona began in 794 and, after its treasures had been plundered many times, Columba's relics were removed and divided two ways between Scotland and Ireland in 849 as the monastery was abandoned.

Kingdom of the Isles

As the Norse domination of the west coast of Scotland advanced, Iona became part of the [Kingdom of the Isles](#). The Norse *Rex plurimarum insularum* [Amlaíb Cuarán](#) died in 980 or 981 whilst in "religious retirement" on Iona. Nonetheless the island was sacked twice by his successors, on Christmas night 986 and again in 987. Although Iona was never again important to Ireland, it rose to prominence once more in Scotland following the establishment of the [Kingdom of Scotland](#) in the later 9th century; the ruling dynasty of Scotland traced its origin to Iona, and the island thus became an important spiritual centre for the new kingdom, with many of its early kings buried there. However, a campaign by [Magnus Barelegs](#) led to the formal acknowledgement of Norwegian control of Argyll, in 1098.

[Sommerled](#), the brother-in-law of Norway's governor of the region (the *King of the Isles*), launched a revolt, and made the kingdom independent. A [convent](#) for [Augustinian](#) nuns was established in about 1208, with [Bethóc](#), Sommerled's daughter, as first prioress. The present Benedictine [abbey](#), [Iona Abbey](#), was built in about 1203.

On Sommerled's death, nominal Norwegian overlordship of the Kingdom was re-established, but de facto control was split between Sommerled's sons, and his brother-in-law.

Kingdom of Scotland

Following the 1266 [Treaty of Perth](#) the Hebrides were transferred from Norwegian to Scottish overlordship. At the end of the century, King [John Balliol](#) was challenged for the throne by [Robert the Bruce](#). By this point, Sommerled's descendants had split into three groups, the [MacRory](#), [MacDougalls](#), and [MacDonalds](#). The MacDougalls backed Balliol, so when he was defeated by de Bruys, the latter exiled the MacDougalls and transferred their island territories to the MacDonalds; by marrying the [heir of the MacRorys](#), [the heir of the MacDonalds](#) re-unified most of Sommerled's realm, creating the [Lordship of the Isles](#), under nominal Scottish authority. Iona, which had been a MacDougall territory (together with the rest of Lorn), was given to the [Campbells](#), where it remained for half a century.

In 1354, though in exile and without control of his ancestral lands, [John, the MacDougall heir](#), quitclaimed any rights he had over Mull and Iona to the Lord of the Isles (though this had no meaningful effect at the time). When Robert's son, [David II](#), became king, he spent some time in English captivity; following his release, in 1357, he restored MacDougall authority over Lorn. The 1354 quitclaim, which seems to have been an attempt to ensure peace in just such an eventuality, took automatic effect, splitting Mull and Iona from Lorn, and making it subject to the Lordship of the Isles. Iona remained part of the Lordship of the Isles for the next century and a half.

Following the 1491 [Raid on Ross](#), the Lordship of the Isles was dismantled, and Scotland gained full control of Iona for the second time. The monastery and nunnery continued to be active until the [Reformation](#), when buildings were demolished and all but three of the 360 carved crosses destroyed. The Augustine nunnery now only survives as a number of 13th century ruins, including a church and cloister. By the 1760s little more of the nunnery remained standing than at present, though it is the most complete remnant of a medieval nunnery in Scotland.

Post-Union

After a visit in 1773, the English writer [Samuel Johnson](#) remarked:

The island, which was once the metropolis of learning and piety, now has no school for education, nor temple for worship.

He estimated the population of the village at 70 families or perhaps 350 inhabitants.

In the 19th century green-streaked marble was commercially mined in the south-east of Iona; the quarry and machinery survive, see 'Marble Quarry remains' below.

Iona Abbey

Iona Abbey, now an [ecumenical](#) church, is of particular historical and religious interest to pilgrims and visitors alike. It is the most elaborate and best-preserved ecclesiastical building surviving from the Middle Ages in the [Western Isles](#) of [Scotland](#). Though modest in scale in comparison to medieval abbeys elsewhere in [Western Europe](#), it has a wealth of fine architectural detail, and monuments of many periods. The [8th Duke of Argyll](#) presented the sacred buildings and sites of the island to the Iona Cathedral trust in 1899.

In front of the Abbey stands the 9th century St Martin's Cross, one of the best-preserved Celtic crosses in the [British Isles](#), and a replica of the 8th century St John's Cross (original fragments in the Abbey museum).

The ancient burial ground, called the Rèilig Odhrain (Eng: Oran's "burial place" or "cemetery"), contains the 12th century chapel of [St Odhrán](#) (said to be [Columba](#)'s uncle), restored at the same time as the Abbey itself. It contains a number of medieval grave monuments. The abbey graveyard is said to contain the graves of many early [Scottish Kings](#), as well as Norse kings from Ireland and Norway. Iona became the burial site for the kings of [Dál Riata](#) and their successors. Notable burials there include:

- [Cináed mac Ailpín](#), king of the Picts (also known today as "Kenneth I of Scotland")
- [Domnall mac Causantín](#), alternatively "king of the Picts" or "king of Scotland" ("Donald II")
- [Máel Coluim mac Domnaill](#), king of Scotland ("Malcolm I")
- [Donnchad mac Crínáin](#), king of Scotland ("Duncan I")
- [Mac Bethad mac Findláich](#), king of Scotland ("Macbeth")
- [Domnall mac Donnchada](#), king of Scotland ("Donald III")
- [John Smith](#), Labour Party Leader

In 1549 an inventory of 48 Scottish, 8 Norwegian and 4 Irish kings was recorded. None of these graves are now identifiable (their inscriptions were reported to have worn away at the end of the 17th century). Saint [Baithin](#) and Saint [Failbhe](#) may also be buried on the island. The Abbey graveyard is also the final resting place of [John Smith](#), the former Labour Party leader, who loved Iona. His grave is marked with an epitaph quoting [Alexander Pope](#): "An honest man's the noblest work of God".

Limited archaeological investigations commissioned by the National Trust for Scotland found some evidence for ancient burials in 2013. The excavations, conducted in the area of [Martyrs Bay](#), revealed burials from the 6th–8th centuries, probably jumbled up and reburied in the 13–15th century.

Other early Christian and medieval monuments have been removed for preservation to the cloister arcade of the Abbey, and the Abbey museum (in the medieval infirmary). The ancient buildings of Iona Abbey are now cared for by [Historic Environment Scotland](#) (entrance charge).



Marble quarry remains



Iona Marble Quarry

The remains of a marble quarrying enterprise can be seen in a small bay on the south-east shore of Iona. The quarry is the source of 'Iona Marble', a beautiful translucent green and white stone, much used in brooches and other jewellery. The stone has been known of for centuries and was credited with healing and other powers. While the quarry had been used in a small way, it was not until around the end of the 18th century when it was opened up on a more industrial scale by the Duke of Argyle. The then difficulties of extracting the hard stone and transporting it meant that the scheme was short lived. Another attempt was started in 1907, this time more successful

with considerable quantities of stone extracted and indeed exported, but the First World War put paid to this as well, with little quarrying after 1914 and the operation finally closing in 1919. A painting showing the quarry in operation, *The Marble Quarry, Iona* (1909) by [David Young Cameron](#), is in the collection of [Cartwright Hall](#) art gallery in Bradford.^[46] Such is the site's rarity that it has been designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument.^[47]

Present day

The island, other than the land owned by the Iona Cathedral Trust, was purchased from the Duke of Argyll by [Hugh Fraser](#) in 1979 and donated to the [National Trust for Scotland](#). In 2001 Iona's population was 125 and by the time of the [2011 census](#) this had grown to 177 usual residents. During the same period [Scottish island](#) populations as a whole grew by 4% to 103,702.

Iona Community



Baile Mòr viewed from the Sound of Iona

Not to be confused with the local island community, Iona (Abbey) Community are based within Iona Abbey.

In 1938 [George MacLeod](#) founded the Iona Community, an ecumenical Christian community of men and women from different walks of life and different traditions in the Christian church committed to seeking new ways of living the [Gospel](#) of [Jesus](#) in today's world. This community is a leading force in the present [Celtic Christian](#) revival.

The Iona Community runs 3 residential centres on the Isle of Iona and on [Mull](#), where one can live together in community with people of every background from all over the world. Weeks at the centres often follow a programme related to the concerns of the Iona Community.

The 8 tonne *Fallen Christ* sculpture by [Ronald Rae](#) was permanently situated outside the MacLeod Centre in February 2008.

Transport

Visitors can reach Iona by the 10-minute ferry trip across the [Sound of Iona](#) from [Fionnphort](#) on [Mull](#). The most common route from the mainland is via [Oban](#) in [Argyll and Bute](#), where regular ferries connect to [Craignure](#) on Mull, from where the scenic road runs 37 miles (60 kilometres) to Fionnphort. Tourist coaches and local bus services meet the ferries.

Car ownership is lightly regulated, with no requirement for an MOT Certificate or payment of Road Tax for cars kept permanently on the island, but vehicular access is restricted to permanent residents and there are few cars. Visitors must leave their car in Fionnphort, but upon landing on Iona they will find the village, the shops, the post office, the cafe, the hotels and the abbey are all within walking distance. Bike hire is available at the pier, and on Mull.

Accommodation

In addition to the hotels, there are several [bed and breakfasts](#) on Iona and various self-catering properties. The Iona Hostel at Lagandorain and the Iona campsite at Cnoc Oran also offer accommodation.

Iona in Scottish painting

The island of Iona has played an important role in Scottish landscape painting, especially during the Twentieth Century. As travel to north and west Scotland became easier from the mid C18 on, artists' visits to the island steadily increased. The Abbey remains in particular became frequently recorded during this early period. Many of the artists are listed and illustrated in the valuable book, **Iona Portrayed – The Island through Artists' Eyes 1760–1960**,^[51] which lists over 170 artists known to have painted on the island.

The C20 however saw the greatest period of influence on landscape painting, in particular through the many paintings of the island produced by [F C B Cadell](#) and [S J Peploe](#), two of the 'Scottish Colourists'. As with many artists, both professional and amateur, they were attracted by the unique quality of light, the white sandy beaches, the aquamarine colours of the sea and the landscape of rich greens and rocky outcrops. While Cadell and Peploe are perhaps best known, many major Scottish painters of the C20 worked on Iona and visited many times – for example [George Houston](#), [D Y Cameron](#), James Shearer, John Duncan and John Maclauchlan Milne, among many.

Media and the arts

[Samuel Johnson](#) wrote "That man is little to be envied whose patriotism would not gain force upon the [plains of Marathon](#), or whose piety would not grow warmer amid the ruins of Iona."^[52]

In [Jules Verne](#)'s novel *The Green Ray*, the heroes visit Iona in chapters 13 to 16. The inspiration is romantic, the ruins of the island are conducive to daydreaming. The young heroine, Helena Campbell, argues that Scotland in general and Iona in particular are the scene of the appearance of goblins and other familiar demons.

In [Jean Raspail](#)'s novel *The Fisherman's Ring* (1995), his cardinal is one of the last to support the antipope [Benedict XIII](#) and his successors.

In the novel *The Carved Stone* (by Guillaume Prévost), the young Samuel Faulkner is projected in time as he searches for his father and lands on Iona in the year 800, then threatened by the Vikings.

"Peace of Iona" is a song written by [Mike Scott](#) that appears on the studio album *Universal Hall* and on the live recording *Karma to Burn* by [The Waterboys](#). Iona is the setting for the song "Oran" on the 1997 [Steve McDonald](#) album *Stone of Destiny*.

Kenneth C. Steven published an anthology of poetry entitled *Iona: Poems* in 2000 inspired by his association with the island and the surrounding area.

Iona is featured prominently in the first episode ("By the Skin of Our Teeth") of the celebrated arts series *Civilisation: A Personal View by Kenneth Clark* (1969).

Iona is the setting of Jeanne M. Dams' Dorothy Martin mystery *Holy Terror of the Hebrides* (1998).

The [Academy Award](#)-nominated Irish animated film *The Secret of Kells* is about the creation of the [Book of Kells](#). One of the characters, Brother Aiden, is a master [illuminator](#) from Iona Abbey who had helped to illustrate the Book, but had to escape the island with it during a Viking invasion.

After his death in 2011, the cremated remains of songwriter/recording artist [Gerry Rafferty](#) were scattered on Iona.

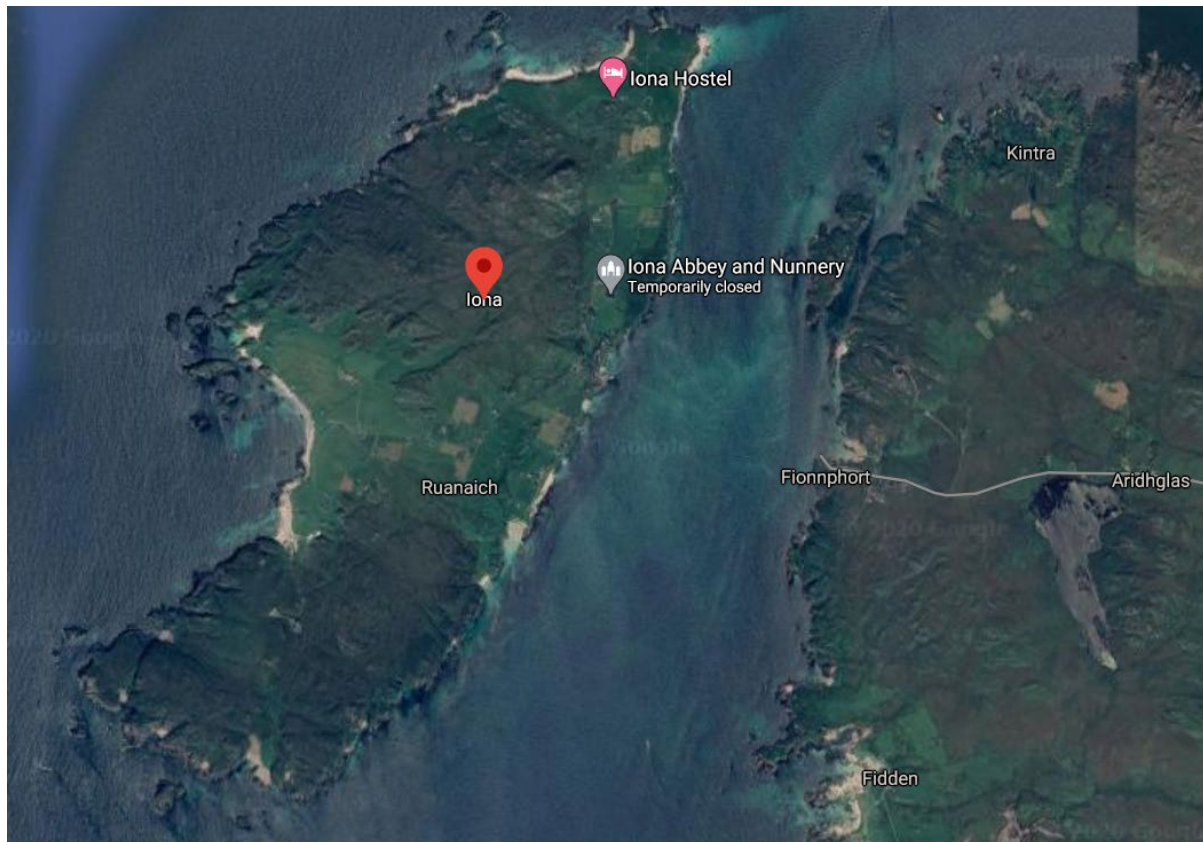
[Frances Macdonald](#) the contemporary Scottish artist based in Crinian, Argyll, regularly paints landscapes on Iona.

[Iona Abbey](#) is mentioned in [Tori Amos](#)'s "Twinkle" from her 1996 album *Boys for Pele*: "And last time I knew, she worked at an abbey in Iona. She said 'I killed a man, T, I've gotta stay hidden in this abbey' "

[Iona](#) is the name of a progressive [Celtic rock](#) band (first album released in 1990; not active at present), many of whose songs are inspired by the island of Iona and Columba's life.

[Neil Gaiman](#)'s poem "In Relig Odhrain", published in *Trigger Warning: Short Fictions and Disturbances* (2015), retells the story of Oran's death, and the creation of the chapel on Iona. This poem was made into a short stop-motion animated film, released in 2019.

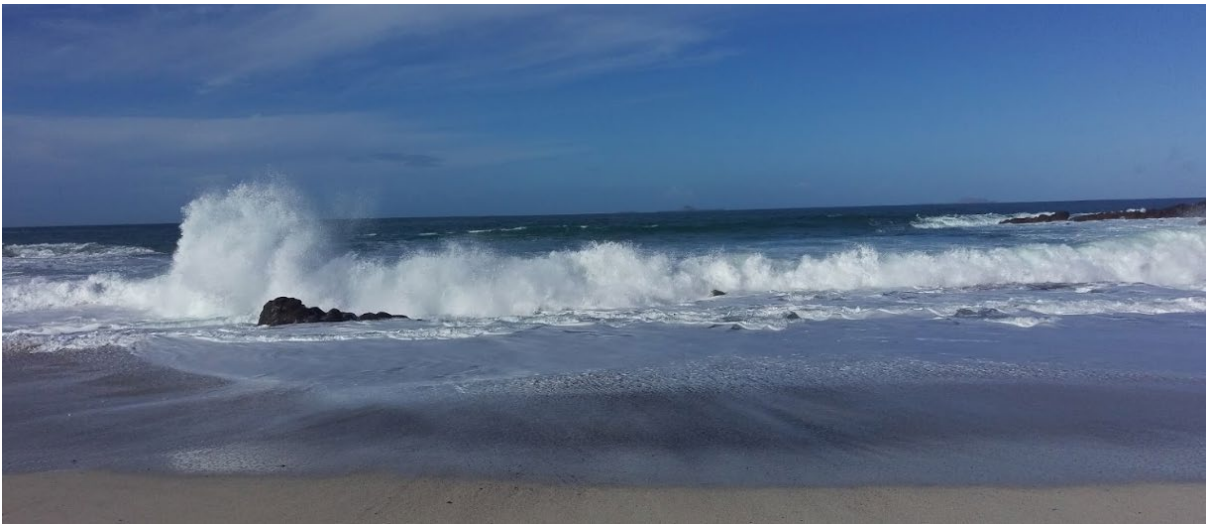
From Google Maps (2020)





Screenshots from Google Maps









1958

Iona

There is a photograph of me aged 3, dressed in summer shorts and shirt, sitting on some rocks with the beach and hills behind, and the sun on my right cheek. If the beach was on the west coast of Iona (over the island from the Village), then the rocks were known as 'the battleship' and 'the submarine'. The photograph indicates that I was taken on holiday to Iona in the summer of 1958...



North (?) coast of Iona

c August 1958

1959

We also went to Iona in 1959, and I remember travelling along the road going north from Iona Abbey, and running from telegraph pole to telegraph pole to hear them humming in the wind. I think we stayed with 'Mrs McFarland'. There's a picture of Grannie taken that year:

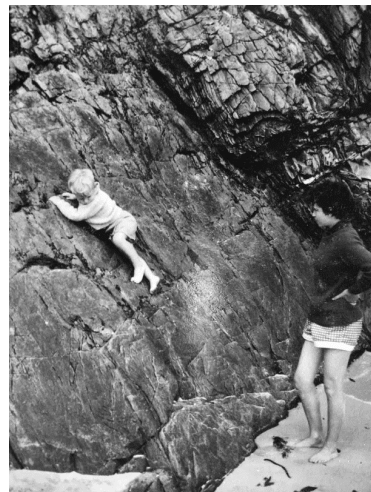
The following photographs tell the story of that holiday.

Photographs of Iona, 1959



Photographs of ferry voyage from the mainland to Mull and Iona...

Photographs of Iona, 1959 (continued)



Photographs of the Iona beaches...

Elsie Carlisle with her daughter, Tony, and granddaughter Catriona on the beach at Iona, c1959.



Photograph of Granny a year or so before she died, on a beach at Iona

1960

Entry for Elsie Carlisle from National Probate Calendar

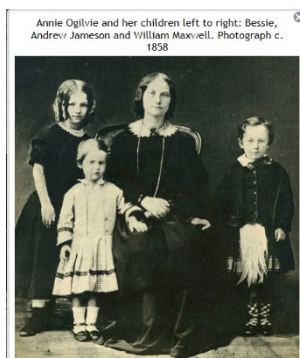
England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858-1966 for Elsie Maxwell Carlisle:

CARLISLE Elsie Maxwell of Ardlair Telegraph Road Heswall Cheshire, widow, died 23 March 1960 at The General Hospital Birkenhead, Probate Liverpool 24 June to Lloyds Bank Limited. Effects £57165 18 s 6d.

Memories of Granny

23 March 1960 – I remember the day (nearly 55 years ago now). I was 4½, so it was one of my earliest clear memories. We were at the rented house in Farnborough ('Highlands'), and I think I had started at the 'Locks Bottom' Nursery School (kindergarten), and that day my mother was up a ladder painting the kitchen ceiling, when the telephone rang and she received a call from her brother Iain, who told her that Granny had died. I did not understand what this meant, but I remember my mother was in tears, and said that she would sit down and make herself a cup of tea.

Later that year we made a visit to Ardlair as the house was on the market for sale, and I remember walking down to the end of the garden, which I was told was 100 yards long. Still later, I stood by the Old Mill at Legbourne, watching the water flowing along the millstream, and wondering what 'dying' meant. Was it something to do with falling into the river? Being only 4 when she died I have only vague memories of Granny, but they were good and warm ones, and I know she loved her four children (Antonia, Mary, Iain and Griselda) and 11 grandchildren very much (this was before Fiona was born). I recall that her grandmother was no less than Annie Maxwell, who (around 1840) had sat at the feet of the great evangelical preacher Robert Murray McCheyne in Dundee.



Photograph of Annie Ogilvie (nee Maxwell), with William Maxwell Ogilvie, my great-grandfather

I remember she had made some dark red jelly, which she had poured into silver or pewter goblets and kept in the fridge. I picked one up and was amazed that when you tipped it, the smooth jelly, which looked like a liquid, did not spill out as it had set. I also remember that on the top floor of Ardlair there was a room with a mirror on the dressing table directly opposite a wardrobe mirror, so that if you sat at the dressing table and looked into that mirror you could see an endless corridor of mirrors, getting fainter and darker as they receded into the distance.

1965

Carsaig, August and September 1965

In late August 1965 my mother and I travelled north for a holiday in Carsaig on Mull and Iona. This was to be my last trip to Iona and my only visit to Carsaig.

We must have taken the night train from London to Glasgow, and I remember my mother injured her back trying to pull a heavy suitcase from underneath the railway compartment seat. I think she had a slipped disk, which must have been extremely painful during the entire holiday. With hindsight I should have been more sympathetic and aware of her suffering.

I remember clearly the train journey from Glasgow to Oban. We travelled in the Observation Car, which was at the rear of the train, with full length windows on three sides looking backwards. It was a very scenic and enjoyable journey, and I remember we went through a place called Callander where Dr Finlay's Casebook was filmed (the fictitious Tannochbrae). We took the ferry from Oban to Craignure, and then travelled by car to Tony (Antonia) and Ruari's cottage at Carsaig near Pennyghael on the south coast of Mull.

With my Brownie camera I took my first ever panorama, two photographs stuck together in the album, showing the view looking southwards from 'Pier Cottage', Carsaig. In the foreground on the left is the famous 'Dog Rock', in the centre is the reef, and panning round to the right, in the distance is the western headland of Carsaig Bay, with the upper cliff forming the vertical and horizontal sides of a right-angled isosceles triangle. On a clear day you could see Colonsay, the Paps of Jura, and Islay further to the west.

There's a nice family group photograph in front of Pier Cottage, with my mother, my first cousin Catriona (standing in the middle), Tony and Ruari, and (I think) cousin David on the far left. Judging from the way people are dressed, with David wearing a straw hat, it must have been one of those

rare warm sunny summer days, although mother is wearing her brown and white Icelandic Jersey. Behind the cottage the forest can be seen rising steeply upwards.

One day in early September, Tony, Catriona, mother and I made a day trip to Iona. There's a photograph of the three on the jetty at Fionnphort, waiting for the ferry. The island of Iona, with its distinctive low hill, can be seen in the distance. Everyone looks rugged up with coats, suggesting it was a chilly, overcast day, certainly not conducive to swimming! Another photograph is taken from the Fionnphort ferry, with Iona Hill (the highest point on the island, towards the north, some 300 feet high) clearly visible, and Iona Village in the distance.

The other photographs I took show Iona Abbey, and the white sandy beaches on the north and north-east coasts, in particular featuring the famous 'battleship' and 'submarine' rock formations. I don't remember visiting any other parts of the island.

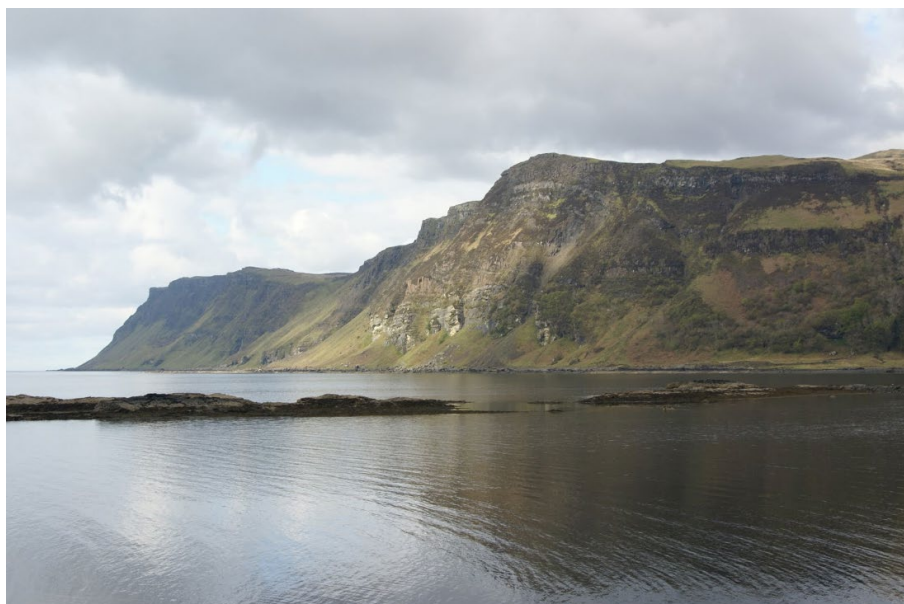
I don't remember much else about our holiday. There's a lovely picture of Ruari rowing their boat 'Piaf', with Catriona in the stern, and I'm sure I took some boat trips in Piaf. And I'm sure I went swimming in Carsaig Bay a few times when the weather permitted.

I do remember a 'film evening' in a nearby community hall – the films included a documentary about a mobile library travelling in a van around Mull, and the 1945 film "I know where I'm going!", parts of which were filmed in Carsaig.

And there's a picture of the steam ferry 'Columba' at Craignure, on our way home, before we embarked for Oban and the Scottish mainland.

Carsaig Bay

(Google images, 2015)



Photographs of Carsaig, 1965



Family group in front of Pier Cottage



View south over Carsaig Bay, with the 'Dog Rock' on the left



The Fionnphort ferry to Iona



Iona Abbey



Waiting for the Fionnphort ferry



Uncle Ruari and Catriona in 'Piaf'



The north coast of Iona



The 'Columba' at Craignure