



[Place-names - The Shoreline]

Ref. 66 MOL-NA-BRAITHREAN (The Brothers' Beach)

This place-name marks the shore-line boundary between Calbost/Marvig to the north of the village. It got its name from the fact that there is a marked burial place, just above the pebbly beach, of the remains of two brothers who were cast up on the beach by the sea. That incident happened in the distant past and no tradition has survived to indicate who the brothers were or when did this incident take place.

It is however worth noting that it was known that they were brothers. Herewith is a copy of a 1760 map which identifies the place as Mol-na-Braithrean and that indicates that the brothers were drowned before 1760.

The graves are marked by four ordinary stones, two at each end as the remains were buried side by side. We understand that there was a tradition of burying human remains at, or near, the place where they were found.

Ref. 67 MUILEAN-MOL-NA-BRAITHREAN (A grain water-mill on the stream coming down from 'LOCH-NA-BUALA-DUIBHE')

It is worth noting that there is widespread evidence of lazybed cultivation (FEANNAGAN) in the area of 'Mol-na-Braithrean', and even extending along the common grazing boundary to BUALA-CHALABOIST at the main road at 'Loch-a-Gruagaich'. There is no local tradition to indicate when, or by whom, this land was cultivated. Could it be, that a community of Norse sea-rovers settled at 'MOL-NA-BRAITHREAN' in the distant past, or even an earlier civilisation such as the Picts. One thing is certain, and that is that the mill at 'Mol-na-Braithrean' is very very old.

The speculation that there might have been a community living at 'Mol-na-Braithrean' gains credence when we note that there was a Norse type grain water-mil on the stream between 'Loch-na-Buala-Duibhe' and 'Mol-na-Braithrean'. Traces of the ruins of the mill building may still be seen and the writer is reliably informed that at least one of the mill-stones is still nearby.

While on the subject of earlier settlements, may we point out that there are extensive evidence of cultivation at the following pebbly beaches on the Calbost shoreline. At 'Mol-a-Gobh', at 'Mol-an-eich' and at 'LITI-SHITHINN'. Could it be that there were settlements at all these places at one time?

Ref. 68 CREAG-AN-A-PHIOBAIR (The Rock of John, Son of a Piper)

This feature of the shoreline got its name from the fact that the remains of a drowned man by the name of 'AN-A-PHIOBAIR' was recovered from the sea at this place, according to tradition (BEUL-AITHRIS). The man was said to be from Point. He was swept overboard from a sail fishing boat sometime in the distant past. This rock was also frequented by local rod fishermen.

Ref. 69 GEODH-NA-CALAMAN (The Pigeon's Cove)

A cove where pigeons nest.

Ref. 70 A-CREAG-MHOR

This feature of the shore-line gave its name to 'RUDHA-NA-CREAGA-MOIRE' which is the place-name of the whole area between 'Mol-na-Braithrean' and 'Mol-a-Gobh'.

'A-Creag-Mhor' is very deep, not unlike a jetty where a fairly large boat could come alongside. It was a very popular rod-fishing rock. Access to it was quite easy.

Ref. 71 SLOC-A-RUDHA

A small bay under a very high cliff about half-way between (A CREAG MHOR) and (GOB-RUDHA-NA-CREAGE-MOIRE).

Ref. 72 URSANN-AN-SLOICHD

The edge, as it were the door-post, of the creek known as (SLOC-A-RUDHA). It was a good rod fishing rock but access to it was dangerous over a slippery sloping rock.

Ref. 73 LECK-A-CHEIREAN

We do not know what this place-name means, unless it alludes to the sea-weed, (FEAMAINN-CHEIREAN) that grows on the rock. It was a good rod fishing rock. Access was easy. The name is Gaelic.

Ref. 74 GOB RUDHA NA CREAGE MOIRE

The point or headland of 'RUDHA-NA-CREAGE MOIRE.' A good fishing rock. Access was very easy and safe.

Ref. 75 CAIRN-AN-IMMIDH (The Cairn of the Butter)

The derivation of this place name is puzzling. It is a creek with easy access to it, and it was used in the past as a natural sheep fanking place, particularly at shearing-time.

Ref. 76 GEODHA-NA-BIADHTAICHAN

The Creek or Cove of Birds of Prey.

Ref. 77 SGEIR-GEODHA-RUDHA-NA-H'EIGHEACHD

A tidal rock close to the shore. The name is Gaelic.

Ref. 78 GEODHA-RUDHA-NA-H'EIGHEACHD

The meaning of this place-name is not known to us. It is a creek consisting of dark rock formation.

Ref. 79 CUL-NA-CREAGE-RUAIDH

Gaelic, literally, the back, or the north side of the high cliff known as 'A CREAG RUADH'.

Ref. 80 GOB-NA-CREAGE-RUAIDH

Gaelic, a prominent headland a little to the north of the pebbly beach known as Mol-a-Gobh where the village boats are hauled up on the beach.

Ref. 81 CREAG MHURCHaidH

Gaelic, 'Murdo's Rock', a rod fishing rock a little to the south of the headland, 'GOB-NA-CREAGE-RUAIDH'. Access was difficult.

Ref. 82 AN-CEANN-GARBH

A Gaelic place-name, indicating a scatter of fairly large boulders at the north end of the pebbly beach known as 'MOL-A-GABH'.

Ref. 83 'CAILLEACH-A-GOBH' (grave)

Above the 'CEANN-GARBH' on a rising on the sloping hill, may be seen a grave marked by an ordinary stone at each end. It is the grave of an elderly lady from Harris. It is about 200 yds above high-water mark.

'Cailleach-a-Gobh' and her son were subjected to eviction somewhere in Harris and they were making their way to Stornoway in a small boat, when they hit a submerged reef at 'STACK-AN-FHIR-MHAOL', at the southern edge of CALBOST BAY and their boat capsized.

Their cries for help were heard by Calbost people out cutting peats in Rubh-na-Creage-Moire and they rushed along to Mol-a-Gobh and launched a boat and hurried to the rescue, but it was too late for the mother but the son was saved and subsequently lived in Stornoway.

Ref. 84 MOL-A-GOBH - A Pebbly Beach

It was on this beach that the boats of the village were hauled up because the bay was open to the sea and therefore unsuitable for mooring boats.

The people of Calbost were crofter fishermen and their 12 to 20 foot keel boats were used extensively at Calbost in the 18th, 19th and early part of the 20th century, particularly in the winter season. They fished with small and great lines as well as gill-nets for herring.

At the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries a salted white fishing business was conducted from this beach. A salting house stood in the narrow neck of land leading to 'Eilean-a-Gobh', where a wooden fishing shed stands at present.

Kelping was also conducted here and we believe that the ruins of the kelping kilns may be seen in 'Eilean-a-Gobh'. 'Eilean-a-Gobh' is actually a peninsula not an island.

The Congested District Board 1896 to 1912 gave assistance for the installation of a winch for the hauling of the boats on the beach. John Macleod (Iain Aonghais), 1 Calbost installed the winch. By the 1920s that winch was out of action because of wear and tear and it was difficult to haul the big boats.

The writer purchased privately a second-hand winch from the old abbatoir at Stornoway in 1958 for £30= and applied for grant aid from the Lewis District Council. Subsequently they granted £30= and we installed the winch and provided a hawser and a wooden box to protect the winch voluntary. It is still there in good condition and very useful.

Ref. 85 EILEAN-A-GOBH

There is at least two good Rod fishing rocks on Eilean-a-Gobh, 'Coul-an-t-Eilean' and 'Ceann an t-Eilean'.

Ref. 86 FISH-SALTING-AND-DRYING-STATION

The last tacksman at Calbost, Rob Weir, who died in 1821 operated the fish salting station at Mol-a-Gobh. It was said that one of the original crofters at Calbost was the last person to operate the salting station after Robert Weir, Murdo Nicolson, 11, Calbost.

At one time ships called at Calbost bay to load dried fish and kelp in order to bring these products to market. Tradition relate that if these ships were returning from Ireland, light (that is without cargo). Apparently it was the custom to use Irish soil as ballast and subsequently unload the soil at places like Calbost when they called for another cargo.

Oral tradition relate that Irish soil is in various places in Lewis, including 'GARADH-MOR-ROB-WEIR', Rob Weir's big garden.

Ref. 87 KELP-KILNS-RUINS

We speculate that it is the ruins of the kelping kilns that may be seen within 'Eilean-a-Gobh'?

Ref. 88 CAMUS CHALABOIST

A Gaelic place-name meaning Calbost Bay.

Ref. 89 AN-GOBH-RUADH

A Gaelic place-name. 'Ruadh' means brown and the rocks at the place has a brown hue. Presumably that might be the basis of the name. Although it was a shallow place, it was, nevertheless, a very popular rod fishing rock. Our ceilidh-house host, Angus Morrison, spent a lot of his time rod fishing here. Access was easy.

Ref. 90 CLACH-MHOR-A-GOBH

A little above the 'Gobh-Ruadh', on the bye-walk, 'FRITH-RATHAD', between the village and the 'GOBH' beach, stands a natural pillar of rock called 'CLACH-MHOR-A-GODH'.

This pillar of rock is remembered in local tradition as the place where Ann Maclean Macleod 1802-1838 wife of John Macleod, 'SEOCK', 8 Calbost gave birth to her first born, Kenneth in 1838, 'Coinneach Sheock' who subsequently settled at 3, Marvig. Apparently Ann was on her way home from the 'Gobh' beach when she had to succumb to the pains of childbirth at this pillar of rock.

The child Kenneth, apparently named after Ann's father Kenneth Maclean, survived, but the mother died then at the age of 36 years.

Ann's father Kenneth Maclean who lived in Calbost at that time moved to 15 Gravir.

Ref. 91 AM-BEALLACH-GLAS

That is the name given to the gorge at the end of the village boundary wall, pertaining to Croft 9, at the shore.

Ref. 92 SGEIR-NA-SAPPAR

This is a tidal rock on the shore-line at the 'BEALLACH-GLAS' which is the point at which the village boundary wall pertaining to Croft 9 reaches the shore. 'SAPPAR' is an English term for a soldier but we are not aware of any oral tradition that associates a soldier with this tidal rock. Could the word 'SAPPAR' have associations with the precious known as 'SAPPHIRE'?

Ref. 93 LEAC-NA-BUITHAIDHAN' (The Rock of the Puffins)

'LEAC' is a Gaelic word for a sloping rock, a declivity. Apparently this rock must have been a favourite place frequented by puffins, 'BUITHAIDHAN'.

This rock was also used as a landing place by the inhabitants of the village for various things, notably for boat-loads of seaweed that was used as fertiliser on their crofts.

The practice of going for a boat-load of seaweed to the island of 'TORRAY' or some other place where seaweed grew plentifully, ceased in Calbost in the 1920s, presumably because the people began to use commercial factory manufactured fertiliser more. The writer remembers the last time our own family boat went to 'TORRAY' for a boat-load of seaweed. Our boat was a white Orkney built 19 foot keel boat called 'BEAUTIFUL' SY 237. My parents and three older brothers went, I was too young to go, or perhaps I was at school.

Bubbly seaweed is very buoyant by reason of the air trapped in the bubbles and they used to load the boats down very low in the water, and if the wind rose on their way home, it became a very dangerous task to negotiate a passage home. On that last occasion my father felt it was prudent to lighten the boat before negotiating the headland known as 'Rudha-na-Creage-Moire' by putting my mother and Murdo, the youngest of my brothers,

ashore half-way at 'Mol-na-Braithrean'. I don't know if his motive was to lighten the boat or minimise the loss of life in the event of an accident, or both. People who go down to the sea in ships as a way of life, live dangerously.

Ref. 94 AN CLACHAN

Clachan is a Gaelic word often applied to a village. The word may also be applied to stepping stone, like across a stream.

The place-name in this case presumably got its name from the stepping stones across the stream from the 'LOCH-DUBH' to the sea. The place-name 'CLACHAN' is normally applied to the green grassy area of Croft 10 bordering on the stream, where boats were built from time to time.

Ref. 95 BUN-AN-UISQUE (End of the Water)

Bun-an-Uisque is the sea rod fishing rock on the south side of the 'CLACHAN' (see Ref. 91).

As a fishing rock it was a particularly good place for cuddies, 'CUIDIGAN', (which are small coalfish) in the spring of the year.

Ref. 96 LAIMHRIG (A Landing Place)

This is a Gaelic place name for wharf or landing place. It is a natural feature of the shore-line. Unfortunately it was tidal and therefore shallow and not always suitable as a landing-place. When the tide was in it was a popular rod fishing rock.

Ref. 97 A SGEIR MHOR

This tidal off-shore rock is situated within the bay of Calbost, just off the 'LAIMHRIG' in Ref. 96.

Ref. 98 A SGEIR BHEAG

This tidal rock is near the Sgeir Mhor within Calbost Bay. It is close to the shore.

Ref 99 A GEODHA (This cove has a pebbly beach)

'Geodha' is Gaelic for cove or creek. It is on the shore of Croft 10.

Ref. 100 GEODHA-AN-DHUILEASG (A STIGH)

A Gaelic place where dulse seaweed grown profusely. It was a very popular rod fishing rock. Access was easy.

Ref. 101 GEODHA-AN-DHUILEASG, A MUIDH

Of the two rod fishing rocks of the same name this one was more popular because of its easier access and deeper waters. A good place for wrasse.

Ref. 102 AN GEOPAN

A small cove seldom used for rod fishing.

Ref. 103 AN CARRAGH BUIDHE

'CARRAGH' in Gaelic may be applied to a rocky shelf or the projecting part of a rock. 'BUIDHE' is the Gaelic word for yellow. We do not know why this ledge or rock was described as yellow. Access to it was difficult and therefore it was not frequented for rod fishing very often.

Ref. 104 A GOB-GLAS

A Gaelic place-name, 'GOB' meaning in this case, a projecting point or small headland. 'GLAS' presumably refers to the green grassy slope above the headland.

As the location of this feature of the shore-line was half-way along the south side of Calbost bay and very deep, it was a suitable place to fasten a rope ashore and set a few gill-nets for herring across the bay with an anchor at the far end of the set of nets.

Generations of Calbost people set nets at this place regularly, particularly during the winter, mainly for a domestic supply of fresh herring.

Ref. 105 CREAG-ALASTAIR-AONGHAIS

A Gaelic place-name for a rod fishing rock named after a local village person who fished there frequently.

Ref. 106 GOB-CREAG-AN-TOILL

A Gaelic place-name descriptive of a headland to which access was gained by passing through a hole in the rocks.

It was a very good rod fishing place with plenty of depth of sea water. Access was reasonable.

Ref. 107 CAIRN-TOLL

A Gaelic place-name, so called because the sea flowed back and fore through holes in the rocks, creating a booming roar when the sea was rough.

It was seldom used as a rod fishing rock. Access was difficult.

Ref. 108 CREAG-AN-UILLT

A Gaelic place-name, so called because there is a small stream coming down the hill at this point when the weather is wet.

It is particularly deep and therefore very suitable for rod sea-fishing. It was very popular because of its easy access.

At one time a ship crashed into the rocks at this point.

Ref. 109 A-LOING

We are not sure of the definition of this place-name, it could be a Gaelic name meaning 'ship'. Depending on the correct spelling and phonetic sound of the word as used locally, it could possibly belong to another language. More research is needed.

It was a very good road sea-fishing rock and access was reasonably easy.

Ref. 110 GEODHA-BHEAG-NA-LOING

Meaning the creek of the LOING.

Ref. 111 STAC-AN-FHIR-MHAOL

Usually marked on the maps. A Gaelic place-name. The word 'STAC' in Gaelic translates to a high cliff or projecting rock. In this case the place-name refers to a headland or projecting rock. It is located at the southern edge of Calbost Bay.

The second part of the name, 'FEAR-MAOL', surely refers to a bald man and the implication of this place-name is lost in the mists of time.

It could be that a bald person fished regularly from this point. It was a good fishing rock but access was difficult from the landward approach.

There is an off-shore reef at this point where the local people fished from small rowing boats for LYTHER etc.

Ref. 112 CREAG-DHONNACHADH

This feature of the shore-line translates from Gaelic to English as 'DUNCAN'S ROCK'. We never heard of any local tradition that identified the 'Duncan', who is commemorated by this place-name.

It is a deep, wharf-like rock, very suitable for rod sea fishing but extremely difficult and dangerous to negotiate access to it. Nevertheless, we knew an old age pensioner who frequently fished from this rock, John Morrison 9 Calbost.

Ref. 113 GOB-LEAC-BHEAG

'GOB' in Gaelic translates to point or small headland and 'LEAC-BHEAG' translates to a small sloping rock or declivity, as against 'GOB-LECK-MHOR' meaning big rock of the same kind further along the coast.

It was a very good rod fishing rock, with very easy access.

Ref. 114 GORMAIG

We do not know what language or the meaning of this place-name. The first part of the name, 'GORM' translates to 'BLUE'. The name could conceivably mean 'Green grassy mound'. Also, there is a bird called 'GORMAG'. More research is needed.

It was a very good rod fishing rock.

Ref. 115 LEAC GORMAAG

'LEAC' translates to a sloping flat rock of declivity. It is a rod fishing rock beside 'GORMAAG'.

Ref. 116 UIDHSEAL

This is probably a Norse name. More research is needed here. Part of this cliff is very high and frequented by sea-birds. The lower part was a good rod fishing rock.

Ref. 117 GOB-LEAC-MHOR

This small headland in Gaelic was used extensively as a rod fishing rock. Access to it was easy.

Ref. 118 AN CORRAN

'CORRAN' in Gaelic means, (a reaping hook or tool), a headland or point reaching far out into the sea. Both of these descriptions fit this place-name. This feature marks the northern edge of the bay of the 'CREAGAN-RUADH'. It is a very good rod fishing rock but extremely difficult and very dangerous to gain access to it from the high hill above the fishing rock, with the scree very loose.

At the top of the 'CORRAN' hill there is a cave which is used by pigeons as a nesting place.

Also, at the top of the 'CORRAN' hill may be seen a projecting rock on the skyline, which is a natural image of a horse's head and neck. At one time this natural rock had two ears but generations of boys spent a lot of time firing stones at the so-called ears, and eventually succeeding in knocking off one of the ears.

'MOL-AN-EICH', the Beach of the Horse, nearby, got its name from this natural image of a horse's head. If one positions oneself at the correct angle to the horse's head, either on land or sea, one gets a good view of this phenomenon against the skyline.

Ref. 119 STACK-NA-SGARBH

This small headland appears to have got its Gaelic name as a result of cormorants who apparently were in the habit of alighting and resting on this rock.

Ref. 120 GEODHA DUBH STACK NA SGARBH

A creek near Stack na Sgarbh.

Ref. 121 AN CREAGAN RUADH

This is a Gaelic name indicating a small rocky eminence of brownish stratified rock. Generations of Calbost people used this rock as a fishing rock. Access was easy.

Ref. 122 MOL-AN-EICH

This feature of the shore-line got its Gaelic name from the so-called projecting rock in the form of a horse's head at the top of the hill to the east of the pebbly beach. There is evidence of cultivation in the area, which indicates that this area may have been inhabited at one time (see 118 Corran).

Ref. 123 CHARNAICH

As the Gaelic name indicates, this is a sloping hill covered with rocks and boulders, just north of the 'CREAG-FHROACH'.

Ref. 124 A CREAG-FHROACH (The Heather Rock)

This Gaelic place-name is a prominent headland. It marks the southern edge of the bay of the 'CREAGAN-RUADH' and the northern edge or entrance to 'LOCH-ODHAIRN' (Loch Grabhar).

Ref. 125 A CHARNAICH MHOR

A Gaelic place-name indicating rocks and boulders.

Ref. 126 CREAG NEILL

This place name translates to 'NAIL'S ROCK' probably because someone called Neil frequented the place as a good rod fishing rock. It is just within the area of Loch Odhairn (Loch Grabhir).

Ref 127 LEABAIDH AN UAMHA (The Sea Monster's Bed)

The story of this place-name is lost in the mists of time. It is a reminder of the brevity of life as is many other place-names. CALBOST area has been inhabited by several waves of people and we, the Gaels, the latest wave of people to occupy the area, appear to be about to vacate the place, and probably all these place-names will be lost forever.

Ref. 128 A GOB GLAS

We are not so familiar with this area and we confine ourselves to recording the place-name.

Ref. 129 GEODHA GLAS A MUIGH

One of two similar creeks or coves. This is the outer.

Ref. 130 SGEIR A CALLACH

A reef close to the shore.

Ref. 131 GEODHA GLAS A STIGH

This is the inner of the two similar creeks in this area.

Ref. 132 MOL-LITI-SITHEAN

Tradition relate that a community lived here at 'LITI-SITHEAN' (spelt 'SITHINN' on the map). Probably they used this beach with their boats.

Ref. 133 GEODHA A RON (The Seal's Creek)

A Gaelic place-name, apparently frequented by seals.

Ref. 134 GEODHA NAN CALAMAN (The Pigeon's Creek)

A Gaelic place-name, apparently frequented by pigeons.

Ref. 135 CREAG CHOINNEACH (Kenneth's Rock)

A Gaelic place-name, commemorating a man by the name of Kenneth. Probably he was in the habit of rod fishing here frequently.

Ref. 136 CLACH UILLEAM (William's Rock)

Apparently various people had a favourite rod fishing rock. This was William's rock.

In more recent times it marks the boundary between the Calbost and Gravir common grazing.

Ref. 137 LOCH ODHAIRN or (Loch Grabhir)

The Calbost common grazing extends to within this sea loch, which is a fine sheltered anchorage. The village of Gravir is situated round the head of this sea loch.

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