

Ardnish pre 800AD

Ardnish and the nearby islands have probably been inhabited for the last few thousand years. Rhum (Rum), an island often visible from Ardnish, has been inhabited since the 8th millennium BC, and is believed to be one of the earliest recorded human settlements in Scotland. The very earliest settlers on Ardnish left behind little evidence, (although a future archeological survey may well reveal some) however Eilean nan Gobhar (Goat Island) at the end of the Ardnish peninsula contains two vitrified forts.

Dating a vitrified fort is difficult, as the following extract from an archeological website comments.

Vitrified forts (or vitrified structures) are difficult to date, because exposure to such intense heat destroys the organic materials, although recent research at Misericordia (Portugal) seems to suggest that archaeomagnetic dating may be a workable solution. The site is important for the innovative use of archaeomagnetic dating of the vitrified elements. Vitrified forts are notoriously difficult to date, but researchers were able to established that the wall was burned between 842-652 BC¹

The archeological evidence therefore suggests that Ardnish was certainly populated at least two and a half thousand years ago, and probably longer, although there is no hard evidence to confirm this.

A vitrified fort has had its stone walls have been subjected to intense heat (in excess of 1,000°C, and probably up to 1,200°C) which has caused the loose rocks to melt into a flux and fuse together. In some cases only the edges of the stone are fused, in others larger parts are fused but the overall effect is to create flux like melted toffee that binds the small rocks together.

Vitrified forts are normally found on the summit of a hill, giving them good visibility, as any foe could be seen some distance away. The vitrified fort at Goat Island has sweeping views to Muck, Eigg and Rum, as well as northwards to Skye, and south to Ardnamurchan. It also commands a good defensive location, being on an island with few available landing points, and with inaccessible cliff faces on several sides.

No bonding materials, such as cement or lime, seem to have been used to fuse the rocks. Many theories have been put forward as to how this fusing occurred, given the extreme temperatures needed.

It was long believed that vitrified forts were only to be found in Scotland, however this has now been disproved, and examples can be found across Europe from France, to Germany and from Hungary to Iran and Turkey. It is estimated that about 200 vitrified forts exist in total, with the vast majority being in Scotland.

Replicating the vitrification

Some initial attempts to replicate the vitrification process were conducted in the mid 1930's by the archaeologist Gordon Childe in a colliery in Stirlingshire. They created a twelve foot wall built of small pieces of basalt rocks (similar to most vitrified forts), surrounding this with a wall made of firebricks then they piled in four tons of wood, and torched it. The fire was fanned by a strong wind

¹ Source: <http://archaeology.about.com/od/mterms/g/misericordia.htm>

(as a blizzard was in progress), which can only have increased the temperature. Some of the inner parts of the stone walls did partially vitrify, but the vitrification was very limited, and was confined to a handful of the smaller stones.

The dwellings on Ardnish pre 800

It is probable that the very earliest dwellings on Ardnish utilised the natural features such as the large cave at Slocht, as it would have provided protection from the elements, without the need for any construction. Although the name Loch nan Uamh was probably a later Gaelic name it translates as the Loch of the Caves, which may be a hangover from these very early dwellings.

Apart from the vitrified fort, which generally seem to be abandoned across Scotland sometime around the 9th Century, little remains of any other settlements from this time. Aerial photographs do show a large round indentation in the grass between the bothy and the Naust. Whilst this seems to fit the pattern of a possible Viking settlement, only an archeological excavation would confirm if this was a settlement and if it was from the Viking era or earlier/later.

It is perhaps not surprising that little remains of any other settlements from the 9th Century till approximately the 1750's, as is likely that any stone structures were cannibalised for later housing, as there is a long history of reusing stones, and timber in the highlands. Also as the early dwellings were often constructed from peat and wood, they would have left few obvious remains after being abandoned.

The population of Ardnish pre 800

Building the vitrified fort would have been a major undertaking, requiring a considerable workforce. I am unaware of any freshwater springs, or a well on Goat Island, although one may have existed. Presumably fresh water would therefore have been supplied from the mainland. Due to the size of the island, and the lack of fertile ground, it seems unlikely that it could have been an entirely self-supporting population. It is therefore highly likely that there were other Pictish settlements on both Ardnish, and in the Roshven area, and these supplied the inhabitants of the vitrified fort.

Ardnish between 800AD and 1250AD

The next invaders/settlers were the Vikings, and they left behind a few strong reminders of their presence. The name Ardnish seems to come from a combination of Old Norse and Gaelic. This combination is the Gaelic *Airde* (a point as in Ardnamurchan) and the Old Norse word of *Nish* (a point). Ardnish rather like Ardtornish (south of Ardnish) becoming a fusion of the two languages, both meaning a point or headland in each language. This was the opinion of the late Sir Ian Noble from Skye (who was knighted in part for his efforts to preserve the Gaelic language) who discussed the origins of the name of Ardnish at length with me.

The Vikings also left some archaeological clues behind, and with the aid of the satellite pictures of Ardnish, it is possible to clearly identify a Viking Naust (a safe haven or harbour) at Peanmeanach. There has been some comment on the internet that there is also a Naust at Slocht, I have not yet been to investigate it, although this may be of a later date.

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Websters online dictionary describes a Naust as: *In Scandinavia, the boathouse is known as a Naust, a word deriving from Old Norse naverstað. These were typically built with stone walls and timber roofs and would be either open to the sea or provided with sturdy doors. Nausts (unroofed or roofed boat-shelters), in use often to the present day, are a familiar feature of the shorelines in Orkney and Shetland.*²

All that is now left of the Peanmeanach Naust is the cutting in the sand that resembles the front half a boat (this shows up remarkably clearly from satellite photographs). The Vikings would probably have created this for use when they pulled their Viking longboats, or other Viking vessels out of the water, as a sort of roofed or roofless boathouse. It would nevertheless have provided shelter for the boat from the strong storms that sweep in from the west in the winter, and may have also been used when repairs were needed.

Besides probably giving or adding to the name of the Ardnish peninsula, the Viking system was also instrumental in the naming of two of the settlements on Ardnish, Peanmeanach and Feorlindhu.

At the end of the 16th century Ouncelands and Pennylands were used as the main units of land assessment in land rentals. This was a hangover from a much earlier system of taxation, and dates back to the Viking era. An Ounceland was an area of cultivatable land – that should generate the annual tax or rent of an ounce of Norse silver which equated to either twenty or eighteen Cologne pennies, these were referred to as Pennylands.

Peanmeanach is a derivation of the Norse for Pennyland (Pean). The Norse word for farthing is a feorlig, Feorlindhu (black farthingland) is a collection of houses (township) near Peanmeanach, and this would have been the name given to one of the subdivisions of the pennylands.

The dwellings on Ardnish from 800 to 1250

The Viking Naust at Peanmeanach would suggest that there was some sort of Viking settlement or dwelling nearby at some stage. The following extract provides some details about the type of dwellings that could have been used by the Vikings on Ardnish.

Most dwelling houses, storehouses and workshops would be of timber and wattle-and-daub construction....Reed or straw thatch would be the usual roofing material. There would be openings high up in the gable ends to allow smoke from the hearth to escape, as there were no chimneys. Some smaller, poorer dwellings may have consisted of just one room with a hearth in the centre. Richer houses would have been larger and have several sleeping alcoves furnished with rugs, pillows and furs. There would be sleeping platforms against the side walls, made of raised earth and faced with wooden boards; these would act as benches for sitting on, keeping feet off the stamped-earth floor and out of draughts. Better houses may have had low stools, chairs, a feasting table and benches. Chests (kists), which would be lockable in the better homes, were a normal means of storing possessions.

The population of Ardnish from 800 to 1250

The size of the population of Ardnish between these dates can only be roughly estimated. Viking boats tended to have a crew of between 25 and 60 with 100 not being uncommon. To move a boat

² Source: www.scran.ac.uk/000-000-142-905-C

from the beach at Peanmeanach to the Naust, even at high tide would require a concerted effort by many hands. It seems probable that the minimum population around Peanmeanach would be 25, although it was probably more likely to have been between over 50 when women and children were included.

Ardnish between 1250AD and 1840AD

Until the 1840s, when the new statistical account was published, there is a lack of official records, as the following two comments from the recent archaeological survey of Polnish highlight. It is therefore impossible to get a really detailed picture of the peninsula. There are however, a number of documents, such as maps that allow a broad picture to emerge.

“There is little about the individual inhabitants of Polnish in any kind of record”

Whilst the early settlers left the archaeological evidence of both the vitrified forts, and the Naust, there is as yet little definitive archaeological evidence of settlers between 1250 and 1850. Apart from a system of names on Ardnish, that refer to the rent paid, and some oral history, it is not possible to prove categorically that Ardnish was continuously inhabited during these six hundred years, although it seems highly probable that it was, or was at least was inhabited for long periods between these dates. Probably the earliest reference was highlighted in the recent archaeological survey of Polnish.

Oral history tells that about 1520 the pursued Dugald VI of Clanranald took to the hills from Loch Ailort and was murdered by his kinsmen in the corrie known as Coire a' Dhugaill, about 800m east of Polnish.³

Whilst this is not direct proof that Ardnish was inhabited in 1520, it does suggest that there were at least inhabitants nearby.

There is reference to the lands of Ardnish in 1625 and 1720, and as rents are detailed, there must have been farmers and other inhabitants living and working on Ardnish to pay these rents.

The MacDonalds of Benbecula. The first of this family was RANALD.... His father bestowed upon him the lands of ... the 20 penny lands of Uachdar, called the two Airds in Knocksorlar, together with the 3 penny lands of Machermeanach, in Skirhough, and the 3 mark 10 shilling lands of Ardnish, Lochelt, and Essan in Arisaig. In 1625, Ranald received a charter of these lands from his nephew, John, XII. of Clanranald. DONALD. In 1680, he received from Donald XIII. of Clanranald a Charter of Novo- damus of all the lands granted to his grandfather in 1625. In 1720, he excambed with Angus Mac- donald of Belfinlay his lands of Ardnish, Lochelt, and Essan.⁴

The first map listing townships in Ardnish was published 1791, but with mapping being undertaken between 1747 to 1755.

Angus MacEachen was born in 1730 in South Uist, he came to Ardnish and took over the tack of Lagan , (English Laggan - Little hollow) where his son, Hugh was b. in 1765.⁵

³ Source: Lower Polnish: a Township on the Ardnish Peninsula - A report for Scotland's Rural Past by the Moidart History Group

⁴ Source: www.archive.org/stream/clandonald03macduoft/clandonald03macduoft_djvu.txt

⁵ Source: Westworld

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Following the 1745 Jacobite rebellion, when the Hanoverian military leaders in Scotland were 'greatly embarrassed for want of a proper Survey of the Country' (John Watson, 1770, quoted in the Royal Scottish Geographical Society's, Early Maps of Scotland to 1850, 1973, p.105).

The need for reliable maps which commanders could use to direct troops and plan campaigns was quickly identified.

This military map clearly marks the houses in Polnish (marked as Earn), Laggan, Peanmeanach, Glasnacardoch, Slocht, Mullochbuie (marked as Mor), there also seems to be an additional two townships marked as Theodlin. These houses are recorded as near the large stone walled field or sheep fank near Laggan, there is evidence of several dwellings there set well back from the sea, although it would seem that these must have been abandoned much earlier than the others.

In the late eighteenth century, there is another link between Ardnish, and in particular Laggan and Bonnie Prince Charlie.

In 1822, Hugh MacEachen was born in 'The Glen' in Arisaig; his father was Angus, and his grandfather was also Angus and was tenant farmer in Laggan, Ardnish in 1798. The grandfather Angus (Tenant Farmer from Laggan), was the grandson of Angus MacEachen, younger brother of Neil MacEachen, who features in history as the boatman who helped Prince Charles Edward Stuart, along with Flora MacDonald, to escape from the Uists to Skye in 1746.

The following year, there is evidence that emigration from Ardnish was already underway, with three emigrants leaving the peninsula.

List of an Emigration from Clanranald's Estate, bound for the Island of StJohn in the Gulph of St. Laurence N.A.Sail'd from the Harbour of Drimindarach the 12th July 1790 on Board the Jane Captain Fisher. NB All above twelve years of age pay full passage, and those under that age pay in proportion as stated. The Ardnish residents are recorded as Lagan Ardnish, Allan MacDonald (tenant), Lagan Ardnish –James MacDonald (tenant) and Fiorlindugh – Donald MacDonald (tenant)⁶

The next chronological evidence comes from 1829. This is direct evidence that the highland clearances bolstered the population of Ardnish, as the other areas of the Highlands were cleared for sheep, and the peninsula of Ardnish was a convenient “dumping ground”.

Gaoithe Dail was cleared of 10 families in 1829 by Lady Ashburton and this farm was also added to the tack, or tenancy, of Mains Farm. Some of the evicted people emigrated and some sought shelter in Ardnish.⁷

As a relatively isolated area, the Ardnish peninsula would have been seen by the owner as an ideal out of the way area, with little productive land, where multiple families and villages could be evicted to (from other more productive land), and be literally “out of sight and out of mind”.

⁶ Source: http://www.islandarchives.ca/fedora/repository/vre:islemag-batch2-12/OBJ/10_PEI_passenger_lists-a_genealogical_p_34-39.pdf

⁷ Source: <http://www.road-to-the-isles.org.uk/westword/march2010.html>

The dwellings on Ardnish between 1250 and 1840

As detailed earlier, there is little detailed evidence of the dwellings on Ardnish until the 1750s. The map and census dating from the mid 1750's for Ardnish provide details of the population and housing, and in addition there are detailed descriptions from the travelers who recorded what they saw such as Dr Samuel Johnson in his Journey to the Western Isles in 1773, and subsequent travelers.

The townships on Ardnish

The definition of a township according to the website highland.gov.uk is, *"A group of dwellings, associated farm buildings and land, held by two or more joint tenants usually working the land communally."*⁸

For most of the Ardnish townships it is impossible to identify exactly how long each was "active" or when it was abandoned. However, there is direct evidence that Peanmeanach and Feorlindhue were settled in the Viking era. I think it is probably unlikely that these townships were simply abandoned, or abandoned for long periods. There is evidence that Ardnish was rented in 1625, and in and around the 1750's that Ardnish was farmed by one tenant, although there would have been farm laborers and probably servants, who would presumably need to live near the productive areas of land. It is possible that some townships before they became permanently inhabited were used as shielings. These were temporary houses or shelters that were used during the summer months, when the livestock and women and children moved to the more remote (and often higher) ground.

There are several shielings on Ardnish, these tend to be on the higher ground or some distance away from the main townships. Examples are visible from satellite photographs and can clearly be seen as single, often remote building. Slocht and Mullochbuie, may have been shielings before they came to be permanently settled as townships, as both are relatively isolated.

A shieling is a small house or hut once common in the hills and mountains of Scotland and northern England. Farmers and their families lived there during the summer, when their livestock were grazing common land in the hills. Shielings generally fell out of use by the end of the 17th century, although in remote areas this system continued into the 18th.

The dwellings from 1750 onwards

From around the 1750's onwards, the people who lived on Ardnish, would probably have lived in black houses or tigh dubh. As with many of the definitions there is some debate about the meaning of black houses (rather like the traditional dagger worn with the kilt the sgian dubh). Some have suggested that the word black house is no more than 150 years old, others that it goes back for several hundreds of years. The debate seems to centre around two similarly pronounced words dubh (black) and tugadh (thatch). Whilst there is much debate about the age and source of the words, there is little doubt about what a black house was, and examples can be seen in the various abandoned villages of Slocht, Peanmeanach, Laggan, Glasnacardoch and Polish.

The houses were designed to offer the minimal resistance to the prevailing wind possible; they were relatively low, and tended to be relatively sheltered from the prevailing wind, even if as on Peanmeanach this meant that they look relatively exposed. The corners of the houses were

⁸ Source: <http://her.hIGHLAND.gov.uk/SingleResult.aspx?uid=THG110>

sometimes rounded to deflect the wind, and the heather or rush roof was held down with large rocks, which were usually suspended in netting from just below the eaves. This would provide an additional weight to stop the roof from being blown off.

The population of Ardnish between 1250 and 1840

The population of the Highlands experienced a dramatic increase from the mid 1750's to the 1800's with the population doubling in some areas in the space of 50 years or so, the area of Moidart saw a significant population rise over this period, which has been estimated at approximately 40%.

The census and parish records for Ardnamurchan/Arisaig and Moidart, which includes Ardnish show the population from 1801 to 1831, as relatively stable, at just over 2,000, although these records do not show the increase from 1750 to 1800, since no records appear to have been kept.

Prior to the clearances, and probably in around 1650, the western end of Ardnish was farmed by a single farmer, although he was probably assisted by some agricultural labourers, shepherds etc.

The enforced clearances dramatically increased the population, to an unsustainable peak sometime in the mid 18th century. The relatively unproductive land on Ardnish could not support the increased population, and life was a constant struggle. It was possible to generate a meager income from kelp burning, fishing, and collecting shellfish etc, although this was barely enough to cover the high rents charged by the landlords. A combination of this and other issues led to the ongoing decline in the Ardnish population, with many emigrating to seek a better life. The de-population of Ardnish was a scene was repeated across many other similar isolated townships in the Highlands and West Coast.

The following quote show that the ongoing population decline was due to a combination of events rather than to a single trigger, although the lack of food in the winter months was a major consideration. The combined impact of these led to a series of mass emigrations from the 1730's to the 1930's.

*The population of Polish declined for reasons common everywhere in the Highlands: poverty, hunger, lack of work, sheep and deer grazing destroying crops*⁹

The increased population led to increased pressure to produce more food from what was at best marginal land. Whilst fishing went some way to bridge the gap, as the following quote shows, the winter months brought extreme hardship, and families were sometimes forced to live off food such as limpets for months on end in the winter.

*Tenants in Glenmoidart (near Ardnish – Ed) were reported to have said that whilst for six months a year they could live comfortably, they had to endure for the other six months in downright starvation.*¹⁰

The impact of the Jacobite rebellion in 1745 on the Highlands was far more marked than the earlier 1715 rebellion, banning the kilt and tartan and removing the virtual sovereign power held by the Clan chiefs.

⁹ Source: Lower Polish: a Township on the Ardnish Peninsula - A report for Scotland's Rural Past by the Moidart History Group

¹⁰ Source: <http://www.moidart.org.uk/datasets/reflectionsonagriculture.htm>

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The ongoing emigration from the highlands of Scotland continued, sometimes in waves.

*Another wave of mass emigration came in 1792, known as the "Year of the Sheep" to Scottish Highlanders*¹¹

The following quote highlight details about the causes of the emigrations, including the post war recession after 1815.

*Before 1800, highland emigrants were simultaneously driven away by economic, social and demographic dislocation resulting from rising rents and agricultural restructuring, and enticed by the offer of generous freehold land grants to former soldiers, many of whom came from the now-redundant tacksman class. After 1815, when the highland economy crumbled in the face of post-war recession and repeated subsistence crises, the mercantilist antagonism of landlords and government to the hemorrhaging of the population was transformed into an active Malthusian approbation of emigration as the only alternative to tenant congestion and starvation, as well as proprietorial bankruptcy.*¹²

The collapse of the kelp industry in the 1820's, would have added to the emigration pressures. Kelp gathering and drying was a labour intensive industry, with many families being paid to collect the kelp. Whilst this was a lucrative industry for the landowners, for the residents of Ardnish it was not, although it would have been one of the few ways to earn money towards paying the rent.

How the Ardnish population may have lived between 1250 and 1840

One source of employment available would have been cattle droving, and it is likely that at its peak from the 1650's to the 1850's there would have been many Ardnish drovers. In the 1841 census there is a drover living at Polnish, although by then droving was well on the decline.

The drovers were local men. In May, they would start to visit farms, bargaining for cattle often only one or two at a time, since many of the highland farming tenants were very poor. Gradually, they would have a herd they could gather as summer advanced and drive south. The herds would be at least 100 strong, often larger and up to 2,000 strong. Ahead of them lay a long and dangerous journey. Rivers in flood might have to be crossed; journeys must be made over trackless mountains, sometimes in thick mist where a drover might easily lose his way; or well armed "rievers" might try to steal cattle.

It is likely that the residents of Ardnish harvested kelp to help pay the rents. The kelp was collected at low tides, dried and eventually burnt. The resulting soda ash was used as a bleaching agent, and also in the production of both glass and soap. The production of soda ash was very lucrative for the landowners, and pools of very cheap labour were required, as the gathering and drying process was labour intensive. By the 1820's the price fell dramatically, as cheaper processes were developed to produce soda ash, and the kelp industry collapsed, leading to further emigration pressure.

Collecting shellfish would have been another key source of money. Whelks, winkles, cockles etc would have been collected at low tide, and put into mesh bags, and stacked in rock pools ready to be

¹¹ Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Highland_Clearances

¹² Source: <http://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/Migration/articles/harper.html> Crossing borders: Scottish emigration to Canada by Marjory Harper, University of Aberdeen

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taken to the mainland for collection. These bags were sealed with coloured tags that identified the merchant they were being collected by, and the owner.

Ardnish and its residents from 1841AD onwards

By the mid nineteenth century there are several official documents that confirm Ardnish was inhabited by a population of approximately 200, these come from both census data and maps.

The census of 1841 provides both the names and occupations where given, for the Ardnish population as:

Township	Population	Surnames	Occupations where given
Laggan	15 people in 2 houses	Chisolm, Gillies and MacDonald	2 Farmers and two female servants
Peanmeanach	48 people in 7 houses	Smith, MacLellan, MacGillivray, MacDonald and	7 Farmers and two female servants
Feorlindue	38 people in 6 houses	MacDonald, Smith, MacGillivray, MacDonald and Gillies	5 Farmers and one Cottar
Sloch	20 people in 3 houses	MacGillivray, MacEachan and MacDugald or MacDougald	2 Farmers and one Cottar
Mullochbuie	15 people in 2 houses	MacDonald, MacEachan MacIsaac and MacVarish	2 Farmers and one female servant
Polnish	62 people in 9 houses	MacDonald, MacDougall, Gillies, MacInnis, Rankin, Morrison, MacPherson, Macleod	2 Tenants, 2 Cottars, 4 Agricultural laborers, 1 cattle drover, 1 shoe maker 1 weaver of hand wool and 1 fox-hunter

The census for Ardnish in 1851 of has 33 households and 178 inhabitants. This compares with 29 households and 198 inhabitants in 1841. The Ordnance survey map published in 1855 clearly marks out all the townships, and the spellings and names of the townships now seem to be more defined and standardised, although Feorlindhue or Firlindhu is no longer identified separately (the houses west of the burn seem to have been included in Peanmeanach).

The Napier Commission which took evidence from crofters towards the end of the nineteenth century identified the issues faced by the inhabitants of Ardnish.

Napier Commission on 6th August 1883. Donald MacVarish, Ardnish, 64, gathered whelks, which were their best source of income now that all other occupations had failed. Earned 5sh in a 5-6 day spring tide. Droving of cattle and sheep to Falkirk gone. Used to make £15-£16 in a season. Canals and trains stopped droving. Donald MacDonald, one of 3 at Polnish, nearly 80 afraid of old age. Rents - one paid £2 the other two paid 30sh each. Pay £3 apiece for a cow each (to tacksman). 17 Commandments. Sons and daughters had to leave when they reached 21.¹³

Oral history details that the path to Peanmeanach (from the lay-by) was maintained by two “road builders.” Much of this path is still in remarkably good condition, given that it was probably made

¹³ Go Listen to the Crofters pp59- Source <http://www.moidart.org.uk/archives/landscapearchive.htm>

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over a hundred years ago. There was considerable aggravation that the crofters of Ardnish had to contribute towards maintaining the track.

Prior to the building of the new school house at Glasnarardoch, the children had to walk the entire length of the peninsular (and back again each day) as the old school house was near the lay-by at Upper Polish. The idea that the children (probably without shoes) would have to walk several miles both to and from school along the path every day seems in today's world of school buses scarcely believable.

Polnish School... now a modernised dwelling... was recorded by the OS surveyors in 1873. It was created by Mrs Astley, the estate owner in the 1870s (Robertson) and funded by the SSPCK (Roberts). It would have served Polish, Kinlochnanuamh and Ardnish: the average attendance was only fifteen children.¹⁴

A new school was built at Glasnacardoch, the construction date is unknown, although it was being used as a school before the first war and it finally closed its doors in 1932. It is a much larger building than all the other dwellings with two large rooms, and very large windows (and what appears to be a more recent addition of a sheep dip on one side!) The school mistress and her daughter lived in the house at Peanmeanach that is now the bothy. Oral history records that as the number of pupils declined at the school, children from Glasgow were "imported" to make up the numbers, and postpone the closure. Quite how this worked, and if children moved permanently to Ardnish either with or without their parents seems to have been lost over the years.

The catholic church at Polish (our lady of the braes), which must be one of the most photographed churches in Scotland, was made famous by its role in the film Local Hero, and was the only church on the peninsula. There is a chapel marked on a map from 1855, so the current building must have either replaced or been remodeled, as the current building dates from 1872, and was consecrated in 1874. It fell into disuse from 1964, when mass was held at the nearby chapel in Inverailort Castle. Oral history recalls that the inhabitants of Ardnish were buried on an island at the lower stretches of the river Ailort, although there is also a burial site on an island (at high tide) near Roshven, and this may also have been used.

The Macleods became the tenants of Ardnish sometime in the late 1930s (presumably after the majority of the townships were abandoned) and lived there until the late 1960s. Although both the Macleods were born in Harris, Donald MacLeod had lived in Patagonia, as a gaucho (sheep rancher) and he built the house that is now called Laggan (Note that Laggan was also a settlement in the census data in the previous century).

Laggan was modeled on one that he had taken measurements and designs from whilst in Patagonia, but the design for the houses in Patagonia had originally come from the Welsh and Scottish emigrants, so Laggan whilst being based on a model of a "Patagonian house" can trace its roots back to the designs used by the emigrants (shepherds and farmers) from Wales and Scotland, and therefore does not look out of place, in its location. Laggan incidentally is the Gaelic name for a green hollow, and as Laggan is relatively sheltered from the westerly winds seems a very apt description.

Donald MacLeod, was alleged to have a whisky still in the hills behind Peanmeanach (there are several remote abandoned stone dwellings or structures houses that would have made a convenient location), although this may just be a tall tale. Certainly in the 1970's there were several bottle

¹⁴ Source: Survey of Polish

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dumps, one near the shed, and one near the dog kennel in front of Ardnish. He was well known for liking a dram or two, and his boat apparently “knew its own way back” from the Lochailort Inn.

Oral history recalls that Mrs MacLeod apparently only left the Ardnish peninsula twice, during the thirty odd years that she lived there, once for a wedding of a Cousin, and once for a funeral. When she did leave, they moved nearby to Lochailort. Mrs Macleod had “a way with the birds” and had trained the birds near Laggan (presumably sparrows, robins etc) to eat out of her hand. When she moved to Lochailort, she was determined that she would continue to have birds eating out of her hands, and apparently persevered all day standing and lying on the ground, with food in her open hand, so that it only took her three days to achieve this.

The last house to be inhabited at Peanmeanach was the former school mistresses house (now the bothy). This was abandoned in 1942. Ian Mitchell in his book Mountain Footfalls recalls talking to Nellie, who was born on Ardnish, and who lived there until 1942 about living on Ardnish. What is clear is that very little had changed between the late 1890’s and 1942, and life continued in much the same way as it had. Even in the 1940’s there was no radio (not even a battery operated one), and the life revolved around the traditional activities such as cutting and drying peat, growing potatoes and vegetables, and producing their own eggs and milk, much as it had done for the last few hundred years.

Nellie MacQueen’s mother came from Barra to Ardnish, to marry the owner of the Post Office, in what is now the bothy. Her mother was the school teacher at the school just around the bay, from just before the first war to when it closed in or around 1932. The roll call had once apparently been as high as 28 children.

In her book Moidart and Morar, Wendy Wood wrote about the Post Office at Peanmeanach. *The low cottage on the shore still had, when I last visited it, a wooden sign hanging by one nail, saying, Post Office. Just prior to the war (Second War – Ed) looking for a place to set up a kiosk, a telephone official was setting out for Ardnish, when it was pointed out to him, that there was now only one house, and three people on the whole place.*

I can recall Mrs Cameron-Head mentioning that they used to oversee the herring bartering between the fish merchants and the Ardnish residents, to ensure that the Ardnish residents were not “diddled.” Payment was normally split, part being in salt (for next year’s salting of herring), plus part in money.

In her pamphlet about returning to Peanmeanach, after over 40 years, Nellie MacQueen gives a moving account, of looking for the well at Peanmeanach marked by white stones, and hitting the corner of each house with a stick and calling out the names of the former inhabitants. She had no regrets on leaving at all, but just wanted to return one last time. The family kept a cow for milk, and every day the Macleods would travel from Laggan to Peanmeanach to collect the fresh milk.

Laggan in the mid 1970s was in a sorry state, the sheep were living in the porch, as the front door had fallen off its hinges, the windows upstairs had been removed, the replacements had not been installed, and were propped up to roughly fit the holes left, when the old windows were removed.

In the 1970s there were numerous reminders of the Macleods, some of which still remain. The ruins of his boat was to be seen until the mid 1980s in front of Laggan, and I can remember extracting copper nails from it. There was also the remains of a Model T Fords back axle in the bay behind Ardnish (quite why the remains of a model T Ford was there remains a mystery – possibly they had been used as an anchor?).

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The path that Mr Macleod used to collect the post from the tip of the large island in front of Laggan is still clearly visible at a low tide, and runs from the mainland across the sand and gravel to the island. The fact that the path has remained so clearly visible despite not being used regularly by humans for approximately fifty years, suggests that the deer now use the same path. The post boat went from Lochailort to Genuig (and then onto Eigg) and he used to walk to the end of the peninsula (island at high tide) in front of Laggan, to meet the post boat, and collect or send letters and parcels.

The post boat was run by 'Post Ardnish', (John MacEachen). He grew up at Mullochbuie on Ardnish, and then moved to Cuiladaroch on the shore of Loch nan Uamh. The inhabitants of Laggan were probably less cut off 50 years ago, with a daily post collection and delivery and ability to chat to the postman, than they are now 50 or more years on.

There was no road from Lochailort to Genuig until the mid 1960s, there was a track from Inverailort along the loch side to Roshven and onto Genuig. I can recall people talking about walking from Inverailort to Genuig and then back again (carrying a fiddle) in an evening to attend a Ceiligh in Genuig. The road building was supposedly assisted by the Army due to the amount of explosives that were needed to blast through the hills.

Up until the late 1980s there was no mains electricity on the mainland opposite Laggan (electricity went only as far as Inverailort Castle), and the noise from the generator at Roshven could clearly be heard from Laggan in the evenings, until it was switched off at 10pm for the evening.

Along with mains electricity came television, and the instillation of a large TV aerial/mast on the hills near Inverailort, the surrounding area could now receive television. I remember that prior to the instillation of the TV mast, there were regular talks (with slides) and lectures given at Inverailort Castle, where guest speakers were invited, and that the turnouts in the winter to these were considerable.

The townships from 1841 onwards

There is direct evidence that from the 1840's to the 1940's at least some of the townships were inhabited continuously, and Laggan was inhabited until the 1960's.

The dates that three townships were abandoned is known. The last permanent occupant of Laggan left in the late 1960's, Peanmeanach was abandoned in 1942 and Polnish in the early 1970's (although one house is now permanently inhabited). It seems likely that Slocht and Mullochbuie were abandoned sometime in the late 1920's or early 1930's. The school at Glasnacardoch closed in 1932, and there is written evidence that just before the second war there were three inhabitants on the "end" of Ardnish (i.e. excludes the roadside and Polnish area), presumably this was Nellie MacQueen and the Macleods.

The census data frequently grouped townships together, so the results need to be treated with some caution, and it is likely that the marks of houses in map from 1855 are approximate, as the population was declining between 1841 and 1891. The number of houses seems to have remained relatively constant for this period, but the number of occupants per house declined (from just under 7 per house in the 1840s). The following table shows the different townships and the number of houses over the years.

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Main Names of Township	1841 survey	1851 survey	1855 map	1891 survey	Notes
Sloch or slochd	3	3	3		The English translation is a pit or a gulley from the Gaelic Sloe
Mullochbuie	2	4	4	3	The English translation is the yellow top or yellow summit
Peanmeanach	7	8 (est)	8	7	The English translation is the Pennyland
Feorlindhue / Firlindhu/	6	3 (est)	2		The English translation is the Farthingland Shown in map (1931) The township consists of the houses west of the burn from Peanmeanach
Glasnacardoch		8 (est)	8	3	The English translation is the grey stony ground Not recorded in 1841 (included elsewhere presumably)
Laggan	2	2 (est)	5	2	The English translation is “the hollow”
Polnish / Polness	9*	8*	5*	7**	*Upper and lower included ** includes Kinlochannanuagh and Polnish
Camusray / Camas Ruighe					A handful of houses can be seen from satellite pictures. The only reference to the village is in the map from 1832. It was either abandoned shortly afterwards, or was included as Upper Polnish.
Theodlin					Shown in Military map in 1747-55. Possibly it is an annotation. East of Laggan, near the sheep fank -3 houses are visible via satellite pictures (probably included in Laggan figures)

The figure for 1851 is 21 houses overall in (Polnish, Glasnacardoch, Peanmeanach, Feorlindhue and Laggan) and the split per township has therefore been estimated.

The dwellings on Ardnish from 1841 onwards

The following description of building a black house probably around the 1900's, in a nearby and similarly remote location, details both the amount of work required to build a house, but also the sheer difficulty in transporting the stones to the new house.

There was no form of transportation on the island, and every item, large or small, heavy or light, had to be carried on the back or in the hand, and one can imagine the enormous amount of human labour that went into the building of a modern house. On the north side of the island and a good distance away from where the houses were being built there was another large cave, called the quarry cave. In it there was a thick seam of brown granite, and from here most of the stones for the buildings had to be taken. The rock first had to be blasted into small pieces, then the stones dressed in the quarry before being carried to the house. Everyone on the island usually turned out to lend a hand. Heavy jambs and lintels had to be carried on a hand barrow by six men.¹⁵

The following description of the inside of a house near Genuig, would have been an apt description of the majority of the houses on Ardnish between 1900 and 1940.

Sometimes I would spend the evening at...I had a bundle of stockings to darn, while Annie knitted, and Angus turned over the old papers or talked, for he had no indoor hobby. The kitchen always

¹⁵ Source: <http://www.scottishweb.net/articles/40/11/The-Story-Of-Island-Roan/Page11.html>

*spotlessly clean and tidy, was arranged on the traditional plan. The long wall facing the window was occupied by two box beds with gathered curtains, which turned them into cubicles so that people of different sex could have privacy and yet enjoy the only fire. There were no easy chairs, and the beds could be used to rest upon during the day. Each had a crucifix and a holy picture at its head. There was also a table, a dresser full of dishes, two or three wooden chairs, and a long bench under the window. Such benches and dressers would often be made by the joiner in the room they were made to occupy, as the doors were too narrow to admit the finished article.*¹⁶

The original black houses were not only for people, they were also shared with livestock. The black house would have had a low internal wall to divide the people from the animals. The black houses were relatively simple affairs, which gave protection from the wind and rain, as the inhabitants (both humans and livestock) would have been outside for most of the year, apart from the winter. It is thought that the origins of the black house, where both animals and humans co-habited the same dwelling goes back thousands of years. As we will see in the next heading, whilst the black houses were basic and functional, their occupants were famed for “highland hospitality” for both strangers and neighbors. Doors always “open” and there was an obligation to welcome (and feed where food permitted) strangers. Having a key to a door was akin to being both mean and inhospitable.

The population of Ardnish from 1841 onwards

The census and parish records for Ardnamurchan/Arisaig and Moidart, which includes Ardnish show the population on a steady decline from 1841. These records show that the census of 1841 had the highest population of 2,556 which was then followed by a steady decline.

Year	Population	Year	Population	Year	Population
1851	2,333	1881	1,836	1911	1,571
1861	2,013	1891	1,602	1921	1,375
1871	1,812	1901	1,678	1931	1,175

The population of Ardnish declined at a much more dramatic rate than the surrounding area. The steep decline was over roughly a century (from 1840 to 1940), although due to little census type data prior to 1841, the evidence before the 1840s is patchy.

The reasons for the decline seem to fall into the following broad categories:

- Pressure from an enlarged population living on marginal land
 - General hardship, high rents, poverty and isolation
 - Highland clearances, potato famine, poor harvests and economic decline
- Impact of smallpox or similar epidemic
- Impact of the First World War
- Impact of the “between the war years”
- Impact of the Second World War

¹⁶ Source: A spade in the rushes by Margaret Leigh

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The census of 1841 shows the population of Ardnish at 198, which is 8% of the total population of 2,556. As the area covered by the census is Ardnamurchan to Arisaig, many hundreds of times larger than Ardnish, it shows that Ardnish was much more densely populated than the surrounding area. Whilst the population of Ardnamurchan/Arisaig and Moidart declined by over 50% from 1841 to 1931, the population of Ardnish declined much more dramatically from 198 in 1841 to under 10 by the late 1940s.

*Gaoithe Dail was cleared of 10 families in 1829 by Lady Ashburton and this farm was also added to the tack, or tenancy, of Mains Farm. Some of the evicted people emigrated and some sought shelter in Ardnish.*¹⁷

A petition was presented to the Crofters Commission by Allan MacDonald, Ronald McEachen, and fifteen other others (presumably all from Ardnish) which echoed the age-old cry of the Highland crofters “we know that the present rent is far too high, in fact double what it should be. We wish that in case of eviction, Government should interfere between tenant and landlord...We hold that the crofter has as much right to live on the land of his forefathers as the proprietor has to be superior over it.”

*Donald MacVarish from Ardnish gave the following evidence to the Crofting Commissioners report in 1855. It is a matter of recent history that Peanmeanach and Laggan were crofted by one man and the current overcrowding is not from rapid multiplication (but) the result of the clearing of the townships of Goadal and Adrnafuaran whose people were put in among us.*¹⁸

The population of Ardnish increased dramatically in 1829 from the one farmer who farmed both Laggan and Polish prior to the clearances, to a population of nearly 200 in the 1841 census. The population of Ardnish may also have been increasing earlier and later than this date as well, (i.e. from the start of the clearances at the end of the 18th century, to the first census in 1841 although there is little documented evidence to prove or disprove this.

The last resident at Peanmeanach, Nellie MacQueen (the schoolteacher's daughter) left in 1942. Donald Macleod's and his wife left Laggan in the late 1960's (I believe that their son Kenneth had already moved to Glasgow), by then they were in their 80's, and the post boat no longer stopped at the end of the island in front of the house (the new road from Lochailort to Genuig, now meant that the post was taken by road). The cost of installing a telephone to Laggan was prohibitive, and they moved to Lochailort. By the mid 1970's there were two permanently occupied houses on Ardnish, the Old School House at Polish, and Ardnambuith all in close proximity to the main road that runs between Mallaig and Fort William.

The last house at Polish “Wee Ronald's House” named after its former occupant Ronald MacEachen) was abandoned in about 1970. There are records of MacEachen's (presumably relations) living on Ardnish, since 1841, so Ronald was probably the last “true” Ardnish resident to live on Ardnish. The house fell into disrepair, and was unlivable for about 10 years. It was rented in the early 1980's on condition that the new owner put in a new front door, and restored the property and it has been lived in ever since. In addition Laggan and the bothy at Peanmeanach are sometimes occupied.

¹⁷ Source: <http://www.road-to-the-isles.org.uk/westword/march2010.html>

¹⁸ Source: Mountain Footfalls by Ian Mitchell (Meercat Press)

Reasons for the population decline from 1841 onwards

A series of poor harvests, and the potato famine would have put extreme pressure on the food supplies on Ardnish, the potato famine in 1846 was followed by a particularly harsh winter. The poor harvests continued in the 1870s.

*In the mid-19th century, most crofters in the Highlands of Scotland were very dependent on potatoes as a source of food. The potato was perhaps the only crop that would provide enough food from such land areas. The land was generally of poor quality in exposed coastal locations.*¹⁹

*By the Spring of 1847, almost all the able-bodied men in Arisaig and Moidart had gone to seek work in the lowlands.*²⁰

The emigrations continued apace in the mid 19th century.

*In 1848 four families left Glen Uig, and six left Smirisary (all townships very near Ardnish – Ed), all for Nova Scotia, and this seems to have been the last(?) band of importance to come to Nova Scotia. The depopulation of Moidart and Arisaig has gone steadily on, and in Ardnish, Arisaig, where thirteen families existed thirty years ago, now only two families remain.*²¹

The Napier Commission highlights the financial hardships of living on Ardnish in the 1880's. It also highlights the ongoing issue of deer forests, lack of fencing and the damage and impact that deer and sheep can have on crops, and therefore food to feed the crofters.

The ongoing decline in the fishing, which was an important source of both food and money was also seen as an additional pressure on populations that relied heavily on it. This came partly from the collapse of the herring industry, the use of larger and more commercial boats, and a move from towards the use of coal powered fishing boats.

The 1870s saw a major depression, with a succession of bad, wet harvests, overgrazing by sheep and the development of deer estates, and by 1881 we see only five men claiming to work the land. 1891 shows a marked change – the population dips and, of the six household heads, only the schoolmaster is male – the other five are older women, four of whom are widows. Fifteen out of the twenty people recorded on the census are female.

The general isolation of the Ardnish peninsula and the advent of the railway has also been seen as a contribution to the ongoing decline.

Impact of smallpox or similar epidemic

Oral history passed down from Miss Becher (who owned the Ardnish peninsula until the mid 1970s) and her factor suggested that the reasons for the decline was due to the isolation of the population, and that this isolation from external contacts, had left the population with little resistance to diseases such as smallpox or chickenpox, and the impact of an epidemic on the Ardnish population,

¹⁹ Source: Wikipedia

²⁰ Source: Great Highland Famine p321 TM Devine and John Donald 1988 temporary Migration and the Crofting Region, parish Patterns in the 1840s - Jean Lawson

²¹ Source: Moidart.org.uk The Clan Ranald after the Forty-Five transcribed by John Dye from a collection of photocopied notes carrying the stamp of the Nova Scotia Archives – December 31st 1930

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caused a significant and sudden decline in the population, from which it never recovered. I can however find no hard evidence of an epidemic on Ardnish, and it is possible that this is not the reason for the decline, although the following quotes hints at such an epidemic, and there is definite evidence of smallpox being in the west coast in the mid nineteenth century, although definite proof of a smallpox epidemic on Ardnish seems to be elusive.

*He mentioned an ancient graveyard at Meoble (near Ardnish – Ed) which has slate slabs on top of the grave sites. No-one seems to know exactly why this was done, which is strange – mention of a smallpox epidemic has been made but no confirmation of this has been found.*²²

*The ship ‘Lulan’ left South Uist in 1848 with emigrants for Nova Scotia of whom about a quarter died of smallpox on board or shortly after arrival.*²³

Impact of the First World War

It is widely believed that the first war often had a twin impact on the populations in rural areas, firstly a large number of males never returned, and secondly that those who did return had both seen and heard about other better ways of living. There is no memorial on Ardnish that lists the fallen of the wars, and therefore it is hard to establish the number of Ardnish residents (if any) who took the Kings shilling, never to return.

The following quote highlights the impact of the war and improved education on a similar remote population to Ardnish.

*Education was advancing, and having been all over the world during the war years (First World War – Ed), the younger generation had been given an insight into what was going on elsewhere, and that sealed the doom of the island. It was the same all around the north and west coast of Sutherland. The young people were leaving to make a living elsewhere.*²⁴

Impact of the “between the war years”

The impact of the economic downturn in the 1920’s and 30’s seems to have had a disproportionate effect on the Highlands, and in particular the younger community, many of whom turned their backs on the traditional crofting community, never to return, and the ongoing mass emigration continued after the first war.

*In 1923...within a single week in April, 600 Hebrideans embarked on two Canadian Pacific liners at Lochboisdale and Stornoway, many of them taking advantage of the year-old Empire Settlement Act to secure subsidised passages to Canada.*²⁵

Impact of the Second World War

It is interesting that until doing the research for this book, I had never even heard of the speculation that the reason for the decline was the use of the peninsula by the Special Forces in the second war, and that the population was evicted so that Ardnish could be used for training.

²² Source: <http://www.road-to-the-isles.org.uk/westword/march2002.html> Arisaig Historical Society - Comunn Eachdraidh Arasaig

²³ Source: <http://hebridesweb.wordpress.com/2007/10/26/the-lulan-voyage/>

²⁴ Source: <http://www.scottishweb.net/articles/40/11/The-Story-Of-Island-Roan/Page11.html>

²⁵ Source: <http://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/Migration/articles/harper.html> Crossing borders: Scottish emigration to Canada by Marjory Harper, University of Aberdeen

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Having stayed with Mrs Cameron Head at Inverailort castle on many occasions, and as Mrs Cameron Head was living at the castle during the second war, I find it hard to believe that she would not have mentioned this in the many conversations that we had about Ardnish. I can recall that Mrs CH (as she was universally called), talking about how the occupants of the villages on Ardnish would barter the herrings for salt, and other goods, and that she used to get involved to ensure that they were not taken advantage of.

In 1942 paraffin became very scarce, and the ration was cut to half a gallon per week per household, plus one candle and one box of matches, this must have had a real impact on living at Peanmeanach and Laggan, in the winter, where it is dark till half past nine in the morning and dark again by four in the afternoon. The small windows in the houses, would just have accentuated the problem, and it has been recorded that this had a negative impact on morale. It is probably not a coincidence that Peanmeanach was abandoned in 1942. There was no electricity on Ardnish, and in winter paraffin lamps would have been the only real way of lighting a house effectively.

The rationed goods would arrive at Lochailort on a Thursday morning, having come from Glasgow. It was loaded onto a lorry and moved to the pier at Lochailort, where it would be loaded onto the mail boat, which would then ply down the loch carrying its precious cargo, for Ardnish, Roshven, Glenuig and the surrounding townships.

It seems hard to believe that the Macleods were allowed to stay at Laggan on Ardnish, but all other occupants from Ardnish were evicted, however it is possible that this was due to some legal issue regarding the lease. Again, it is hard to believe that Miss Becher's factor would not have known the real reason, and thirty years after the event would have at least alluded to it.

The everyday lives of the people of Ardnish from 1900 onwards

There are very few records of everyday life at Ardnish, however there are a few books written about life in nearby townships from the 1900 onwards. Smirisary was a very similar isolated community to Peanmeanach, and has very similar characteristics i.e. both could only be reached by the sea, or a walk of a few miles on a path. The following extracts written give a brief glimpse of just how hard life was, in the 1940's and how time consuming and fraught routine tasks were, from carrying water, to getting supplies such as coal and paraffin.

Water-carrying was heavy work, especially when one had a dairy, and a nuisance at the end of a long day, so that I toyed with various schemes for taking water to the house. But gravitation was impossible, rotary pumps an annoyance, and corrugated iron sheets for catching water an eyesore: and so I still walk to the well, and when a few years have passed, I shall forget that I ever considered anything else....Fuel was harder to get than water.

I had an occasional bag of coal, but transport difficulties made this a precious luxury. You would order say half-a-ton from the store at Lochailort, and a lorry would dump it at the pier head in a little heap, along with other little heaps belonging to other people. Here it would remain until you succeeded in begging, borrowing or stealing ten sacks. In due course, weather permitting, the store-boys would go up to Lochailort, fill the sacks, which were usually rotten and full of holes, and land them at either Glenuig or Samalaman boathouse. Should there be a storm or an extra high tide, they might be washed off the pier and you could spend the hours at low water gleaning lumps and dross from the sand and seaweed of the ebb. Those days are long gone and no one regrets them.²⁶

²⁶ Source: A spade in the Rushes by Margaret Leigh (first published in 1949)

APPENDIX 4 – Maps and Charts of Ardnish

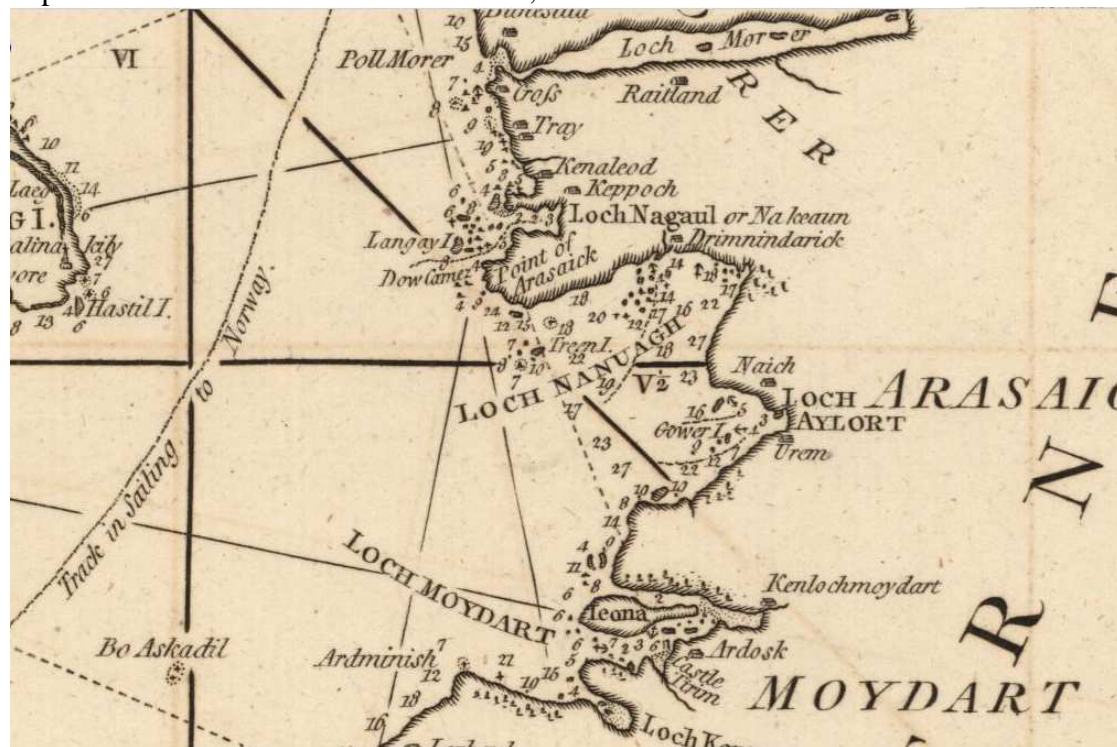
Prior to 1800 when most maps and nautical charts were relatively inaccurate, the Ardnish peninsular simply appears not to exist at all, and is subsumed into the general topography. Andrews' new and accurate travelling map of the roads of Scotland printed in 1783 marks both Polish and Ardnish as villages, although the peninsular is not clearly defined.

The West Part of Inverness Sh. Lochaber with all the Territories west from it / by H. Moll
Imprint: London : Bowles and Bowles, 1745



Source National Library of Scotland

Extract from A new chart of the West coast of Scotland from the point of Ardnamurchan to Cape Wrath. London : Laurie & Whittle, 1794.



Source National Library of Scotland

Andrews' new and accurate travelling map of the roads of Scotland
Imprint: J. Andrews and J. Harris London 1782 and 1783



Source National Library of Scotland

Following the 1745 Jacobite rebellion, when the Hanoverian military leaders in Scotland were 'greatly embarrassed for want of a proper Survey of the Country' (John Watson, 1770, quoted in the Royal Scottish Geographical Society's, *Early Maps of Scotland to 1850*, 1973, p.105). The need for reliable maps which commanders could use to direct troops and plan campaigns, was quickly identified, as the following extract from the website shows.

Soon after his victory at Culloden, Cumberland successfully petitioned King George II (his father) for the Military Survey of Scotland and in 1747 Watson was instructed to begin work. He in turn delegated the primary practical responsibility to his Assistant Quartermaster, William Roy. Finally, through Roy's efforts and his promotion of the construction of a new three-foot theodolite by Jesse Ramsden, the accurate measurement of a base line on Hounslow Heath laid the foundation of the Trigonometrical Survey of Great Britain in 1791. This was later to become the Ordnance Survey.

Source: library of Scotland

Compared with similar maps both before and after 1755, the detail and accuracy far surpasses all the other, and many of the latter maps, in terms of detail. The townships are clearly marked, and it also details an additional two townships, East of Laggan, with the name of Theodlin, although this may be some other reference. There is certainly evidence of several houses in this area still visible, and a large area enclosed by stone walls.

Roy's Military Survey of Scotland 1747-55



Source National Library of Scotland

By the mid 1850's the nautical charts and maps had improved dramatically, although the spellings still seem to vary considerably between maps. The Nautical chart from 1863 calls Ardnish "Ru Ardnish" Ru or Rue being another word for a point or headland, so at this stage Ardnish or Ru Ardnish could be roughly translated as point, peninsular, headland!

Ardnamurchan Point to Loch Bhreatail, Skye, including the Small Isles and Sleat Sound
London : Hydrographic Office, surveyed 1852 and 1863



Source National Library of Scotland

Ordnance Survey Map of Scotland – Sheet 61 – Arisaig Publication Date 1855



Source National Library of Scotland

John Thomson's Atlas of Scotland, 1832 Northern Part of Inverness Shire. Southern Part



Source National Library of Scotland

Ordnance Survey Maps One-inch "Popular" edition, Scotland, surveyed 1924-27, Sheet 46



Source National Library of Scotland

Bartholomew's "Half Inch to the Mile Maps" of Scotland, Sheet 14 - Arisaig and Rum

Publication date: 1931



Source National Library of Scotland