

**The Living Tradition
of Saints
in the British Isles**

**12 Scotland:
South and West**

Community of St Bega, St Mungo and St Herbert
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THE HIGHWAY OF THE SEA



The sea is the only way to get to any island; in the ancient world it was also the best way to get anywhere.

The Western routes from the Mediterranean went round the Western Isles of Ireland, through the Western Isles of Scotland, and ultimately to Iceland.

The early monks loved the islands and the sea

Many monks sought to follow Christ by leaving everything - clan, tribe and homeland in order to be an 'exile' for Christ ('peregrinus'). They built their chapels and cells wherever they went and evangelised those around them.

This accounts for the visitation and evangelisation of the Western Isles which we will now explore all up the Western seaboard. We find at least 26 saints, over 50 sites, and many martyrs!

In the south and western areas of Scotland we meet the Gaels who shared a common culture with relatives in Ireland but were otherwise known as the Scotti; these were at different times subject to the Picts (8C), the Vikings (9C) and, in the far north, the Norse 9C+. The Kingdom of Scotland (Alba) came into being through the unification of the kingdoms of the Gaels and the Picts in 10C, and the integration of the Northern Isles from 13C -15C.

SANDA



As we sail up the Firth of Clyde we meet old friends:

On Sanda, a little island off the Mull of Kintyre, we meet St Ninian, who is said to have died there.

We meet St Patrick at Kilpatrick (church of St Patrick) on the Clyde, which could have had a Christian community even in Roman times.

We meet St Brendan at Kilburnie (church of St Brendan) in Ayr; and again and again up the West coast

St Kieran of Saighir, though a very early saint, could be the Kieran of Kilkerran on KIntyre, of Kilkieran on the island of Islay, and Kilcheran on the island of Lismore.

Geograph Becky Williamson

ARRAN



Ginger Scallywag

St Molaise (639), who was raised in Scotland before returning to Ireland, lived in a cave on 'Molaise's Isle', now called Holy Isle, Arran



GREAT CUMBRAE



St Mochta (524) a Briton, disciple of St Patrick and Bishop of Louth founded a monastery at Kirkton of Kilmahew ('Church of Mochta') on the north side of the Clyde. The church has recently been rebuilt.

St Mirren (620) of Bangor in Ireland founded a monastery on Great Cumbrae, and another at Paisley where there may have been a Christian settlement in Roman times

St Beya and Maura were 7C Northumbrians who lived and were buried on Little Cumbrae (pictured above)

These communities near the sea were very vulnerable to Viking attack

INCHMURRIN



St Mirren also found a more sheltered spot on Inchmurrin
in Loch Lomond.

Wikimedia Commons

INCH TAVANNACH



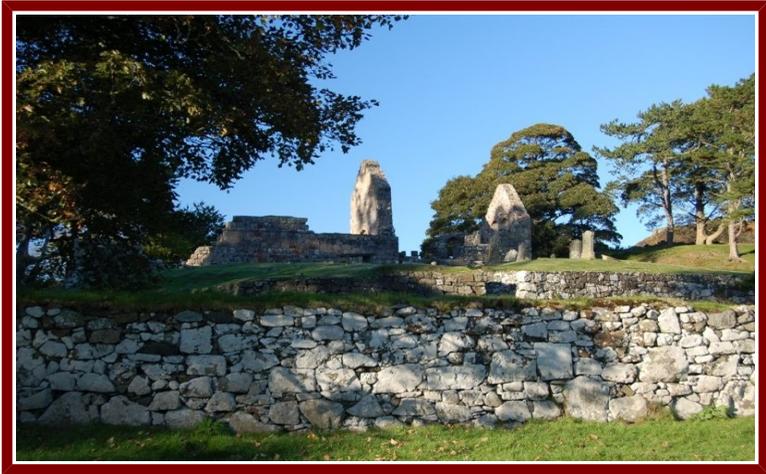
The Irish St Kessog (510) lived on the island of Inchtavannach, in Loch Lomond.

St Kentigerna (734) lived on Inchcailloch (Nun's Island)

St Modan, from Argyll, a disciple of St Columba, ended his days at Roseneath on Gare Loch as a hermit.

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BUTE



St Cattan was an early Irish monk who with his nephew St Blane founded the monastery at Kingarth at the end of Bute.

en wikipedia.org

INCHMARNOCK



St Marnock (M'Ernoc, or My [Saint] Little Ernan) (7C) may have founded a monastery at Inchmarnock in the sound of Bute, and another at Kilmarnock down the Firth of Clyde

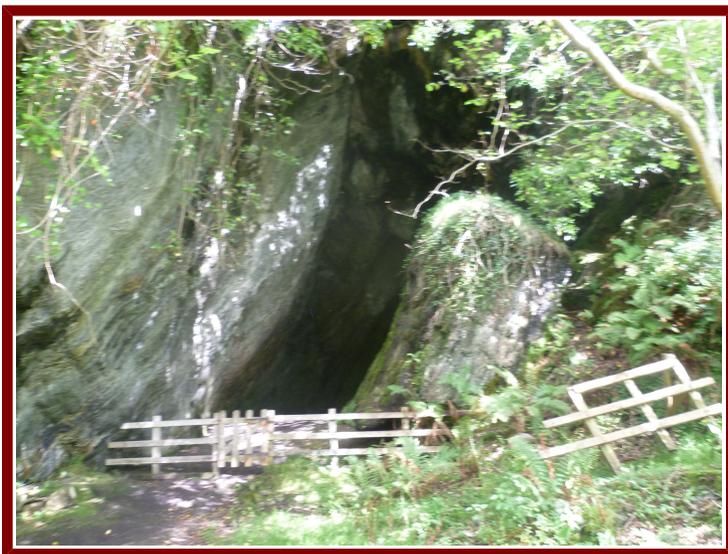
Geograph Steve Partridge

GIGHA



St Cattan also founded a monasteries on the island of Gigha (above), on Colonsay, and Lewis. He may have ended his days in Ireland

KNAPDALE



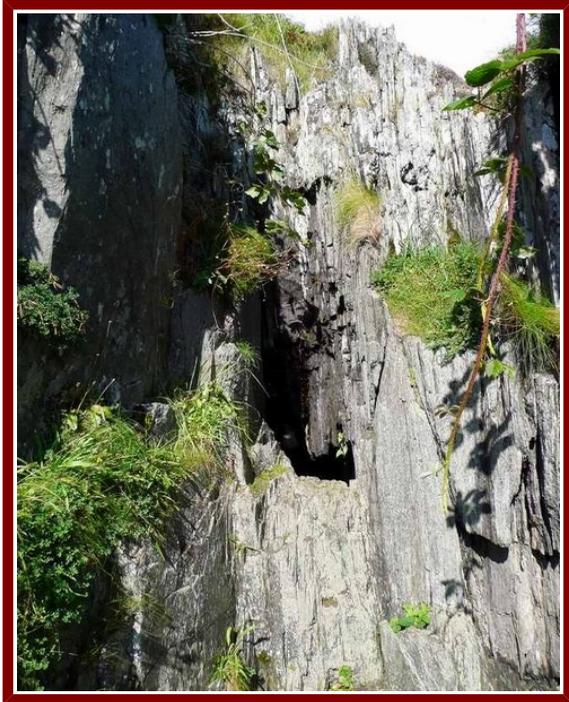
St Columba may have landed at Ellary just off the sound of Jura and spent some time in this magnificent cave before he journeyed to Iona

KNAPDALE



Inside the cave is an altar

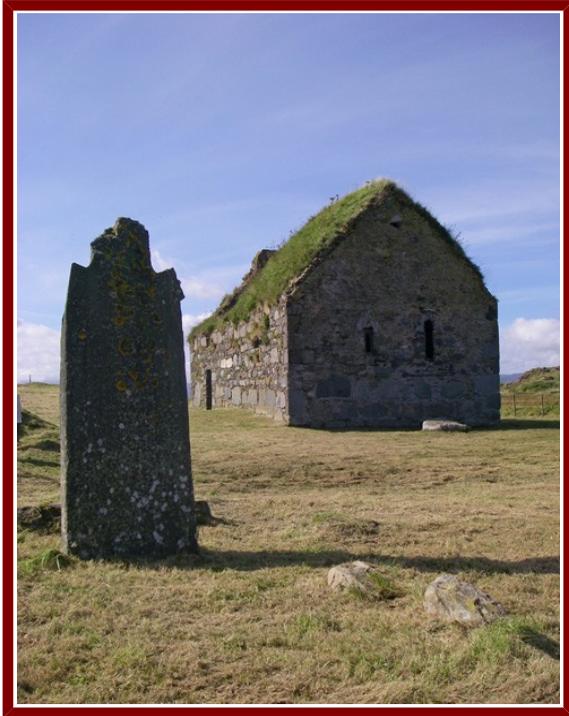
EILEAN MORE



The Irish St Cormac (7C) lived in a cave on Eilean More
one of the Garvellach Islands in the sound of Jura

Geograph Gordon Brown

EILEAN MORE



St Cormac's Chapel and Grave Slab

EILEAN MORE



The chapel is dwarfed by the Paps of Jura.

Jura may be the ancient Hinba

Geograph Gordon Doughty

KNAPDALE

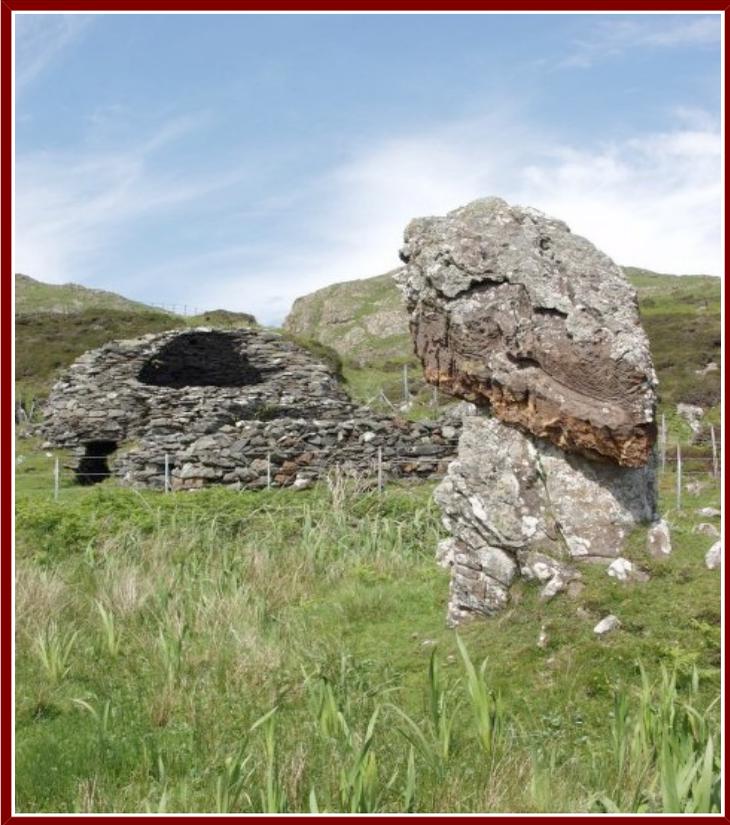


St Cormac also founded a sizeable monastery at Keills on Knapdale. Keills is derived from the Manx word for a small simple chapel, Keeils, of which there are many on the Isle of Man. There are also chapels of this type on Islay

St Maelrubha founded a church at Kilmory Oib and was associated with Islay before he went further north to Applecross.

Kilmory Knap has a large collection of cross slabs.

EILLACH AN NAIOMH



St Brendan built a bee-hive oratory here on one of the Garvellach Islands c 542 20 years before St Columba came to Iona.

The oratory door and partly holed roof can be seen on the left, with a standing stone in foreground

EILLACH AN NAIOMH



St Columba is said to have visited the island.
St Eithne, St Columba's mother, may have her grave
here

ISLAY



St Comman was a 7C Irish monk;
a 14C Cross stands at Kilchoman on the west of Islay;
also on that side is Kilchiaran church founded perhaps by
St Kieran of Saighir

Above is another early cross at Kilnave in the north

ISLAY



The famous cross at Kildalton, on the east side of Islay, is one of the earliest and finest of carved crosses in existence; it was carved from a single piece of stone. But the reason why here and in whose honour is lost to us.

INCH KENNETH



St Kenneth (Cainech) was a close companion of St Columba and the two often worked together. He founded a monastery on the island bearing his name close to the island of Mull in the Inner Hebrides.

MULL



Missionaries from Iona planted several churches on Mull.
A 7C chapel was discovered at Tobermory in 2010.
The old Holy Well and Tree at Kilninnian can still be seen.



There is an old cave on the shore at Scour on the Ross
of Mull with several ancient crosses on the wall

IONA

Iona took pride of place in the coming of Christianity to Scotland, though it was not the first place to which it came.

St Columba left Ireland with 12 monks in 563. It became a major centre in ministering both to the Gaels (Irish) and to the Picts. It was also the centre of the whole network of Columban monasteries in Ireland, all important centres for learning and sculpture.

The site of St Columba's cell, of his shrine, and 2 of the great crosses can still be seen. The first buildings would have been equally simple made of wattle and daub, and later in wood.

12C chapel of St Odhran (548) stands in its original burial ground. He may have worked in Scotland before Columba

Iona was plundered many times by the Vikings; 68 monks died in 806, St Blathmac in 825. It was finally abandoned in 849 when the monks returned to Ireland.

The monastery was important in the formation of the new Kingdom of Scots known as Alba.

St Ronan's convent of Benedictine nuns was set up in 1208 and had 400 nuns. It lasted till the Reformation. At that time 357 out of 360 of its carved crosses were destroyed. The ecumenical community was founded in 1938

IONA



The 12C Chapel of St Oran
with restored abbey buildings behind.



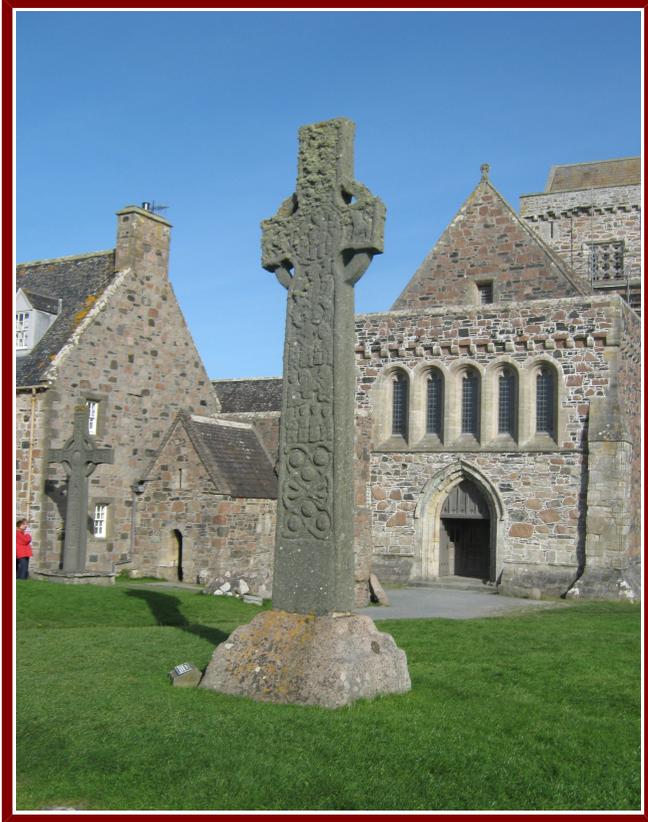
The site of St Columba's cell in front of the Abbey

IONA



he 9/10C stone tomb of St Columba
now rebuilt and called his 'shrine'

IONA



The 8C St Martin's cross
may be the earliest of all carved crosses

IONA



St John's Cross 8/9C, perhaps the most ambitious of all crosses ever made. The original is in the museum.

IONA



St Columba 's pillowstone
which may have been used in his tomb

IONA



St Columba had vowed to 'leave his homeland'
which meant it had to be out of sight from Iona

IONA



Martyr's Bay where 68 monks met their death
at the hands of the Vikings

TIREE

St Patrick's Oratory is on the south tip of the island.

St Kenneth ,St Comgall, St Cannice (Kenneth) and St Columba all made foundations here

St Baithene, Abbot of Iona founded a monastery at Soroby or Kirkapol about 565.

SKYE

The Irish St Moluag (6C) established an important centre on the island of Lismore in Loch Linnhe outside Oban.

He also established a church at Kilmaluag on the island of Raasay, another at Kilmaluag Bay, and on Mull, Tiree, and Lewis

St Maelrubha was planted churches on Skye

TEXA

off the west coast of Islay probably had a monastic cell

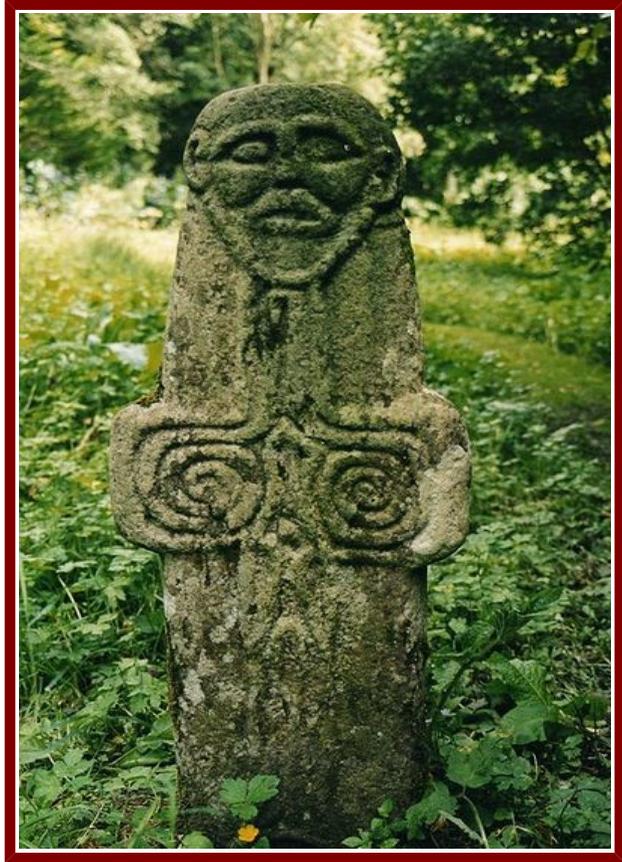
JURA

was regarded as specialy holy ('holy Isle)
a place for hermits.

St Columba used it for a retreat.

St Ernan, his uncle, died there.

COLONSAY



This is an amazing piece of carving showing 8C Irish influence. But of whom? Christ? An Apostle? A Bishop?

EIGG



The Small Isles lie between Mull and Skye.
The monastery at Kildonan was founded by an Irish missionary, St Donnan and perhaps 50 monks were massacred in 617 by raiders.

RHUM

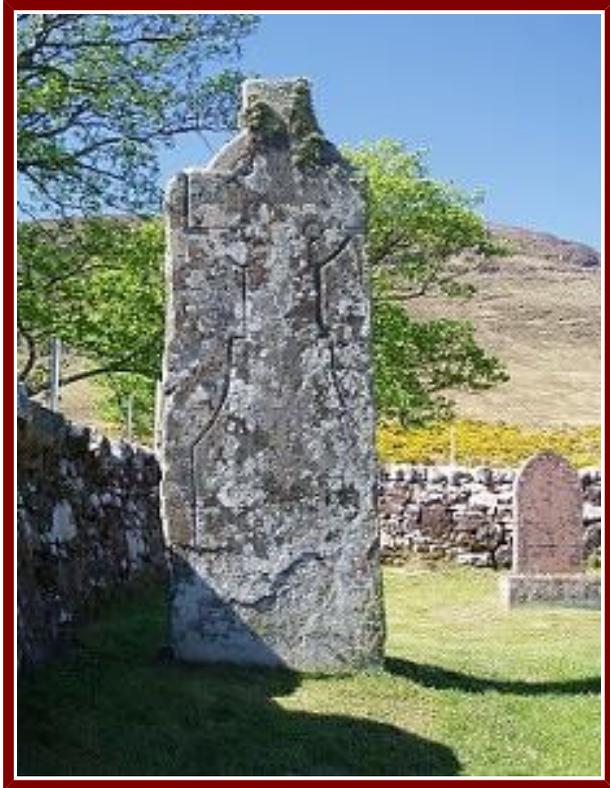
The hermit St Beccan lived here for 40 years
till his death in 677

LOCH SHIEL



St Finan (7C) had a cell on an island at the south end of the Loch which he used as a base in his missionary endeavours

APPLECROSS



The unfinished High Cross at Applecross.
Perhaps the Vikings were on their way?

The Highland Council

St Maelrubha founded a church on Skye at the head of
Lough Eynort

He also founded a monastery among the Northern Picts
in 672 on the Applecross Peninsula in Wester Ross
opposite Raasay and Skye.

The monastery was very remote, access being only by
sea. Even today the road journey is very long and scary.

There is a 15C cell in the churchyard near where,
somewhere, it is said, the saint is buried

He travelled much round the west coast founding many
places. He built a hermitage on Isle Maree in Loch Maree
which is named after him. He died in 722

ISLE OF LEWIS
EILEAN COLUMBKILLE



St Columba is said to have landed on this small island
and founded a monastery

The silence is awesome

LEWIS
EUROPIE



St Moluag (6C) also founded a church at Europie on Ness in the northernmost part of Lewis. The church fell into ruin but has now been beautifully restored by the Church of Scotland.

One tradition says the church was founded by St Ronan. His holy well lies behind the church

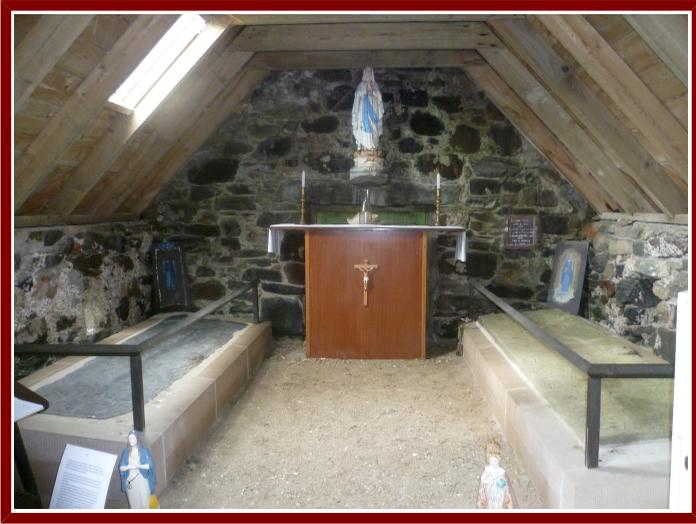
HARRIS
NORTHTON CHAPEL



The journey to reach this exquisite chapel of the 15C epitomises everything that is wonderful about visiting holy places.

(see last photo)

BARRA OUTER HEBRIDES



Barra is the southernmost inhabited island of the Outer Hebrides. It is named after St Finnbar who was probably a 7C Scot. Barra survived the Viking and the clearances. The current ruins, on an early site, are 12C; a tiny chapel is still used for services.

The small islands such as Pabbay ('hermit's isle') Barra and Pabbay Harris, were probably used by hermits.

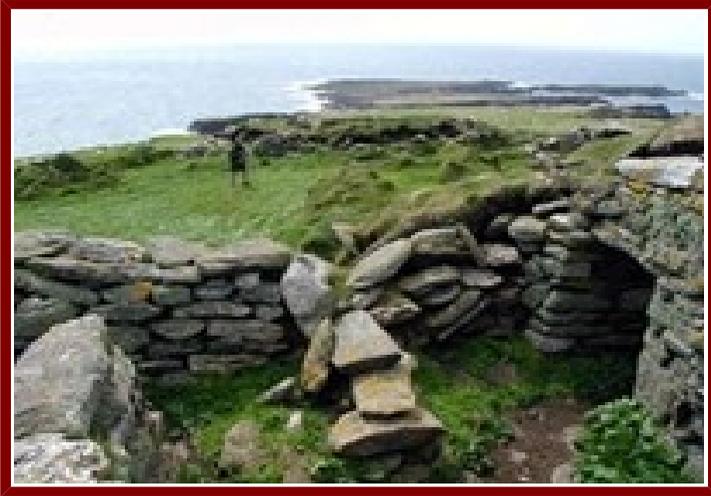
St Brendan had chapels at Borge on the west coast of Barra, on Vatersay and on the tidal island of Uinessan.

THE FLANNAN ISLES



A small group of islands in the Outer Hebrides, 20 miles west of Lewis, named after the 7C Irish St Flannan

NORTH RONA



St Ronan spent time on Lewis before going to the island of St Ronan 44 miles north east of Lewis. His cell can still be seen.

St Brendan had a chapel and holy well on Hirta one of the St Kilda islands 40 miles West of Lewis.

St Brendan and those inspired by him
were the ones who took the call
of the hermit pilgrim for Christ to its
absolute and outrageous conclusion

How far did they go?



Northton chapel becomes just a tiny dot
on the headland right in the middle of the photo.

Next stop: Orkney, Shetland, Faroes - and Iceland?

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