

pabay philatelic news 38 july 2015



Island of Pabay Information

About 2 miles to the East of Broadford is the hamlet of Waterloo, Nestling on the shore of Broadford Bay. Pabay is clearly visible from the shore and maybe the veterans of Waterloo often rowed over to Pabay to harvest the molluscs that about on the shore at low tide. The Pabay stamp shows the painting Scotland Forever! the 1881 oil painting by Lady Butler depicting the start of the charge of the Royal Scots Greys, a British cavalry regiment that charged alongside the British heavy cavalry at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. The painting is now housed in the Leeds Art Gallery.

Waterloo – origin of the name

In his book “Strath: In Isle of Skye” (published in 1913) Reverend Lamont, the then Minister of Strath, says that Waterloo was so named because it was settled by veterans from the Battle.

The township of Waterloo does not appear in the rental records until 1829. Before that it was included as part of Scullamus.

A letter (MEP1614/1) dated November 1815 from a Colonel Murray says that he doesn’t know why the farm of Scullamus was not offered to the “present tenants” nor does he know anything about “Scalpay and Corry” [i.e. Norman MacDonald of Scalpay and Lachlan MacKinnon of Corry] being considered as tenants but he doesn’t object to it. I would appear that Norman MacDonald of Scalpay does become the tenant of Scullamus at this time although the actual lease does not seem to have survived.

The “proper” consecutive rental records begin in 1823 (they are very fragmentary prior to this). At this time Scullamus was let to the “heirs of Norman MacDonald”. By 1829 the farm had arrears of £117- 4s-9d. These were paid off in full by the “representatives of Lachlan MacKinnon of Corry” (who died in 1826)

(Norman MacDonald and Lachlan MacKinnon were related to each other by marriage. Lachlan MacKinnon's mother, Flora MacAlister and Norman MacDonald's wife, Susannah MacAlister, were sisters – which explains why MacKinnon of Corry's representatives were liable for the debt).

In 1829 both Scullamus and Waterloo appear in the Macdonald Estate rental. They are both crofting townships (i.e. let to multiple tenants) but there is no record of the MacDonald Estate implementing any changes at this time.

In 1811 John Blackadder wrote a series of recommendations for improvements to the MacDonald Estate he said that the farm of Scullamus was most suited to be a crofting township (like its neighbouring townships of Harrapool and Breakish).

This leads me to believe that it was Norman MacDonald of Scalpay who set Scullamus out to crofts – not the MacDonald Estate itself. This would explain why there is no mention of Waterloo being settled by veterans and why both Waterloo and Scullamus “suddenly” appear as fully-fledged crofting townships in 1829.

Five of Norman MacDonald's sons were high-ranking officers in the British Army during the Napoleonic Wars, which may explain his sympathy for the veterans, and why that part of Scullamus farm became known as Waterloo.

This is only a theory but I cannot think of a more plausible explanation. There are no Army Pensioners living in Waterloo by the time of the 1841 census, but they could easily have died or moved elsewhere by then.

On the OS map Waterloo is recorded as “Sgiaban”. AR Forbes, in his “Place Names of Skye” (published 1923) says this place is “east of Harrapool” but I have not found any other instance of the place being called this. The annotated OS map does record the common grazing of the township as “Waterloo”

Information provided by Clan Donald Library.

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