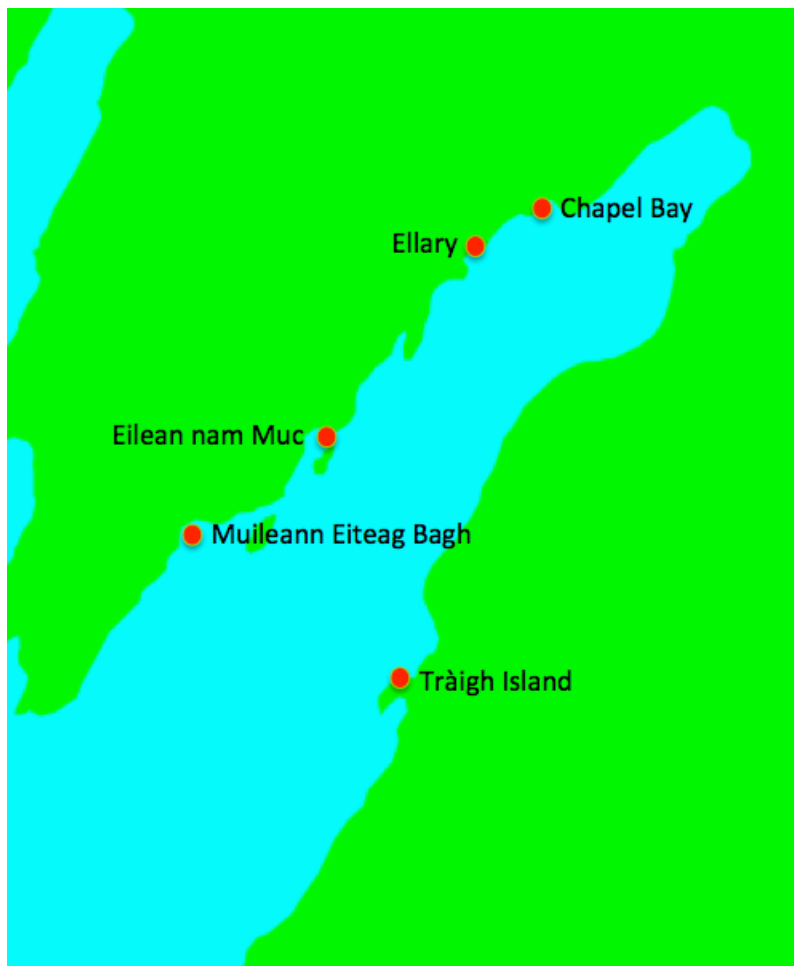


# Loch Caolisport

Last updated January 11<sup>th</sup> 2024



An attractive loch in a low key sort of a way, very open to the southwest for sure so hopeless for anchoring if there is any significant swell. However, there are at least five anchorages in suitable weather, and a couple more on the northwest side if you carefully examine the Antares charts.

## Chapel Bay

The name is apt. From the anchorage you can just about see the ruined 13th century St Columba's chapel<sup>1</sup> submerged in the bracken just across the small road running along the shoreline. Apart from the slab at the east end (I presume covering a grave) the interior is so overgrown that you can't see anything else. Just behind the chapel are a couple of caves, the largest with an altar of some sort, and a cross which is

carved on the wall above it<sup>2</sup>. Maybe St Columba himself hid in this cave, who knows. Further to the left is a rather charming, mossy and secretive waterfall tumbling through the trees — it has a charming sound too. If you walk along the road heading south, in a short while you get to Ellary House, or you can up anchor and move to Ellary itself.

## Ellary

Even though the Sailing Directions are a near blank for Loch Caolisport, there must be several places to anchor near here, at least when the wind is from the north. There are hardly any other boats around, even though the scenery is lovely. If you are in to really mouldering burial grounds, then try and find Cladh a'Bhile<sup>3</sup> southwest of Ellary House by about 600 metres. It took me two attempts, and you certainly need an OS map. The key is a couple of broken down metal gates, at the northwest side of a clearing in the woods. You will find some 7th and 8th century cross-marked stones, a terrific grave slab almost buried in the undergrowth displaying a splendid sword, and a surprisingly recent gravestone from 1999 (Grid ref. 7333

<sup>1</sup> <https://canmore.org.uk/site/39011/cove-st-columbas-chapel>

<sup>2</sup> <https://canmore.org.uk/site/39012/st-columbas-cave-ellary>

<sup>3</sup> <https://canmore.org.uk/site/39051/ellary-cladh-a-bhile>

7560). Should these ancient stones stay here, mysterious, unmarked with no signage, more and more hidden as nature takes over without any obvious human hand to keep things tidy? Or should they be moved to a museum, or somewhere like Keills Chapel by Loch na Cille where they could be properly displayed? I am not sure.

Ellary House is the large Victorian pile by the shore, designed by David Bryce and built in 1870, and then rebuilt by Robert Lorimer after a fire in 1894-8. It is not open to the public and I have no idea who lives there, if anyone very much.

### **Tràigh Island**

Be careful, there are two Eilean Tràighs in this one loch alone, and others elsewhere. Not too surprising as in translation from the Gaelic it means island of the shore, or beach. I have not been to this one but it is said to be a very attractive anchorage, just north of the almost island on the southeast shore of the loch.

### **Muileann Eiteag Bagh**

A very pleasant and rather remote spot with a bit of a beach (sand and pebbles) which is good for a barbeque, a small crag well-known to climbers, and if you walk up beside the burn for 20 minutes you will find a small and ruined township that was gradually abandoned in the late 19th and early 20<sup>th</sup> century — Stronefield<sup>4</sup>.

### **Eilean nam Muc**

There is a small beach but it is sadly covered in plastic trash. If you can avert your eyes and walk northeast and up through lovely deciduous woods you may find the single ruined and very isolated cottage at Ardnafrain. It looks to be later than a black house, possibly 19<sup>th</sup> century. Miles from anywhere, and with no obvious track to the sea or even to Ellary

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<sup>4</sup> <https://canmore.org.uk/site/154280/stronefield>