islands

for Alistair Peebles

‘how beautiful they are, the islands that we’ve never been to’ – Davy Polmadie

THE WORLD’S
WILD HOLIDAYS

islands

- 

EIRE’S
WAKE

iona

- 

SAINTS’
SKEPS

garvellach

- 

AWESOME
THREESOME

jura

- 

‘islands’. Alec Finlay.
Transnational Literature Vol. 7 no. 1, November 2014.
THE YEARS DISTILLED

islay

ROCK-ALL

coll

\ | / SOL
tiree

CLOUD CATCHER

rùm

SWEENEY’S EX-ISLE

eigg

CROOKED HARBOUR

canna
FAIR
DIAL

hyskeir

ULTIMA
PHOEACIA

raasay

BERNERAY
AYE

berneray

ST
AC-
KED

st kilda

SACRED
GROVE

isle maree
MAMMA THULE

hoy

RING ROAD

rousay

WEE HOP

papa westray

SHEEP DIP

rusk holm

Alec Finlay

Reference:

St Columba settled on Iona, on the hill with its back turned on Ireland; there are beehive cells on the Garvellach Isles; Jura is famous for its paps, or mam-shaped hills, and Islay for its distilleries; Dr Johnson said that Coll was not rocky, but one great rock; Tiree is famed for its hours of sunshine; the mountains of Rum are often cloud-tipped; the mad King Sweeney spent 6 weeks in exile, sleeping in a cave on Eigg; a Stevenson lighthouse gleams on Hyskeir; Dr Johnson visited Raasay and compared it to a distant Phaeacia, and its hospitality to that of a Homeric court; there are sacred plantings of Druidic oak, Norse larch and Christian holly on Isle Maree; Hoy has a pair of mam-shaped hills; my father worked for a time as a road-mender on the single road that rings Rousay; the flight from Westray to Papa Westray is the shortest in the British Isles; Rusk Holm is little more than a rock, with a shelter for a few tide-worried sheep – the definition of an island is any place you can graze sheep on all year round.

Photograph Gunnie Moberg c.1979
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