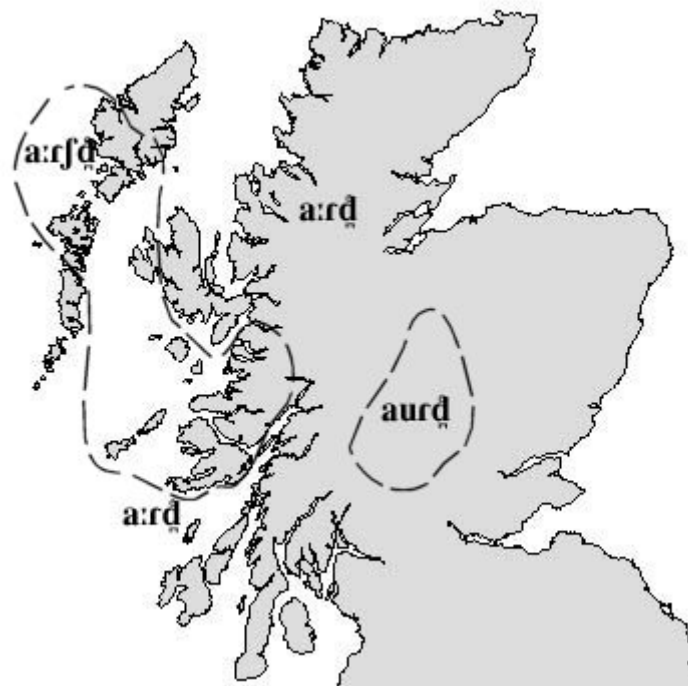


## [a:ɹd̪] vs [a:ɹf̪d̪] or Where the [f̪] comes from

We won't go into the discussion of whether this feature is Norse or Martian because unless you are hoping to become a historical linguist, it doesn't matter.

So what \*can\* we tell you about this strange [f̪] that pops up in Gaelic?

1. It affects **rt** and **rd** groups in Gaelic.
2. Traditionally, not all dialects are affected, as you can see on the below map and Perthshire Gaelic even diphthongised the [a]. Due to the pervasiveness of Lewis Gaelic in the media, teaching etc, this feature has spread into other dialects, so the presence or lack of the [f̪] is no clear cue to geographical origin anymore.



If it occurs, it tends to occur only in stressed syllables so **ainneart** for example tends not to have this intrusive [f̪].

1. Some speakers tend to insert [f̪] only in **rt** groups, but not **rd** groups, but never the other way round. Thus you will hear speakers who pronounce **ceart** and **àrd** as [kʲaɹf̪t̪] and [a:ɹf̪t̪] but \*never\* [kʲaɹt̪] and [a:ɹt̪].
2. Beyond that, there doesn't appear to be a clear rule, but we'll research this further in the future and see whether there actually is a rule.

It seems to be a good guideline to insert [f̪] both in **rt** and **rd** groups in stressed syllables (i.e. the first) as a learners - it won't sound wrong to a Gael's ears even should he not pronounce it himself. Unless you are desperate to learn a particular dialect (which we don't recommend anyway), in which case you will have to memorise your dialects **rt** and **rd** words, as it does not appear to be rule based as far as we can see.

To listen to some examples, check our [Fuaimhean na Gàidhlig](#) section.