

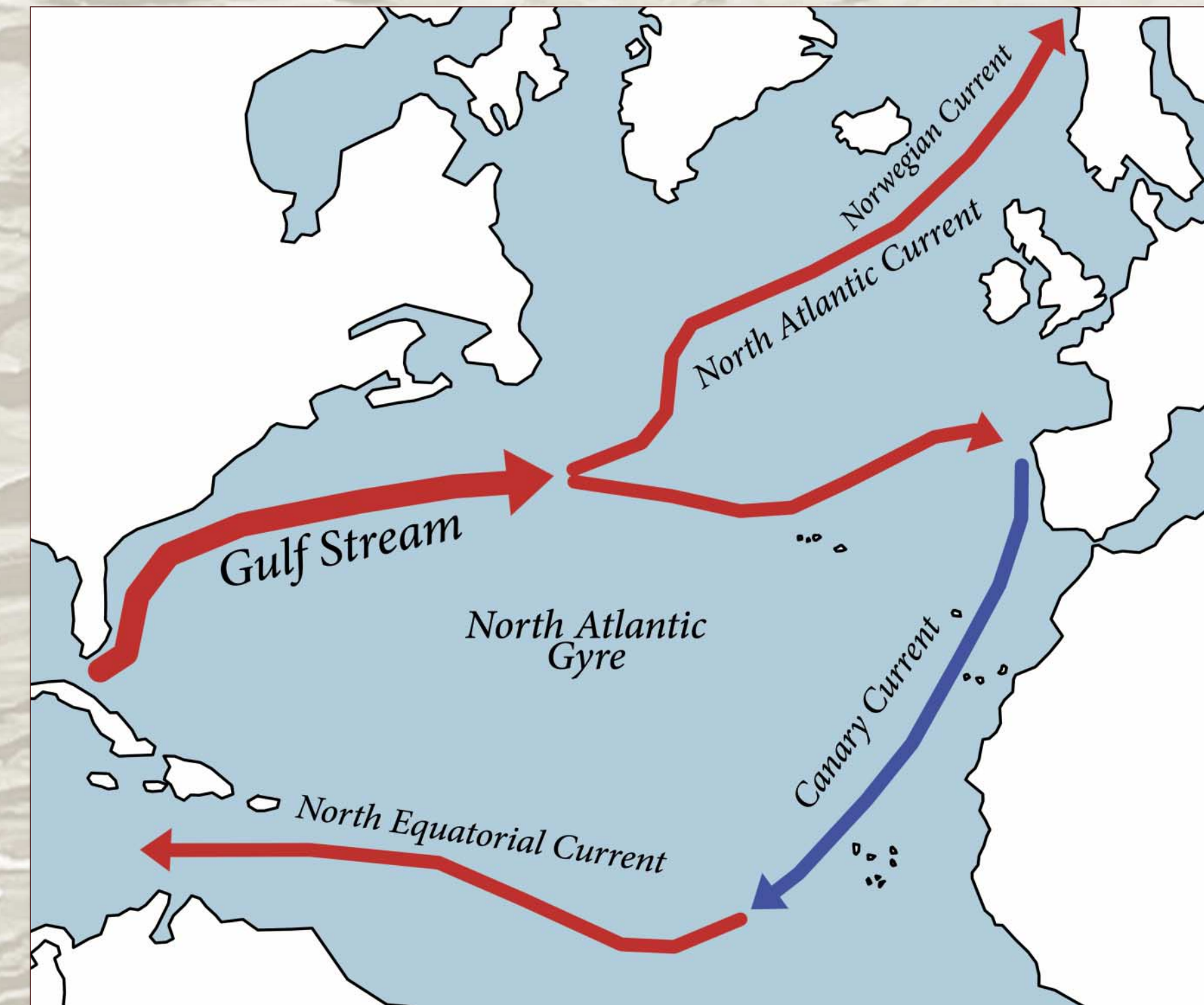
## *Buain a' Chuain* The Sea's Harvest

Some of the objects washed up on the shores of Tiree have travelled thousands of miles from the Caribbean or Canada.

The prevailing winds provide the main driver, but the North Atlantic Current is also an important 'engine', moving 20 million cubic metres of seawater per second across the Atlantic at around 0.2 mph.

This warm water from the Gulf of Mexico helps to keep our climate mild, although recent research has shown that wind carries more heat than the ocean. By way of comparison, the Inuit community of Nunainguk in Labrador is on the same latitude as Tiree; in January, it sees three feet of snow and is around 20 degrees colder than our island.

Charcoal from Canadian spruce was found in the Iron Age fort at Vaul. Whole trees from Canada were a common find on the Tiree shoreline, providing boat and house timbers.



Sea beans from Central American lianas are also sometimes found, and were believed to have magical properties. In 1695, Martin Martin wrote that '*the natives [of Tiree] use them for removing the diarrhoea*'.

Flotsam from shipwrecks could be a boon, as in 1899, when the *Labrador* foundered on Skerryvore. All on board were saved, but the west coast of Tiree was a rich hunting ground for weeks afterwards. It was said that cattle were bursting from gorging on apples.

Today, however, the sea's harvest is anything but welcome. Around 1000 tonnes of plastic debris get washed into Scottish seas every year: 200 million pieces of macro plastic and 25 trillion pieces of microplastic.

90% of this plastic comes from littering on land, with 93% of west coast marine plastic coming from the River Clyde. On average, 150 pieces of plastic enter the sea from the Clyde catchment area every minute.

Fishing releases around 4 million pieces of plastic into Scottish seas each year (2% of the total), and 8 million pieces (4% of the total) are brought to our waters from further afield by the currents of the North Atlantic Gyre.

Beach cleans remove somewhere between 5% and 20% of the total plastics entering Scottish seas. Several Tiree community groups have done a lot of work to clear marine plastic from the island's coastline.

LEFT Map showing the main currents and gyres in the North Atlantic.

BELOW Photograph of a dead green turtle that washed up on the shore at Crossapol Farm in 2009. The green turtle nests on the shorelines around the Gulf of Mexico and of South America, but they can be found throughout the Atlantic feeding on sea grass. They often live for 70 years.

RIGHT Colour photograph of Donald Brown, Vaul, standing next to a large United States Coast Guard buoy washed ashore at Vaul in 2017.

