

Alba 1891: Gàidhlig (Scottish Gaelic) Local Profile

No. 012

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Area: *Gallaibh (Caithness): Ramsraigs, Borbh Shuas & Borbh*

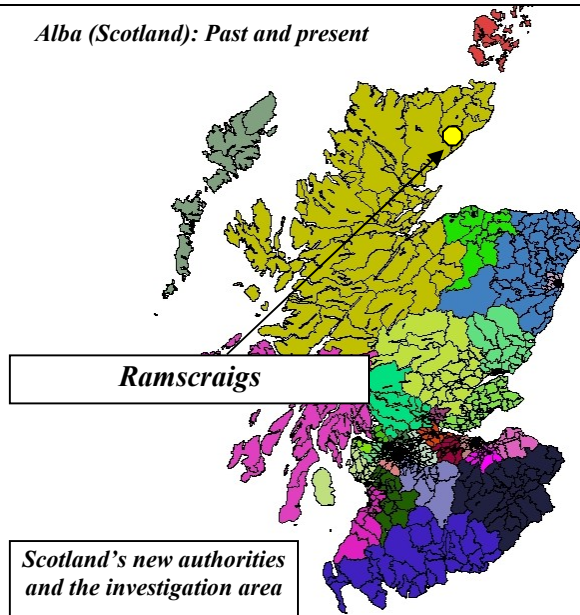
(Names of enumeration locations used on census forms: Ramsraigs, Upper Borgue, Borgue)

Number of households: 72 Population present at census night: 312

Share of resident population (aged three years or over) speaking Gàidhlig: 56.5 %

| County | Civil parish | Registration district | Enumeration district number | Census form pages |
|-----------|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| Caithness | Latheron | Latheron | 16 17 | 9-11 13-23 |

Alba (Scotland): Past and present



State of Gàidhlig in 1891:

Most residents still spoke *Gàidhlig* in this period. A few elderly persons did not even speak English. The language community, however, was already ageing because there were only a few children who still spoke the language of their parents.

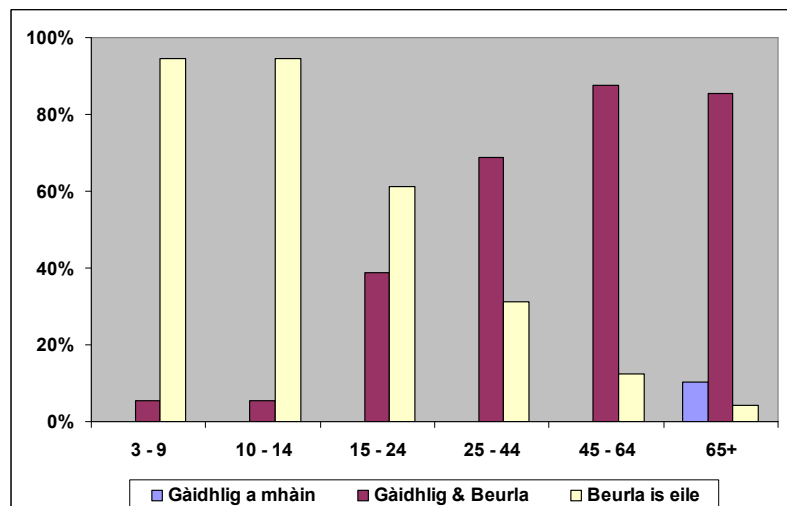
Locally there was not much of a difference in intensity of *Gàidhlig*-speaking between the two main townships of Ramsraigs and *Borbh* (Borgue) with well above 50 % of residents speaking the traditional tongue.

Area description:

The area concerned is located almost halfway between the fishing villages of *Dùn Bheathadh* (Dunbeath) and *Bearghdal* (Berriedale) in the county of *Gallaibh* (Caithness).

The district includes the hamlets of Ramsraigs as well as *Borbh* (Borgue) whose inhabitants were mainly occupied with crofting and fishing. A few persons were also working as servants, shepherds, or gamekeepers on the local estates.

Please see the remark regarding the use of placenames in Caithness on page 4 of this factsheet!



Age profile: Share of population speaking (1) *Gàidhlig*, (2) *Gàidhlig* & English, or (3) no *Gàidhlig* at all

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Area: *Gallaibh (Caithness): Ramscraigs, Borbh Shuas & Borbh*

| | Population enumerated | | | | Usually resident population (3+) | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------|-------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|----------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| | Total | Aged 0-2 | Deaf & dumb | Visitors etc. ³ | Total ⁴ | Gàidhlig | Gàidhlig & English | Gàidhlig speakers (%) |
| Age | | | | | | | | |
| Total | 312 | 10 | 0 | 3 | 299 | 5 | 164 | 56.5 % |
| 3-4 | 8 | | 0 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 % |
| 5-9 | 28 | | 0 | 0 | 28 | 0 | 2 | 7.1 % |
| 10-14 | 36 | | 0 | 0 | 36 | 0 | 2 | 5.6 % |
| 15-24 | 54 | | 0 | 0 | 54 | 0 | 21 | 38.9 % |
| 25-44 | 63 | | 0 | 2 | 61 | 0 | 42 | 68.9 % |
| 45-64 | 65 | | 0 | 1 | 64 | 0 | 56 | 87.5 % |
| 65+ | 48 | | 0 | 0 | 48 | 5 | 41 | 95.8 % |
| Gender | | | | | | | | |
| Female | 163 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 156 | 4 | 94 | 64.0 % |
| Male | 149 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 143 | 1 | 70 | 64.4 % |
| Place of birth | | | | | | | | |
| Born in parish | 279 | 10 | 0 | 2 | 267 | 5 | 155 | 59.9 % |
| In neighbouring parish¹ | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 0 | 7 | 70.0 % |
| Gaidhealtachd elsewhere² | 7 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 0 | 2 | 33.3 % |
| Other places | 16 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 16 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 % |

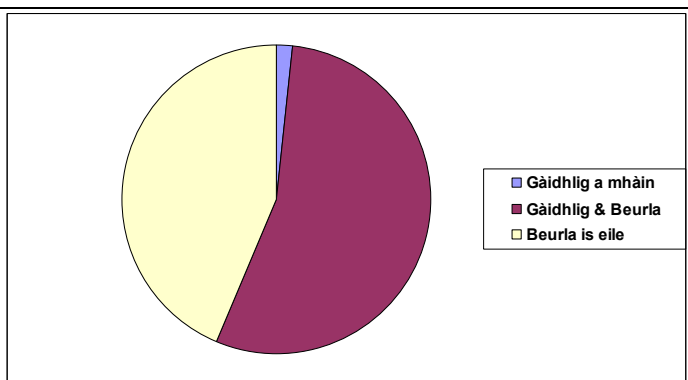
Notes:

¹ Parishes of Kildonan (Sutherland), Halkirk, Watten and Wick (both Caithness).

² Other parishes in Scotland with more than 50 % Gàidhlig speakers in the 1891 census.

³ People described as visitors, boarders, lodgers or other similar terms.

⁴ Number of enumerated persons who were (1) older than 2 years of age, who were (2) not deaf & dumb and who (3) did not live only temporarily in the area.



Share of population speaking (1) Gàidhlig, (2) Gàidhlig & English, or (3) no Gàidhlig at all

Background of Gàidhlig (Scottish Gaelic) Local Profiles:

The 1891 census was the first such enumeration exercise with an unequivocal language question. After more than 100 years the original census forms are publicly available for detailed analysis. During research concerned with the “Gàidhlig (Scottish Gaelic) Local Studies” a vast number of such local statistics have been gathered about the Gàidhlig speaking population of Scotland in that year. As many of these results could not be included in the reports these concise fact-sheets are a welcome way to publish some of the “local gems”. More information is provided at http://www.linguae-celticae.de/GLP_english.htm.

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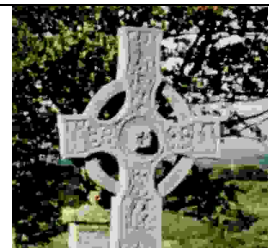
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Area: *Gallaibh (Caithness): Ramsbraigs, Borbh Shuas & Borbh*

| | House-holds | Usually resident population (3+) | | | |
|--|-------------|----------------------------------|----------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| | | Total | Gàidhlig | Gàidhlig & English | Gàidhlig speakers (%) |
| Ramsbraigs & Borbh | 72 | 299 | 5 | 164 | 56.5 % |
| Individual communities | | | | | |
| Ramsbraigs (Ramsbraigs) | 53 | 217 | 2 | 123 | 57.6 % |
| Borbh & Borbh Shuas (Borgue & Upper Borgue) | 19 | 82 | 3 | 41 | 53.7 % |
| Language of parents | | | | | |
| Both parents Gàidhlig speaking | 16 | 90 | 0 | 38 | 42.2 % |
| Single parent Gàidhlig speaking | 16 | 68 | 1 | 49 | 73.5 % |
| One parent Gàidhlig speaking | 4 | 27 | 0 | 6 | 22.2 % |
| No Gàidhlig speaking parent | 3 | 16 | 0 | 2 | 12.5 % |
| Households with no children (0-14) | 33 | 98 | 4 | 69 | 74.5 % |
| Occupation of head of household | | | | | |
| Crofter, farmer, fisherman, etc. | 47 | 217 | 4 | 124 | 59.0 % |
| Shepherd, gamekeeper or similar | 1 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 % |
| Clergyman, teacher, physician, etc. | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 % |
| Mason, carpenter, merchant, etc. | 8 | 37 | 0 | 14 | 37.8 % |
| Living on private means | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 100 % |
| Manager, coachman, cook, etc. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - |
| Worker, farm/domestic servant, etc. | 14 | 34 | 1 | 24 | 73.5 % |
| Remaining occupations | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - |

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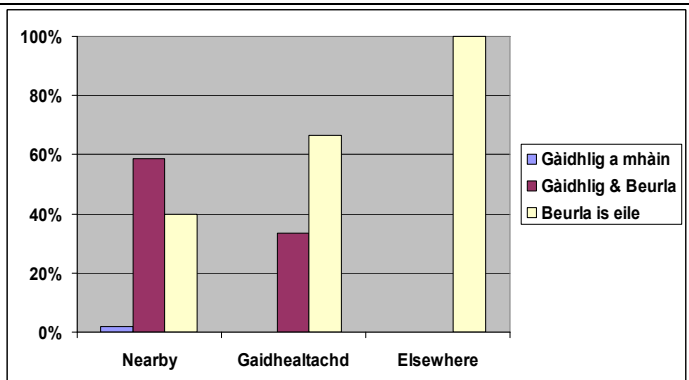
Place of birth and Gàidhlig speaking:

All persons born outside the *Gaidhealtachd* did not speak *Gàidhlig*. On the other hand, most locally born residents spoke *Gàidhlig*. A few of them were still monolingual.

Notes:

¹ Born either in Latheron or in the parishes of Kildonan (Sutherland), Halkirk, Watten and Wick (both Caithness).

² Born in other parishes of Scotland with more than 50 % *Gàidhlig* speakers in the 1891 census.



Speakers according to place of birth (1) nearby¹
(2) in remaining *Gaidhealtachd*², or (3) elsewhere

Remarks:

1. Five residents spoke no English. These were returned from elderly household heads and comprised five farmer/crofter families.
2. The majority of locally born people still spoke *Gàidhlig*. Accordingly, the language was traditionally spoken in the district contrary to the belief that the language was alien to the county of *Gallaibh (Caithness)*.
3. In original census report terms, the district had a population of 312 persons of all ages. 162 enumerated inhabitants spoke “Gaelic and English” and five persons present at census night spoke no English. This led to an “official” share of *Gàidhlig* speakers of 53.5 %. This was an under-estimate of 3.0 % compared with the more realistic figures considering only the usually resident population.
4. There are many names of settlements in Caithness – even in the west of the county – where no distinct *Gàidhlig* placenames have been ascertained or documented. This does not mean that there were no *Gàidhlig* descriptions by the local inhabitants. Often some parts of names suggest at least a partially *Gàidhlig* topographic description like “ach-“, “dun-“, “brae-“, “knock-“, or “bal-“. However, the names used on Ordnance Survey maps are used in these factsheets.