

# Alba 1891: Gàidhlig (Scottish Gaelic) Local Profile

No. 013

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**Area:** *Gallaibh (Caithness): Baile na Bruaich, Baile a'Chladaich, Caisteal Dùn Bheathadh & Cnoc a'Chaisteil*

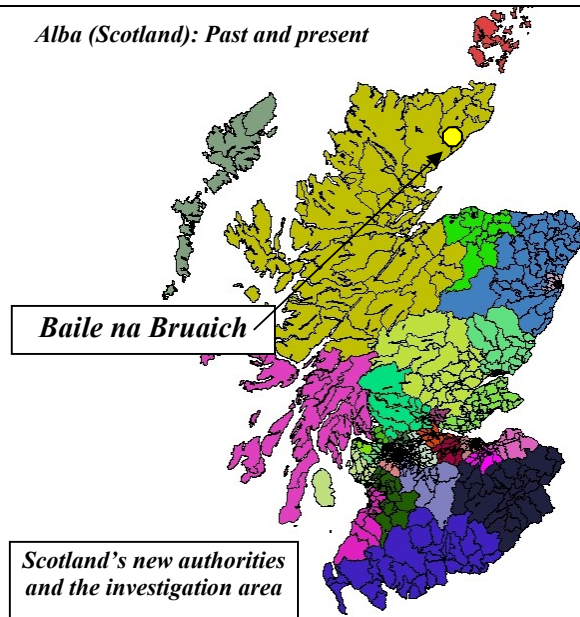
(Names of enumeration locations used on census forms: Balnabruich, Balchladich, Castlehill, Mains of Dunbeath, Castle of Dunbeath)

**Number of households:** 58      **Population present at census night:** 276

**Share of resident population (aged three years +) speaking Gàidhlig:** 35.9 %

County	Civil parish	Registration district	Enumeration district number	Census form pages
Caithness	Latheron	Latheron	17 16	1-3(part);10(part)-12 1 - 7

*Alba (Scotland): Past and present*



## State of Gàidhlig in 1891:

A considerable portion of the local population still spoke Gàidhlig. Most speakers were of course belonging to the older generation. For example, those born before 1825 with no exception spoke the language. On the other hand, almost no child was returned as speaking the traditional tongue.

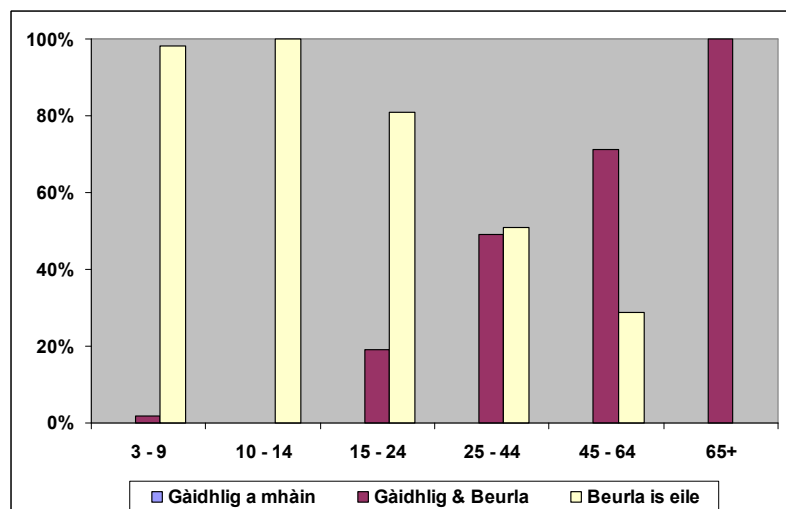
Strongest Gàidhlig community was the hamlet of *Baile na Bruaich* (Balnabruich) with almost 40 % of all residents speaking Gàidhlig.

## Area description:

The locations described are situated in the vicinity of the fishing village of *Dùn Bheathadh* (Dunbeath) and its nearby castle in the county of *Gallaibh* (Caithness).

The township of *Baile na Bruaich* (Balnabruich) was by far the largest group of houses on this rocky coastline. Most of the inhabitants were occupied with crofting; some of them did also some fishing as an additional source of income.

**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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	Population enumerated				Usually resident population (3+)			
	Total	Aged 0-2	Deaf & dumb	Visitors etc. <sup>3</sup>	Total <sup>4</sup>	Gàidhlig	Gàidhlig & English	Gàidhlig speakers (%)
<b>Age</b>								
<b>Total</b>	276	20	0	5	251	0	90	35.9 %
<b>3-4</b>	18		0	0	18	0	0	0.0 %
<b>5-9</b>	34		0	0	34	0	1	2.9 %
<b>10-14</b>	32		0	0	32	0	0	0.0 %
<b>15-24</b>	44		0	2	42	0	8	19.0 %
<b>25-44</b>	64		0	3	61	0	30	49.2 %
<b>45-64</b>	45		0	0	45	0	32	71.1 %
<b>65+</b>	19		0	0	19	0	19	100 %
<b>Gender</b>								
<b>Female</b>	139	3	0	1	135	0	48	35.6 %
<b>Male</b>	137	17	0	4	116	0	42	36.2 %
<b>Place of birth</b>								
<b>Born in parish</b>	199	19	0	3	177	0	79	44.6 %
<b>In neighbouring parish<sup>1</sup></b>	20	1	0	1	18	0	2	11.1 %
<b>Gaidhealtachd elsewhere<sup>2</sup></b>	13	0	0	1	12	0	7	58.3 %
<b>Other places</b>	44	0	0	0	44	0	2	4.5 %

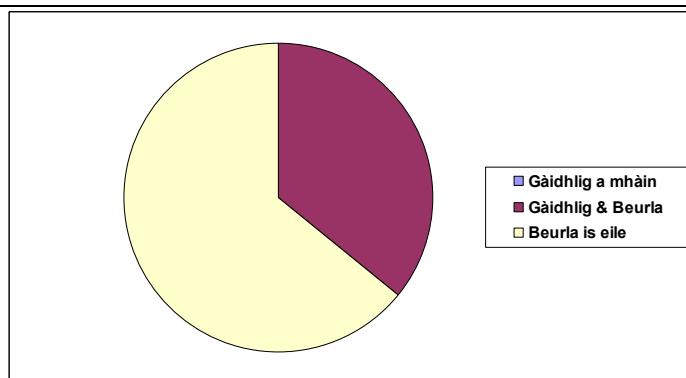
**Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> Parishes of Kildonan (Sutherland), Halkirk, Watten and Wick (both Caithness).

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

<sup>3</sup> People described as visitors, boarders, lodgers or other similar terms.

<sup>4</sup> 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 & Beurla, or (3) Beurla is eile

**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 factsheets are a welcome way to publish some of the “local gems”. More information is provided at [http://www.linguae-celticae.de/GLP\\_english.htm](http://www.linguae-celticae.de/GLP_english.htm).

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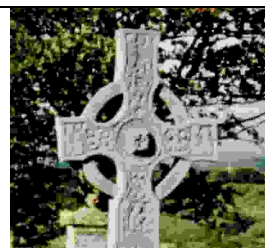
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Area: *Gallaibh (Caithness): Baile na Bruaich, Baile a'Chladaich, Caisteal Dùn Bheathadh & Cnoc a'Chaisteil*

	House-holds	Usually resident population (3+)			
		Total	Gàidhlig	Gàidhlig & English	Gàidhlig speakers (%)
<b><i>Baile na Bruaich &amp; Baile a'Chladaich</i></b>	<b>58</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>35.9 %</b>
<b>Individual communities</b>					
<b><i>Cnoc a'Chaisteil &amp; Caisteal Dùn Bheathadh</i></b> (Castlehill & Castle of Dunbeath)	<b>9</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>34.0 %</b>
<b><i>Baile na Bruaich</i></b> (Balnabruich)	<b>39</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>39.5 %</b>
<b><i>Baile a'Chladaich</i></b> (Balchladich)	<b>10</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>28.1 %</b>
<b>Language of parents</b>					
<b>Both parents Gàidhlig speaking</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>38.6 %</b>
<b>Single parent Gàidhlig speaking</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>39.3 %</b>
<b>One parent Gàidhlig speaking</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>16.7 %</b>
<b>No Gàidhlig speaking parent</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6.7 %</b>
<b>Households with no children (0-14)</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>56.5 %</b>
<b>Occupation of head of household</b>					
<b>Crofter, farmer, fisherman, etc.</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>42.3 %</b>
<b>Shepherd, gamekeeper or similar</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>50.0 %</b>
<b>Clergyman, teacher, physician, etc.</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>18.2 %</b>
<b>Mason, carpenter, merchant, etc.</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>40.0 %</b>
<b>Living on private means</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>17.6 %</b>
<b>Manager, coachman, cook, etc.</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>31.3 %</b>
<b>Worker, farm/domestic servant, etc.</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>21.4 %</b>
<b>Remaining occupations</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-</b>

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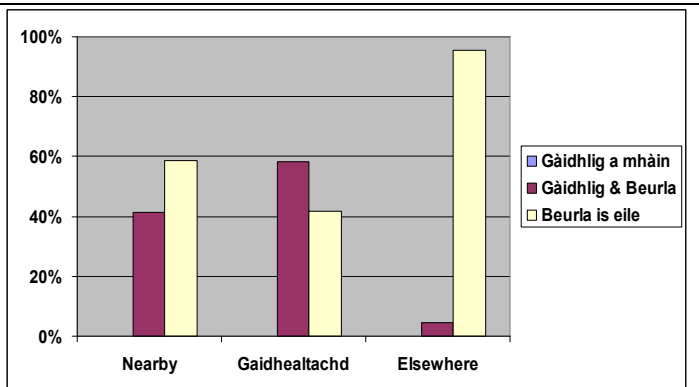
**Place of birth and Gàidhlig speaking:**

Roughly 50 % of those born locally or in the wider *Gaidhealtachd* spoke Gàidhlig. Hardly anyone born in the Lowlands or further away was returned as Gàidhlig speaker.

**Notes:**

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

<sup>2</sup> Born in other parishes of Scotland with more than 50 % Gàidhlig speakers in the 1891 census.



Speakers according to place of birth (1) nearby<sup>1</sup>  
(2) in remaining *Gaidhealtachd*<sup>2</sup>, or (3) elsewhere

**Remarks:**

1. A significant proportion 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)*.
2. In original census report terms, the district had a population of 276 persons of all ages. 91 enumerated inhabitants spoke “Gaelic and English”. This led to an “official” share of *Gàidhlig* speakers of 33.0 %. This figure was an under-estimate of 2.9 % compared with the more realistic figures considering only the usually resident population.
3. 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.