

# Alba 1891: Gàidhlig (Scottish Gaelic) Local Profile

No. 015

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**Area:** *Hacraig (Halkirk): An Spideal, Achadh an Lòin, Achanarras, An Dail & Miabost*

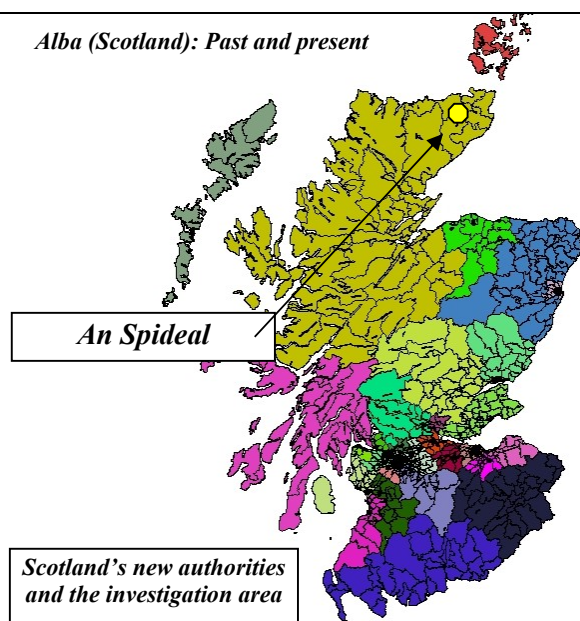
(Names of enumeration locations used on census forms: Spittal, Achalone, Bardsnurkie, Achanarras, Dale & Mybster)

**Number of households:** 82      **Population present at census night:** 372

**Share of resident population (aged three years +) speaking Gàidhlig:** **29.1 %**

County	Civil parish	Registration district	Enumeration district number	Census form pages
Caithness	Halkirk	Halkirk	5 6	1 - 11 1 - 5

*Alba (Scotland): Past and present*



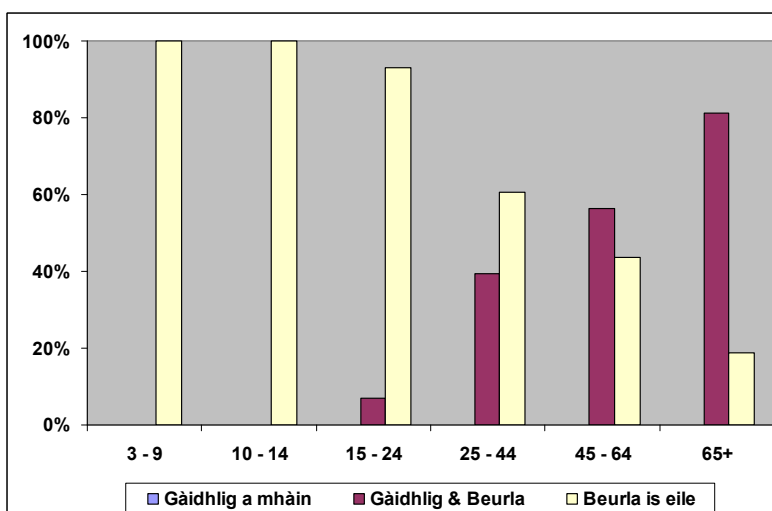
## State of Gàidhlig in 1891:

The language was still widespread among the older people but no-one below the age of 15 was reported as Gàidhlig-speaking in 1891. Intergenerational language transmission seems to have seized effectively in the 1870s in this area. Nonetheless almost 30 % of the usually resident population was returned as speaking Gàidhlig as well as English. The language was strongest in the community of *Miabost* (Mybster) with a respectable 53.6 % of Gàidhlig-speakers within its population. Gàidhlig was predominant also among the elderly who were born in the parish. This points to the fact that the language was not an “import” by migrants from the Highlands further west.

## Area description:

This area comprises relatively fertile farmland south of the town of *Baile Theòrsa* (Thurso) in the county of *Gallaibh* (Caithness). All settlements as far south as *Miabost* (Mybster) were part of the parish of *Hacraig* (Halkirk).

Main hamlet was the scattered township of *An Spideal* (Spittal) where – as anywhere in this fertile area – the major occupation was farming.



**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>	<i>Gàidhlig</i>	<i>Gàidhlig</i> & English	<i>Gàidhlig</i> speakers (%)
<b>Age</b>								
<b>Total</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>29.1 %</b>
<b>3-4</b>	<b>16</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0 %</b>
<b>5-9</b>	<b>40</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0 %</b>
<b>10-14</b>	<b>47</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0 %</b>
<b>15-24</b>	<b>64</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6.9 %</b>
<b>25-44</b>	<b>81</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>39.5 %</b>
<b>45-64</b>	<b>56</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>56.4 %</b>
<b>65+</b>	<b>39</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>81.1 %</b>
<b>Gender</b>								
<b>Female</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>29.4 %</b>
<b>Male</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>28.8 %</b>
<b>Place of birth</b>								
<b>Born in parish</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>21.6 %</b>
<b>In neighbouring parish<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>116</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>40.2 %</b>
<b><i>Gaidhealtachd</i> elsewhere<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>18</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>46.2 %</b>
<b>Other places</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>42.9 %</b>

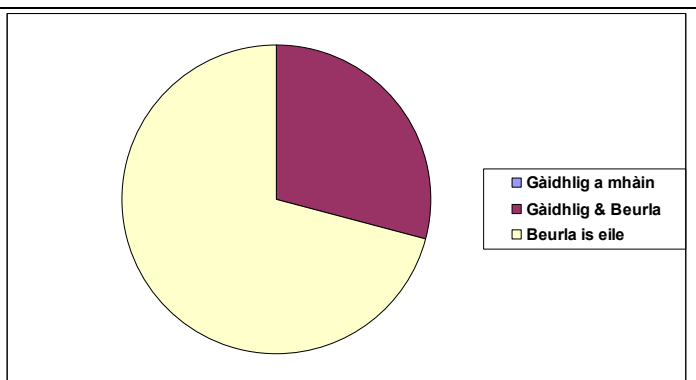
#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Parishes of Farr and Kildonan (Sutherland), Latheron, Bower, Reay, Watten and Thurso (all 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* & 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](http://www.linguae-celticae.de/GLP_english.htm).

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	House-holds	Usually resident population (3+)			
		Total	<i>Gàidhlig</i>	<i>Gàidhlig</i> & English	<i>Gàidhlig</i> speakers (%)
<i>An Spideal &amp; Miabost</i>	82	326	0	95	29.1 %
<b>Individual communities</b>					
<i>An Spideal</i> (Spittal)	36	160	0	37	23.1 %
<i>Achadh an Lòin</i> (Achalone)	7	36	0	9	25.0 %
<i>Achanarras</i> (Achanarras)	8	30	0	11	36.7 %
<i>An Dail</i> (Dale)	12	52	0	11	21.2 %
<i>Miabost</i> (Mybster)	19	48	0	27	56.3 %
<b>Language of parents</b>					
Both parents <i>Gàidhlig</i> speaking	7	45	0	17	37.8 %
Single parent <i>Gàidhlig</i> speaking	5	19	0	9	47.4 %
One parent <i>Gàidhlig</i> speaking	5	30	0	5	16.7 %
No <i>Gàidhlig</i> speaking parent	25	126	0	8	6.3 %
Households with no children (0-14)	40	106	0	56	52.8 %
<b>Occupation of head of household</b>					
Crofter, farmer, fisherman, etc.	30	119	0	50	42.0 %
Shepherd, gamekeeper or similar	5	18	0	7	38.9 %
Clergyman, teacher, physician, etc.	2	9	0	1	11.1 %
Mason, carpenter, merchant, etc.	10	34	0	8	23.5 %
Living on private means	0	0	0	0	-
Manager, coachman, cook, etc.	2	11	0	0	0.0 %
Worker, farm/domestic servant, etc.	33	135	0	29	21.5 %
Remaining occupations	0	0	0	0	-

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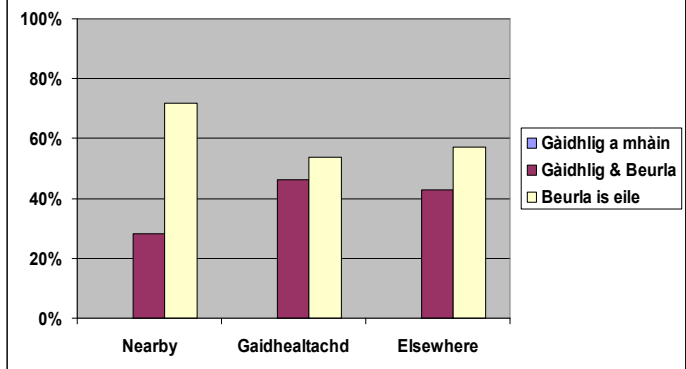
## Place of birth and Gàidhlig speaking:

Over 20 % of all residents born in the parish spoke Gàidhlig. Among the remaining inhabitants this percentage was even higher.

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Born either in Halkirk or in the parishes of Farr, Kildonan (Sutherland), Reay, Bower, Latheron, Watten and Thurso (all 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. In the original census forms one return was enumerated as “Gaelic only” in the hamlet of *An Dail* (Dale). This 72-year-old farm labourer was described as lodging in a crofting household. Therefore, his return was not taken into account in these statistics based on the “usually resident population”.
2. In original census report terms, the district had a population of 372 persons of all ages. 99 enumerated inhabitants spoke “Gaelic and English” and a lodger from *Na Hearadh* (Harris) was registered as “Gaelic only”. These figures led to an “official” share of Gàidhlig speakers of 26.9 %. This percentage was an under-estimate of 2.2 % compared with the more realistic figures considering only the usually resident population.