

# Alba 1891: Gàidhlig (Scottish Gaelic) Local Profile

No. 017

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**Area:** *Gallaibh (Caithness): Sour, Caladal a Tuath, Caladal an Iar, Caladal a Deas, Achavarn, Achavrole, Goirtean, Achscrabster, Lieurary & An t-Achadh Siar*

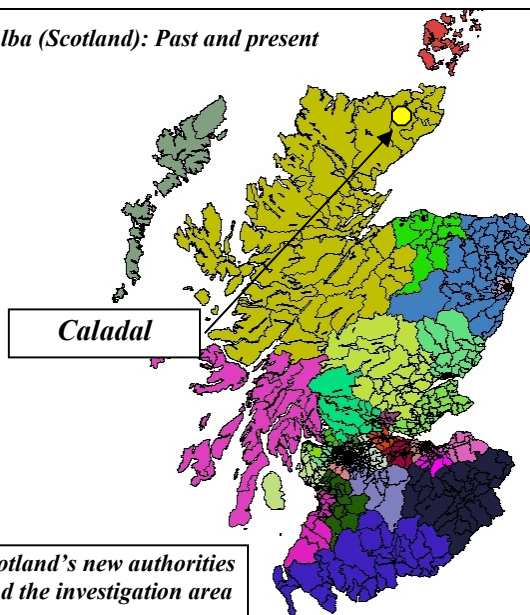
(Names of enumeration locations used on census forms: Upper Sour, Lower Sour, North Calder, West Calder, Framside, Achavarn, South Calder, Roadside Calder, Lochside Calder, Hill of Calder, Achavrole, Gerston, Drakeries, Achscrabster, Lieurary & Westfield)

**Number of households:** 112    **Population present at census night:** 544

**Share of resident population (aged three years +) speaking Gàidhlig:** 14.6 %

County	Civil parish	Registration district	Enumeration district number	Census form pages
Caithness	Halkirk	Halkirk	9	1 - 13
			10	1 - 11

*Alba (Scotland): Past and present*



## State of Gàidhlig in 1891:

In this area of *Gallaibh* (Caithness) the language was already very much a minority issue apart from the very old. Nonetheless *Gàidhlig*-speakers made up still over 70 % of those aged 65 or more.

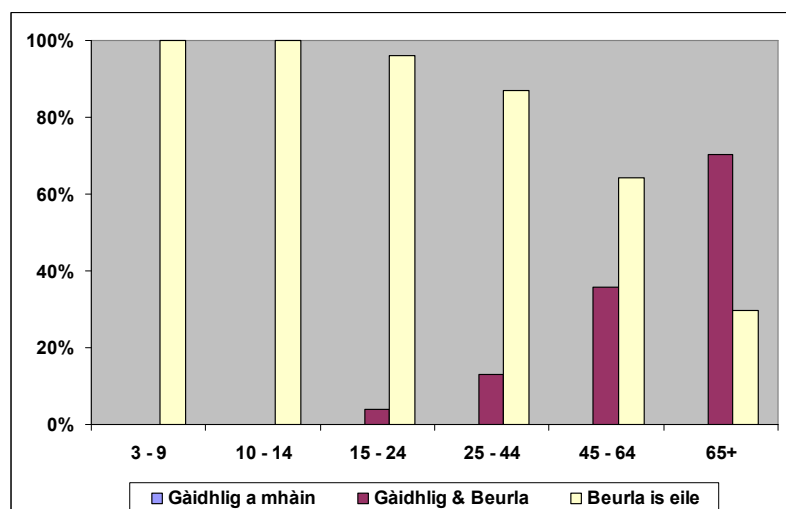
The geographical distribution of the strength of language communities differed very much between around 25 % *Gàidhlig*-speakers in places like *An t-Achadh Siar* (Westfield) and almost no speakers in the farm houses of Sour in 1891.

## Area description:

The district occupies a relatively flat and fertile part of the parish of *Hacraig* (Halkirk) in the north-eastern county of *Gallaibh* (Caithness). Quite a few small and scattered hamlets dominated the settlement patterns in the district to the east of *Loch Caladair* (Loch Calder).

People were mainly occupied with farming in this pastoral countryside.

**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>	<b>544</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>487</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>14.6 %</b>
<b>3-4</b>	<b>28</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0 %</b>
<b>5-9</b>	<b>66</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0 %</b>
<b>10-14</b>	<b>69</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0 %</b>
<b>15-24</b>	<b>101</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4.0 %</b>
<b>25-44</b>	<b>118</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13.0 %</b>
<b>45-64</b>	<b>74</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>35.6 %</b>
<b>65+</b>	<b>37</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>70.3 %</b>
<b>Gender</b>								
<b>Female</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>14.6 %</b>
<b>Male</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>14.6 %</b>
<b>Place of birth</b>								
<b>Born in parish</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>10.8 %</b>
<b>In neighbouring parish<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>213</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>18.6 %</b>
<b>Gaidhealtachd elsewhere<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>20</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>50.0 %</b>
<b>Other places</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>01</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0 %</b>

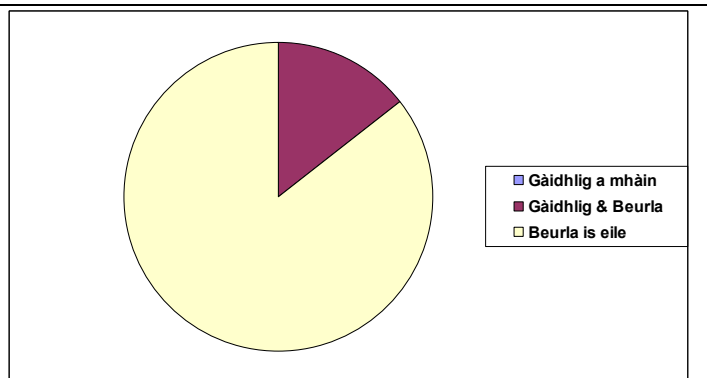
## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Parishes of Farr and Kildonan (Sutherland), Latheron, Reay, Bower, 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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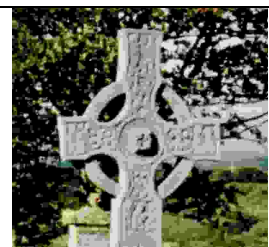
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	House-holds	Usually resident population (3+)			
		Total	Gàidhlig	Gàidhlig & English	Gàidhlig speakers (%)
<b>Caladal &amp; An t-Achadh Siar</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>487</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>14.6 %</b>
<b>Individual communities</b>					
<i>Upper Sour &amp; Lower Sour</i> (Upper Sour & Lower Sour)	4	17	0	0	0.0 %
<i>Caladal a Tuath &amp; Caladal an Iar</i> (North Calder & West Calder)	7	41	0	3	7.3 %
<i>Framside</i> (Framside)	7	28	0	7	25.0 %
<i>Achavarn &amp; Caladal a Deas</i> (Achavarn & South Calder)	11	44	0	4	9.1 %
<i>Caladal an t-Sràid &amp; Caladal an Locha</i> (Roadside Calder & Lochside Calder)	10	40	0	9	22.5 %
<i>Caladal a'Chnuic &amp; Achavrole</i> (Hillside Calder & Achavrole)	11	55	0	3	5.5 %
<i>Goirtean &amp; Drakerous</i> (Gerston & Drakerous)	11	44	0	2	4.5 %
<i>Achscrabster</i> (Achscrabster)	25	108	0	21	19.4 %
<i>Lieurary</i> (Lieurary)	17	73	0	13	17.8 %
<i>An t-Achadh Siar</i> (Westfield)	9	37	0	9	24.3 %
<b>Language of parents</b>					
<b>Both parents Gàidhlig speaking</b>	4	23	0	7	30.4 %
<b>Single parent Gàidhlig speaking</b>	4	16	0	4	25.0 %
<b>One parent Gàidhlig speaking</b>	5	29	0	8	27.6 %
<b>No Gàidhlig speaking parent</b>	59	302	0	13	4.3 %
<b>Households with no children (0-14)</b>	40	117	0	39	33.3 %
<b>Occupation of head of household</b>					
<b>Crofter, farmer, fisherman, etc.</b>	18	100	0	11	11.0 %
<b>Shepherd, gamekeeper or similar</b>	4	15	0	3	20.0 %
<b>Clergyman, teacher, physician, etc.</b>	1	7	0	1	14.3 %
<b>Mason, carpenter, merchant, etc.</b>	13	61	0	5	8.2 %
<b>Living on private means</b>	0	0	0	0	-
<b>Manager, coachman, cook, etc.</b>	6	24	0	8	33.3 %
<b>Worker, farm/domestic servant, etc.</b>	70	280	0	43	15.4 %
<b>Remaining occupations</b>	0	0	0	0	-

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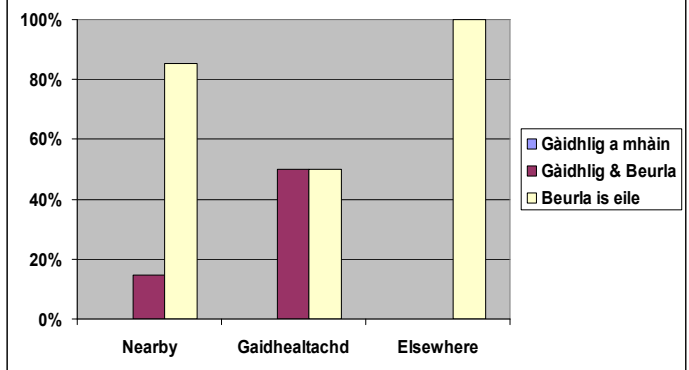
## Place of birth and Gàidhlig speaking:

Just around 10% of residents born in the parish did speak Gàidhlig. No-one born outside the *Gaidhealtachd* spoke the language.

### 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 original census report terms, the district had a population of 544 persons of all ages. 73 enumerated inhabitants spoke “Gaelic and English”. This led to an “official” share of Gàidhlig speakers of 13.4 %. The figure therefore was a slight underestimate of 1.2 % compared with the more realistic figures considering only the usually resident population.
2. 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