

Alba 1891: Gàidhlig (Scottish Gaelic) Local Profile

No. 020

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Area: *Gallaibh (Caithness): An Srath Mòr, A'Chròic, An Loch Mòr, Tulachan, Allt nam Breac, An Glut, An Dail Mòr, Cnoc Dubh & An Dail Shuas*

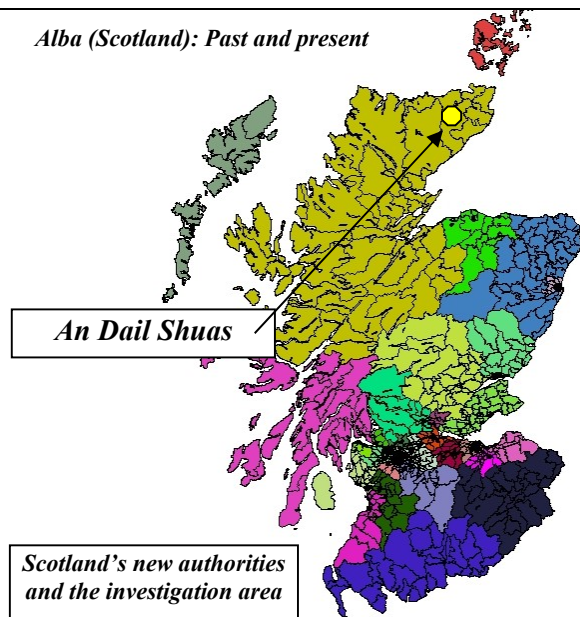
(Names of enumeration locations used on census forms: Strathmore Lodge, Croick, Lochmore, Achscoriclate, Balvreed, Tullachan Lodge, Backlass, Dalnaha, Dalliwillan, Dalganachan, Glutt, Rumsdale, Altnabreac, Dorrery, Hillocks, Coulmaddie, Badaneen, Lonan, Tormsdale, Dalmore, Knockdoo, Tormiston, Dirlot & Westerdale)

Number of households: 55 **Population present at census night:** 296

Share of resident population (aged three years +) speaking Gàidhlig: 27.5 %

County	Civil parish	Registration district	Enumeration district number	Census form pages
Caithness	Halkirk	Halkirk	12	1 - 5
			13	1 - 3
			7	1 - 2(part); 4 - 9

Alba (Scotland): Past and present



State of Gàidhlig in 1891:

Around a quarter of the population spoke Gàidhlig. However, the language was already almost exclusively confined to the older generations. Just a few persons below the age of 25 spoke Gàidhlig at the time. Accordingly, it can be concluded that intergenerational language transmission had seized effectively in the area around 1860.

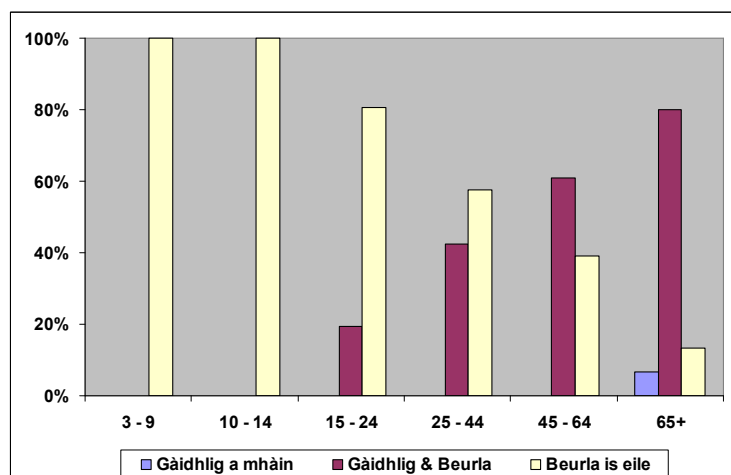
The language was strongest in the area of *An t-Srath Mòr* (Strathmore) where 35.4 % of the usually resident population still spoke Gàidhlig.

Area description:

The few settlements in the wide-open spaces of western central *Gallaibh* (Caithness) are subject of this study. Therefore, the area includes the estates of *An t-Srath Mòr* (Strathmore) as well as farming townships like *An Dail Shuas* (Westerdale) – all in the parish of Halcraig (Halkirk).

Most important occupations of the resident population were farming, gamekeeping, and shepherding.

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. ³	Total ⁴	Gàidhlig	Gàidhlig & English	Gàidhlig speakers (%)
Age								
Total	296	18	0	20	258	1	70	27.5 %
3-4	17		0	0	17	0	0	0.0 %
5-9	53		0	0	53	0	0	0.0 %
10-14	34		0	2	32	0	0	0.0 %
15-24	52		0	11	41	0	8	19.5 %
25-44	64		0	5	59	0	25	42.4 %
45-64	43		0	2	41	0	25	61.0 %
65+	15		0	0	15	1	12	86.7 %
Gender								
Female	163	6	0	4	153	0	41	26.8 %
Male	133	12	0	16	105	1	29	28.6 %
Place of birth								
Born in parish	147	15	0	1	131	0	25	19.1 %
In neighbouring parish¹	84	3	0	1	80	0	30	37.5 %
Gaidhealtachd elsewhere²	32	0	0	6	26	1	14	57.7 %
Other places	33	0	0	12	21	0	1	4.8 %

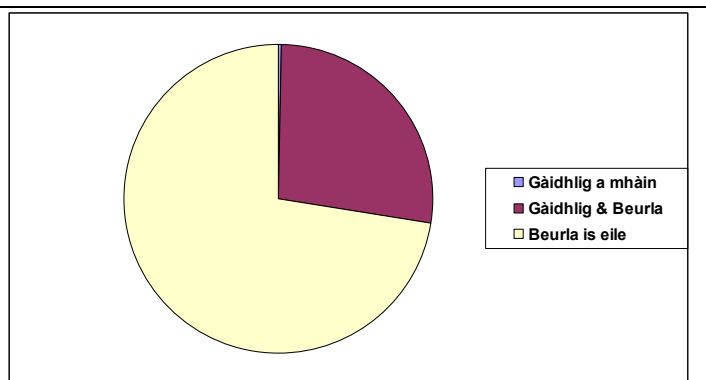
Notes:

¹ Parishes of Farr and Kildonan (Sutherland), Latheron, Reay, Watten, and Thurso (all 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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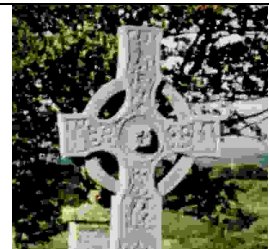
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	Households	Usually resident population (3+)			
		Total	Gàidhlig	Gàidhlig & English	Gàidhlig speakers (%)
<i>An Srath Mòr & An Dail Shuas</i>	55	258	1	70	27.5 %
Individual communities					
<i>An Srath Mòr</i> (Strathmore)	19	79	0	28	35.4 %
<i>Allt nam Breac & An Glut</i> (Altnabreac & Glutt)	13	55	1	10	20.0 %
<i>Tormiston & Dirlot</i> (Tormiston & Dirlot)	5	26	0	7	26.9 %
<i>An Dail Shuas</i> (Westerdale)	18	98	0	25	25.5 %
Language of parents					
Both parents Gàidhlig speaking	8	52	0	15	28.8 %
Single parent Gàidhlig speaking	8	44	1	19	45.5 %
One parent Gàidhlig speaking	2	10	0	2	20.0 %
No Gàidhlig speaking parent	17	88	0	1	1.1 %
Households with no children (0-14)	20	64	0	33	51.6 %
Occupation of head of household					
Crofter, farmer, fisherman, etc.	9	67	0	22	32.8 %
Shepherd, gamekeeper or similar	19	84	0	20	23.8 %
Clergyman, teacher, physician, etc.	4	19	0	6	31.6 %
Mason, carpenter, merchant, etc.	6	27	0	8	29.6 %
Living on private means	0	0	0	0	-
Manager, coachman, cook, etc.	2	7	0	0	0.0 %
Worker, farm/domestic servant, etc.	15	54	1	14	27.8 %
Remaining occupations	0	0	0	0	-

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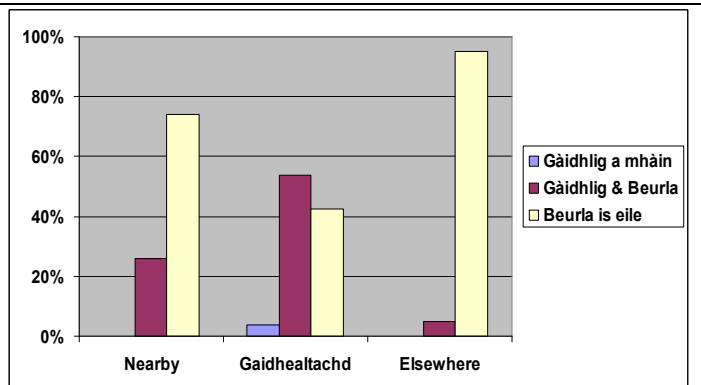
Place of birth and Gàidhlig speaking:

Only a fourth of nearby born residents spoke Gàidhlig. Almost all enumerated persons with a birthplace outside the *Gaidhealtachd* spoke no Gàidhlig at all.

Notes:

¹ Born either in Halkirk or in the parishes of Farr, Kildonan (Sutherland), Reay, Latheron, Watten and Thurso (all 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. One person was enumerated as speaking *Gàidhlig* only. A 68-year-old railway surfaceman in *Clasach* near *Allt nam Breac* did not speak English. He was born in *Urchadain* (Urquhart) in *Ros an Ear* (Easter Ross).
2. In original census report terms, the district had a population of 296 persons of all ages. 76 enumerated inhabitants spoke “Gaelic and English” and one inhabitant spoke “only Gaelic”. This resulted in an “official” share of *Gàidhlig* speakers of 26.0 %. Such a figure was an under-estimate of 1.5 % 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.