

Alba 1891: Gàidhlig (Scottish Gaelic) Local Profile

No. 118

Page 1 of 4

Area: *Gallaibh (Caithness): Achadh a'Mhanaich, Rangaig, Achastle & Achow*

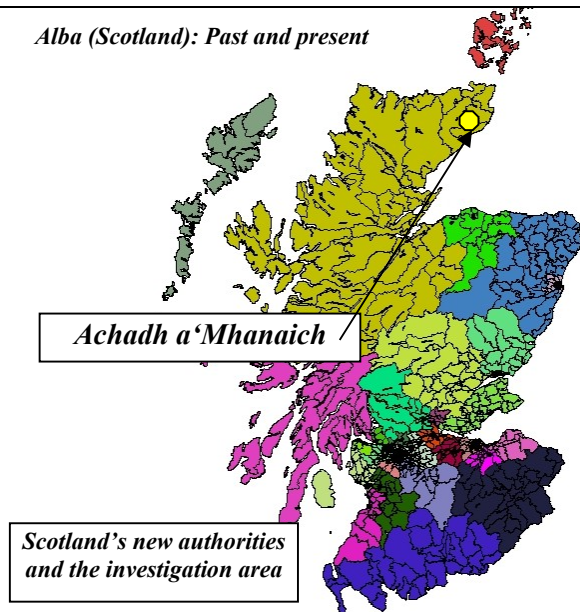
(Names of enumeration locations used on census forms: Swiney, Achastle, Achow, Reisgill, Achavanich, Rangag)

Number of households: 111 Population present at census night: 465

Share of resident population (aged three years or over) speaking Gàidhlig: 51.4 %

| County | Civil parish | Registration district | Enumeration district number | Census form pages |
|-----------|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| Caithness | Latheron | Latheron | 8 | 1 - 15 |
| | | | 9 | 1 - 7 |

Alba (Scotland): Past and present



State of Gàidhlig in 1891:

The census returns gave a clear picture of the failed intergenerational language transmission of Gàidhlig speech in this society (like in other parts of the traditionally Gàidhlig speaking west of the county). Whereas most inhabitants born before the 1870s spoke Gàidhlig, the language vanished almost completely from the younger generations.

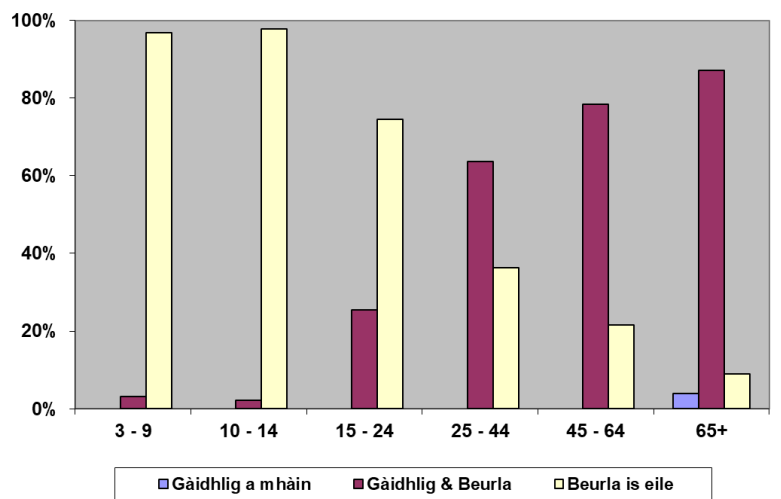
Crofters from the more remote parts in the hinterland around Achadh a'Mhanaich (Achavanich) kept their Gàidhlig traditions slightly stronger than the coastal fishing folk.

Area description:

The area investigated is situated on or near the east coast of Gallaibh (Caithness) between the fishing ports of Latharan (Latheron) and Liabost (Lybster). The hinterland is made up of hills and open moorland, whereas the coast is rocky and in parts almost inaccessible from the landside.

Besides the traditional crofting activities major employment provided the local fishing fleets in the coastal villages.

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

Alba 1891: Gàidhlig (Scottish Gaelic) Local Profile

No. 118

Page 2 of 4

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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 | 465 | 27 | 1 | 7 | 430 | 3 | 218 | 51.4 % |
| 3-4 | 16 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 16 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 % |
| 5-9 | 49 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 47 | 0 | 2 | 4.3 % |
| 10-14 | 45 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 45 | 0 | 1 | 2.2 % |
| 15-24 | 61 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 59 | 0 | 15 | 25.4 % |
| 25-44 | 90 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 88 | 0 | 56 | 63.6 % |
| 45-64 | 99 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 97 | 0 | 76 | 78.4 % |
| 65+ | 78 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 78 | 3 | 68 | 91.0 % |
| Gender | | | | | | | | |
| Female | 241 | 11 | 0 | 1 | 229 | 2 | 118 | 52.4 % |
| Male | 224 | 16 | 1 | 6 | 201 | 1 | 100 | 50.2 % |
| Place of birth | | | | | | | | |
| Born in parish | 363 | 23 | 1 | 4 | 335 | 3 | 171 | 44.4 % |
| In neighbouring parish¹ | 51 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 51 | 0 | 32 | 65.3 % |
| Gaidhealtachd elsewhere² | 13 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13 | 0 | 8 | 29.6 % |
| Other places | 38 | 4 | 0 | 3 | 31 | 0 | 5 | 10.2 % |

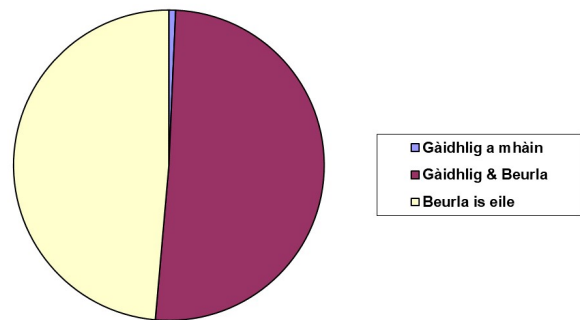
Notes:

¹ Parishes of Kildonan (Sutherland), Halkirk, Watten or Wick (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 & Beurla, 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 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.

Alba 1891: Gàidhlig (Scottish Gaelic) Local Profile

No. 118

Page 3 of 4

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| | Households | Usually resident population (3+) | | | |
|--|------------|----------------------------------|----------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| | | Total | Gàidhlig | Gàidhlig & English | Gàidhlig speakers (%) |
| <i>Gallaibh: Achadh a'Mhanaich</i> | 111 | 430 | 3 | 218 | 51.4 % |
| Individual communities | | | | | |
| <i>Swiney, Achastle & Achow</i> (Swiney, Achastle & Achow) | 82 | 314 | 3 | 149 | 48.4 % |
| <i>Achadh a'Mhanaich & Rangaig</i> (Achavanich & Rangag) | 29 | 116 | 0 | 69 | 59.5 % |
| | | | | | |
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| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Language of parents | | | | | |
| Both parents Gàidhlig speaking | 24 | 144 | 0 | 64 | 44.4 % |
| Single parent Gàidhlig speaking | 14 | 49 | 0 | 32 | 65.3 % |
| One parent Gàidhlig speaking | 6 | 27 | 0 | 8 | 29.6 % |
| No Gàidhlig speaking parent | 9 | 49 | 0 | 5 | 10.2 % |
| Households with no children (0-14) | 58 | 161 | 3 | 109 | 69.6 % |
| | | | | | |
| Occupation of head of household | | | | | |
| Crofter, farmer, fisherman, etc. | 76 | 315 | 1 | 166 | 53.0 % |
| Shepherd, gamekeeper or similar | 2 | 10 | 0 | 3 | 30.0 % |
| Clergyman, teacher, physician, etc. | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 % |
| Mason, carpenter, merchant, etc. | 10 | 41 | 0 | 15 | 36.6 % |
| Living on private means | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - |
| Manager, coachman, cook, etc. | 3 | 13 | 0 | 4 | 30.8 % |
| Worker, farm/domestic servant, etc. | 12 | 31 | 2 | 16 | 58.1 % |
| Remaining occupations | 7 | 17 | 0 | 14 | 82.4 % |

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Alba 1891: Gàidhlig (Scottish Gaelic) Local Profile

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Page 4 of 4

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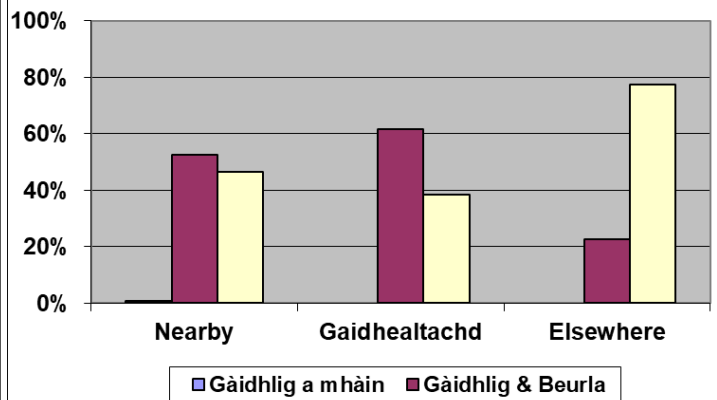
Place of birth and Gàidhlig speaking:

The language was still spoken in parts of the locally born population. As Latheron and its neighbouring parishes were divided between Scots-speaking and Gàidhlig-speaking areas the birthplace information on census forms could not provide more exact numbers.

Notes:

¹ Born either in Latheron or in the adjacent parishes of Kildonan (Sutherland), Halkirk, Watten or Wick (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. Official census figures reported 218 bilingual inhabitants and three monolingual Gàidhlig-speakers out of a total population of 465 persons (96.2 %). The usually resident population of just 430 persons, however, consisted of 221 Gàidhlig-speakers (51.4 %) including three inhabitants “with no English”.
2. The three monolingual Gàidhlig returns were provided by three elderly inhabitants of Achow – all in their seventies: A retired shoemaker, a woolspinner and her blind sister.
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.