

# Alba 1891: Gàidhlig (Scottish Gaelic) Local Profile

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**Area:** *Eilean Cholla (Isle of Coll): Sòrasdal, Babhsta, Eilean Mòr, Còrnaig Mhòr, Còrnaig Bheag, Greasapol, Cliad, Àrnabost, A'Ghallanach, Torathasdan, An t-Achadh Mòr, Àirigh Bhàraich, Beinn Mheadhonach & Baile Hogh*

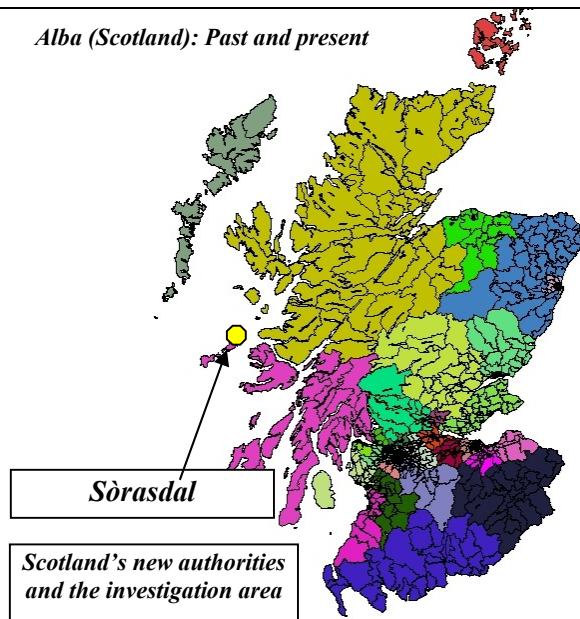
(Names of enumeration locations used on census forms: Sorisdale, Bousd, Eilean Mor, Cornaigmore, Cornaigbeg, Gressipol, Cliad, Arnabost, Gallanach, Torastan, Achamore, Arivarich, Benmeanach & Ballyhaugh)

**Number of households:** 54      **Population present at census night:** 269

**Share of resident population (aged three years +) speaking Gàidhlig:** 89.3 %

County	Civil parish	Registration district	Enumeration district number	Census form pages
Argyll	Coll	Coll	2 4	1 - 3 1 - 5

*Alba (Scotland): Past and present*



## State of Gàidhlig in 1891:

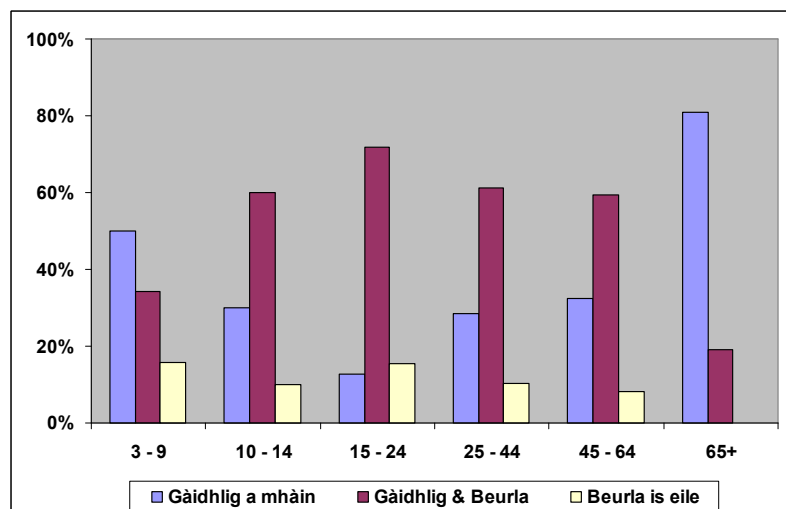
The language was universally spoken by the locally born population. Interestingly there was a deep linguistic division in the community with a large majority of local Gàidhlig speakers and a small group of Ayrshire farmers who spoke nothing but English.

On the other hand, a significant proportion of Gàidhlig speakers remained monolingual especially at young age and among the elderly. Strongest Gàidhlig communities were found on the north-eastern tip of the island around Sòrasdal (Sorisdale) and Còrnaig Mhòr (Cornaigmore) but also at Baile Hogh (Ballyhaugh).

## Area description:

The district covers roughly the north-eastern half of the island of Colla (Coll) which was part of the county of Earra-Ghaidheal (Argyll) at that time.

The islanders were occupied with two significantly different agricultural practices. The locally born people were mainly crofters living on land with poorer soils whereas the more fertile countryside was farmed by a few Ayrshire farmers who had been “imported” by the island owner.



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>269</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>89.3 %</b>
<b>3-4</b>	<b>13</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>84.6 %</b>
<b>5-9</b>	<b>25</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>84.0 %</b>
<b>10-14</b>	<b>31</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>90.0 %</b>
<b>15-24</b>	<b>54</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>84.6 %</b>
<b>25-44</b>	<b>71</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>89.8 %</b>
<b>45-64</b>	<b>40</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>91.9 %</b>
<b>65+</b>	<b>21</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>100 %</b>
<b>Gender</b>								
<b>Female</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>88.7 %</b>
<b>Male</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>89.7 %</b>
<b>Place of birth</b>								
<b>Born in parish</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>86.5 %</b>
<b>In neighbouring parish<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>100 %</b>
<b>Gaidhealtachd elsewhere<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>12</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100 %</b>
<b>Other places</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>29.2 %</b>

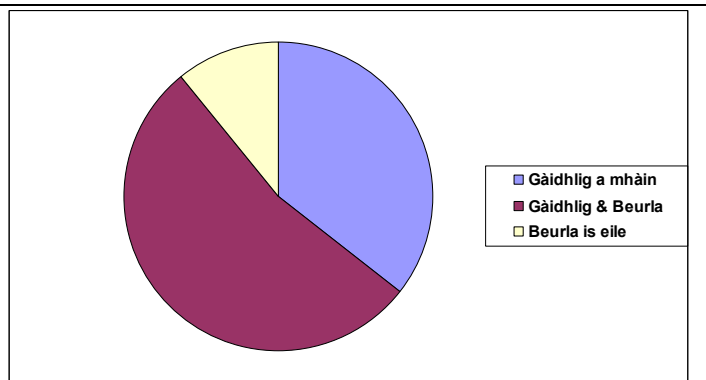
## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Parish of Tiree (Argyll).

<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 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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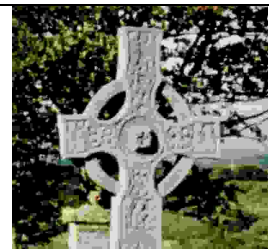
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	House-holds	Usually resident population (3+)			
		Total	Gàidhlig	Gàidhlig & English	Gàidhlig speakers (%)
<b>Sòrasdal &amp; Cliad</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>89.3 %</b>
<b>Individual communities</b>					
<i>Sòrasdal</i> (Sorisdale)	9	34	21	13	100 %
<i>Babhsta</i> (Bousd)	7	26	10	16	100 %
<i>Eilean Mòr</i> (Eilean Mor)	6	25	18	7	100 %
<i>Còrnaig Mhòr &amp; Còrnaig Bheag</i> (Cornaigmore & Cornaigbeg)	12	34	18	16	100 %
<i>Greasapol &amp; Cliad</i> (Gressipol & Cliad)	6	28	1	14	53.6 %
<i>Àrnabost &amp; A'Ghallanach</i> (Arnabost & Gallanach)	4	18	1	10	61.1 %
<i>Torathasdan &amp; An t-Achadh Mòr</i> (Torastan & Achamore)	4	21	6	12	85.7 %
<i>Airigh Bhàraich &amp; Beinn Mheadhonach</i> (Arivarich & Benmeanach)	4	18	1	17	100 %
<i>Baile Hogh</i> (Ballyhaugh)	2	10	0	10	100 %
<b>Language of parents</b>					
<b>Both parents Gàidhlig speaking</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100 %</b>
<b>Single parent Gàidhlig speaking</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100 %</b>
<b>One parent Gàidhlig speaking</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>28.6 %</b>
<b>No Gàidhlig speaking parent</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>33.3 %</b>
<b>Households with no children (0-14)</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>92.5 %</b>
<b>Occupation of head of household</b>					
<b>Crofter, farmer, fisherman, etc.</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>94.7 %</b>
<b>Shepherd, gamekeeper or similar</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>90.9 %</b>
<b>Clergyman, teacher, physician, etc.</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>66.7 %</b>
<b>Mason, carpenter, merchant, etc.</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Living on private means</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>100 %</b>
<b>Manager, coachman, cook, etc.</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Worker, farm/domestic servant, etc.</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>74.3 %</b>
<b>Remaining occupations</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-</b>

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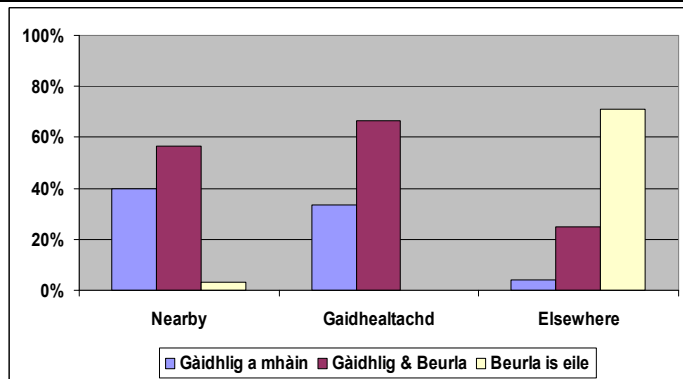
## Place of birth and Gàidhlig speaking:

Almost all persons with “no Gaelic” were born outside the *Gaidhealtachd*. Gàidhlig monolinguals made up more than a third of the remaining population irrespective of place of birth.

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Born either on the Isle of Coll or in the parish of Tìree (both Argyll).

<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 total 23 persons in the usually resident population did not speak *Gàidhlig*. They all had Lowland connections and were registered in six families. These were headed by the parish minister, two farmers, a shepherd, a dairy manager, and a dairy keeper. Apart from the local priest all these household heads originated from Ayrshire.
2. In original census report terms, the district had a population of 269 persons of all ages. 117 enumerated inhabitants spoke “Gaelic and English” and 79 were counted as monolingual *Gàidhlig* speakers. This led to an “official” share of *Gàidhlig* speakers of 72.9 %. This figure was a very significant under-estimate of 16.4 % compared with the more realistic figures considering only the usually resident population. Main reason of this discrepancy was the visit of a few fishing vessels from North-East Scotland to the hamlet of *Còrnaig Bheag* (Cornaigbeag). All visitors did not speak *Gàidhlig*.