

Alba 1891: Gàidhlig (Scottish Gaelic) Local Profile

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Area: *Gallaibh (Caithness): Smerral, Buoltach, Achingoul, Lapan, Paidheag, Cnocannan & M̀anas Latharan a'Phuill*

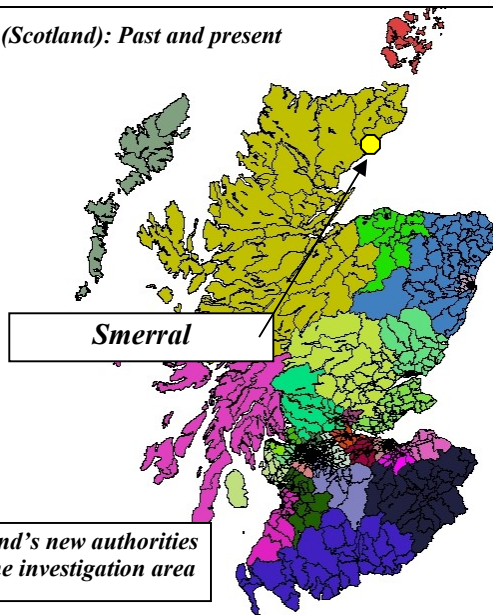
(Names of enumeration locations used on census forms: Upper Smerral, Lower Smerral, Buoltach, Achingoul, Lapan, Paidhag, Knockinnan, Latheronwheel Mains)

Number of households: 105 Population present at census night: 439

Share of resident population (aged three years or over) speaking Gàidhlig: 38.3 %

County	Civil parish	Registration district	Enumeration district number	Census form pages
Sutherland	Latheron	Latheron	13	1 - 19

Alba (Scotland): Past and present



State of Gàidhlig in 1891:

A substantial part of the inhabitants still spoke Gàidhlig – mainly in the older generation. Effective inter-generational language transmission, however, seems to have seized in the 1850s in this district.

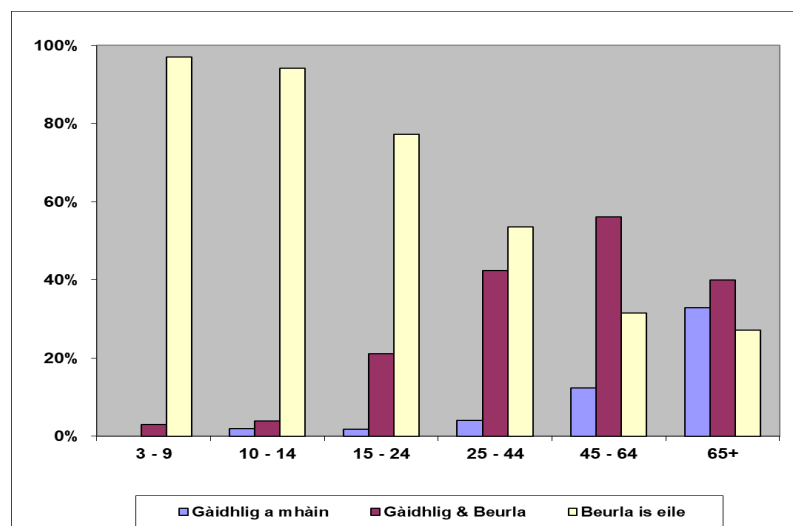
The language was strongest in crofting families. Women were more likely to speak Gàidhlig than men. There was even a considerable number of inhabitants who did not speak English. The share of speakers was especially high in the tiny crofting communities of Smerral, *Buoltach* and *Paidheag* with a share of more than 40 % of the population.

Area description:

The district was part of the wide-open hinterland of the fishing villages of *Latharan* and *Latharan a'Phuill* (Latheronwheel) on the east coast of Caithness – Scotland's northernmost mainland county.

Main occupations of the inhabitants were crofting activities, often in combination with work in the local fishing fleet. Some men left temporarily their families for job opportunities in the booming Central Belt.

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	439	24	4	9	402	36	118	38.3 %
3-4	21	0	0	0	21	0	0	0.0 %
5-9	46	0	0	0	46	0	2	4.3 %
10-14	53	0	1	0	52	1	2	5.8 %
15-24	60	0	0	3	57	1	12	22.8 %
25-44	102	0	1	2	99	4	42	46.5 %
45-64	58	0	1	0	57	7	32	68.4 %
65+	75	0	1	4	70	23	28	72.9 %
Gender								
Female	244	9	2	5	228	19	61	35.1 %
Male	195	15	2	4	174	17	57	42.5 %
Place of birth								
Born in parish	415	24	4	5	382	35	115	39.3 %
In neighbouring parish¹	14	0	0	1	13	0	2	15.4 %
Gaidhealtachd elsewhere²	2	0	0	1	1	1	0	100.0 %
Other places	8	0	0	2	6	0	1	16.7 %

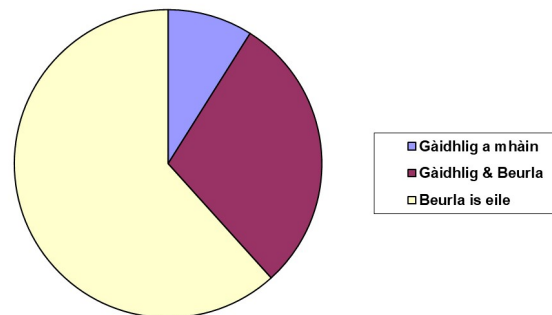
Notes:

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.

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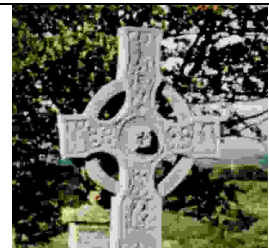
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	Households	Usually resident population (3+)			
		Total	Gàidhlig	Gàidhlig & English	Gàidhlig speakers (%)
<i>M̀anas Latharan a'Phuill</i>	105	402	36	118	38.3 %
Individual communities					
<i>Upper Smerral</i> (Upper Smerral)	18	61	13	13	42.6 %
<i>Lower Smerral</i> (Lower Smerral)	17	76	8	30	50.0 %
<i>Buoltach</i> (Buoltach)	23	76	11	22	43.4 %
<i>Achingoul</i> (Achingoul)	7	31	2	7	20.0 %
<i>Lapan & Paidheag</i> (Lapan & Paidhag)	10	39	2	16	46.2 %
<i>Cnocannan</i> (Knockinnan)	17	65	0	23	35.4 %
<i>M̀anas Latharan a'Phuill</i> (Latheronwheel Mains)	13	54	0	7	13.0 %
Language of parents					
Both parents Gàidhlig speaking	20	101	4	38	41.6 %
Single parent Gàidhlig speaking	10	49	8	15	46.9 %
One parent Gàidhlig speaking	7	44	2	8	22.7 %
No Gàidhlig speaking parent	16	63	0	3	4.8 %
Households with no children (0-14)	52	145	22	54	52.4 %
Occupation of head of household					
Crofter, farmer, fisherman, etc.	76	307	30	97	41.4 %
Shepherd, gamekeeper or similar	2	5	0	3	60.0 %
Clergyman, teacher, physician, etc.	1	3	0	0	0.0 %
Mason, carpenter, merchant, etc.	10	37	3	12	10.0 %
Living on private means	0	0	0	0	-
Manager, coachman, cook, etc.	3	15	0	0	0.0 %
Worker, farm/domestic servant, etc.	13	34	3	6	25.7 %
Remaining occupations	0	0	0	0	-

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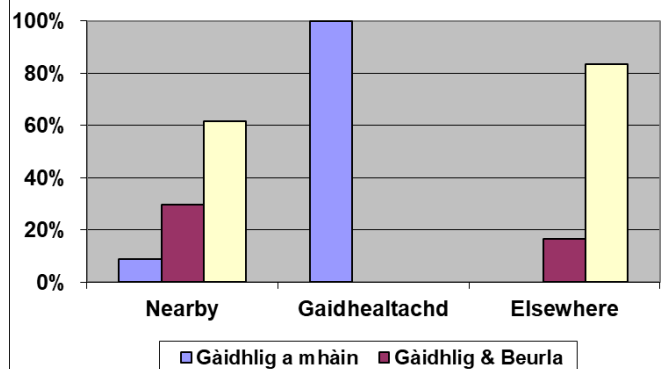
Place of birth and Gàidhlig speaking:

The language was spoken by roughly a third of locally born inhabitants – contrary to the widely held belief that Caithness was a wholly “Lowland” county.

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 118 bilingual inhabitants and 37 monolingual *Gàidhlig*-speakers out of a total population of 439 persons (35.3 %). The usually resident population of 402 inhabitants, however, consisted of 154 *Gàidhlig*-speakers (38.3 %) including 36 inhabitants “with no English”.
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.