

Alba 1891: Gàidhlig (Scottish Gaelic) Local Profile

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Area: *Gallaibh (Caithness): Brubster, Sherrary & Brawlbin*

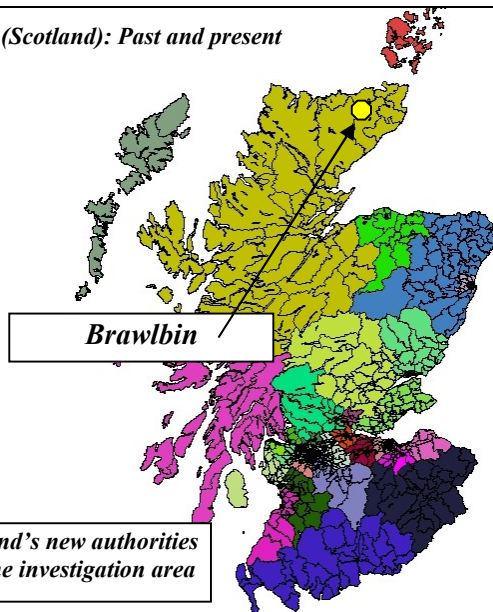
(Names of enumeration locations used on census forms: Brubster, Sherrary, Lambsdale & Brawlbin)

Number of households: **53** Population present at census night: **234**

Share of resident population (aged three years or over) speaking *Gàidhlig*: **52.1 %**

County	Civil parish	Registration district	Enumeration district number	Census form pages
<i>Caithness</i>	<i>Reay</i>	Reay	4	1 - 11

Alba (Scotland): Past and present



State of *Gàidhlig* in 1891:

At the census time this area was still part of the *Gaidhealtachd*, although on a moderate level. A substantial part of the resident population still spoke *Gàidhlig* in the district. All speakers were effectively bilingual. The age profile, however, was already heavily biased towards older generations. In the age group of 65+ the language was spoken by almost 80 % of all residents. Nonetheless *Gàidhlig* was still spoken by the majority within households headed by a *Gàidhlig* speaker.

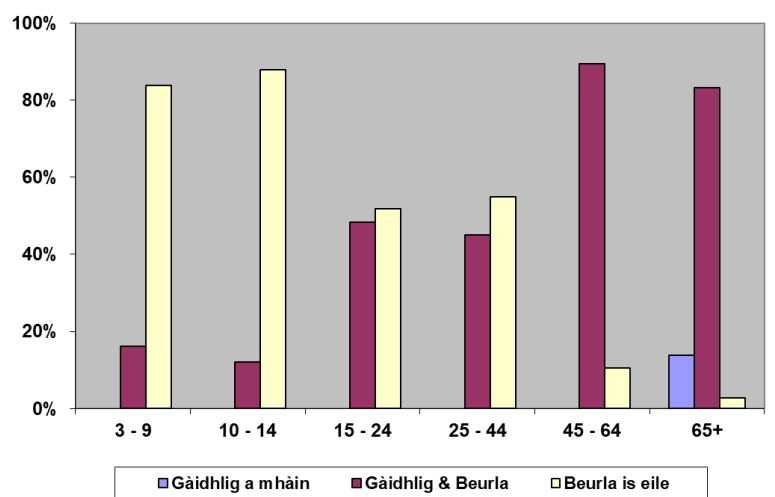
Strongest *Gàidhlig* community was the settlement of *Brubster* with 70.0% speakers of the traditional language.

Area description:

The district investigated lies in the western corner of the county of *Gallaibh* (Caithness) a few miles east of the county boundary with *Cataibh* (Sutherland). It is a relatively flat and in places boggy land which is drained by the *Allt Fors* (Forss River).

Main economic activities were concerned with husbandry and agriculture.

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	234	18	0	3	213	5	106	52.1 %
3-4	7	0	0	0	7	0	0	0.0 %
5-9	30	0	0	0	30	0	6	20.0 %
10-14	33	0	0	0	33	0	4	12.1 %
15-24	30	0	0	1	29	0	14	48.3 %
25-44	41	0	0	1	40	0	18	45.0 %
45-64	39	0	0	1	38	0	34	89.5 %
65+	36	0	0	0	36	5	30	97.2 %
Gender								
Female	127	10	0	1	116	4	57	52.6 %
Male	107	8	0	2	97	1	49	51.5 %
Place of birth								
Born in parish	138	18	0	0	120	5	75	65.8 %
In neighbouring parish¹	58	0	0	3	55	0	19	34.5 %
Gaidhealtachd elsewhere²	9	0	0	0	9	0	7	77.8 %
Other places	29	0	0	0	29	0	6	20.7 %

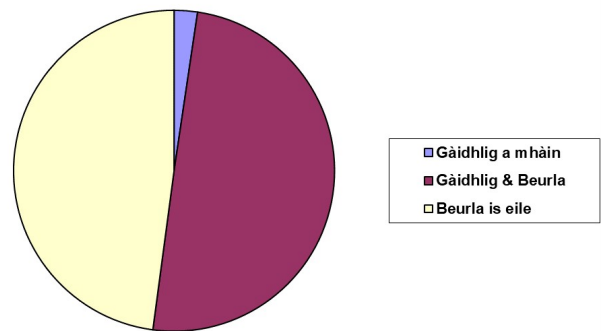
Notes:

¹ Parishes of Farr (Sutherland), Thurso or Halkirk (both 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 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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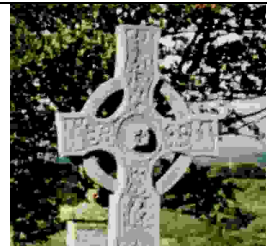
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	Households	Usually resident population (3+)			
		Total	Gàidhlig	Gàidhlig & English	Gàidhlig speakers (%)
<i>Srath Fors Uachdar – Upper Forss</i>	53	213	5	106	52.1 %
Individual communities					
<i>Brubster</i> (Brubster)	18	60	0	42	70.0 %
<i>Sherrary & Lambsdale</i> (Sherrary & Lambsdale)	11	63	4	28	50.8 %
<i>Brawlbin</i> (Brawlbin)	24	90	1	36	41.1 %
Language of parents					
Both parents Gàidhlig speaking	9	51	0	39	76.5 %
Single parent Gàidhlig speaking	9	41	1	22	56.1 %
One parent Gàidhlig speaking	4	23	0	4	17.4 %
No Gàidhlig speaking parent	7	45	0	1	2.2 %
Households with no children (0-14)	24	53	4	40	83.0 %
Occupation of head of household					
Crofter, farmer, fisherman, etc.	21	83	4	60	77.1 %
Shepherd, gamekeeper or similar	8	57	0	13	22.8 %
Clergyman, teacher, physician, etc.	2	5	0	3	60.0 %
Mason, carpenter, merchant, etc.	4	13	0	7	53.8 %
Living on private means	0	0	0	0	-
Manager, coachman, cook, etc.	1	7	0	1	14.3 %
Worker, farm/domestic servant, etc.	12	42	0	17	40.5 %
Remaining occupations	5	6	1	5	100.0 %

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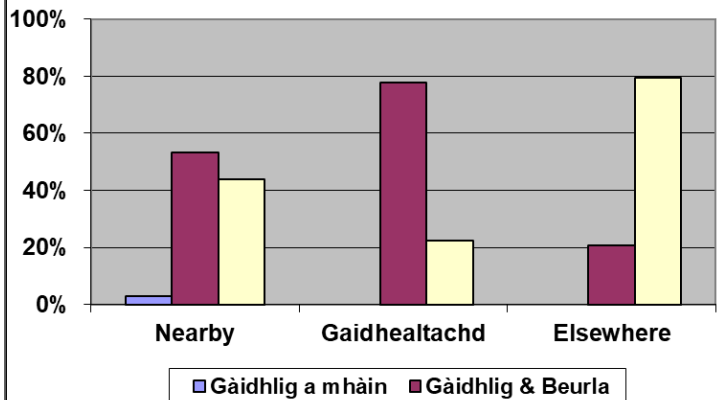
Place of birth and Gàidhlig speaking:

The language was spoken mainly by older people who were born locally. Those born in the wider *Gaidhealtachd* of course “had the *Gàidhlig*”, too.

Notes:

¹ Born either in Reay or in the adjacent parishes of Farr (Sutherland), Thurso or Halkirk (both 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 108 bilingual inhabitants and five monolingual *Gàidhlig*-speakers out of a total population of 233 persons (48.5%). The usually resident population of 213 inhabitants, however, consisted of 111 *Gàidhlig*-speakers (52.1%) including five inhabitants “with no English”.
2. Five inhabitants did not speak English at the time. They were all elderly. Four crofters respectively annuitants lived in Sherrary, another pauper was recorded in Brawlbin.
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.