

Alba 1891: Gàidhlig (Scottish Gaelic) Local Profile

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Area: *Gallaibh (Caithness): Clyth an Ear, Clyth Meadhonach, Clyth an Iar, Mànas Clyth, Occumster, Camster, Roster*

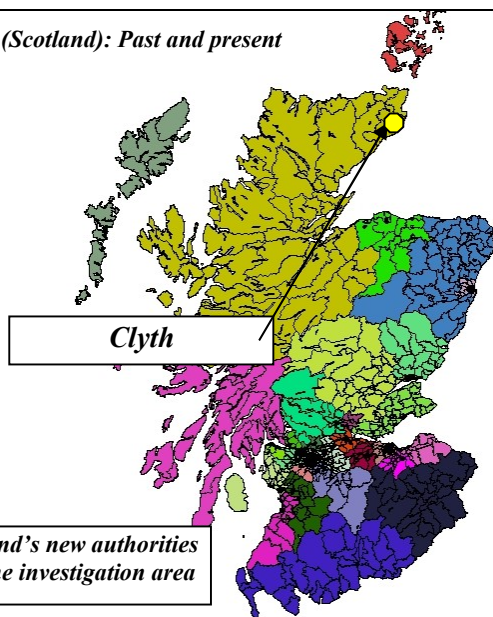
(Names of enumeration locations used on census forms: East Clyth, Mid Clyth, Newlands, West Clyth, Clyth Mains, Occumster, Mavesy, Achvar, Lhaid, Camster, Roster)

Number of households: 222 **Population present at census night:** 1.025

Share of resident population (aged three years or over) speaking Gàidhlig: 20.3 %

County	Civil parish	Registration district	Enumeration district number	Census form pages
Caithness	Latheron	Latheron	1	1 – 9
			2	1 – 10
			3	1 – 16
			4	1 - 9

Alba (Scotland): Past and present



State of Gàidhlig in 1891:

The communities investigated did live on the century old “frontier” between the Norse and Gàidhlig traditions of *Gallaibh* (Caithness) right on the doorstep of *Inbhir Uige* (Wick). As might be expected, the retreat of Gàidhlig occurred a bit earlier here than in the parts of the county further south. In 1891 Gàidhlig-speakers here were only in a majority in the 65+ age group. Among younger folk no Gàidhlig was spoken anymore.

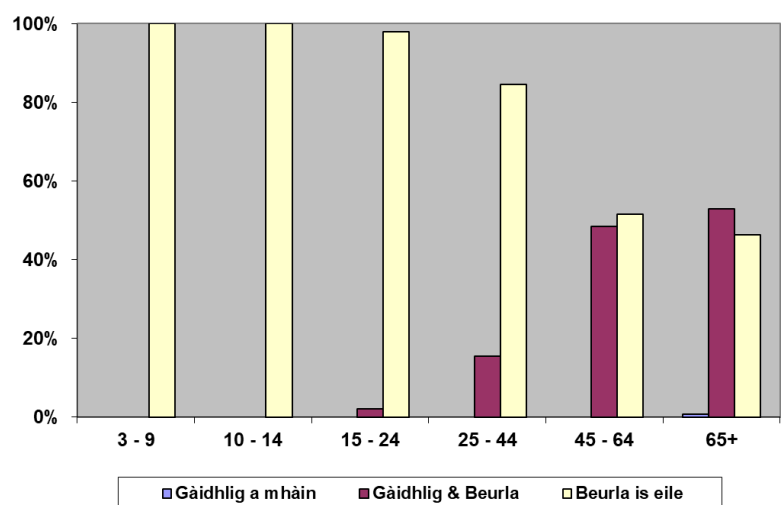
The language seemed to be more resilient in crofter settlements away from the coast like Roster.

Area description:

The region considered lies on the North Sea coast of *Gallaibh* (Caithness) just west of the town of *Inbhir Uige* (Wick). Main occupations were farming on the fertile coastal stretches and crofting in the scattered settlements inland.

Almost the whole district was part of one estate. It does not go without saying that a mansion was the centre of decisions and wide areas were restricted to gamekeepers and shepherds.

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	1.025	69	1	14	941	1	190	20.3 %
3-4	50	0	0	0	50	0	0	0.0 %
5-9	121	0	0	2	119	0	0	0.0 %
10-14	123	0	1	1	121	0	0	0.0 %
15-24	141	0	0	2	139	0	3	2.2 %
25-44	202	0	0	1	201	0	31	15.4 %
45-64	194	0	0	4	190	0	92	48.4 %
65+	125	0	0	4	121	1	64	53.7 %
Gender								
Female	545	35	0	6	504	1	106	21.2 %
Male	480	34	1	8	437	0	84	19.2 %
Place of birth								
Born in parish	888	65	0	8	815	1	141	17.4 %
In neighbouring parish¹	59	3	1	2	53	0	25	47.2 %
Gaidhealtachd elsewhere²	33	0	0	3	30	0	17	56.7 %
Other places	45	1	0	1	43	0	7	16.3 %

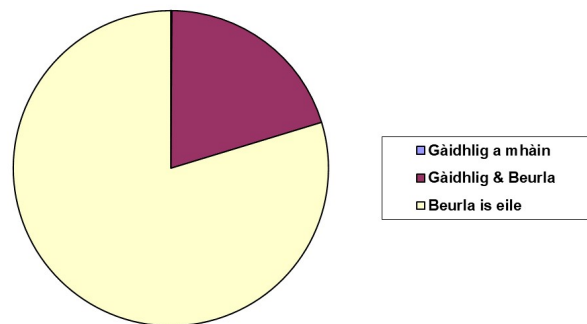
Notes:

¹ Parishes of Wick, Halkirk (both Caithness) or Kildonan (Sutherland).

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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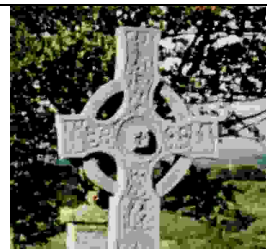
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	House-holds	Usually resident population (3+)			
		Total	Gàidhlig	Gàidhlig & English	Gàidhlig speakers (%)
Clyth	222	941	1	190	20.3 %
Individual communities					
<i>Clyth an Ear</i> (East Clyth)	50	207	0	37	19.4 %
<i>Clyth Meadhanach</i> (Mid Clyth)	48	232	0	35	15.8 %
<i>Am Fearann Ùr</i> (Newlands)	35	159	1	39	26.5 %
<i>Clyth an Iar & Mànas Clyth</i> (West Clyth & Clyth Mains)	21	95	0	7	8.1 %
<i>Occumster & Mavesy</i> (Occumster & Mavesy)	25	128	0	23	20.7 %
<i>Achvar, Lhaid & Camster</i> (Achvar, Lhaid & Camster)	12	66	0	7	12.7 %
<i>Roster</i> (Roster)	31	138	0	42	33.3 %
Language of parents					
Both parents Gàidhlig speaking	25	164	0	48	29.3 %
Single parent Gàidhlig speaking	24	124	1	44	36.3 %
One parent Gàidhlig speaking	15	74	0	16	21.6 %
No Gàidhlig speaking parent	66	335	0	3	0.9 %
Households with no children (0-14)	92	244	0	79	32.4 %
Occupation of head of household					
Crofter, farmer, fisherman, etc.	165	780	0	151	19.4 %
Shepherd, gamekeeper or similar	5	26	0	3	11.5 %
Clergyman, teacher, physician, etc.	6	13	0	5	38.5 %
Mason, carpenter, merchant, etc.	5	17	0	6	35.3 %
Living on private means	2	5	0	1	20.0 %
Manager, coachman, cook, etc.	3	8	0	0	0.0 %
Worker, farm/domestic servant, etc.	16	46	0	10	21.7 %
Remaining occupations	20	46	1	14	32.6 %

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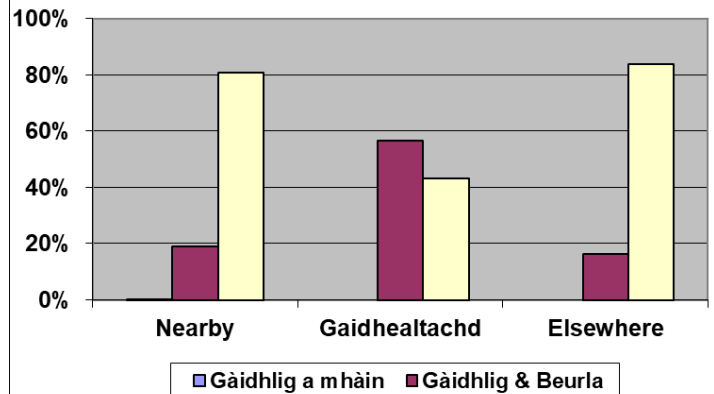
Place of birth and Gàidhlig speaking:

The language was spoken by older people born nearby and those folk originating from the wider *Gaidhealtachd*.

Notes:

¹ Born either in Latheron or in the adjacent parishes of Wick, Halkirk (both Caithness) or Kildonan (Sutherland).

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 198 bilingual inhabitants and one monolingual *Gàidhlig*-speaker out of a total population of 1,024 persons (19.4%). The usually resident population of 941 persons, however, consisted of 191 *Gàidhlig*-speakers (20.3%) including one inhabitant “with no English”.
2. The only *Gàidhlig* monolingual person recorded was a 84-year-old crofter’s widow in *Am Fearann Ùr* (Newlands).
3. A large proportion of *Gàidhlig*-speakers was born in the county of *Gallaibh* (Caithness). This underlines the fact that the language was not alien in an area which today many characterize as a “Lowland” county.
4. 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.