

Alba 1891: Gàidhlig (Scottish Gaelic) Local Profile

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Area: **Gallaibh (Caithness): Dùnrath, Fors, Achremie, Skail, Shebster & Achalona**

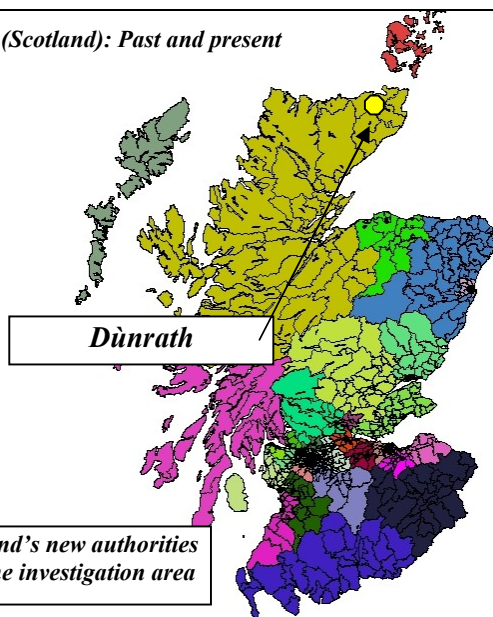
(Names of enumeration locations used on census forms: Achremie, Clashdoin, Bulldo, Borrowston, Upper Dounreay, Lower Dounreay, Skail, Lybster, Kennachy, Hallum, Forss, Shebster, Yellowmoss, Stemster, Baillie, Achalona, Criene, Auchnagarron)

Number of households: 118 Population present at census night: 544

Share of resident population (aged three years or over) speaking Gàidhlig: 26.1 %

County	Civil parish	Registration district	Enumeration district number	Census form pages
Caithness	Reay	Reay	2	1 - 21
	Thurso	Thurso	3	1 - 11
			11	14 - 15

Alba (Scotland): Past and present



State of Gàidhlig in 1891:

At the census time this area was no longer a part of the *Gaidhealtachd*. However, a notable 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 45+ the language was spoken by most residents.

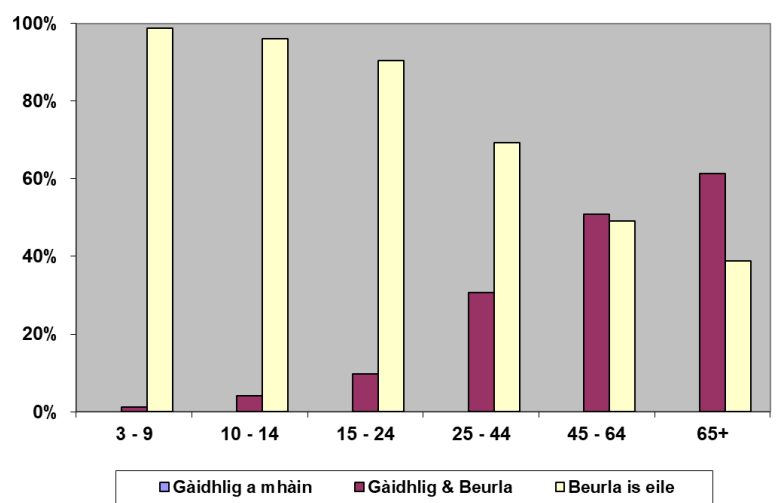
The strongest *Gàidhlig* communities were found in the inland parts of the district: Shebster, Achremie and Bulldo with over a third of the population speaking the traditional language.

Area description:

The district investigated lies in the northern corner of the county of *Gallaibh* (Caithness) a few miles west of the county town of *Baile Theòrsa* (Thurso). It covers the lower part of the floodplain of the *Allt Fors* (Forss River) right until the coast.

The coastal settlements were concentrating on fishing. Further inland the 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	544	25	0	9	510	0	133	26.1 %
3-4	22	0	0	0	22	0	0	0.0 %
5-9	57	0	0	0	57	0	1	1.8 %
10-14	74	0	0	0	74	0	3	4.1 %
15-24	86	0	0	3	83	0	8	9.6 %
25-44	118	0	0	1	117	0	36	30.8 %
45-64	111	0	0	3	108	0	55	50.9 %
65+	51	0	0	2	49	0	30	61.2 %
Gender								
Female	285	10	0	3	272	0	68	25.0 %
Male	259	15	0	6	238	0	65	27.3 %
Place of birth								
Born in parish	251	21	0	2	228	0	80	35.1 %
In neighbouring parish¹	103	1	0	5	97	0	23	23.7 %
Gaidhealtachd elsewhere²	22	0	0	0	22	0	17	77.3 %
Other places	168	3	0	2	163	0	13	8.0 %

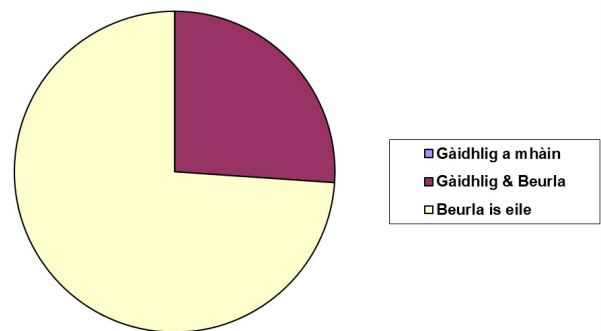
Notes:

¹ Parishes of Thurso, Halkirk (both Caithness) and Farr (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) Beurla is eile

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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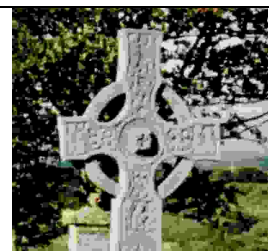
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Area: *Gallaibh (Caithness): Dùnrath, Fors, Achremie, Skaill, Shebster & Achalone*

	House-holds	Usually resident population (3+)			
		Total	Gàidhlig	Gàidhlig & English	Gàidhlig speakers (%)
<i>Dùnrath, Shebster & Fors</i>	118	510	0	133	26.1 %
Individual communities					
<i>Achremie</i> (Achremie)	22	93	0	37	39.8 %
<i>Bulldo & Borrowston</i> (Bulldo & Borrowston)	17	71	0	24	33.8 %
<i>Dùnrath</i> (Dounreay)	16	67	0	8	11.9 %
<i>Skaill</i> (Skaill)	11	48	0	6	12.5 %
<i>Lybster</i> (Lybster)	10	50	0	9	18.0 %
<i>Fors</i> (Forss)	8	39	0	3	7.7 %
<i>Shebster & Achalone</i> (Shebster & Achalone)	34	142	0	46	32.4 %
Language of parents					
Both parents Gàidhlig speaking	10	69	0	25	36.2 %
Single parent Gàidhlig speaking	11	56	0	20	35.7 %
One parent Gàidhlig speaking	13	76	0	14	18.4 %
No Gàidhlig speaking parent	30	164	0	1	0.6 %
Households with no children (0-14)	54	145	0	73	50.3 %
Occupation of head of household					
Crofter, farmer, fisherman, etc.	42	185	0	70	37.8 %
Shepherd, gamekeeper or similar	8	36	0	8	22.2 %
Clergyman, teacher, physician, etc.	3	10	0	4	40.0 %
Mason, carpenter, merchant, etc.	8	30	0	13	43.3 %
Living on private means	0	0	0	0	-
Manager, coachman, cook, etc.	4	24	0	0	0.0 %
Worker, farm/domestic servant, etc.	50	220	0	33	15.0 %
Remaining occupations	3	5	0	5	100.0 %

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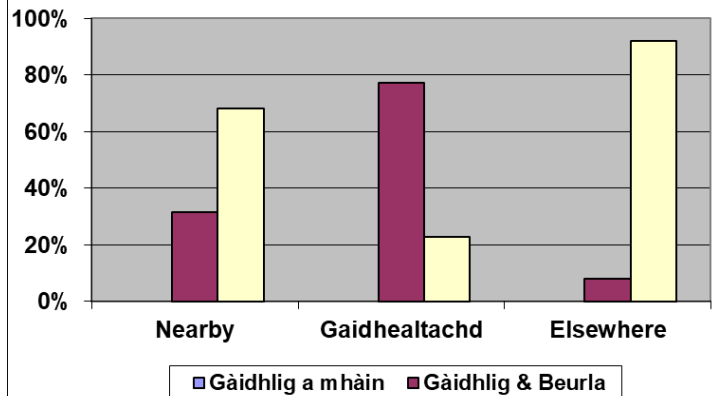
Place of birth and Gàidhlig speaking:

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

Notes:

¹ Born either in Reay or in the adjacent parishes of Thurso, Halkirk (both Caithness) and Farr (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 134 bilingual inhabitants out of a total population of 544 persons (24.6%). The usually resident population of 510 persons, however, consisted of 133 *Gàidhlig*-speakers (26.1%). Inhabitants “with no English” were not recorded.
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.