

Alba 1891: Gàidhlig (Scottish Gaelic) Local Profile

No. 187

Page 1 of 4

Area: **Gallaibh (Caithness): Hill of Forse, Forse, Burrigill & Rumster**

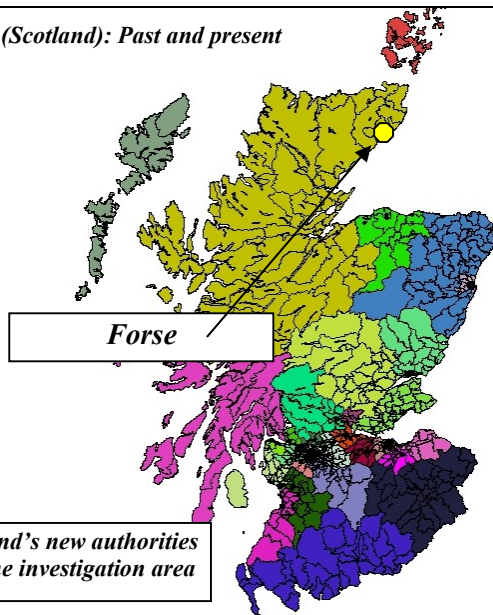
(Names of enumeration locations used on census forms: Roadside Forse, Hill of Forse, Nottingham, Loup of Forse, Ditches of Rumster, Benchielt, Badnsky, Rumster, Niandt, Mains of Forse, Burrigill, Forse)

Number of households: 78 Population present at census night: 356

Share of resident population (aged three years or over) speaking Gàidhlig: 28.2 %

County	Civil parish	Registration district	Enumeration district number	Census form pages
Caithness	Latheron	Latheron	10	1 – 16

Alba (Scotland): Past and present



State of Gàidhlig in 1891:

The census data clearly reveal that Gàidhlig ceased to be a relevant means of communication in this area some fifty years before. The vast majority of those older than 45 years of age still spoke Gàidhlig in the village and the adjacent crofting communities. However, the younger generations had no knowledge whatsoever (see figure below).

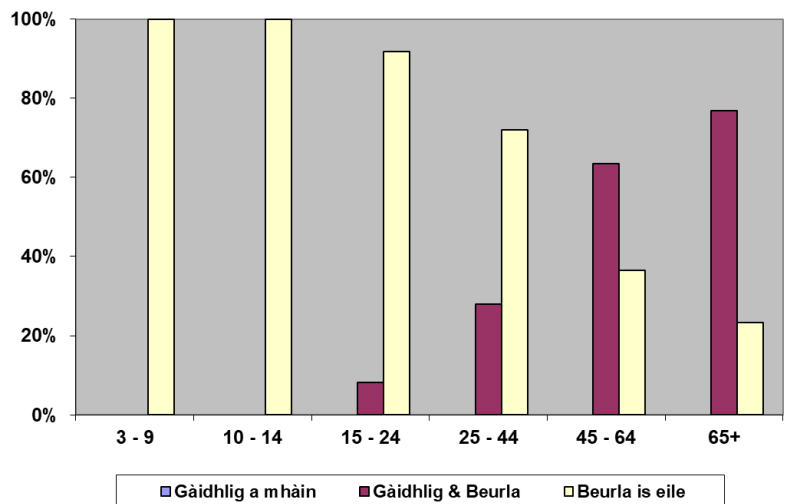
Despite speaking the traditional language all household heads did not pass it over to the next generation(s).

Area description:

The village of *Forse* and its neighbouring crofting hamlets are object of this study. These settlements are situated in the south-eastern corner of the county of *Gallaibh* (Caithness) on Scotland's rocky North Sea coast between the fishing towns of *Liabost* (Lybster) and *Latharan* (Latheron).

The whole area at the time was part of one local estate. Main economic factors were some fishing, but mainly traditional crofting activities in 1891.

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

Alba 1891: Gàidhlig (Scottish Gaelic) Local Profile

No. 187

Page 2 of 4

Area: *Gallaibh (Caithness): Hill of Forse, Forse, Burrigill & Rumster*

	Population enumerated				Usually resident population (3+)			
	Total	Aged 0-2	Deaf & dumb	Visitors etc. ³	Total ⁴	Gàidhlig	Gàidhlig & English	Gàidhlig speakers (%)
Age								
Total	356	17	1	8	330	0	93	28.2 %
3-4	23	0	0	0	23	0	0	0.0 %
5-9	43	0	0	0	43	0	0	0.0 %
10-14	39	0	0	1	38	0	0	0.0 %
15-24	54	0	0	5	49	0	4	8.2 %
25-44	83	0	0	1	82	0	23	28.0 %
45-64	53	0	0	1	52	0	33	63.5 %
65+	44	0	1	0	43	0	33	76.7 %
Gender								
Female	176	9	1	5	161	0	50	31.1 %
Male	180	8	0	3	169	0	43	25.4 %
Place of birth								
Born in parish	277	16	1	6	254	0	79	31.1 %
In neighbouring parish¹	32	1	0	2	29	0	6	20.7 %
Gaidhealtachd elsewhere²	5	0	0	0	5	0	4	80.0 %
Other places	42	0	0	0	42	0	4	9.5 %

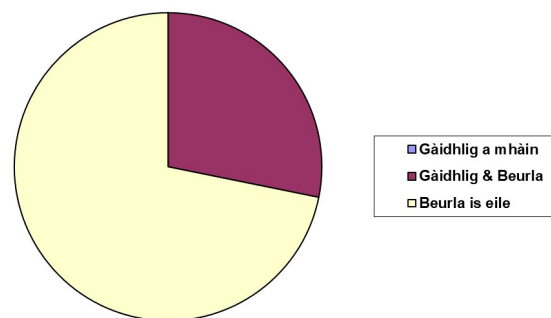
Notes:

¹ Parishes of Wick, Halkirk, Watten (all 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 & 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.

Alba 1891: Gàidhlig (Scottish Gaelic) Local Profile

No. 187

Page 3 of 4

Area: *Gallaibh* (Caithness): Hill of Forse, Forse, Burrigill & Rumster

	House-holds	Usually resident population (3+)			
		Total	Gàidhlig	Gàidhlig & English	Gàidhlig speakers (%)
<i>Forse, Burrigill & Rumster</i>	78	330	0	93	28.2 %
Individual communities					

No sensible details could be derived from the census sheets to ensure a correct breakdown of figures related to different communities.

Language of parents					
Both parents Gàidhlig speaking	13	82	0	28	34.1 %
Single parent Gàidhlig speaking	2	11	0	2	36.4 %
One parent Gàidhlig speaking	9	53	0	9	17.0 %
No Gàidhlig speaking parent	15	83	0	1	1.2 %
Households with no children (0-14)	39	101	0	51	50.5 %
Occupation of head of household					
Crofter, farmer, fisherman, etc.	45	192	0	57	29.7 %
Shepherd, gamekeeper or similar	4	24	0	4	16.7 %
Clergyman, teacher, physician, etc.	0	0	0	0	-
Mason, carpenter, merchant, etc.	7	42	0	7	16.7 %
Living on private means	1	3	0	3	100.0 %
Manager, coachman, cook, etc.	3	10	0	4	40.0 %
Worker, farm/domestic servant, etc.	14	44	0	13	29.5 %
Remaining occupations	4	15	0	5	33.3 %

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Alba 1891: Gàidhlig (Scottish Gaelic) Local Profile

No. 187

Page 4 of 4

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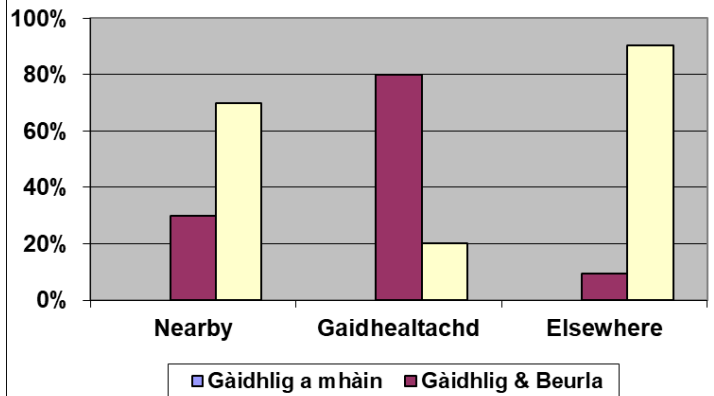
Place of birth and Gàidhlig speaking:

The language was spoken by most older people born nearby and by all incomers from the wider *Gaidhealtachd*.

Notes:

¹ Born either in Latheron or in the adjacent parishes of Wick, Halkirk, Watten (all 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 95 bilingual inhabitants out of a total population of 356 persons (26.7%). The usually resident population of 330 inhabitants, however, consisted of 93 *Gàidhlig*-speakers (28.2%).
2. No census recordings were obtained of inhabitants “with no English”.
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.