

Alba 1891: Gàidhlig (Scottish Gaelic) Local Profile

No. 200

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Area: *Gallaibh (Caithness): Bhatain an Iar (West Watten), Backlass, Bylbster, Badlipster & An Srath*

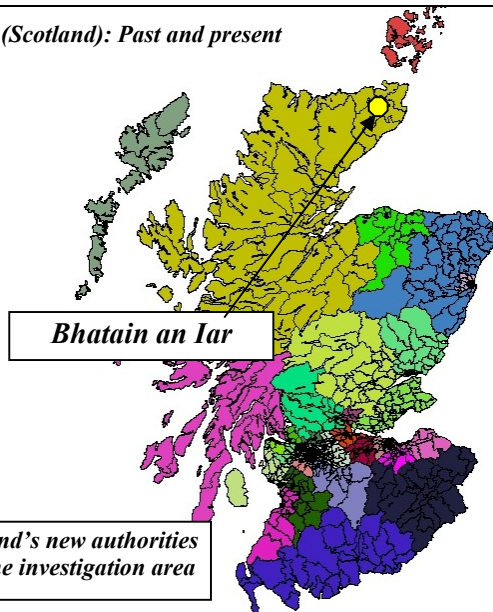
(Names of enumeration locations used on census forms: Banks, Achoy, Dreemdor, Backlass, Upper Houstry, Newton, Newlands, Nook, West Watten Farm, West Watten Village, Bylbster, Achingale, Milton, Scouthal, Acharole, Strathbeg, Munsary, Kensary, Rowens, Badlipster, Achalipster, Scorriclate, Flex, Strath, Pennyland)

Number of households: 99 **Population present at census night:** 468

Share of resident population (aged three years or over) speaking Gàidhlig: 10.7 %

County	Civil parish	Registration district	Enumeration district number	Census form pages
Caithness	Watten	Watten	2 4	1 – 16 1 - 6

Alba (Scotland): Past and present



State of Gàidhlig in 1891:

The census results clearly show that this area was part of the outer reaches of the area where Gàidhlig was also spoken (besides Caithness Scots) in *Gallaibh* (Caithness).

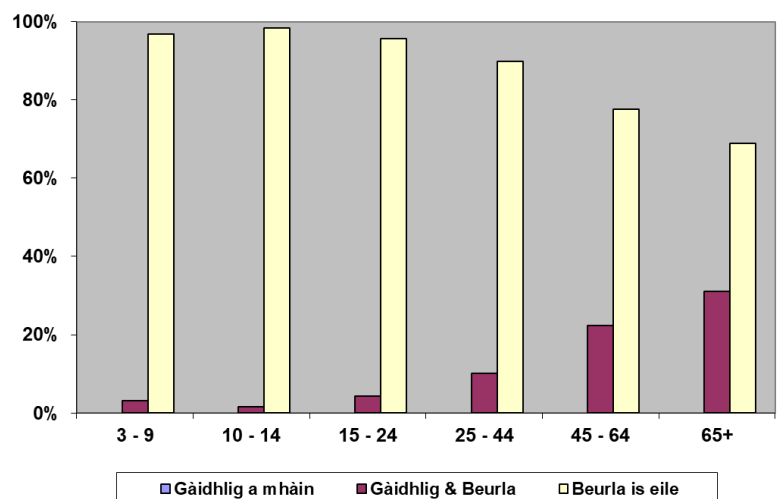
Most of the speakers in 1891 were either born in the parish or in a neighbouring parish (in many cases in *Latharan*). Therefore, the presence of Gàidhlig in the area was not entirely an immigration result. But the speakers were mostly older than 25 years-of-age and it was to be expected that the language would disappear from this part of the county very shortly.

Area description:

This report covers much of the southern part of the parish of *Bhatain* (Watten) in the centre of the county of *Gallaibh* (Caithness). Main settlement was the hamlet of *Bhatain an Iar* (West Watten), the remaining population was widely scattered living in farmhouses on this relatively fertile land.

Main occupation of the inhabitants was of course farming.

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	468	20	0	20	428	0	46	10.7 %
3-4	19	0	0	0	19	0	1	5.3 %
5-9	45	0	0	2	43	0	1	2.3 %
10-14	66	0	0	3	63	0	1	1.6 %
15-24	97	0	0	6	91	0	4	4.4 %
25-44	95	0	0	6	89	0	9	10.1 %
45-64	97	0	0	3	94	0	21	22.3 %
65+	29	0	0	0	29	0	9	31.0 %
Gender								
Female	233	12	0	7	214	0	22	10.3 %
Male	235	8	0	13	214	0	24	11.2 %
Place of birth								
Born in parish	242	20	0	7	215	0	7	3.3 %
In neighbouring parish¹	117	0	0	5	112	0	25	22.3 %
Gaidhealtachd elsewhere²	17	0	0	0	17	0	12	70.6 %
Other places	92	0	0	8	84	0	2	2.4 %

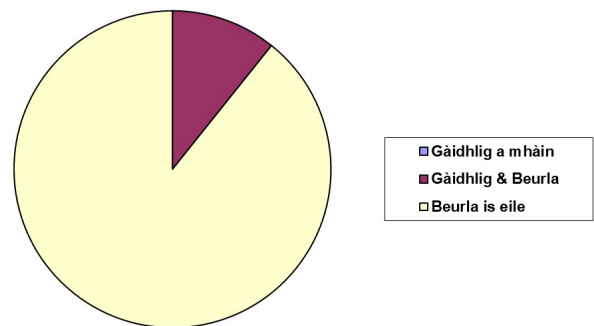
Notes:

¹ Parishes of Latheron, Wick, Bower, or Halkirk (all in 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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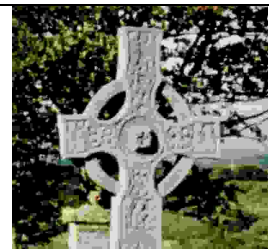
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Area: *Gallaibh (Caithness): Bhatain an Iar (West Watten), Backlass, Bylbster, Badlipster & An Srath*

	House-holds	Usually resident population (3+)			
		Total	Gàidhlig	Gàidhlig & English	Gàidhlig speakers (%)
<i>Bhatain an Iar & An Srath</i>	99	428	0	46	10.7 %
Individual communities					
<i>Backlass (Backlass)</i>	21	109	0	15	12.7 %
<i>Bhatain an Iar (West Watten)</i>	37	139	0	10	7.2 %
<i>Bylbster (Bylbster)</i>	16	62	0	4	6.5 %
<i>An Srath & Badlipster (Strath & Badlipster)</i>	21	109	0	17	15.6 %
Language of parents					
Both parents Gàidhlig speaking	4	22	0	13	59.1 %
Single parent Gàidhlig speaking	1	3	0	1	33.3 %
One parent Gàidhlig speaking	12	69	0	14	20.3 %
No Gàidhlig speaking parent	37	211	0	1	0.5 %
Households with no children (0-14)	45	123	0	17	13.8 %
Occupation of head of household					
Crofter, farmer, fisherman, etc.	29	149	0	7	4.7 %
Shepherd, gamekeeper or similar	6	29	0	6	20.7 %
Clergyman, teacher, physician, etc.	6	18	0	5	27.8 %
Mason, carpenter, merchant, etc.	12	48	0	4	8.3 %
Living on private means	5	9	0	4	44.4 %
Manager, coachman, cook, etc.	3	16	0	0	0.0 %
Worker, farm/domestic servant, etc.	38	159	0	20	12.6 %
Remaining occupations	0	0	0	0	-

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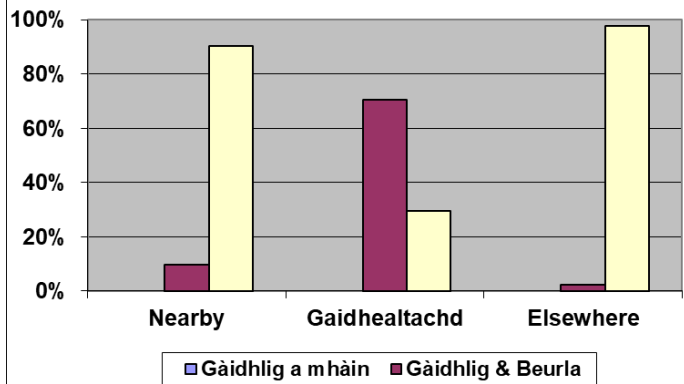
Place of birth and Gàidhlig speaking:

The language was spoken mainly by incomers from the wider *Gaidhealtachd*. However, a few locally born people still spoke the language.

Notes:

¹ Born either in Watten or in the adjacent parishes of Latheron, Wick, Bower, or Halkirk (all in 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 47 bilingual inhabitants out of a total population of 468 persons (10.0%). The usually resident population of 428 persons, however, consisted of 46 *Gàidhlig*-speakers (10.7%).
2. There were no monolingual *Gàidhlig*-speakers recorded.
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.