

Alba 1891: Gàidhlig (Scottish Gaelic) Local Profile

No. 066

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Area: *Leòdhas (Lewis): Am Bac*

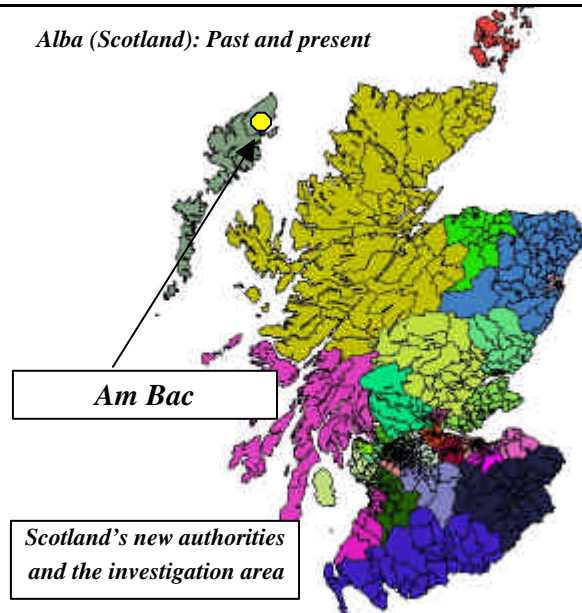
(Names of enumeration locations used on census forms: Township of Back, Free Church Manse, Schoolmaster's House)

Number of households: 120 Population present at census night: 596

Share of resident population (aged three years or over) speaking Gàidhlig: 99.6 %

County	Civil parish	Registration district	Enumeration district number	Census form pages
Ross & Cromarty	Stornoway	Stornoway	24	1 – 24

Alba (Scotland): Past and present



State of Gàidhlig in 1891:

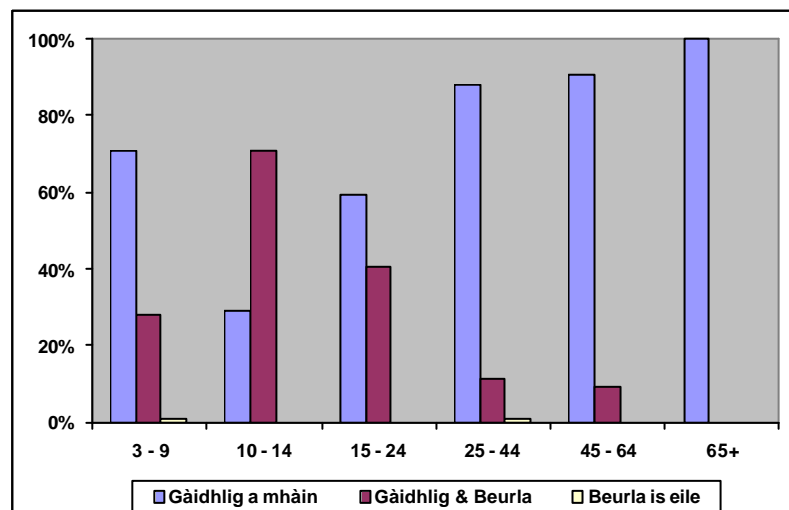
The Gàidhlig language was spoken by almost everyone in the community. Roughly three quarters of the usually resident population did not even speak English at all. This was most pronounced among women in this community.

Gàidhlig monolingual persons were only in the minority among children aged between 10 and 14. The only adult with “no Gaelic” was the wife of the public school teacher – she had been born in Walls in Orkney.

Area description:

The scattered crofting township of *Am Bac* (Back) is situated on the north-eastern side of the Hebridean island of *Leòdhas* (Lewis). As such it was part of the ancient county of *Ros is Cromba* (Ross & Cromarty) in 1891.

Almost all inhabitants were occupied with traditional crofting activities and/or near-shore fishery at this time. Main avenue to the outside world was of course the nearby harbour town of *Steòrnabhagh* (Stornoway).



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 [†]	Gàidhlig	Gàidhlig & English	Gàidhlig speakers (%)
Age								
Total	596	45	1	12	538	391	145	99.6 %
3-4	33		0	0	33	31	1	97.0 %
5-9	67		0	1	66	39	27	100 %
10-14	72		0	0	72	21	51	100 %
15-24	112		1	5	106	63	43	100 %
25-44	127		0	4	123	108	14	99.2 %
45-64	97		0	1	96	87	9	100 %
65+	43		0	1	42	42	0	100 %
Gender								
Female	322	21	1	9	291	242	48	99.7 %
Male	274	24	0	3	247	149	97	99.6 %
Place of birth								
Born in parish	572	45	1	12	514	383	130	99.8 %
In neighbouring parish[†]	8	0	0	0	8	4	4	100 %
Gaidhealtachd elsewhere²	12	0	0	0	12	4	8	100 %
Other places	4	0	0	0	4	0	3	75.0 %

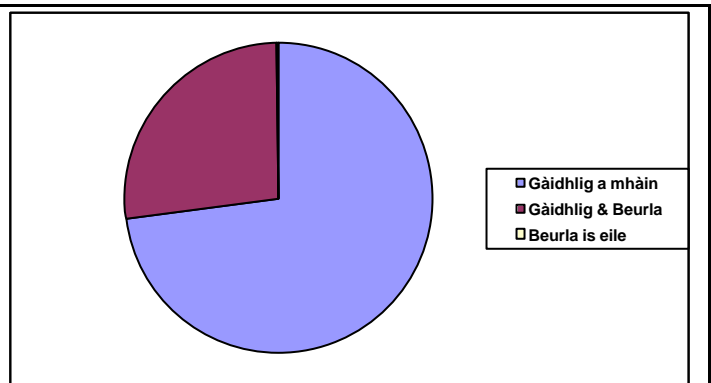
Notes:

¹ Parishes of Barvas, Uig and Lochs (all Ross & Cromarty).

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 fact-sheets are a welcome way to publish some of the “local gems”. More information is provided at http://www.linguae-celticae.org/GLP_english.htm.

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	House-holds	Usually resident population (3+)			
		Total	Gàidhlig	Gàidhlig & English	Gàidhlig speakers (%)
<i>Am Bac</i>	120	538	391	145	99.6 %
Individual communities					
<p>No individual communities were identified within this enumeration district.</p>					
Language of parents					
Both parents Gàidhlig speaking	73	366	251	114	99.7 %
Single parent Gàidhlig speaking	22	90	71	19	100 %
One parent Gàidhlig speaking	1	7	0	6	85.7 %
No Gàidhlig speaking parent	0	0	0	0	-
Households with no children (0-14)	24	75	69	6	100 %
Occupation of head of household					
Crofter, farmer, fisherman, etc.	93	420	321	98	99.8 %
Shepherd, gamekeeper or similar	0	0	0	0	-
Clergyman, teacher, physician, etc.	2	18	3	14	94.4 %
Mason, carpenter, merchant, etc.	4	18	9	9	100 %
Living on private means	0	0	0	0	-
Manager, coachman, cook, etc.	0	0	0	0	-
Worker, farm/domestic servant, etc.	21	82	58	24	100 %
Remaining occupations	0	0	0	0	-

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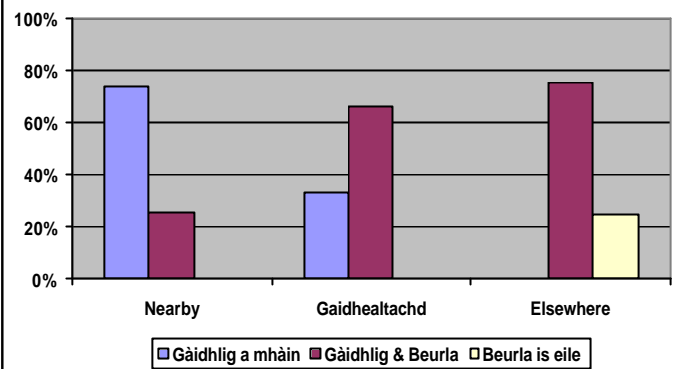
Place of birth and Gàidhlig speaking:

The majority of locally born persons did not speak English at all. Among those born in other parts of the *Gaidhealtachd* most were returned as bilingual.

Notes:

¹ Born either in Stornoway or in the adjacent parishes of Lochs, Barvas and Uig (all Ross & Cromarty).

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. There were just two persons enumerated as “not speaking Gaelic”. This included the wife of the public school teacher (originally from Walls in Orkney) and a three year old daughter of a local crofter. The family of the latter, however, was overwhelmingly speaking only *Gàidhlig*. Therefore even this return might not be categorised as an “English only” speaker. Perhaps the girl was not speaking any language at the time.
2. In original census report terms the enumeration district in total had a population of 596 persons of all ages. 150 enumerated inhabitants spoke “Gaelic and English” and 412 persons were reported as monolingual *Gàidhlig* speakers. These figures lead to an “official” share of *Gàidhlig* speakers of 94.3 %. A comparison with the more realistic statistics of this fact-sheet reveals that this percentage was a considerable under-estimate of 5.3 % mainly caused by the inclusion of under-three olds in the official population base.