

Alba 1891: Gàidhlig (Scottish Gaelic) Local Profile

No. 078

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Area: *Leòdhas (Lewis): Mol Shannabhaig, Buaille na Cloiche, Tolm & Tac Thuilm*

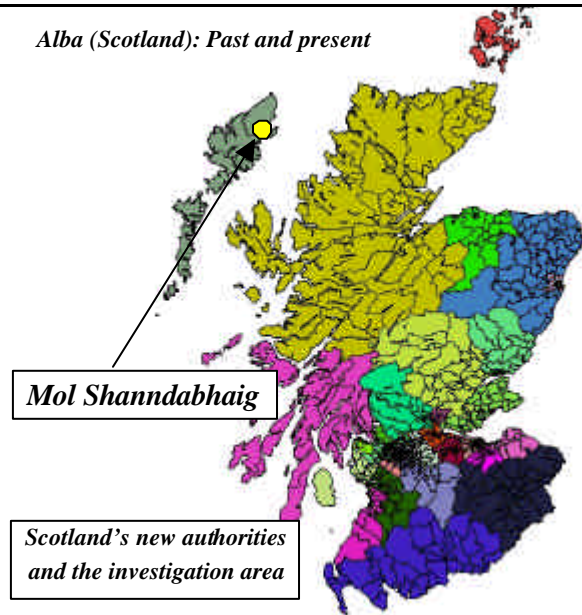
(Names of enumeration locations used on census forms: Lower Sandwick, Stoneyfield, Holm & New Holm)

Number of households: 44 **Population present at census night:** 229

Share of resident population (aged three years or over) speaking Gàidhlig: 98.1 %

County	Civil parish	Registration district	Enumeration district number	Census form pages
Ross & Cromarty	Stornoway	Stornoway	9	1 – 12

Alba (Scotland): Past and present



State of Gàidhlig in 1891:

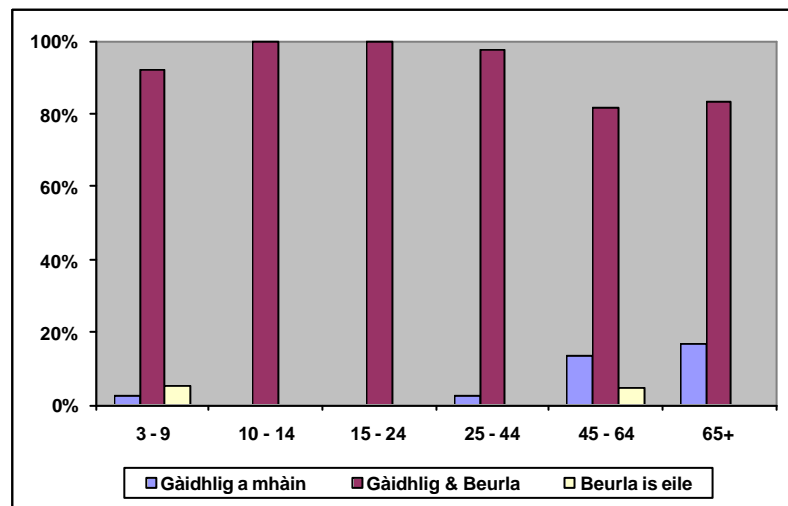
The communities in this still rural part of the island were essentially bilingual. A few persons spoke only Gàidhlig; even fewer people spoke only English according to the census in 1891.

The two major settlements of *Mol Shannabhaig* and *Tac Thuilm* were exclusively Gàidhlig-speaking. But even in the farm houses at *Buaille na Cloiche* (Stoneyfield) and *Tolm* (Holm) just two genuine English monolinguals were recorded – a farm manager and his wife from Northeast Scotland.

Area description:

The district contains four small settlements on the eastern outskirts of *Steòrnabhagh* (Stornoway) on the island of *Leòdhas* (Lewis). By far the most populous community was the crofting hamlet of *Mol Shannabhaig* (Lower Sandwick) at the time of the census.

Most of the residents were occupied with crofting in the district; a few inhabitants were engaged also in the handful of farms of the area.



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	229	18	0	4	207	11	192	98.1 %
3-4	15		0	0	15	0	13	86.7 %
5-9	23		0	0	23	1	22	100 %
10-14	30		0	1	29	0	29	100 %
15-24	38		0	1	37	0	37	100 %
25-44	42		0	1	41	1	40	100 %
45-64	45		0	1	44	6	36	95.5 %
65+	18		0	0	18	3	15	100 %
Gender								
Female	132	9	0	2	121	10	108	97.5 %
Male	97	9	0	2	86	1	84	98.8 %
Place of birth								
Born in parish	200	18	0	3	179	7	170	98.9 %
In neighbouring parish¹	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	100 %
Gaidhealtachd elsewhere²	18	0	0	0	18	4	14	100 %
Other places	10	0	0	1	9	0	7	77.8 %

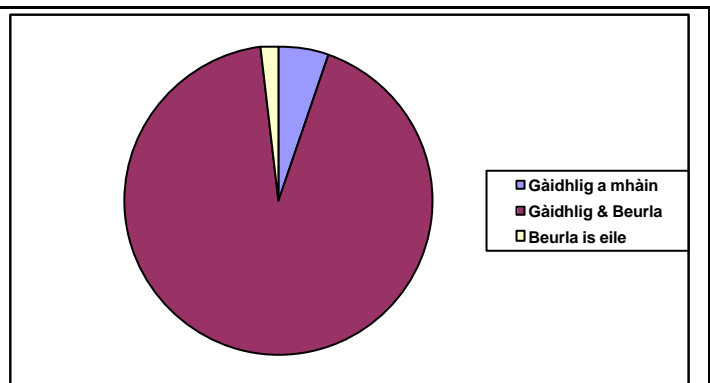
Notes:

¹ Parishes of Lochs, Barvas and Uig (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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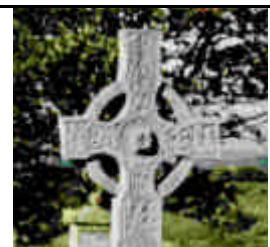
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	House-holds	Usually resident population (3+)			
		Total	Gàidhlig	Gàidhlig & English	Gàidhlig speakers (%)
<i>Mol Shanndabhaig & Tolm</i>	44	207	11	192	98.1 %
Individual communities					
<i>Mol Shanndabhaig</i> (Lower Sandwick)	29	139	7	132	100 %
<i>Buaille na Cloiche</i> (Stoneyfield)	1	11	0	9	81.8 %
<i>Tolm</i> (Holm)	2	12	0	10	83.3 %
<i>Tac Thuilm</i> (New Holm)	12	45	4	41	100 %
Language of parents					
Both parents Gàidhlig speaking	18	102	2	198	98.0 %
Single parent Gàidhlig speaking	12	63	2	61	100 %
One parent Gàidhlig speaking	0	0	0	0	-
No Gàidhlig speaking parent	1	11	0	9	81.8 %
Households with no children (0-14)	13	31	7	24	100 %
Occupation of head of household					
Crofter, farmer, fisherman, etc.	28	141	9	130	98.6 %
Shepherd, gamekeeper or similar	0	0	0	0	-
Clergyman, teacher, physician, etc.	0	0	0	0	-
Mason, carpenter, merchant, etc.	5	24	0	24	100 %
Living on private means	0	0	0	0	-
Manager, coachman, cook, etc.	2	12	0	10	83.3 %
Worker, farm/domestic servant, etc.	9	30	2	28	100 %
Remaining occupations	0	0	0	0	-

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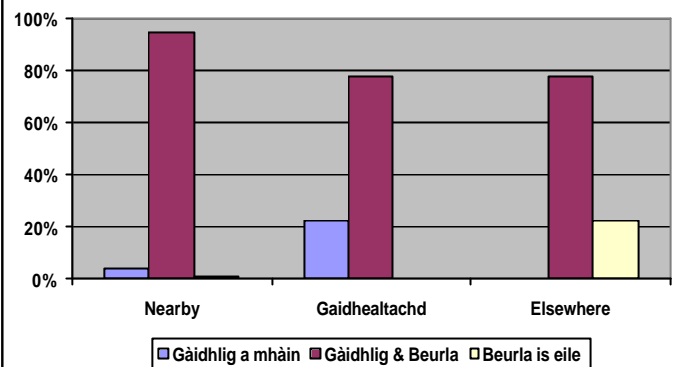
Place of birth and Gàidhlig speaking:

Most of the residents were bilingual irrespective of their birthplace. Two of the four “English only” speakers were of course born outside the *Gaidhealtachd*.

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 four persons found to be “not speaking Gaelic”. Among them were a farm manager and his wife at *Tolm* (Holm). Both were born in Doric speaking areas of Aberdeenshire and Banffshire respectively. Interestingly all their children – even their 11 year old daughter – were bilingual. They had apparently learned the language from their peers in the community.
2. The remaining persons with no “Gaelic” or “G&E” marks on their enumeration sheets were three-year old twins at *Buaile na Cloiche* (Stoneyfield). They were traced, however, in the 1901 census and found to be speaking *Gàidhlig* and English 10 years later.
3. In original census report terms the enumeration district in total had a population of 229 persons of all ages. 203 enumerated inhabitants spoke “Gaelic and English” and 11 persons were reported as monolingual *Gàidhlig* speakers. These figures lead to an “official” share of *Gàidhlig* speakers of 93.4 %. A comparison with the more realistic statistics of this fact-sheet reveals that this percentage was an under-estimate of 4.7 % caused by the inclusion of under-three olds and visitors in the official population base.