

# Alba 1891: Gàidhlig (Scottish Gaelic) Local Profile

No. 082

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**Area:** *Colbhasa (Isle of Colonsay): Cill Chatain, Cill Òrain, Uragaig, Baile na h-Àirde, Riasg Buidhe, Scalasaig, Machaire, Am Port Mòr, Orasa, Àird Sgènis, Garbh Àird & Maol Buidhe*

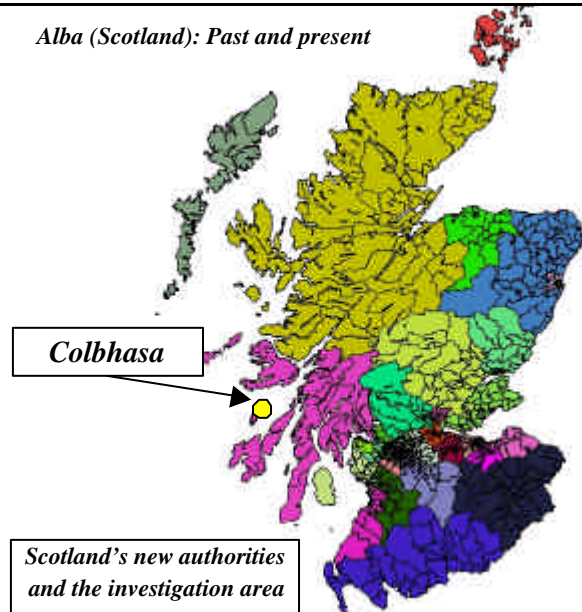
(Names of enumeration locations used on census forms: Kilchattan, Kiloran, Mansion House, Uргаig, Balnahaird, Riskbuie, Bunavag, Glassart, Scalasaig, Machrins, Portmore, Oronsay, Ardsकिनिश, Garvart, Balerominmore, Baleromindubh & Mulbuie)

**Number of households:** 85      **Population present at census night:** 381

**Share of resident population (aged three years +) speaking Gàidhlig:** **93.6 %**

County	Civil parish	Registration district	Enumeration district number	Census form pages
Argyll	Colonsay & Oronsay	Colonsay	1 2	1 – 17 1 - 3

*Alba (Scotland): Past and present*



### State of Gàidhlig in 1891:

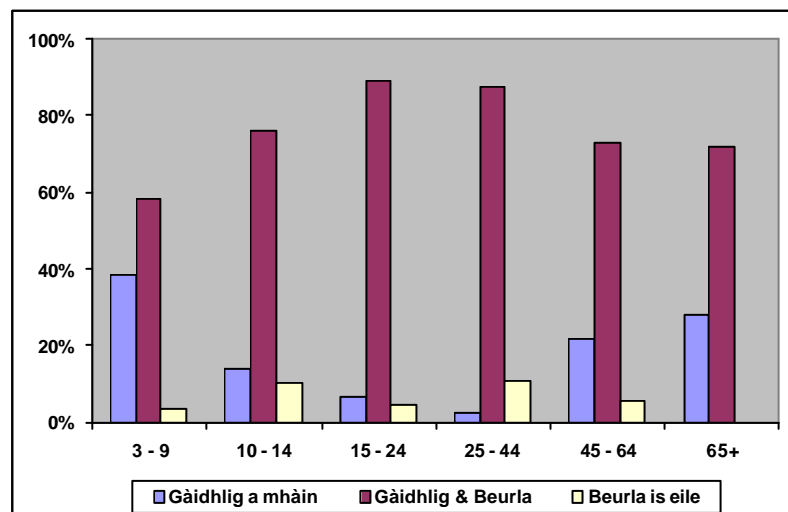
The locally born population spoke almost universally Gàidhlig. Among them was a significant minority which did not speak English. These monolingual speakers were almost exclusively confined to the young generation and the elderly. Residents with no speaking ability of Gàidhlig were in most cases born in the Lowlands or England.

Apart from the two households at *Baile na h-Àirde* (Balnahard) on the northern tip of *Colbhasa* (Colonsay) all settlements were overwhelmingly Gàidhlig speaking in 1891.

### Area description:

The area concerned is made up of the twin islands of *Colbhasa* (Colonsay) and *Orasa* (Oronsay) within the Inner Hebrides. They were part of the county of *Earra-Ghaidheal* (Argyll) in 1891.

The most populous part of this archipelago was of course *Colbhasa* with its main settlements situated in the central part of the island. Besides a few farmers and shepherds and those serving at Kiloran House most people were occupied with crofting or fishing in those days.



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. <sup>3</sup>	Total <sup>1</sup>	Gàidhlig	Gàidhlig & English	Gàidhlig speakers (%)
<b>Age</b>								
<b>Total</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>93.6 %</b>
<b>3-4</b>	<b>15</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>100 %</b>
<b>5-9</b>	<b>40</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>95.0 %</b>
<b>10-14</b>	<b>50</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>90.0 %</b>
<b>15-24</b>	<b>47</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>95.6 %</b>
<b>25-44</b>	<b>88</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>89.5 %</b>
<b>45-64</b>	<b>77</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>94.6 %</b>
<b>65+</b>	<b>32</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100 %</b>
<b>Gender</b>								
<b>Female</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>94.2 %</b>
<b>Male</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>92.9 %</b>
<b>Place of birth</b>								
<b>Born in parish</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>99.3 %</b>
<b>In neighbouring parish<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100 %</b>
<b>Gaidhealtachd elsewhere<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>18</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100 %</b>
<b>Other places</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>39.4 %</b>

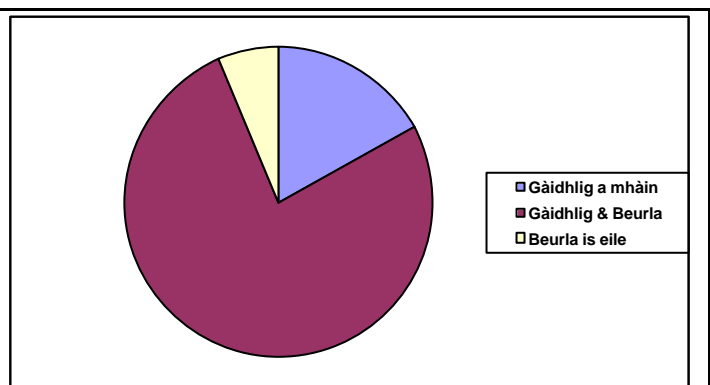
## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Civil parishes of Jura, Killarow & Kilmeny, Kilchoman or Kildalton (all Argyll).

<sup>2</sup> Other parishes in Scotland with more than 50 % Gàidhlig speakers in the 1891 census.

<sup>3</sup> People described as visitors, boarders, lodgers or other similar terms.

<sup>4</sup> 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](http://www.linguae-celticae.org/GLP_english.htm).

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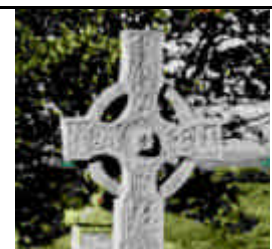
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	House-holds	Usually resident population (3+)			
		Total	Gàidhlig	Gàidhlig & English	Gàidhlig speakers (%)
<b>Colbhasa &amp; Orasa</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>93.6 %</b>
<b>Individual communities</b>					
<i>Cill Chatain</i> (Kilchattan)	23	84	13	68	96.4 %
<i>Cill Òrain</i> (Kiloran)	9	39	8	29	94.9 %
<i>Uragaig</i> (Uragaig)	6	29	11	18	100 %
<i>Baile na h-Airde</i> (Balnahard)	2	9	0	3	33.3 %
<i>Riasg Buidhe &amp; Glas Àird</i> (Riasg Buidhe & Glas Àird)	12	40	7	33	100 %
<i>Sgalasaig</i> (Scalasaig)	10	44	3	40	97.7 %
<i>Machaire</i> (Machrins)	8	35	2	26	80.0 %
<i>Am Port Mòr</i> (Portmore)	3	7	1	6	100 %
<i>Orasa</i> (Oronsay Island)	2	19	3	16	100 %
<i>Àird Sgènis &amp; Maol Buidhe</i> (Ardskensish & Milbuie)	10	36	10	23	91.7 %
<b>Language of parents</b>					
Both parents Gàidhlig speaking	25	149	33	116	100 %
Single parent Gàidhlig speaking	9	37	10	26	97.3 %
One parent Gàidhlig speaking	2	12	0	10	83.3 %
No Gàidhlig speaking parent	4	18	0	3	16.7 %
Households with no children (0-14)	45	126	15	107	96.8 %
<b>Occupation of head of household</b>					
Crofter, farmer, fisherman, etc.	30	136	24	105	94.9 %
Shepherd, gamekeeper or similar	6	25	0	16	64.0 %
Clergyman, teacher, physician, etc.	4	11	0	9	81.8 %
Mason, carpenter, merchant, etc.	8	33	12	20	97.0 %
Living on private means	0	0	0	0	-
Manager, coachman, cook, etc.	5	25	3	20	92.0 %
Worker, farm/domestic servant, etc.	32	112	19	92	99.1 %
Remaining occupations	0	0	0	0	-

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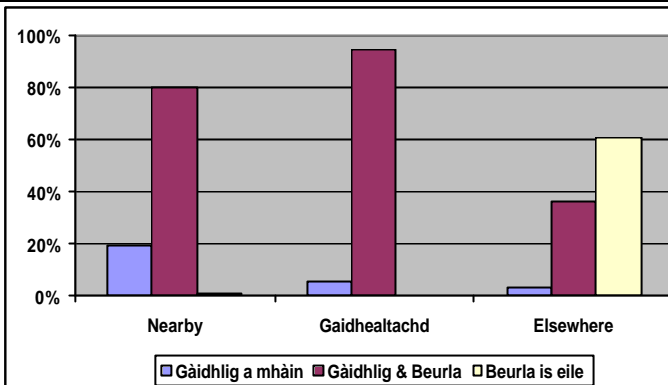
## Place of birth and Gàidhlig speaking:

Virtually all residents born in the *Gaidhealtachd* spoke Gàidhlig. A fifth of those born locally did not speak English. Even around 40 % of those born outside the *Gaidhealtachd* spoke the traditional language.

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Born in the parishes of Colonsay & Oronsay, Jura, Killarow & Kilmeny, Kilchoman or Kildalton (all Argyll).

<sup>2</sup> Born in other parishes of Scotland with more than 50 % Gàidhlig speakers in the 1891 census.



Speakers according to place of birth (1) nearby<sup>1</sup> (2) in remaining *Gaidhealtachd* <sup>2</sup>, or (3) elsewhere

## Remarks:

1. In total 22 inhabitants were enumerated with no “G” or “G&E” marked on their registration sheets. With the exception of two persons all of these “no Gaelic” entries were born outside the *Gaidhealtachd*. Among them was a 13 year old girl (born in Glasgow) and households headed by a young teacher from Stirling, a butler from England, a farmer and a shepherd from Cumnock in Ayrshire, a shepherd from Wigtownshire and a farmer’s wife born in Aberlady near Edinburgh.
2. In original census report terms the district had a population of 381 persons of all ages. 268 enumerated inhabitants spoke “Gaelic and English” and 70 were counted as monolingual Gàidhlig speakers. This led to an “official” share of Gàidhlig speakers of 88.7 %. This figure was an under-estimate of 4.9 % compared with the more realistic figures taking into account only the usually resident population.