

South Ayrshire Council

Gaelic Language plan

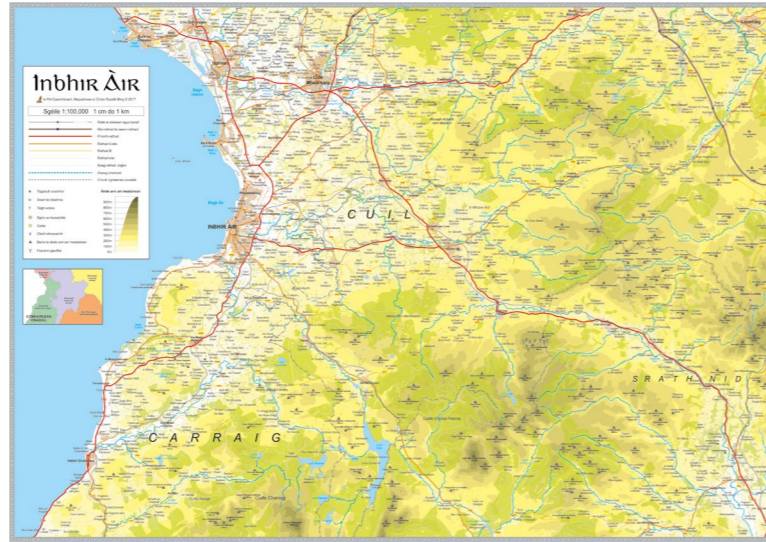
2026-2031

Appendix 2



Appendix 2 - Gaelic Heritage

Gaelic is strongly evidenced in myriad placenames within South Ayrshire which have evolved from Gaelic roots, often reflecting the topography of the area. E.g. Auchencruive (Achadh nan Craobh- the tree field), Kincaidston (Baile Cinn Cadha- settlement at the head of the pass), Minshant (Am Meuna Sheunta- the sacred thicket), Dunure (Dùn Iobhair- the Yew Tree Fort) to name but a few. The map to the right-hand side shows Gaelic placenames within the area.



Within local dialect there are still words with Gaelic roots, two examples are:

Sheuch- the ditch at the side of the road ([siuchan](#) /ʃuxan/

fir. gin. iol. -ain

1 small trench, drainage ditch (sheuch) 2 streamlet)

And Smurr- fine powdery rain like peat dust ([smùr mòna](#): peat dross/dust)

(Definitions taken from Dwelly's Gaelic Dictionary)

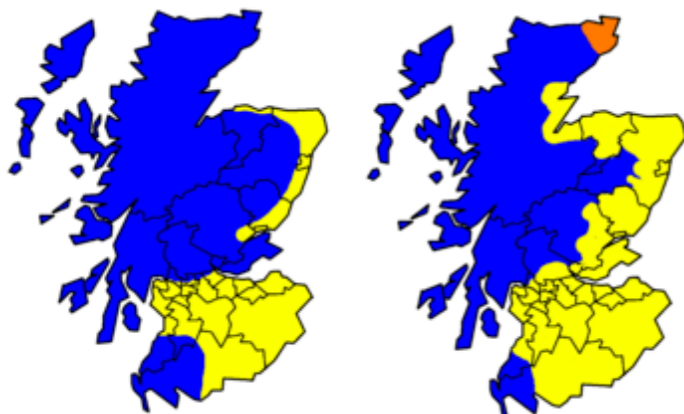
In 1891 it is recorded that the Lowlands and the northeast of Scotland had an average of 5-10% Gaelic speakers inhabiting it (**In some areas that percentage rises to 25-75%; such as Ayr, Sanquhar, Girvan, Ballantrae**, Peebles, sections of the Edinburgh region, Moffat and Selkirk; some even possessing at least 75-80% Gaelic language fluency)

1400'S-1500's Scotland

These two maps show the estimated linguistic (See linguistic, not ETHNIC) divide in Scotland during the 1400'S, and then 1500's. The blue represents Gaelic. The Yellow represents Scots. The orange represents Norn. This map, however, does not represent those bilingual speakers who could converse in either language, but does help to illustrate the extent of the language continuing in much of Galloway and the wider Aberdeen shire area. What this says to me is that Lowlanders opted to learn English so as to effectively trade with those south of the border.

It also shows the Carrick/Galwegian speaking area clearly.

<https://nuairathigairduinethigairuile.wordpress.com/2017/02/27/scottish-gaelic-gaelic-scotland/>



- Robert the Bruce, born in Dundonald (Dùn Dhòmhnaill) of a mother with Gaelic ancestry and brought up in Carrick (Carruig) then a Gaelic/Galwegian (a lost form/dialect of Gaelic) speaking area would most likely have spoken Gaelic
- Robert Burns would have been familiar with Gaelic, especially when collecting songs (some of which are rough translations/have the 'spirit' of Gaelic songs- Ae Fond Kiss has a melody with Gaelic roots) for his Scot's Musical Museum. In his poem 'The Twa Dugs', one of the dogs is called Luath (meaning swift or feisty) and in the poem 'The Vision' Duan meaning an ode.
- As part of the Western seaboard/highway Irish Gaelic came into Ayrshire via Galloway (Gall= stranger in Gaelic, the way part comes from the Gaelic for the place of)- trade, migration along the coast etc had Irish Gaelic speaking settlers arrive in the Southern part of South Ayrshire in the early 5th/6th century- along with the early Irish Christian saints.
- The Carrick/Girvan area and south of it were the strongest bastions of Gaelic in South Ayrshire also due to the fact of it being more isolated and less influenced by English language intrusion and this area was also one of the last places to have native Gaelic speakers in Ayrshire. Carrick and Galloway: Gaelic was spoken in the southern parts of Ayrshire, specifically Carrick, and in the adjoining region of Galloway until the late 1700s or early 1800s. Late speakers: Some accounts suggest the last native speaker in Carrick died around 1760, although older residents still spoke Gaelic in some areas like Glen Barr and Ballantrae into the early 19th century. there is anecdotal evidence of some limited Gaelic still being occasionally spoken in dialect within the rural farming community up until the late 19th century.
- Royal & Clan Influence: The Kennedy family, one of Ayrshire's oldest clans, was historically Gaelic-speaking. Gaelic was also the language of Scottish royalty who frequented sites like Dundonald Castle.

