‘Gaelic a recommendation’: Language and employment in the nineteenth-century Highlands[1]

Abstract. This article examines the linguistic landscape of the nineteenth-century Highlands through the lens of the labour market. It analyses a corpus of over 600 job advertisements seeking Gaelic speakers which appeared in *The Inverness Courier* between 1817 and 1899 and draws on a further 200 from selected years of *The Glasgow Herald* and *The Scotsman*. It examines the range of roles in which an ability to speak Gaelic, alongside English, was seen as either a necessity or advantageous by employers, considering in turn, education, health and social welfare, commerce, domestic service, law and order, estate and land, and the church. Some of the factors behind growing opportunities for skilled and semi-skilled Gaelic speakers are explored, such as the expansion of the health and welfare system in the wake of the 1845 Poor Law (Scotland) Act, and the accommodations made for the needs of Gaelic speakers when new roles were created. The continuing utility of Gaelic in Highland commerce also emerges as a counter to contemporary views of the language as unsuited for such transactional contexts. The evidence from these advertisements underlines the complexity of language usage in the Highlands in the nineteenth century as well as the need for further research to extend our understanding of the use of Gaelic in both public and private spheres.

Keywords. Gaelic, Highlands, nineteenth century, language use, employment, advertisements, education, health, social welfare, commerce

The historiography of the Gaelic language has primarily focused on its decline and on the factors behind this, political, economic, educational, social and cultural, with the widely-accepted and valuable work of Viktor Durkacz and Charles W. J. Withers from over three decades ago, remaining the key scholarship on the subject.[2] At the heart of their work were the church and the school, and the place of the language in other domains has largely been ignored, underlining the limited place of Gaelic in Highland historiography more generally. The invisibility of Gaelic in official records has been one of the key factors which has concealed the ubiquity of a language which, by the time of the 1891 Census, remained the only language spoken by 43,738 individuals in Scotland, with a further 210,677 recorded as speaking both Gaelic and English.[3] The normalisation of English, and the concomitant invisibility of Gaelic, within new and developing administrative structures and policies in the Highlands, has its parallels in other Celtic languages, as has been discussed by a number of scholars of nineteenth-century Ireland.[4] As well as drawing attention to the greater visibility of English, compared with Irish, across a range of public domains, Nicholas Wolf has

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[2] V. E. Durkacz, *The Decline of the Celtic Languages: A Study of Linguistic and Cultural Conflict in Scotland, Wales and Ireland from the Reformation to the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh, 1983); C. W. J. Withers, *Gaelic in Scotland 1698–1981: The Geographical History of a Language* (Edinburgh, 1984). See also C. W. J. Withers, *Urban Highlanders: Highland-Lowland Migration and Urban Gaelic Culture, 1700−1900* (East Linton, 1998).

[3] *Tenth Decennial Census of the Population of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1892), p. xxi. The 1881 Census was the first to include a question about Gaelic, but as Withers, *Gaelic in Scotland*, p. 210 discusses, a lack of clarity in the question would seem to have resulted in an under-estimation.

[4] N. Ó Ciosáin, ‘The Celtic Languages: Visible and Invisible’, in A. Havinga and N. Langer (eds), *Invisible Languages in the Nineteenth Century* (Bern, 2015), pp. 35–50; G. Ó Tuathaigh, *I mBéal an Bháis. The Great Famine and the Language Shift in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Hamden, CT, 2015); N. M. Wolf, *An Irish-Speaking Island: State, Religion, Community, and the Linguistic Landscape in Ireland 1770–1870* (Madison, 2014).

highlighted 'significant contestations of language dominance and examples of Irish carving out a niche for itself alongside English', begging the question which 'niches' Scottish Gaelic may have found for itself beyond the already recognised ones of church and schoolroom.[5] The relative strength of Gaelic at community level in the nineteenth-century Highlands is reflected in the increasing frequency of calls to accommodate the needs of Gaelic speakers across a range of sociolinguistic domains in the later decades of the century. Professor John Stuart Blackie who, in the 1870s, had spear-headed the campaign to establish a Chair of Celtic at the University of Edinburgh, argued in 1887 that there were five 'classes' in the Highlands who should have Gaelic, 'the clergy, teachers, lawyers, lairds and doctors'.[6] Niall Ó Ciosáin's survey of the historiography of language shift in Ireland emphasises the need for a 'more detailed and grounded exploration of language use and attitudes in practice', a desideratum for Scottish Gaelic too.[7] This article examines the complex linguistic landscape of the nineteenth-century Highlands through the evidence of job advertisements in which an ability to speak Gaelic is specified as either an essential or desirable criteria and, through these, seeks to provide more granular details about language usage across a wider range of social domains than have previously been considered.

Donald MacRaild has demonstrated the potential value of job advertisements as a source in his work on 'No Irish Need Apply' advertisements in the nineteenth-century British and Irish press. MacRaild's study found over 600 job advertisements using this term, contrasting with Richard Jensen's conclusion that the term's use in America was in fact a myth which bolstered ethnic solidarity.[8] Rather than examining ethnicity as a marker of prejudice and exclusion from employment, the current study takes a converse starting point by considering the active recruitment of Gaelic speakers in the job market, for the most part in the Highlands, although not exclusively so. While ethnicity is recognised as having played a role in the Lowland labour market in towns such as Greenock, this aspect of the labour market in the Highlands bears examination, with the evidence from these advertisements demonstrating that a linguistic dimension existed.[9]

The advertisements under consideration, which were predominantly for skilled or semi-skilled professional and commercial positions, provide information not readily available from other sources and demonstrate that being bilingual could be an asset in some sectors of the job market, most frequently in the Highlands, but also occasionally in the Lowlands. The types of employment for which an ability to speak Gaelic, alongside English, was advantageous, are analysed; primarily jobs which offered 'service' of various sorts to Gaelic speakers, often in the public sector, but also in the private sector. Given the growing role of the state in the lives of the Highland population, with English the language of new national administrative structures, it considers examples of Gaelic being accommodated within these.

Methodology

[5] Wolf, *An Irish-Speaking Island*, p. 47.
[6] *Scotsman*, 15 Jan. 1887.
[7] N. Ó Ciosáin, 'Gaelic Culture and Language Shift', in L. M. Geary and M. Kelleher (eds), *Nineteenth-Century Ireland. A Guide to Recent Research*, (Dublin, 2005), pp. 136–52, 152.
[8] D. M. MacRaild, '"No Irish Need Apply": The Origins and Persistence of a Prejudice', *Labour History Review*, 78, 3 (2013), pp. 269–99; R. Jensen,' "No Irish need apply": A Myth of Victimization', *Journal of Social History*, 36, 2 (2002), pp. 405–29.
[9] See, for example, S. Kavanagh, 'The Irish in Greenock: Employment, Networks and Ethnicity – A Primary Analysis', *Journal or Irish and Scottish Studies*, 8, 2 (2015), pp. 100–25.

The main source of data for this study, *The Inverness Courier,* was one of the earliest newspapers to be established in the Highlands and appeared in a continuous run from 1817.[10] It began as a weekly publication, moving to three issues per week in 1880 and reducing to two issues each week in 1886, thus providing a substantial corpus of over 5,500 issues by the end of the century.[11] Crucially here, this entire run is available in digital form through the British Newspaper Archive.[12] While job advertisements – whether mentioning Gaelic or not − are few in number in its early years, these began to appear more frequently, particularly after the abolition of the tax on newspaper advertisements in 1853.[13] It must be emphasised that advertisements mentioning Gaelic were always in a very small minority. In 1850, of the sixty-three job advertisements to appear in the *Courier*, only 4.8% (three) mentioned Gaelic, although by 1860 this had risen to 9.8% (nineteen) of the 195 vacancies advertised.

The data was identified using 'Gaelic' as a key word search term. Most vacancies were advertised over a number of issues, but a vacancy is only counted on its first publication.[14] Some advertisements are for more than one individual, e.g. 'teachers' or 'nurses' and, given this lack of clarity as to the number of posts or whether all should be Gaelic-speakers, this analysis looks solely at the number of advertisements. There are methodological issues which accompany this approach as Adrian Bingham has noted, such as the potential fallibility of scanning and character recognition, the distortive effect of the availability of some newspapers but not others, and the potential loss of context. Efforts have been made to mitigate against these here, for example, by searching three years, 1850, 1860 and 1870, manually as a check on the accuracy of the key word search facility.[15] Although the focus is on the *Inverness Courier*, other newspapers have been considered, however it may well be that some which have not yet been digitised would yield further data. The contrasting findings of Jensen and MacRaild in their work on 'No Irish Need Apply', the former using the American press, and the latter the British and Irish press, also serves as a reminder of the diverging evidence which can emerge from this type of approach. Finally, while context may have been lost, the search has also helped identify other relevant content, such as reports of discussions over appointing Gaelic speakers to public positions.

The *Courier* carried more job advertisements mentioning Gaelic than any contemporary Highland newspaper. In 1870 339 appeared of which 10.9% (thirty-seven) mentioned Gaelic (fifteen individual vacancies). This compares with 157 advertisements in the twice-weekly *Inverness Advertiser*, 7.6% (twelve) of which mention Gaelic (six individual vacancies, four of which also appeared in the *Courier*). *The Oban Times* carried 127 advertisements, 6.3% (eight) of which mention Gaelic (three individual vacancies of which one also appeared in the *Courier. The Ross-shire Journal* did not begin publication until 1877 and carried relatively few job advertisements of any sort. The Lowland-based *Scotsman* and *Glasgow Herald* provide further comparative data for the study. As daily newspapers, the scale of analysis required to survey every issue was unfeasible and therefore

[10] The earliest newspaper to be published in Inverness was the *Inverness Journal* which ran from 1807 to 1848.
[11] There were twenty-six issues which I was unable to consult in digital form or hard copy, one from 1871 and twenty-five from 1875.
[12] www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk accessed 25 June 2019.
[13] M. Hewitt, *The Dawn of the Cheap Press in Victorian Britain: The End of the 'Taxes on Knowledge', 1849–1869* (London, 2014), pp. 23–5 and 60–6.
[14] Where there is a gap of four months or more before a position is re-advertised it is then counted again.
[15] A. Bingham, 'The Digitization of Newspaper Archives: Opportunities and Challenges for Historians', *Twentieth Century British History*, 21, 2 (2010), pp. 225–31. The manual search of these three years showed that no advertisements had been missed by the key word search for 1850 (three advertisements) or 1870 (thirty-six advertisements) and one job in one advertisement (twenty-three advertisements) was found to be have been missed for 1860, suggesting that the key word search offers an acceptable level of accuracy for current purposes.

eight specific years were analysed, based on four-yearly intervals from 1871, immediately before the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act, onwards with these later decades selected for reasons of availability, although some advertisements from earlier years are also discussed.

There are however, inevitably, limitations to the data since many Highland jobs would not been advertised in the press, particularly unskilled ones. All the advertisements were published in English, and in an English-language press, underlining the assumption that applicants would generally be bilingual, although that does not necessarily mean that monoglot Gaelic speakers were not aware of these advertisements through word of mouth, or indeed that they were excluded from applying. It must also be stressed that the lack of a reference to Gaelic in advertisements cannot be taken as an indication that Gaelic would not be seen as advantageous by these employers, and may in fact simply reflect the ubiquity of Gaelic speaking, something which is largely obscured by the English language press. A further caveat is that, for the most part, we do not know whether or not Gaelic speakers were appointed to these positions, although some evidence relating to appointments is discussed later which also shows that applicants without Gaelic were not necessarily deterred by the mention of the language or by the location of a post being in a Gaelic-speaking area.

Detailed data on the labour market in Scotland is available from the censuses and helps to contextualise the Gaelic advertisements. The official report on the 1881 Census data breaks occupations down into the six general categories of professional, domestic, commercial, agricultural, industrial and unoccupied. The largest employment sector for the country as a whole was industrial (24.97% of the population), followed by agricultural (7.21%), domestic (4.73%), commercial (3.54%) and professional (2.57%).[16] For the County of Inverness, as might be expected, agricultural employment was the largest sector (19.15%) followed by industrial (11.73%), domestic (5.52%), professional (4.6%) and commercial (2.29%).[17] Recruitment for the two largest employment sectors would not generally have been through the advertisement columns of newspapers, but through other channels, such as hiring, or feeing, fairs for agricultural workers, with a number of Highlands parishes noted in the *New Statistical Account*, as holding these half-yearly or annually for recruiting farm servants.[18] What will emerge in the following analysis of the advertisements mentioning Gaelic is that the advertisements relate almost entirely to the smaller employment sectors both nationally and in the Highlands, first and foremost the professional classes, albeit with a growing domestic sector.

Overview of Nineteenth-Century Job Advertisements Mentioning Gaelic

Figures 1−3 provide an overview of the data gathered. Figure 1 demonstrates the overall rise in number of jobs advertisements mentioning Gaelic in *The Inverness Courier* in the course of the century with a total of 638 identified. Advertisements peaked in the 1870s with 1878 seeing twenty-nine separate vacancies advertised, the majority of these teaching posts. The vast majority, where location features, are based in the Highlands, with eleven posts identifiable as being in the Lowlands, five in England, and two abroad.

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[16] *Ninth Decennial Census of the Population of Scotland taken 4th April 1881, with Report. Vol. II* (Edinburgh, 1883), p. 27.
[17] *Ibid*., p. 437.
[18] 'Inverness', *New Statistical Account of Scotland* [*NSA*], vol. 14, (Edinburgh, 1845), p. 35; 'Portree', *NSA*, vol. 14, p. 234. See also B. Powell, 'The Farm Servant', in A. Fenton and K. Veitch (eds), *Scottish Life and Society: Farming and the Land* (Edinburgh, 2011), pp. 446–76, 448–9.

Figure 2 details the advertisements in *The Glasgow Herald* and *The Scotsman* which appeared in the eight sample years. These years span the period immediately before and after the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act, a period of land agitation and also increasing government attention devoted to the Highlands in the form of inquiries such as the Napier Commission and the Deer Forest Commission. The rising number of advertisements over these years, in part, reflects the growing demand for Gaelic-speaking teachers in the wake of the 1872 Act, but also underlines the importance of Gaelic-speaking communities in the Lowlands as a recruiting ground for employers in the Highlands, with close to 23,000 Gaelic speakers in Scotland's two largest cities by 1891.[19] Only seven posts identifiable as Lowland-based appeared in these newspapers in these eight years sampled. The strikingly high number of advertisements in *The Scotsman* in 1891 are primarily for teachers and doctors. The importance of professional qualifications as well the language qualifications in these advertisements remains evident in 1899. Of the sixteen posts advertised in *The Scotsman*, fifteen required some form of professional qualification (medical officer, teacher and veterinary surgeon); of the seventeen in *The Herald*, eleven required a qualification (medical officer, teacher and nurse).

Figure 3 shows the total number of separate vacancies to appear across the three newspapers being surveyed during the eight sample years with the 1891 spike resulting from an unusually high number of advertisements in *The Scotsman* highlighted in Figure 2. The noticeable fall in the 1880s reflects the main wave of recruitment for schools in the post-1872 period having passed.

Figure 4 provides a breakdown according to job type of the 638 advertisements carried by the *Courier*. This demonstrates that it is the 'professional' category (including, education, health and the clergy) which features most prominently, followed by commercial and domestic, a pattern which is not reflective of the Scottish or Inverness labour markets outlined earlier where industrial and agricultural employment respectively were dominant. Instead, the market for Gaelic speakers is much more niche and oriented towards skilled and semi-skilled workers and roles where communication with Gaelic speakers would generally have been important.

Changing patterns, which will be discussed in more detail in sections on individual employment sectors, are shown in Figure 5 where we see, for example, the emergence of social welfare posts for Gaelic speakers in the wake of the Poor Law Amendment (Scotland) Act of 1845 and the sharp rise in advertisements for teachers after 1872. Legislative measures would have had little impact on mercantile or domestic posts which also showed a gradual rise. The remainder of the article considers these areas of employment in turn as presented in Figure 5, with health and social welfare combined.

Education

Education offered the largest number of advertised opportunities for Gaelic speakers in the nineteenth century. This falls into two separate phases: the first before the 1872 Education Act (Scotland), a period which saw education in the Highlands provided by a range of parish, charitable and denominational schools; the second phase, after the passing of the 1872 Act which created a national, compulsory education system, centralising control of education provision and, crucially for the Highlands, making no mention of Gaelic. This second phase

[19] Withers, *Urban Highlanders*, p. 207.

saw a substantial rise in the number of advertisements for teachers in general not only for those able to speak Gaelic.[20]

A total of 210 advertisements for Gaelic-speaking teachers appeared in *The Inverness Courier*, sixty-eight up to the end of 1872 and the majority (142) from 1873 onwards. In the pre-Education Act period Gaelic was stipulated as a requirement for all but twelve of the posts.[21] These advertisements include those for parochial schoolmasters and for the various charitable organisations which advocated the teaching of Gaelic in Highlands schools, albeit on the premise that this would lead to English: the Society for the Education of the Poor in the Highlands, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, the Glasgow Auxiliary Gaelic School Society and the Free Church.[22] An 1869 advertisement for a schoolmaster for Embo serves as a useful reminder that assumptions cannot be made about the medium of instruction in a school based on an advertisement when it states 'the teacher should understand Gaelic although English only will be taught'.[23]

The 1872 Act marked a rapid increase in the number of teaching posts being advertised. These peaked in 1878 and 1879 which respectively saw nineteen and eighteen teaching posts advertised in the *Courier*. While the language did not form part of the curriculum, teachers with Gaelic were, nonetheless, apparently much in demand, reflecting the pedagogical needs of the schoolroom. What the advertisements show, however, is a shift away from Gaelic being essential in the vast majority (82.3%) of the advertisements before the Act, to merely desirable in the majority (73.2%) after the Act, underlining the erosion of Gaelic in education. A detailed study of school board records would be required to establish the frequency with which Gaelic-speaking teachers were appointed to any of these posts.

The advertisements placed in the *Courier* by the four school boards in the island of Lewis in the post-1872 period serve as an interesting sample. The 1891 Census showed that 51% of the island's population spoke were monoglot Gaelic speakers, with a further 41% recorded as speaking both Gaelic and English.[24] Prior to the Act, the *Courier* had carried only two advertisements for Gaelic-speaking teachers for Lewis.[25] In contrast, the period between 1873 and 1882 saw thirty-three advertisements appear: eleven for Barvas School Board; ten for Stornoway School Board; nine for Lochs Board; and three for Uig. Only in six of these advertisements was Gaelic essential. When Barvas School Board first advertised for a teacher for its new school at Airidhantuim in 1877 Gaelic was an essential qualification, but when re-advertised some fifteen months later it had been downgraded to a 'recommendation', albeit reverting to 'necessary' after a further fifteen months had passed.[26] The varying status of the language qualification in the advertisements may reflect the composition of individuals school boards which were often dominated by those in favour of anglicisation, such as estate managers. The Uig Board, for instance, which had seven schools under its control, was made up of two ministers, a tacksman, a ground officer, a doctor, a miller and a crofter at the time

[20] J. McDermid, 'Education and Society in the Era of the School Boards, 1872–1918', in R. Anderson, M. Freeman and L. Paterson (eds), *The Edinburgh History of Education in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2015), pp. 190–207; F. O'Hanlon and L. Paterson, 'Gaelic Education since 1872', in Anderson et al. (eds), *Edinburgh History of Education*, pp. 304–25.
[21] The difference between the 210 teaching posts mentioned here and the 212 educational posts in Figure 4 is accounted for by two non-teaching posts for a schoolroom maid, and for a School Board officer.
[22] *Inverness Courier*, 20 Aug. 1819; 10 Aug. 1825; 16 Aug. 1826; 21 Mar. 1848.
[23] *Inverness Courier*, 16 Sep. 1869.
[24] *Tenth Decennial Census*, p. 165.
[25] *Inverness Courier*, 6 Aug. 1845; 3 Mar. 1859.
[26] *Inverness Courier*, 31 May 1877; 5 Sep. 1878; 4 Dec. 1879.

of the Napier Commission's 1883 visit.[27] The phrasing of these advertisements may also have had much to do with the availability of suitably qualified Gaelic-speaking teachers. The requirement for teachers to have a professional qualification was identified as hindering recruitment with the admission examinations to training courses a barrier. *The Education News* reported in 1879 that 'we have it on the authority of the Principal of one of our training Colleges that, at the last examination for admission, more than twenty-six Gaelic-speaking young men […] presented themselves, not one of whom came up the government requirement'.[28]

As will be seen in the medical and domestic domains, the number of opportunities being advertised for women in teaching rose rapidly in the later decades of the century. The earliest advertisement for a Gaelic-speaking female teacher appeared in 1866 when an un-named girls' school on the west coast of Ross-shire advertised for a school mistress.[29] Only two advertisements for female Gaelic-speaking teachers had appeared in the *Courier* before the end of 1872, whereas twenty-four would appear between 1873 and 1899 with a further twelve which specified either male or female.

While the 1872 Act has been much-criticised for its omission of Gaelic and the resulting legacy of this for the language, the evidence from job advertisements demonstrates that, in the short term at least, it created more opportunities for Gaelic speakers than there were qualified Gaelic speakers available to fill them, a situation which continues to afflict Gaelic education to the present day.[30] Nonetheless, the shift away from Gaelic as an essential criteria underlines the erosion of the language in Highland education.

Health and Social Welfare

One area of employment where there was a distinct growth in demand for Gaelic speakers was health and social welfare. The period between 1817 and 1849 saw fifteen advertisements in this category in the *Courier*, seventy-five between 1850 and 1869, and ninety-one between 1870 and 1889. This growth stemmed from the implementation of the Poor Law (Scotland) Act of 1845. The new, Edinburgh-based Board of Supervision had oversight of the provision of poor relief through a system of parochial boards and, employed by these boards, inspectors of poor.[31] It was these inspectors whom individuals seeking poor relief would approach, making them, and their ability to communicate effectively with the neediest in society, the lynch-pin in this new system of relief.

The establishment of this new poor relief system coincided with the failure of the potato crop in many parts of the Highlands so that the Board found itself devoting particular attention to the country's Gaelic-speaking parishes in its early years. In February 1847 it sent two officers to report on the distress in the Highlands. Ord Graham Campbell observed with some concern two months later that the inspector of poor for Torosay, Mull, spoke no Gaelic:

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[27] *Report of her Majesty's Commissioners of Inquiry*, p. 895.
[28] Re-printed in *The Ross-shire Journal*, 14 Feb. 1879.
[29] *Inverness Courier*, 13 Sep. 1866.
[30] L. M. Dombrowski, E. Danson, M. Danson, D. Chalmers & Peter Neil, 'Initial Teacher Education for Minority Medium-of-Instruction Teaching: The Case Study of Scottish Gaelic in Scotland', *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 15, 2 (2014), pp. 119–32, www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14664208.2013.811006, accessed 25 June 2019.
[31] R. Cage, *The Scottish Poor Law 1745–1845* (Edinburgh,1981); R. Mitchison, 'Poor Relief and Health Care in 19th Century Scotland', in O. P. Grell, A. Cunningham and R. Jütte (eds), *Health Care and Poor Relief in 18th and 19th Century Northern Europe* (Aldershot, 2002), pp. 246–55.

> I found that the inspector laboured under the disadvantage of not being able to speak or understand the Gaelic language, in consequence of which he confessed he experienced much difficulty in getting at the real circumstances of the people. Having expressed my doubts of his being able efficiently to discharge his duties without a knowledge of the language, he admitted the disadvantage, but at the same time assured me that at every *town* or hamlet he could always find an interpreter.[32]

The Board of Supervision was quick to act and, from April 1848, required that in all parishes where Gaelic was the medium of religious instruction inspectors of poor should be able to speak the language.[33] The effect of this ruling is evident in all subsequent advertisements. Twenty-four advertisements for inspectors appeared in the *Courier* between 1848 and 1870 and in twenty-three of these Gaelic was seen as a requirement and 'desirable' in one. The regulatory embedding of the language in the role of inspector was taken seriously by parochial boards to the point where there are instances of inspectors without the requisite language skills being ostensibly dismissed or resigning. Alexander Grigor, a solicitor and inspector of poor for Dingwall Parochial Board, resigned in 1853 when his fluency in Gaelic was called into question.[34] The inspector for South Knapdale, John Lochhead, was in post for only two and a half months in 1867 before he was deemed unfit for the role and dismissed because 'he had not a competent knowledge of the Gaelic language.'[35]

The establishment of poorhouses also created new opportunities for Gaelic speakers although there was no directive from the Board of Supervision on employing Gaelic speakers. The Skye Union Poorhouse and the Inverness Poorhouse both opened in 1861 with the former advertising for a governor and matron, both of whom should be able to speak Gaelic, and the latter seeking a married couple to act as governor and matron one of whom should speak the language.[36] The Mull Combination Poorhouse (1864) and the Sutherland Combination Poorhouse (1865) both advertised for Gaelic-speaking governors and either the governor or matron of Lochgilphead Combination Poorhouse was expected to be a Gaelic speaker in 1865.[37] It would, therefore, seem to have been normal practice to actively seek out Gaelic speakers for at least one of the supervisory roles in these new institutions where the majority of those within the establishments would have spoken the language.

It was rare for advertisements for Gaelic-speaking doctors to appear in the press before the passing of the Poor Law Act. These appeared with increasing frequency from the 1850s onwards as a result of the introduction in 1848 of a Medical Relief Grant specifically aimed at improving medical provision for the poor.[38] Highland parochial boards were quick to avail themselves of the new funds, with 98% in receipt of these by 1860. [39] This helps explain the

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[32] *Second Annual Report of the Board of Supervision for the Relief of the Poor in Scotland* (1848), p. 25.

[33] *Third Annual Report of the Board of Supervision* (1849), p. 2. The Board was chaired by a Gaelic speaker, Sir John MacNeill (1795–1883), a native of Colonsay, although there is no evidence in the Board's records to suggest that he was ever a particular advocate of the language.

[34] *Inverness Advertiser*, 28 June 1853, 25 Jul. 1853; *Eighth Annual Report of the Board of Supervision* (1853), p. iii; NRS, Minute Books of Board of Supervision, June–Aug. 1853, HH/23/5.

[35] *Return of the Board of Supervision showing the names of all inspectors of poor in Scotland dismissed from office by the Board of Supervision*, (1884), p. 4.

[36] *Inverness Courier*, 7 Mar. 1861; 27 July 1861.

[37] *Inverness Courier*, 4 Feb. 1864; 8 June 1864; 31 Aug. 1865.

[38] For a general discussion of this parliamentary grant see S. Blackden, 'The Board of Supervision and the Scottish Parochial Medical Service, 1845–95', *Medical History* 30 (1986), pp. 145–72, 156 ff.

[39] *Second Annual Report of the Board of Supervision* (1848), p. 78; *Fourteenth Annual Report of the Board of Supervision* (1860), pp. 184–96. See also P. E. Whatley, 'The Development of Medical Services in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Dundee, 2013), pp. 41–50.

rise in advertisements for Gaelic-speaking medical officers, positions which were often advertised in conjunction with paid parish duties. The 1840s saw one post advertised in the *Courier* and the 1850s saw seven, rising to twenty-seven in the 1860s and thirty-nine in the 1870s. Unlike inspectors of poor, parochial boards were not required to appoint Gaelic-speaking medical officers. This was despite an 1858 report which specifically commented on the language barrier between some doctors and patients: 'it is much to be regretted that, in many Highland districts, there are medical men who cannot speak or understand Gaelic […] but few, especially females, like to state their complaints through a third person.'[40]

It was presumably for pragmatic reasons that the Board did not introduce such a requirement as a Royal College of Physicians inquiry during 1850 and 1851, had revealed a shortage of doctors in the Highlands and Islands due to the size and often difficult terrain in many parishes, compounded by low salaries. Of 155 parishes, only sixty-two were 'adequately supplied with medical practioners'; fifty-two were 'partially supplied'; and the remaining forty-one 'are never, or almost never, visited by any regular practitioners'.[41] Under such circumstances the Board of Supervision's lack of reference to Gaelic in the appointment of medical officers is unsurprising when there was already a significant shortfall in available medical practitioners. Divergences therefore emerged in the ways in which parochial boards advertised for inspectors of poor and for medical officers, despite both roles involving working with the same vulnerable individuals in each parish. In 1864 Ardnamurchan Parochial Board advertised for both an inspector of poor and a medical officer, with Gaelic being seen as 'indispensable' for the former, but merely 'desirable' for the latter.[42] Even more strikingly, Applecross and Lochcarron advertised together for an inspector of poor and collector of poor rates in 1870, stating that a 'knowledge of Gaelic is indispensable', while in the same column Applecross's Parochial Board advertised for a doctor, but with no reference at all made to Gaelic.[43] This is not to say that a Gaelic-speaker would not have been preferred, but the lack of any mention of the language speaks to both the importance of the Board of Supervision's formal requirement in relation to inspectors and also to the shortage of doctors in the Highlands.

The importance placed upon Gaelic in the advertisements sometimes changed over time. The change from Gaelic being a requirement for the Glenelg medical officer on the six occasions the vacancy was advertised between 1856 and 1870 to 'desirable' and 'a recommendation' in the three advertisements later in the century may reflect recruitment difficulties. Equally, it may be a reflection of language shift and the strengthening of English among the population in this, as in many, Highland parishes, although even by 1891, the Census records 28% of the Glenelg population as monoglot Gaelic speakers and 64% as speaking Gaelic and English.[44] Similar patterns are discernible in hospital vacancies for Gaelic-speaking doctors which were almost exclusively for Inverness's Northern Infirmary and appeared every one-two years by the mid-1840s with all references to Gaelic removed by 1877.

There is some evidence of parochial boards prioritising the language in the appointment process. The advertisement for a medical officer for Badenoch in 1851, stated that a

[40] *Thirteenth Annual Report of the Board of Supervision* (1858), Appendix A, p. 8.
[41] Archive of Royal College of Physicians Edinburgh, 'Report of Committee of the Royal College of Physicians on Medical Practice in the Highlands' (1852).
[42] *Inverness Courier*, 21 Apr. 1864; 20 Oct. 1864.
[43] *Inverness Courier*, 25 Aug. 1870.
[44] *Inverness Courier*, 27 Nov. 1856; 28 May 1857; 30 Oct. 1862; 7 Mar. 1867; 25 Mar. 1869; 21 Apr. 1870; 5 June 1873; 25 Mar. 1875; 8 Jan. 1891.

knowledge of Gaelic would be 'an advantage'. The meeting which appointed Dr Donald Kennedy, noted that his 'testimonials are of a very high order, and (what is of considerable importance) that he has a thorough knowledge of Gaelic'.[45] The parochial boards of Boleskine and Abertarff and of Kilmonivaig discussed the applications for a shared post, a Gaelic 'desirable' post, and it was agreed that of the twelve applications received only those able to speak Gaelic would be considered.[46]

Under the Lunacy (Scotland) Act of 1857 a network of public asylums was established and the two institutions which would cater for the predominantly Gaelic-speaking areas, the Argyll and Bute District Asylum (Lochgilphead) and the Inverness District Asylum (re-named Craig Dunain in 1947) opened in 1863 and 1864 respectively. The first advertisement for staff for the Inverness asylum was for a matron and a house steward and made no reference to Gaelic, but focused instead on applicants' previous experience.[47] It may have been assumed that there would be no need to mention Gaelic as a pre-requisite for these posts and that there would be Gaelic speakers among the applicants. By September of 1864, however, the matron's post was advertised in *The Scotsman*, not the Inverness press, and indicated a preference for Gaelic-speaking applicants.[48] This suggests difficulties in recruiting a Gaelic speaker with relevant experience. This was a point raised by the General Board of Commissioners in Lunacy for Scotland in relation to the Lochgilphead Asylum, specifically, the 'limited sphere from which attendants can be procured, owing to the necessity of an acquaintance with the Gaelic language'.[49] The first official report on the Inverness institution confirms that the Asylum was successful in attracting linguistically qualified attendants with all twelve able to speak Gaelic, perhaps even indicating the creation of a new predominantly Gaelic-speaking work environment.[50] Argyll and Bute District Asylum was similarly staffed with twelve of the thirteen attendants recorded as being Gaelic speakers and an estimate that a quarter of the patients spoke Gaelic only or had a poor command of English.[51] It is clear, therefore, that the expanding public health system was creating opportunities for Gaelic speakers as it accommodated the needs of Gaelic-speaking patients.

Gaelic-speaking nurses were also occasionally sought through advertisements, the earliest identifiable one being for a post at the Northern Infirmary in 1820.[52] The opening of new hospitals such as Belford Hospital, Fort William (1865) and Gesto Hospital, Skye (1878), and recommendations by the Board of Supervision that poorhouses should employ trained nurses, alongside the formalisation of training for nurses, lies behind the gradual rise in opportunities for Gaelic-speaking nurses from the mid-1870s onwards. A month before Belford Hospital opened, an advertisement in *The Glasgow Herald* sought a surgeon, matron, house porter, two nurses and two maidservants, the only position requiring Gaelic being one of the nursing ones, presumably on the basis that nurses had more interaction with patients than any of the other roles.[53]

Commerical employment

[45] *Inverness Courier*, 9 Oct. 1851; 30 Oct. 1851.
[46] *Inverness Courier*, 19 Sep. 1858; 18 Nov. 1858.
[47] *Inverness Courier*, 28 Jan. 1864.
[48] *Scotsman*, 5 Sep.1864.
[49] *Seventh Report of the General Board of Commissioners in Lunacy for Scotland* (1865), p. xliv.
[50] *Ibid.*, p. 170.
[51] *Ibid.*, p. 144.
[52] *Inverness Courier*, 8 June 1820.
[53] *Glasgow Herald*, 4 Oct. 1865.

It was not uncommon for the value of Gaelic in commercial situations to be dismissed as the nineteenth century progressed with the language often seen as not fit for the modern world of commerce, in the same way as Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh has noted that Irish was increasingly perceived as 'obsolete and without transactional value'.[54] Alexander Dallas, one of the founding members of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, observed at its establishment in 1871 that there was little use in teaching Gaelic in Highland schools since, 'it would in no way promote their prosperity in the world; no business was done in Gaelic beyond a few transactions, perhaps, at the Muir of Ord. And who ever heard of accounts kept or rendered in Gaelic?[55] This did not go unchallenged by those present with Robert Macdonald, a Gaelic teacher, referring to having often seen accounts kept in Gaelic and the Chairman, Thomas Mackenzie, reported as having '[given] off-hand a formula for a Gaelic account'.[56] Nicholas Wolf has discussed the prevalence of Irish in the market-place in nineteenth-century Ireland and the advantages offered by bilingualism, a situation which, advertisements would suggest, also held true in the Highlands.[57]

A Church of Scotland committee heard testimony in 1825 that Gaelic was still the language of commerce the parish of Little Dunkeld on Highland-Lowland border:

> one of the grocers […] lost all his custom because he could not speak Gaelic, and he was obliged to get an apprentice who understood it, that he might compete with his rivals. In the bank, a clerk for transacting the business in Gaelic was kept; and where the doctor visited his patients, if he did not speak Gaelic, he had to provide himself with an interpreter.[58]

The competitive edge which an ability to speak Gaelic could provide is clear, and underlines the agency of Gaelic speakers when presented with a choice between Gaelic-speaking and non-Gaelic-speaking businesses. In 1860, Polmont-born Thomas Flint, a merchant and chemist who had lived in Tain for some thirty-three years reported that he spoke 'a little "shop Gaelic". This was clearly insufficient for commercial purposes since he also employed a Gaelic-speaking shop lad to act as interpreter. According to Wolf this was common practice in Ireland too, as were advertisements for Irish speakers to fill commercial roles.[59]

The *Courier* published no fewer than 102 advertisements for commercial positions which mentioned Gaelic, 23.9% of all its Gaelic-related advertisements, and a strikingly high figure bearing in mind that the 1881 Census showed that only 2.29% perhaps of the county's population was employed in a commercial position. The earliest example of a job advertisement mentioning Gaelic dates to 1818 in which an un-named business seeks 'as Clerk in a Mercantile establishment, a well-educated Young Man of reputable character and parents, who speaks Gaelic'.[60] It was not, however, until the 1840s, that there was any regular mention of Gaelic in a commercial environment when twelve advertisements appeared between 1840 and 1849. These included vacancies for apprentices in grocers and spirit merchants, salesmen and apprentices in drapers, book-keepers and clerks. In the period 1850–

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[54] Ó Tuathaigh, *I mBéal an Bháis*, p. 29.
[55] 'Introduction', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, 1 (1871–72), p. 4.
[56] *Ibid*.
[57] Wolf, *An Irish-Speaking Island*, pp. 47–9.
[58] *Caledonian Mercury*, 26 May 1825.
[59] *Inverness Courier*, 20 Sep. 1860. NRS, 1861 Census 082/ 4/ 3. Wolf, *An Irish-Speaking Island*, p. 49. The reference to 'shop Gaelic' raises interesting questions about professional linguistic registers which would merit further study.
[60] *Inverness Courier*, 28 May 1818.

70 the majority of the commercial posts – fifteen of the twenty-one − refer to Gaelic as being an essential qualification. Furthermore, some are specific in requiring an individual who speaks Gaelic 'fluently' or advising that 'none need apply who do not speak Gaelic well'.[61] This echoed an 1844 advertisement from a grocery and hardware which indicated that the successful applicant would need to have 'a perfect knowledge of the Gaelic language'.[62] The premium placed on good communication skills reflects the importance of the language for Highland businesses and that this was seen as a positive qualification, while also hinting at the weakening of Gaelic language skills among the Highland population.

A cluster of advertisements from the 1880s and 1890s, reflects the influx of Gaelic-speaking fishermen and women to the east coast during the herring fishing season, a population movement which by these later decades was reported as having reached 10,000 Highlanders and spanned the north-east coast from Wick to Peterhead.[63] Five advertisements appeared in the *Courier* seeking Gaelic-speaking salesmen in Fraserburgh drapers shops and one for a man to work in a bar.[64] Two further advertisements from Fraserburgh drapers appeared in the Aberdeen press, one specifically seeking a salesman for the fishing season who 'must speak Gaelic'.[65] These advertisements were not limited to one drapers shop, with at least three separate businesses identifiable, reinforcing the importance of this seasonal trade to local shops and their attempts to capitalise upon it.

A rare glimpse into the nature of applications is afforded by the letters applying for the post of shop manager at Fraser's merchants in Inverness in 1832, although there is no evidence to indicate who was appointed to the post.[66] Most of the letters refer to Gaelic, suggesting that it was mentioned in the advertisement, with seven of the thirteen applicants admitting to having no knowledge of the language, and two expressing a willingness to learn it. The Gaelic-speaking applicants included John McNiven from Strontian who 'completely understands the Gaelic Language' and was employed by a tea, wine and spirit merchant in Glasgow's Gallowgate; and George MacFarlane from Comrie who had experience of working in a grocer, wine and spirit merchant in Edinburgh's Broughton Street, emphasising the importance of the Lowlands as a recruiting ground for experienced Gaelic-speaking employees.[67].

A small number of advertisements confirm the importance of Gaelic where there were sizeable Gaelic communities in the Lowlands. A small number of mercantile vacancies appeared in *The Glasgow Herald* in the middle of the century which were located in Glasgow, home to an estimated 25,000 Gaelic speakers by the mid-1830s.[68] Two of these were positions in spirit cellars, one of which was the business of John Cameron who had premises at both 117 Gallowgate and 12 Broomielaw, indicating the value of employees in the Glasgow alcohol trade being Gaelic-speakers, particularly for a business located at the shipping hub for vessels headed to and from the islands and west Highland seaboard.[69] A further two advertisements, for porters at the Broomielaw, similarly highlight that Gaelic was

[61] *Inverness Courier*, 10 Apr. 1862.
[62] *Inverness Courier*, 22 May 1844.
[63] Withers, *Urban Highlanders*, 60–7.
[64] *Inverness Courier*, 30 Oct. 1862; 13 June 1882; 16 June 1883; 5 July 1883; 23 June 1891; 20 Apr. 1897; 15 June 1897. *The Ross-shire Journal*, 15 June 1877, carries an advertisement for a grocery assistant in Peterhead.
[65] *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 28 May 1881; *Aberdeen Free Press*, 3 July 1888.
[66] Highland Archive Centre, Inverness, D122/15/4/4.
[67] *Ibid*.
[68] J. N. MacLeod (ed.), *Memorials of the Rev. Norman MacLeod (Senr) DD* (Edinburgh, 1898), p. 115.
[69] *Glasgow Herald*, 9 Apr. 1860. The advertisement states 117 Gallowgate which allows the business to be identified in the *Post Office Glasgow Directory for 1860–61* (Glasgow, 1860), p. 74.

a working language at the Clyde quays.[70] The number of urban-based commercial vacancies advertised in *The Scotsman* is significantly lower, undoubtedly a reflection of the smaller Gaelic-speaking population in the east of the country. Nonetheless, one advertisement which reflects the existence of a growing Gaelic community in the capital, as well as the expansion of the Gaelic book trade, appeared in 1863 with Edinburgh publisher, William Mackenzie, seeking 'two intelligent and respectable Highlanders' to collect subscriptions in Edinburgh and Leith for a new Gaelic edition of John Bunyan's Works.[71]

Occasional advertisements appeared from individuals seeking work who specifically mentioned that they spoke Gaelic. In 1849 a young man of twenty-three looking for a situation as a lawyer's clerk mentioned being able to speak Gaelic, as did a middle-aged man seeking employment as a draper in 1854, and a young man pursuing employment as a traveller or commission agent in 1869 who 'can transact business in both languages'.[72] These only appeared sporadically but are, nonetheless, indicative that commerce remained a domain in which Gaelic was commonly used in the Highlands, and the ability to communicate with customers in the language was seen as a possible advantage by those seeking employment. Contrary to the suggestion of Alexander Dallas, the evidence of job advertisements suggests that there was very much a place for Gaelic, alongside English, in commercial transactions in the Highlands, and indeed in some urban Highland communities, and that Gaelic remained a language for commercial transactions throughout the century.

Domestic employment

This category of employment encompasses advertisements seeking children's nurses, housekeepers, housemaids and cooks. These constituted 5.17% of the *Courier*'s advertisements which is broadly comparable with the 1881 census data showing 4.73% and 5.52% of the national and county populations engaged in domestic employment. In the majority of *Courier* advertisements, twenty-five out of thirty-three, Gaelic was essential suggesting either Gaelic or bilingual domestic environments.

Joan MacKenzie, in her study of Highlanders in Glasgow, and Charles Withers in his work on Highlanders in Lowland urban centres, have both discussed domestic service as a common source of employment for Highland women. In her analysis of three areas of Glasgow, Broomielaw, Kingston and Plantation, MacKenzie has shown that Highland-born females regularly made up a third, or more, of these districts' domestic workforce in the later decades of the nineteenth century.[73] Employment in domestic service had expanded in the second half of the nineteenth century in tandem with an increasingly wealthy middle class. By the later decades of the century these vacancies were often advertised by register offices for domestic servants. Glasgow saw a rise in such registers from eight in 1860 to thirty-six by the end of the century and with no fewer than nine in Inverness by 1899.[74] Examples of Gaelic vacancies advertised in the press via these agencies included a school-room nursemaid, an upper nurse and an under-nurse wanted by MacDonald's Select Register in Inverness.[75]

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[70] *Glasgow Herald*, 19 Aug. 1853, 3 July 1854.
[71] *Scotsman*, 9 Oct. 1863.
[72] *Inverness Courier*, 12 July 1849; 28 Dec. 1854; 25 Mar. 1869.
[73] J. MacKenzie, 'The Highland Community in the Nineteenth Century in Glasgow: A Study of Non-Assimilation' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Stirling, 1987), pp. 126–45; Withers, *Urban Highlanders,* pp. 143–5.
[74] *Post Office Glasgow Directory 1860–6*, p. 511; *Post Office Glasgow Directory 1899–1900* (Glasgow, 1899), pp. 1245–6; *Inverness Burgh Directory for 1899–1900* (Inverness, 1899), p. 323.
[75] *Inverness Courier*, 2 Jan. 1884; 6 Jan. 1885; 30 July 1885.

Advertisements for domestic servants reflect recruitment by the middle and upper classes in Gaelic-speaking society, such as the 'High Class Family' in Argyllshire which advertised in both *The Glasgow Herald* and the *Courier* for an experienced nurse 'speaking correct Gaelic' to take charge of two children.[76] As noted previously, the publication of these advertisements in English, and in English-language newspapers, suggests that competence in English was also expected and that these employees would be part of a bilingual environment. This chimes with Ethel Bassin's description of the 'interlacing' of the two languages in the mid-nineteenth century tacksman's house in Skye in which song collector, Frances Tolmie, grew up and of the Gaelic domestic environment:

> Gaelic was supreme in the nursery, where nurses invariably spoke no other language; their bilingual mother would speak mainly Gaelic to the smaller children. Workers in the kitchen, the byre, the stable and the fields were Gaelic speakers; in Uncle Hugh's office either language would be used according to convenience; in the dining-room, drawing-room and schoolroom English prevailed.[77]

It is interesting to note an advertisement for a kitchen-maid for Kingsburgh House, Skye in 1890 which stated a preference for 'a girl who does not speak Gaelic', the only one of its kind encountered in this study.[78] This might be assumed to be for a non-Gaelic-speaking family, however, the following year's census shows that this was a mixed language household. Glasgow-born David Todd was not a Gaelic speaker, whereas his Skye-born wife, Jessie, spoke both Gaelic and English and their two children were too young to have any language recorded. They employed a governess from Lancashire and a cook from Banchory, neither of whom spoke Gaelic, alongside a nurse, table-maid, house-maid and kitchen-maid, all of whom could speak Gaelic and English. The presence of an English governess and the preference for a non-Gaelic speaking kitchen-maid suggests an effort to gradually anglicise this relatively well-to-do household. The fact that the Census a little over a year later shows their kitchen-maid, Annie Fraser, as speaking Gaelic and English, suggests that they were unsuccessful in recruiting a non-Gaelic speaker.[79]

Opportunities existed for domestic servants beyond Scotland as, for example, in the 1879 advertisement for a children's nurse in Otterspool, Liverpool 'who must speak English and Gaelic equally well' and the 1886 vacancy advertised by a single gentleman in London seeking a general servant or working housekeeper, 'a Highland woman who speaks Gaelic desired'.[80] Whether or not the Liverpool family or the London gentleman were themselves Highlanders or Gaelic speakers cannot, however, be discerned from the advertisements.

As with other sectors, there are advertisements from those seeking employment who chose to highlight that they were Gaelic speakers, such as an experienced children's nurse seeking work in 1891 with a gentleman's family through the Lorne Register in Glasgow and a governess-housekeeper-companion in search of employment in 1895.[81] Gaelic clearly could open doors for those seeking domestic employment and these advertisements provide some limited evidence for Gaelic within the private, rather than public, sphere and speak to the bilingual, or perhaps Gaelic-dominated, environment in some middle and upper-class families and challenge the association of Gaelic with the lower classes. These advertisements also

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[76] *Glasgow Herald*, 7 Jan. 1891; *Inverness Courier* 13 January 1891.
[77] Ethel Bassin, *The Old Songs of Skye: Frances Tolmie and her Circle*, ed. by Derek Bowman (London, 1977), p. 10. My thanks to Dr Kenna Campbell for drawing this reference to my attention.
[78] *Inverness Courier*, 25 Feb. 1890.
[79] NRS, 1891 Census 111/2 5/11.
[80] *Inverness Courier*, 13 Mar. 1879; 16 Nov. 1886.
[81] *Inverness Courier*, 23 Jan. 1891; *Scotsman*, 23 Mar. 1895.

demonstrate the expanding employment opportunities available to female Gaelic speakers alongside those emerging in education and nursing.

Law and Order

In the Report produced by the Napier Commission in 1884 the commissioners noted that it was desirable that sheriffs and procurators-fiscal in the Highlands be able to speak Gaelic.[82] Despite the lack of any such formal requirement being placed upon these court officials, or on any other law officers in the Highlands at any point, the importance of employing Gaelic speakers in roles within the justice system was recognised. The advertisements which appeared in the press are of three particular types: police; prisons; sheriff officers.

Although the prevalence of Highlanders among Glasgow's police in the nineteenth century has been discussed by Charles Withers, no advertisements for the Lowlands have been identified.[83] By 1870, six advertisements for Gaelic-speaking policemen had appeared in the *Courier*, three each from Ross-shire and Inverness.[84] In the Inspector of Constabulary of Scotland's report for 1865 it was noted that all twenty constables in the Inverness-shire Constabulary were required to have both Gaelic and English which, alongside poorer pay than other counties, was seen as limiting the choice of candidates.[85] A language preference in recruitment was not limited to the most strongly Gaelic-speaking areas with Caithness, Perthshire and Bute all advertising for Gaelic-speaking constables at various points.[86]

Furthermore, it was not only among the lower ranks that an ability to speak Gaelic was valued. The position of Superintendent of Police for the county of Inverness was advertised in 1857. There was no mention of Gaelic in the advertisement and, when the Constabulary Committee met, it emerged that of twenty-two applications only one, from William Murray, an Edinburgh-based policeman originally from Kildonan, mentioned being a Gaelic speaker.[87] Gaelic became one of the committee's key points of discussion with Sheriff William Colquhoun supporting the application of David Anderson, Assistant Superintendent for the county. Anderson's lack of Gaelic was viewed by the non-Gaelic speaking Sheriff as something of an advantage:

> He [Colquhoun] had had to do with the Small Debt Court for a great many years; he was thankful to say he did not have one word of Gaelic, and believed that he got better through the business of the Court without it. If the regular force of the police were acquainted with Gaelic, he believed it was a matter of perfect indifference whether the Superintendent knew it or not. Indeed, if asked whether the Superintendent were better with Gaelic or without it, he would say without it![88]

Nonetheless, the meeting voted eighteen to five that Gaelic should be regarded as a highly desirable qualification for the office and Murray was appointed by a majority of four votes. In little over a year he was appointed Chief Constable of Inverness.[89] That the language continued to be well-represented at the highest levels in the Inverness Constabulary is evident from the advertisement for Murray's replacement in 1882 when Gaelic was introduced as a

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[82] *Report of her Majesty's Commissioners of Inquiry*, p. 83.
[83] C. W. J. Withers, '"The Long Arm of the Law": Migration of Highland-born policemen to Glasgow, 1826–1891', *The Local Historian*, 18, 3 (1988), pp. 127–35.
[84] *Inverness Courier*, 6 July 1854; 27 Dec. 1855; 18 Feb. 1864; 9 Oct. 1862; 11 May 1865; 26 Aug. 1869. Perhaps the earliest advertisement for Gaelic-speaking policemen is that which appears in *The Inverness Advertiser*, 28 June 1853.
[85] *Seventh Report of Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary of Scotland* (1865), p. 19.
[86] *John O' Groat Journal*, 29 Dec. 1859; *Inverness Courier*, 20 July 1878; *Glasgow Herald*, 16 July 1891.
[87] *Inverness Courier*, 30 April 1857.
[88] *Inverness Courier*, 4 June 1857.
[89] *Inverness Courier*, 18 Mar. 1858.

requirement and the appointee, was the Gaelic-speaking Chief Constable of Sutherland, Alexander McHardy.[90] It was not only in Inverness that Gaelic was seen as a qualification for high-profile police roles with the post of Chief Constable of Argyllshire advertised as one for which Gaelic was considered 'a recommendation', and one to which Sutherland-born Gaelic speaker, Colin MacKay was appointed.[91]

The benefits of police constables being Gaelic speakers went beyond the obvious advantage of ease of communication while carrying out their regular duties. They were, on occasions, called upon to act as interpreters for prisoners and witnesses. Dalmally constable, John Anderson, was sworn in as interpreter by the non-Gaelic speaking Sheriff of Argyll, Alexander Forbes Irvine, when Tiree land agitation prisoners were examined at Scarinish in 1886. Similarly, Ardrishaig police constable, Hugh McLellan, was sworn in in September to act as interpreter by Colin MacLachlan, Sheriff Substitute for Argyll.[92]

A Scotland-wide prison-building and renovation programme underway in the wake of the 1839 Prisons Act led to the recruitment of Gaelic-speaking warders and governors.[93] Between 1854 and 1877 there were no fewer than nine advertisements in the *Courier* for prison employees for Dingwall, Inverness and Lochmaddy, with Gaelic essential for every position. The other role in which Gaelic was seen as a qualification was that of sheriff officer with two instances of Gaelic speakers being required, one in Inverness (1851) and the other in Islay (1852).[94] It is evident, therefore, that Gaelic remained sufficiently ubiquitous throughout the century to necessitate the recruitment of Gaelic speakers for many positions within law enforcement, albeit never extending to the justiciary.

Estates and land

Census data shows that 19.15% of the population of the county of Inverness was employed in agriculture in 1881, whereas this represents a very small proportion of advertisements mentioning Gaelic, 3.91%. The majority of the jobs advertised are for land management rather than agricultural labourers or farm servants where recruitment would generally have been through feeing markets. There existed a range of views among landlords about what constituted desirable linguistic capabilities in those who acted as intermediaries between them and their tenants. The 8th Duke of Argyll appointed Lowlander, John Geekie, as factor in 1864, 'despite the objection of want of knowledge of Gaelic. In truth I do not think it wholly a disadvantage'.[95] Writing two months later he anticipated that creating a language barrier between tenants and factor by employing a factor unable to speak Gaelic might lead indirectly to increased emigration from his estates.[96] The factor tended to be a less than popular individual in Highland communities as recent studies have discussed and Geekie's linguistic marginalisation may have made what was an already isolated position even harder and have contributed to his alcoholism and eventual departure for Canada.[97] A view from the

[90] *Inverness Courier*, 26 Oct. 1882; NRS, 1891 Census 098/12/11;
[91] *Glasgow Herald*, 19 Jan. 1864.
[92] NRS, High Court Records, JC26/1886/294.
[93] D. F. Smith, 'Scottish Prisons under the General Board of Directors, 1840–61', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 15, 4 (Winter, 1983), pp. 287–312, 296.
[94] *Inverness Courier*, 9 October 1851; 12 Mar. 1852.
[95] NLS, Acc 8508/44 Bundle 6, Letter from Argyll to Sir John MacNeill, 17 Feb. 1864.
[96] K. Mulhern, 'The Intellectual Duke: George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, 1823–1900', (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2006), p. 6; NLS Acc 8508/43 Bundle 2, Letter from Argyll to Sir John MacNeill, 21 Mar. 1864.
[97] See, for example, A. Tindley, '"They sow the wind, they reap the whirlwind": Estate Management in the Post-Clearance Highlands, c. 1815–c.1900', *Northern Scotland*, 3, 1 (2012), pp. 66–85; E. A. Cameron, '"Not a popular personage": The factor in Scottish Property Relations, c.1870–1920', in A. Tindley, L. A. Rees and C.

tenantry's perspective was voiced by John Macpherson, from Glendale in Skye, who told the Napier Commission that their non-Gaelic-speaking factor, 'is not a suitable factor for us, for he does not speak our language, and many of us cannot speak English'. When it was pointed out that another less than popular Skye factor, Donald Macdonald 'Tormore', was a Gaelic speaker, MacPherson maintained the importance of the factor being able to communicate with tenants, 'We would prefer Tormore to him. People were saying to me to-day that they would accept of any factor who would be placed over them who could speak their language, and of good character, from anywhere in the three kingdoms'.[98] A bye-law reported to have been introduced by the Duke of Sutherland's forester in 1892 to ban those employed by him using Gaelic at work hints at tensions between Gaelic and non-Gaelic speaking workers and at attempts to regulate language use in the workplace.[99]

Twenty-three land-related jobs mentioning Gaelic appeared in the *Courier*, increasing from one in each of the 1830s and 1840s to a peak of eight in the 1870s. The majority of these involve some form of estate management – factors, estate/farm managers, overseers, ground officers, gamekeepers – with the occasional advertisement for foresters, ploughmen, and gardeners. The increasing prevalence of deer forests in the Highlands in the later decades of the century is reflected in an increase in advertisements for gamekeepers, the first for a Gaelic speaker being from 1874 and a further four appearing in the following two decades.[100]

Of the ten *Courier* vacancies for estate managers, factors and ground officers, seven indicated that Gaelic was essential and the remainder indicated a preference for a Gaelic speaker, suggesting that the Duke of Argyll's view on the advantages of employing a non-Gaelic speaker was not necessarily a widely-held one. For the most part, neither estates nor landlords can be identified due to the non-specific nature of the advertisements which often little more in the way of location than 'a large Highland property'. There are two advertisements for Torloisk in the 1870s seeking a Gaelic-speaking overseer and a ploughman 'who must speak English and Gaelic', suggesting a need to fit into a bilingual working environment on this Mull estate.[101]

As with other employment sectors, those seeking work in estate management sometimes highlighted their linguistic qualifications. There are no fewer than four *Courier* advertisements for individuals seeking employment in estate management or as a gamekeeper which mention a knowledge of Gaelic, underlining the perception that this was an advantage, rather than a disadvantage, for those working on Highland estates.[102] Overall, these advertisements speak to the added value which Gaelic brought to those estate roles which involved working with what, in many areas, would have been a predominantly Gaelic-speaking tenantry.

Church

Reilly (eds), *The Land Agent: 1700–1920* (Edinburgh, 2018), pp. 39–55; R. K. Campbell, 'John Campbell ("Am Bàillidh Mòr"), Chamberlain to the 7th and 8th Dukes of Argyll: Tradition and Social Memory', in Tindley, Rees and Reilly (eds), *The Land Agent*, pp. 205–24; Mulhern 'The Intellectual Duke', p. 63; R. Black (ed.), *The Gaelic Otherworld: John Gregorson Campbell's Superstitions of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland and Witchcraft and Second Sight in the Highlands and Islands* (Edinburgh, 2005), p. 640 & p. 693 fn 42.

[98] *Report of her Majesty's Commissioners of Inquiry*, p. 370.

[99] *Highland News*, 9 April 1892.

[100] *Inverness Courier*, 7 May 1874.

[101] *Scotsman*, 28 Aug. 1875; *Inverness Courier*, 30 Aug. 1877.

[102] *Inverness Courier*, 2 Dec. 1875; 12 Oct. 1888; 8 Mar. 1892; 21 June 1895; see also *Scotsman*, 7 Nov. 1883.

Given that the churches endeavoured to provide Gaelic-speaking ministers in Gaelic-speaking parishes the appearance of only twenty-five church-related advertisements in the *Courier* may initially seem low, but it should be borne in mind that these vacancies would normally be publicised through the churches' own channels rather than in the press. None of the advertisements is for a permanent parish minister but rather for assistants, missionaries, or preachers for communities abroad. The same holds true for the advertisements in the Lowland press. Among the *Courier* posts, were ones for a probationer to act as a substitute minister in Inverness in 1867; a Gaelic speaking assistant minister for Barra in 1870; and an assistant for Lochalsh in 1873.[103] Some of the mission posts reflect migrant employment patterns with a Gaelic-speaking missionary wanted for the North East Coast Mission in 1862 to preach to fishermen and gutters, and in 1892 a missionary was wanted to work among navvies building the Highland railway.[104] Beyond Scotland, a minister was sought for London's Caledonian Asylum in 1822 and Gaelic-speaking preachers were wanted for Canada in 1828 and the British colonies more generally in 1838.[105] Most of the remaining advertisements were for precentors, more often for urban parishes than rural ones. Where a location was given, five were for Inverness parishes, and one each for Glasgow, Greenock, Croy and Invergordon. Similar demand from urban parishes is evident in *The Scotsman* and *The Glasgow Herald*, primarily from Glasgow and Greenock.

The shortage of Gaelic-speaking ministers had been a challenge for the church in the Highlands over the centuries, a problem exacerbated by the Disruption of 1843.[106] The regular appearance of advertisements for posts above and beyond parish ministers in the press confirms that there remained an unsatiated demand for Gaelic preachers throughout the century.

Conclusion

Analysis of a substantial body of data in the shape of job advertisements, has provided some granular detail on the use of Gaelic across a range of social domains and demonstrates that there was a linguistic dimension to the labour market in the nineteenth-century Highlands. The growing frequency with which Gaelic featured in advertisements in the course of the century, and the importance that a range of employers attached to a knowledge of the language, speaks to the ubiquity of Gaelic in communities across much of the Highlands and to the ongoing need for employees who could function in both Gaelic and bilingual work environments. Despite the continuing shift towards English in the Highlands, Gaelic was not only of value in professions such as teaching and the church, but a proficiency in the language was seen as advantageous in a number of other official spheres where roles involved regular interactions with Gaelic speakers. The majority of these positions were skilled and semi-skilled work, with less evidence available through advertisements for unskilled workers who would more commonly have secured employment through others means such as hiring fairs. While this data alone cannot untangle the complex linguistic landscape of the Highlands, it demonstrates accommodations being made for Gaelic speakers when new administrative structures were introduced, most notably in social welfare with the requirement that inspectors of poor in Highland parishes be Gaelic speakers, and with the

[103] *Inverness Courier*, 22 Aug. 1867; 10 Feb. 1870; 7 Aug. 1873.
[104] *Inverness Courier*, 30 Oct. 1862; 12 Apr. 1892.
[105] *Inverness Courier*, 31 Dec. 1928; 15 Aug. 1838.
[106] Withers, *Gaelic in Scotland*, p. 33ff.

recruitment of Gaelic speakers across a range of other new roles. It also confirms that the language remained of value in transactional situations in the Highlands, despite some contemporary claims of obsolescence. There is some limited evidence for the growth in employment opportunities for Gaelic-speaking women as the century progressed, in both the public and domestic spheres, which may repay further exploration. Overall, what these advertisements demonstrate is the complexity of the linguistic landscape in the nineteenth-century Highlands and, crucially, the need for more detailed research on language usage across the full range of sociolinguistic domains in order to better understand interactions within Gaelic-speaking communities, communications between Gaelic speakers and authorities and, more broadly, the power dynamics which underpinned these interactions.

Figure 1. **Job advertisements mentioning Gaelic in *The Inverness Courier* by decade**

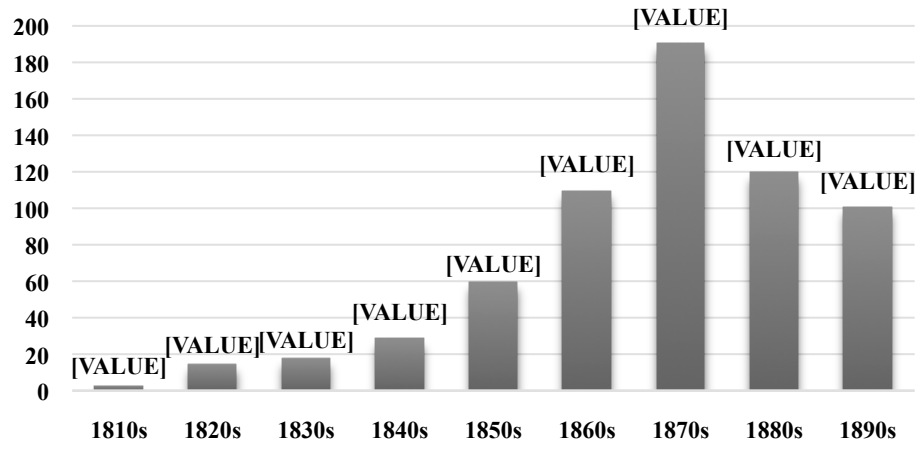

Figure 2. **Job advertisements in *The Glasgow Herald* and *The Scotsman* in selected years**

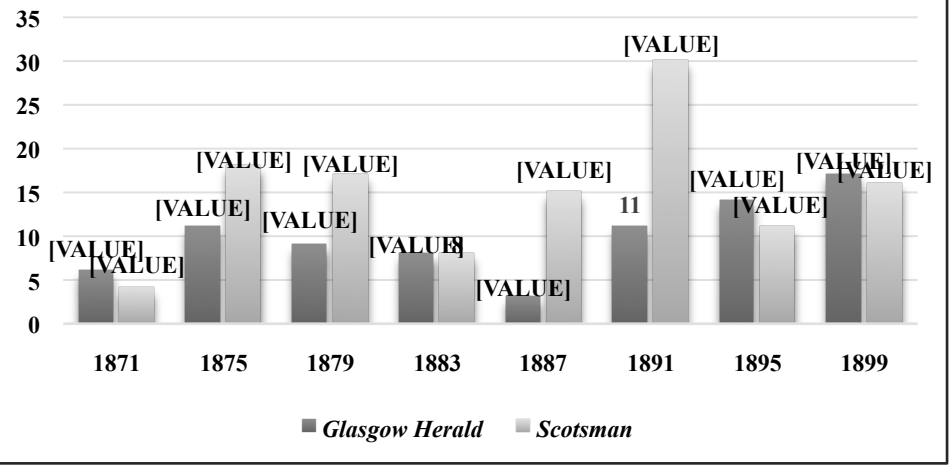

***Figure 3*. Number of separate jobs advertised in *The Inverness Courier*, *The Glasgow Herald* and *The Scotsman* in selected years**

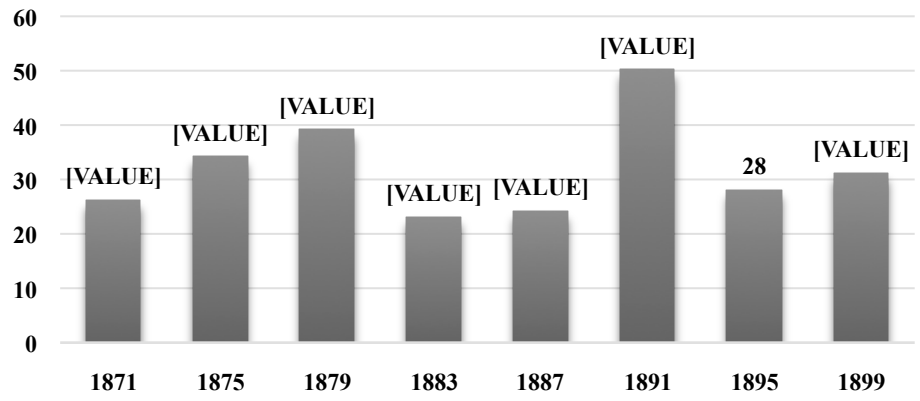

***Figure 4.* Types of employment advertised in *The Inverness Courier* 1817–99**

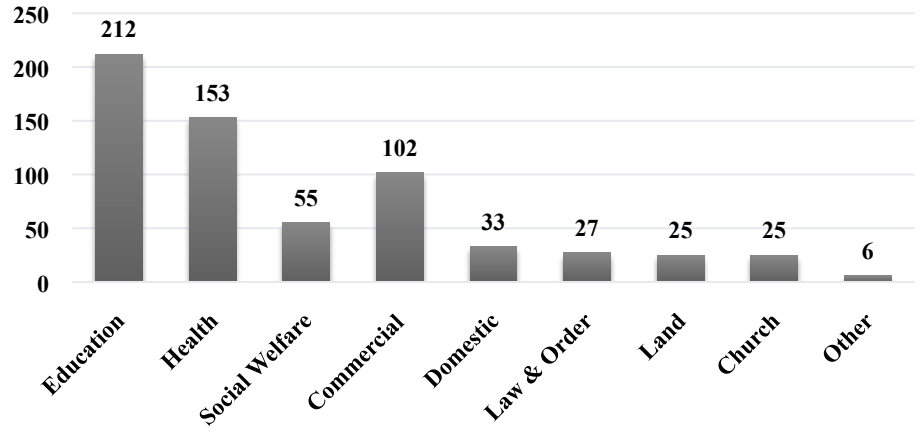

Figure 5. **Breakdown of job types mentioning Gaelic from *The Inverness Courier* 1817–99**