

Dandelion



Dig where you stand

Contents

Introduction	3
Citizen Fieldwork	5
ABC of Local Distinctiveness	8
Cycle of the Seasons	11
Scottish Gaelic Calendar Year	14
Working Together: 'The Lovedarg'	18
The Last Sheaf: Custom and Belief	22
Harvest Baskets	30

Introduction

Introduction

Growing and harvesting can include digging, but here we invite you to a different kind of dig – into our cultural past!

This resource booklet introduces some of the **cultural heritage, traditions, folklore, custom and crafts** associated with harvest and the growing year in Scotland. You will have heard about **citizen science** and this resource provides a framework for **citizen fieldwork**.

Topics invite exploration and reflection on the themes of **community, working together, celebration, hospitality, belonging, local distinctiveness** and **cultural diversity**.



Daisy harvesting wheat at the Latha Buana (Harvest Day), Farr 2020. Image: David Lintern

There are activities for young people to **connect with their own place** and, through taking part in **citizen fieldwork**, encourage learning about **cultural traditions** from families and neighbours – reflecting back the many stories and voices of our **diverse communities in Scotland** today.

Becoming Culture Makers for the Future

A **tradition** is a belief or custom with special meaning or significance passed down through generations within a family or community. Tradition can include things like recipes, songs, stories, crafts, clothes, games, activities, greetings, performances, dances and festivals. UNESCO calls this 'intangible cultural heritage,' or 'living culture,' which is important for building a **sense of place, identity, belonging** and understanding of cultural diversity in our communities.

A **living culture** holds traditions that are connected to the past but are always changing, reflecting contemporary society. Our places today have cultural influences from all over the world.

"Tradition is a story, learned from the past, shaped in the present, looking to the future"

(Gary West, 2012, creative ethnologist for the Dandelion project)

Invitation

If tradition is an unfolding story looking to the future, we invite you to be a part of it: to become culture makers for the future. We encourage you to explore the diverse cultures of your communities and create exciting new-look harvest traditions for years to come!

Make sure you also check out the separate Harvest Home resource to help you create your very own harvest festival.

Citizen Fieldwork

What is citizen fieldwork?

Fieldwork is the process of collecting information about people, cultures and natural environments. It is important in both the social and natural sciences, and is conducted outside a laboratory or classroom in our everyday surroundings.

Maybe you have heard of 'citizen science' – this is when members of the public or community collaborate in scientific research to increase scientific knowledge. When it comes to culture, **citizen fieldwork** is about collecting information from the people we know in our own home or community. We can learn from the memories and stories they share about their lives and experiences.



Citizen Fieldwork Questions:

Across these resources there are questions you might like to ask a member of your family, neighbour, friend, or someone you know in your community. You may wish to record your fieldwork interviews as a legacy for the future or use them as inspiration for creative work. Look out for boxes like this to find those citizen fieldwork questions.

Becoming Citizen Fieldworkers: tips and advice

Citizen fieldwork is about collecting information from the people we know in our own home or community and asking them to share memories and stories about their lives and experience. When lots of people remember the same things, it becomes a 'cultural memory.' Very often, this kind of history isn't written down in history books, so we try to capture people's memories and experiences in their own words and voices. When interviews are recorded and documented, this becomes what we sometimes call 'oral history' – a treasure trove for future generations to come.

With a bit of practise, anyone can become a good fieldworker. At the same time, people can spend a lifetime perfecting their craft! In the simplest sense, conducting a fieldwork interview is about having a really good conversation with someone about what is meaningful to them. It's about being curious and learning to listen. It is important to make sure that we are being kind, careful and respectful to the people we are interviewing.

It's a skill to be able to ask good, open-ended questions (that can't be answered with 'yes' or 'no!'). For example,

- 'Instead of asking, 'Do you like vegetables?' say, 'Tell me about the vegetables you like to eat'.

As a next step: Think about what you might like to do creatively with what you have learned – perhaps a piece of writing, drama, or art. If you recorded audio material, you could create a podcast or radio show.

TOP TIPS

- Think about who you are going to interview and what you want to find out. Use the worksheet to write down some questions.
- You may wish to record the interview in some way (written notes or audio recording on a phone or other recording device). If you are recording the audio, make sure you ask permission from your interviewee.
- Find a quiet place with no distraction for the interview. Make sure your interviewee is comfortable.
- If you are using a device, make sure you don't run out of batteries – bring a spare or take a charger!
- During the interview, try not to interrupt the person while they are talking and really *listen* to what they are saying. Try not to rely on your prepared questions too much. Interviews can be unpredictable and surprising, and that is what makes them interesting! Is there anything your interviewee has said that is really interesting that you would like to ask more about?
- If you have recorded the audio, you could try 'transcribing' parts of it. This means listening and writing down what the person has said.
- Make sure you make a backup of your audio on a computer or in the cloud.

Citizen Fieldwork Worksheet

- Who do you want to talk to? What would you like them to talk about? Find a member of the family, neighbour, or somebody you know and trust in your community and ask them if they'd like to be interviewed.
- If you are recording the audio, make sure you ask permission from your interviewee.
- It's important also to write down in the notes box the name of the person you are interviewing ('the contributor'), as well as the date, time and place that you did the interview.
- Follow up with your interviewee, thank them for their time and let them know if you use the interview material.

Write your questions here.

What do you want to find out? What would you like your interviewee to speak about?

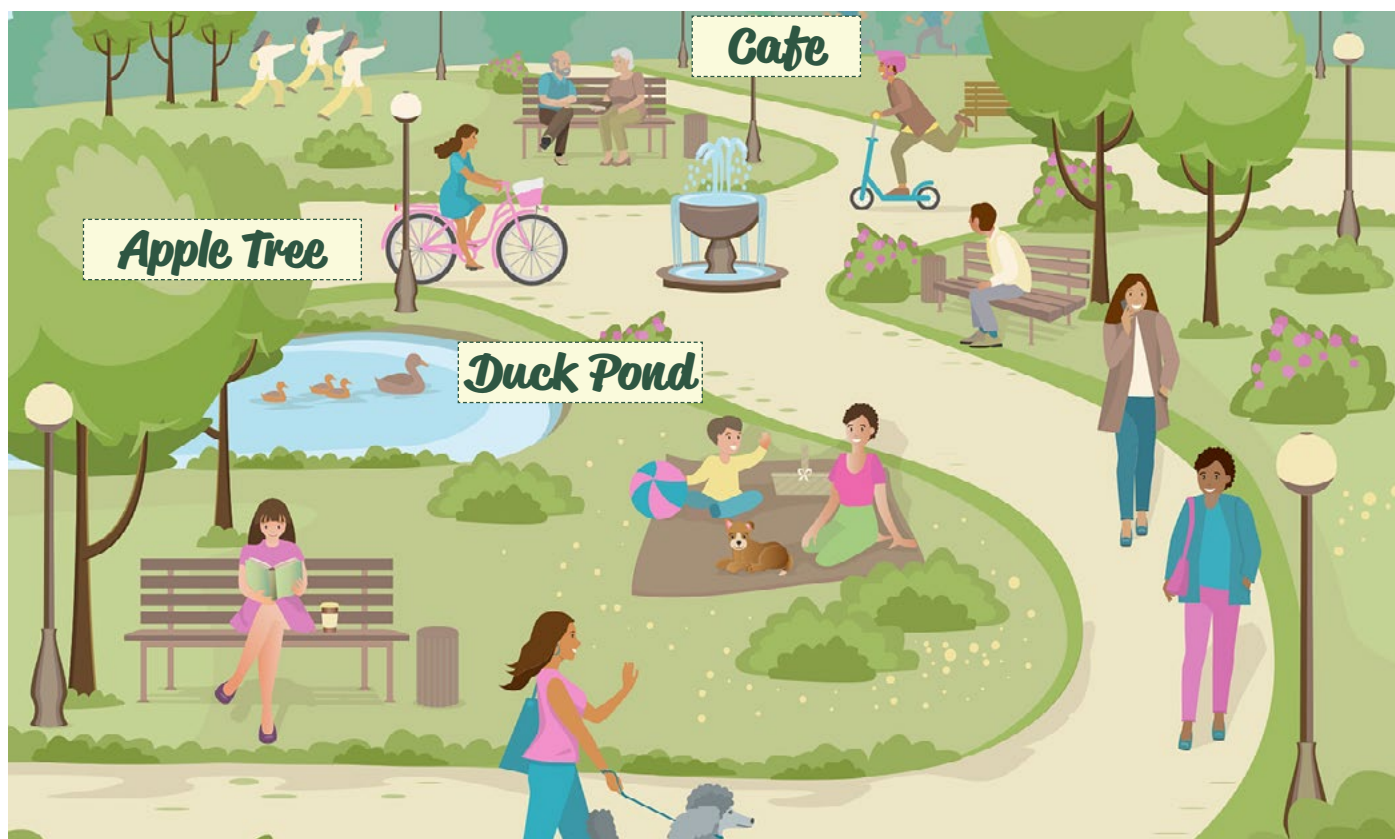


Field Report Notes

Contributor (interviewee) name:
Fieldworker (your) name:
Date and Time:
Location:

ABC Of Local Distinctiveness

ABC of Local Distinctiveness



The ABC of LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS is a simple tool that can help young people connect with their local place and what makes it distinctive.

The idea is to try and find something for every letter of the alphabet. Different people will value and come up with different things, but that's what makes it interesting! You can do it together as a class or it can be completed in pairs or small groups. It also could be a take-home exercise for individuals.

The ABC can be used as the basis for a piece of visual art, a map, a poem or song, a local guided walk or even a menu!

How to create your ABC:

- 1. Decide upon a definition of your area, your place. This could be your school, or it could widen out to the local neighbourhood, village, town, or island.**
- 2. Think about any food, growing or plant-related words, features, places, items relating to your place. They can be current or from the past.**
- 3. Decide how you want to complete your ABC. You can use the downloadable template provided or you could take photos or sketch images. You might put a big sheet of paper on the wall and just add things any time you think of them.**

This ABC resource has been adapted from **Common Ground**, an arts and environmental charity based in Dorset, England. For more information about local distinctiveness see:

<https://www.commonground.org.uk/local-distinctiveness/>

ABC of local distinctiveness template

<i>A</i>	<i>N</i>
<i>B</i>	<i>O</i>
<i>C</i>	<i>P</i>
<i>D</i>	<i>Q</i>
<i>E</i>	<i>R</i>
<i>F</i>	<i>S</i>
<i>G</i>	<i>T</i>
<i>H</i>	<i>U</i>
<i>I</i>	<i>V</i>
<i>J</i>	<i>W</i>
<i>K</i>	<i>X</i>
<i>L</i>	<i>Y</i>
<i>M</i>	<i>Z</i>

Cycle of the Seasons

Cycle of the Seasons

Understanding the yearly cycle of the seasons is important for growing food and harvesting in Scotland. In farming communities, key tasks are associated with different seasons.

If you are growing plants outside it will help you to know how the weather changes over the year and when is the best time of year to prepare the soil or sow your seeds for example, to give you the best chance of a tasty harvest. You might look at a website or watch a gardening programme on television to help you know what to do and when.

In the past, farming communities in Scotland followed the seasonal cycle of the **Scottish Gaelic Calendar Year**.

This calendar was based on the patterns in nature that people observed. It was organised around celestial events such as the solstices and equinoxes by which seasons could be predicted, which meant that the right time could be calculated for the main agricultural tasks of the farming year. These included:

- **ploughing, harrowing and tilling** – preparing the soil for the new year's crops in the spring
- **sowing** – planting the seeds
- **harvest** – including **reaping** or cutting the grain crop; **threshing** or separating the grain; fruit picking and the harvesting of potatoes and vegetables



Citizen Fieldwork Questions:

Is there anyone in your family or neighbourhood who remembers taking part in the growing year and harvest in their part of the world? What do they remember about it?

The harvest, of course, was a very busy time in the farming year. It involved whole communities working in the fields alongside each other, usually including women and children. In times past, without machinery, it was hard work – it was a race against time and the weather! While the work was hard, it was also good fun – especially if the sun was shining, and children would often take time off school to help.

It was common for farmers to bring in the help of neighbours or to employ extra 'farm hands.' It was also not unusual for farm workers to work long days and well into the night if the moon was shining. Food like porridge, bread, beer, and bannocks – often cooked on the open fire – was designed to give them energy. They were also served Scotch broth at the side of the fields!



Learn more about Harvest in the separate Harvest Home resource created by Dandelion.

Suggested Activities

Language of the land.

Watch the video, **“Perthshire’s Rural Past – Farming”**. This short film is based on the memories of men, women and children who worked on farms in Perthshire in the middle years of the twentieth century. It shows the main agricultural tasks which were carried out at different times of the year and is narrated by retired farmers and farmworkers. The text beneath the video provides a very good summary of its contents.

Are there words in the video that you don’t recognise? Many of them belong to the Scots language, and there are many which refer to tools or processes associated with farming. Try searching in one of the online Scots language dictionaries at the links below. Examples might include:

dung – manure
singlin neeps – hoeing or thinning out turnips
sawin – sowing
rucks – hay stacks

Cycle of the Seasons in Creative Writing.

Write a poem or a short story inspired by the cycle of the seasons. You might like to use some of the Scots words you have heard in the video, or perhaps you’d like to use some words or terms you know from another language or culture. You can explore the resource links below to help find some information and inspiration!

- Scots words relating to weather and the seasons, Scots Language Centre https://www.scotslanguage.com/Weather_Blether_uid154/Across_Seasons_and_Time
- Scottish and multicultural seasonal customs, suggesting simple ways to encourage enjoyment and participation through recognising small changes in the seasons, from Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland (TRACS) <https://tracscotland.org/resources/a-scottish-seasonal-calendar/>
- Online Scots language dictionaries <https://dsl.ac.uk/> and https://www.scots-online.org/dictionary/scots_tips.php

Cycle of the Seasons in Visual Art.

Draw a comic strip which tells the story of the growing season here in Scotland, or in another place that you are familiar with.

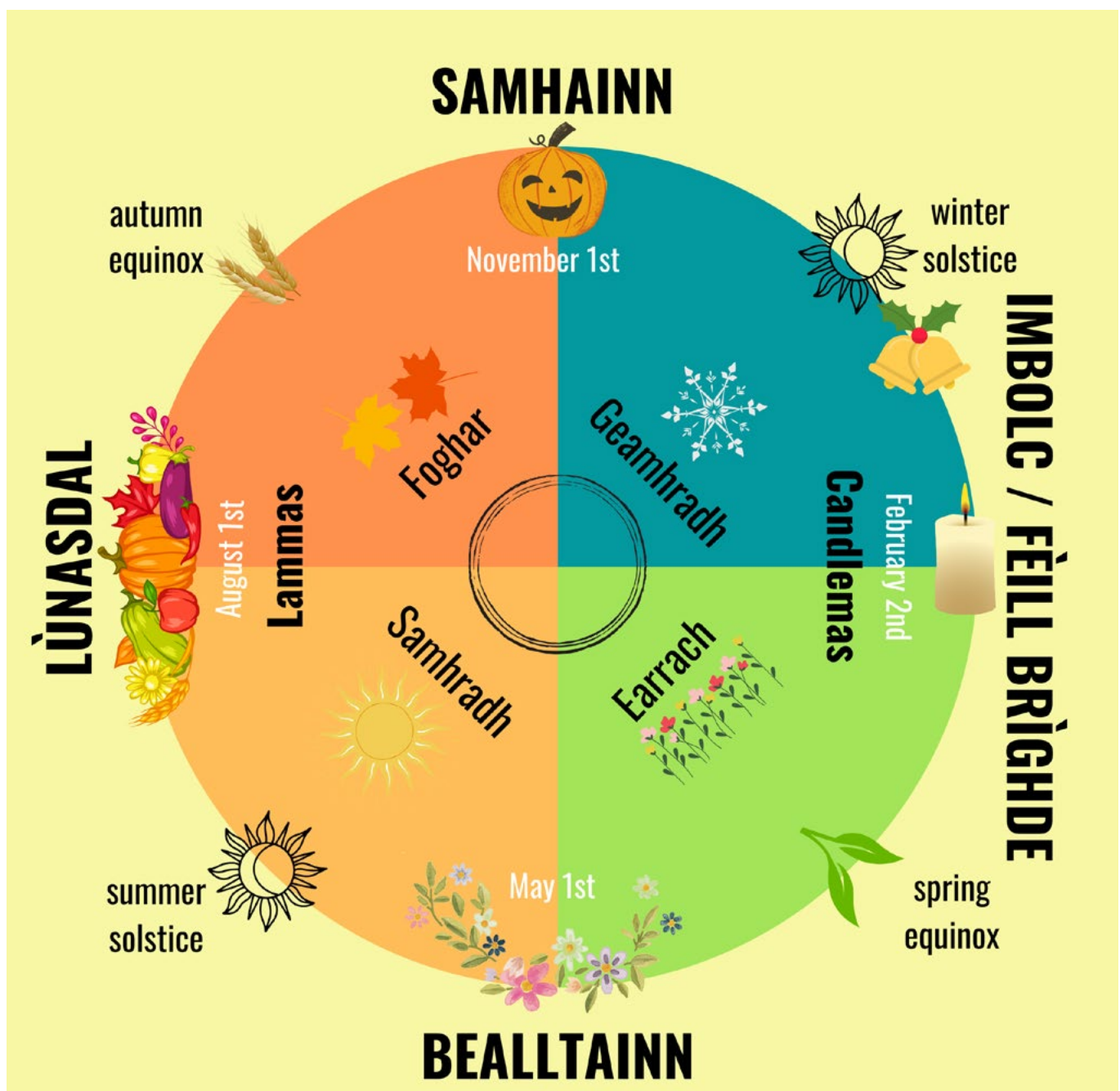
Scottish Gaelic Calendar year

The Scottish Gaelic Calendar Year

This Scottish Gaelic Calendar – also known as the Celtic Calendar – was based on observing nature and awareness of being a part of the environment. Each month had a significant theme, festival or important agricultural task associated with it.

The year was organised around celestial events such as solstices and equinoxes by which seasons could be predicted. For thousands of years, this was the only calendar necessary for most of the population, and many of the old traditions follow this interpretation of the year.

Solstices are the two times of the year when the position and tilt of Earth relative to the sun result in the longest day or the shortest day (amount of daylight in a day). Equinoxes are the two times of the year when the sun crosses the equator and daylight and nighttime hours are just about the same.



From Harvest to Halloween

In Scots and Gaelic speaking communities, the festival of **Lùnasdal** or **Lammas** was celebrated on the first day of August. It marked the beginning of a new season of harvest when the fields would be glowing with corn and reaping would begin. People would bake a 'Lammas loaf', which was often seen as symbol of good luck. The harvest period would continue until **Samhain** when the last stores for the winter months would be put away – this is our **Halloween**.

The year can be broken up into four quarters, with each quarter starting at the beginning of a new season. Click on the name in green text to hear the Gaelic pronunciation

- **Geamhradh** – Winter
- **Earrach** – Spring
- **Samhradh** – Summer
- **Foghar** – Autumn

The first day of each season is known as a Quarter Day. These are known as:

- **Samhainn** (November 1) – beginning of Winter
- **Imbolc, or Fèill Brìghde: or St. Brigid's Day** (February 2nd) – beginning of Spring
- **Bealltainn** (May 1) – beginning of Summer
- **Lùnasdal** (August 1) – beginning of Autumn

Each Quarter Day was seen as bringing a change in climate and weather conditions. Each one had its own festive ceremonies, with food, fruit, flowers, and symbols appropriate to the season – a mixture of local traditions and customs.

It was also believed that on these days, the boundary between this world and the supernatural otherworld was at its thinnest, and so rituals protected against any crossover!

For more Gaelic words, visit the Learn Gaelic Resource: <https://learngaelic.scot/>



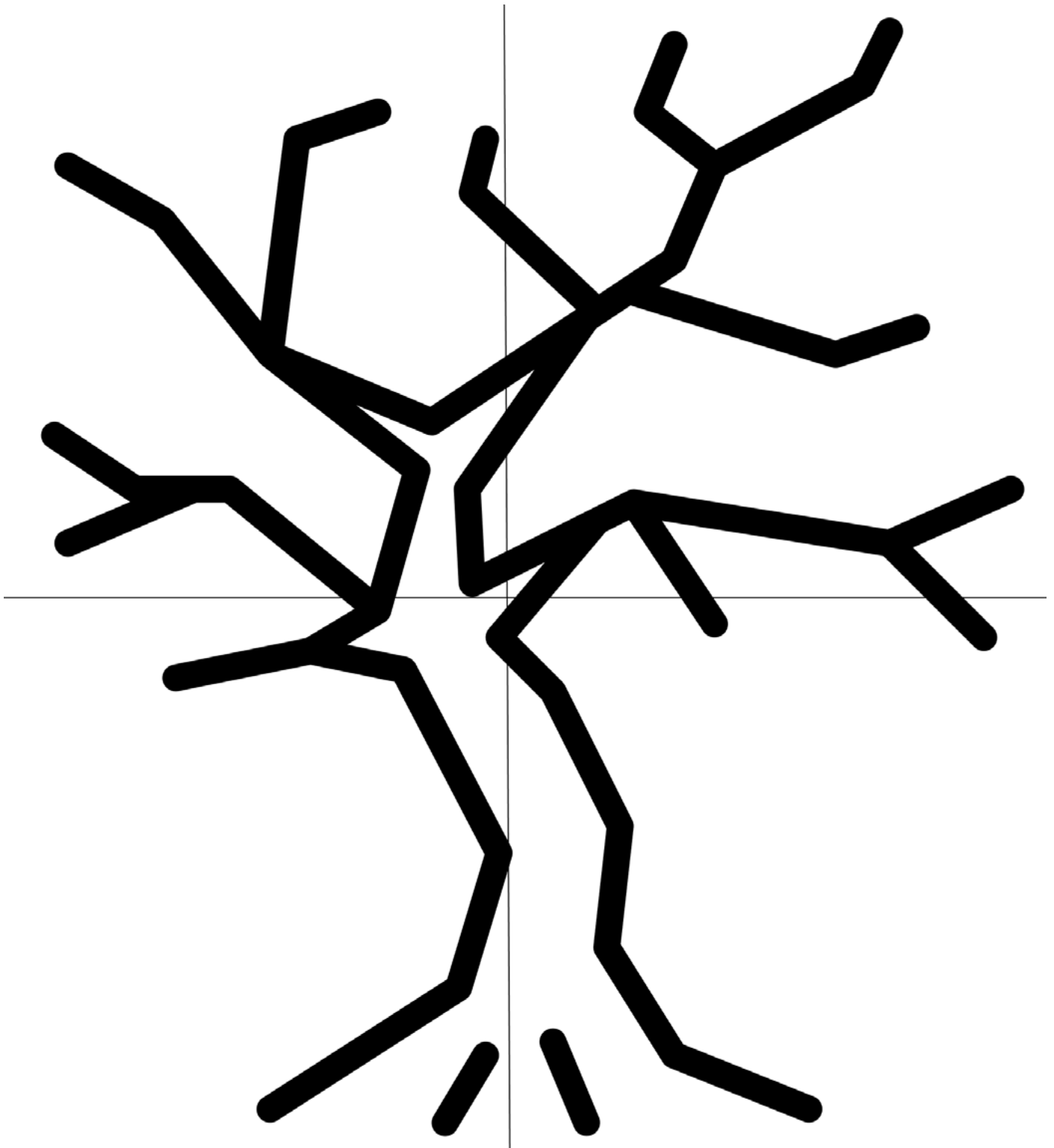
Pilar Lopez' rolls for Hornbeam Bakers' Collective's Local Loaves for Lammas event in 2010 by Chris Young / realbreadcampaign.org CC-BY-SA 4.0

A year in the life of an apple tree

Label each quarter of the picture with the name of a season. Colour and draw that quarter of the tree to show what it would look like at that time of year. Why does it change?

When will its apples be ready to pick and eat? When will you need to prune it (cut it back) so that it doesn't grow too big, so you can still reach the fruit?

You could include a person pruning in your picture. What other creatures might there be and in which season?



Working Together The Lovedarg

Working Together – The Lovedarg

The Lovedarg is a tradition which belonged to rural parts of Scotland in the past. 'Darg' is Scots for a 'a day's work' so Lovedarg means 'work done for love.' It usually took the form of a friendly day's ploughing, sowing or harvest help given to a neighbour in need.



The lovedarg was a service given not for money or even for charity, but for support, affection, and appreciation. The main reason for the lovedarg was to help new tenants to 'get on their feet'. These occasions were not a matter of embarrassment for the people who received the help, but rather the emphasis was on the esteem in which they were held by the community.

The idea was that by investing in your neighbour you were investing in yourself, because you never knew when you might need help too. Lovedargs were also significant events in the local community, celebrated as local carnivals or celebrations, followed by food and music.

The lovedarg was also offered if a family or person was in difficulty for some reason – if they had suffered grief or illness. It was also offered in celebration – perhaps of a marriage or new baby – and as a token of appreciation of service to the community, a way to celebrate people.





Below are four extracts of interviews with farm workers who took part in lovedargs in the past:

"A lovedarg – say you had just taken a farm over or had been ill and had fallen behind in your work, all the neighbours would come and plough the ground for you. And that's what you called a lovedarg. When we moved into a farm when I was a boy, we had no horses and the neighbours all came – and they ploughed the whole lot. And not only were they ploughing the ground, but they'd roll it and harrow it. Everything was done. That was to help you start, you see? It was great that altogether. It was kindness itself." (John Fisher, Glenlyon, Perthshire).



"I was at a lovedarg once at Newtyle. This farmer died, and what they called a lovedarg was given to the widow. And all the farmers from around about brought in a pair of horse or a couple of pairs of horse, and I was at that. The whole farm was ploughed in one day." (Dave MacDonald, Birnam, Perthshire)



"And we all helped one another – we all helped. The lovedarg covered the whole thing. If somebody was behind in their work, you all turned up with your plough and your pair of horse and started ploughing their field for them. Aye, that's been done at different times that I know of. Oh aye, the lovedarg was a common thing." (William Adam, Perthshire).

"There was more neighbourliness in these days than what there is now. Folk weren't living just for money entirely. It was more community spirit, you know, which you don't get nowadays. Money's done all that out." (John Fisher, Glenlyon, Perthshire).



1 & 4 School of Scottish Studies Archives SA1988.20; 2 SSSA SC 1986; 3 NMS Scottish Life Archive 1985/44

Mutual Aid Today

The lovedarg is an example of what we might call 'mutual aid'. The principle of mutual aid continues to this day in our towns and cities as well as in the countryside. In many cases this happens in a casual way amongst neighbours, while more formal groups also exist. Many local help groups have been set up across the country (and throughout the world) during the Covid 19 pandemic. Are there any in your area?

Here's a map of mutual aid groups set up during the Covid 19 Pandemic. <https://covidmutualaid.org/local-groups/>



Artwork: **Monica Trinidad**



Citizen Fieldwork Questions:

- While the lovedarg was originally used in agricultural production, the basic idea can be applied to many walks of life. Can you find any other examples of how groups of people get together to help someone in need? How do these work? How are they organised?
- People who took part in lovedargs saw them as playing a role in creating and sustaining a sense of community. Do people feel a sense of community where you live? What kinds of things do they feel help to build that?

Suggested activities

Create a modern lovedarg

Think of a way you could practise mutual aid in your own school or community. What would local people find helpful? Put your ideas into action. Some ideas include:

- running errands for community members in need
- seed or seedling gifting or swapping
- setting up a community fridge like this one in [Muir of Ord](#)
- cooking classes and community meals
- sharing skills, recipes and tips
- tool libraries and the sharing of gardening or household tools
- skill swapping
- running errands for community members in need

Design a lovedarg logo

Visual Art. Design a badge, logo or artwork which you feel captures the spirit of the lovedarg. An example is given below, reflecting the many hands of the community



The Last Sheaf

The Last Sheaf: Custom and Belief

Custom and belief, the role of tradition and superstition in the past and in our contemporary lives today

A superstition is a belief that certain events or things will bring good or bad luck. They are deeply rooted in human history and are found in different cultures around the world. They are an example of 'magical thinking' – the concept that the physical world can be affected by our hopes, wishes and actions.

In the past, having your grain crops saved for winter was crucial for survival. People had little access to science – like weather reports! – and perhaps unsurprisingly there were many beliefs and customs surrounding the harvest.



Kincardineshire maiden. Image courtesy of Elaine Lindsay

A sheaf is a bundle of grain stalks tied together after being cut and gathered. The last sheaf is the last bundle of grain stalks to be cut from the fields.

An ancient and widespread custom across northern Europe was related to the end of the harvest process and the cutting of the 'last sheaf' of the crop – perhaps oats, barley or wheat. The belief was that the 'spirit of the corn' resided within this last sheaf. Once cut, the last sheaf became a superstitious charm.

The charm could be a simple sheaf or plait of straws, but in some places, it was crafted into a corn doll, tied up with ribbons or even clothed. In Scotland the charm had various names – in Gaelic it was called the **maighdean-bhuana** (the harvest maiden) the **cailleach** (the old woman), or **clàidheag**. In northeast Scotland and the Northern Isles it was often called the **clyack**.



Corn dolly from Angus. Image courtesy of Elaine Lindsay, www.somethingcorny.co.uk

People believed the charm was very powerful and good for the health of livestock, the luck of the household and safety of the people. Nobody wanted to be the person who finished the harvest last for fear of having the 'famine of the farm' (*gort a' bhaile*). The tradition of the last sheaf introduced an element of competition within the fields, which was thought to speed up the work and get the crop safely secured more quickly.

After the harvest feast, the sheaf was looked after and displayed in the home over winter until it was time to start the growing process all over again the following year, often fed to the birds, horses, or ploughed back into the field for good luck.



Citizen Fieldwork Questions:

We may think that superstitions are things of the past, but many of us still follow them! We might be superstitious about the way we celebrate certain things or times of year (such as birthdays, festivals, weddings) or things that we think might bring us good or bad luck (such as 'touching wood' or not walking under a ladder).

- What superstitions can you find in your family or community today? What makes people feel secure and hopeful? What ways do people try to increase their luck?
- Does anyone in your family or neighbourhood remember making corn dolls?

Here is an interview with a lady, Margaret Wisely, who remembered the last sheaf tradition from when she was a child.

Margaret Wisely: It was the finish of the harvest ye see, when aa the crop was cut. You were said to have a clyack ... a very old habit but it wis when I was young. The last sheaf that was cut, was supposed to be a small one and you dressed it up and this was the clyack maiden. It was taken into the house and hung up on the roof and then about New Year time it was put outside to the birds.

Emily Lyle: So every farm had it...

MW: Yes, different times though.

EL: And who actually cut the last sheaf? Was there anybody special?

MW: Well, it might have been cut with the scythe. I can't remember. In my home there might have been a bit in the middle of the field and you cut round about it and round about it, you see, and then there was just a little bit left in the middle and maybe it was cut with the scythe and tied up, and you put on a lot of bands, round it, you know, down below, another one and another one and dressed it up.

EL: After it was cut?

MW: Yes, yes.

EL: And who did that?

MW: Well, I couldna say, maybe if there was a young girl there she might have done it. And there were lots of women workers in the harvest fields.

EL: And you've actually seen this done to the sheaf. And how was it dressed up?

MW: Well, as a lady, as a girl. Some sort of bonnet on. In those days there were bonnets - sun bonnets and all the rest. And maybe a jacket or an old skirt or something. That was all.

EL: And would you see the ears of com?

MW: Yes you might. The face would be the ears of com. I canna remember if there was anything done to the face. I hardly think so.

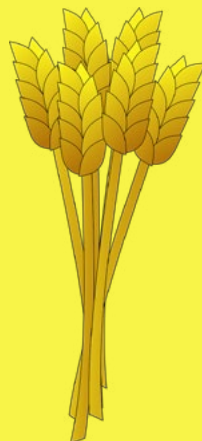
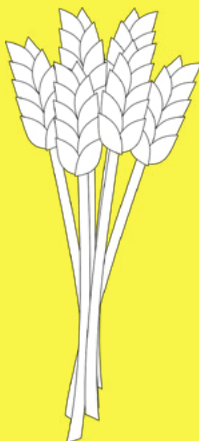
EL: And where was that put?

MW: It was hung up. There used to be hooks in all the roofs. The hook was for hanging legs of ham. You know when the pig was killed, they salted the leg of ham. It was rolled up and it was hung up there. And when you needed it you simply took it down, hacked off a bit and that was it. And the clyack sheaf was often hung up there and maybe left there until the com began to drop off and the housewife began to be annoyed at it, you see. It could be kept until Christmas or some time in the New Year and put out to the birds.

Margaret Wisely, New Pitsligo.

Recorded by Emily Lyle. Transcribed by Cathie Scott. School of Scottish Studies Archives SA1987.130

Tocher 59p 8-9



Make your own Hairst Knot

For each knot you will need:

4 stems of your chosen material. Wheat, oats, rye, barley, reeds or grasses can be used, you can make these knots from paper straws too.

Strong thread

Pair of scissors

Ribbon, dried flowers etc. for decoration (optional)

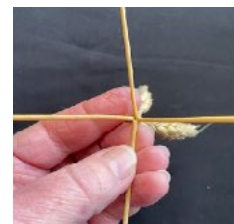


If your materials are dry, they need to be dampened by soaking in warm water for ¾ hour.

1. Tie 4 straws tightly together at the top of the stem just below the ears. I use a Clove Hitch but use a knot that you know, just make sure the straws are tied tightly. Trim the excess thread.



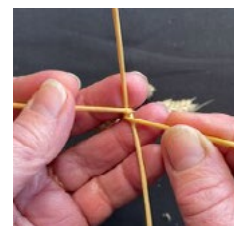
2. The plait we are using is called the Compass Plait. Start this plait with the corn ears hanging down under your hand. Open up the straws as shown into a cross shape with the straws pointing to North, South, East and West.



3. Starting with the South straw, fold it up over the centre of the cross and lay it to the lefthand side of the North straw. Then bring the North straw straight forward and place it where the South straw has just come from. You are swapping the straws over.



4. Now we do the same with East and West straws so that they too swap places. Then you go back to swapping North and South straws and then East and West straws. The straws always sit side by side so there are no diagonal moves.



Dig where you stand

5. Continue moving the straws in this manner, with each pair of straws swapping places until you have a 14cm-16cm length of plait leaving a small amount of unplaited straw. Then bring the 4 straws up together again into a bunch. Don't let go at this stage or the plait will come undone.



6. To form the Hairst Knot bring the start of the plait around in a loop to meet the end of the plait and tie together tightly.



7. Trim the stalks neatly, I like them to be just a bit shorter than the corn ears. Make sure that the loop is a good shape and leave lying flat on a table to dry thoroughly before decorating. You can use ribbon to decorate your finished piece.



8. I hope you have enjoyed making your own Hairst Knot and will hang them up and display them with pride.



Watch a video of Elaine Lindsay talking you through how to make your own Hairst Knot at <https://dandelion.scot/schools>

To buy straw, visit [Simply Straw](#)

For videos on straw preparation, have a look [here](#)

For more designs, visit www.somethingcorny.co.uk



Making a Kirn Maiden

For each Kirn Maiden you will need:

22-24 stems of your chosen material. Wheat, oats, rye, barley, reeds, or grasses can be used.

Strong thread

Pair of scissors

Measuring Tape

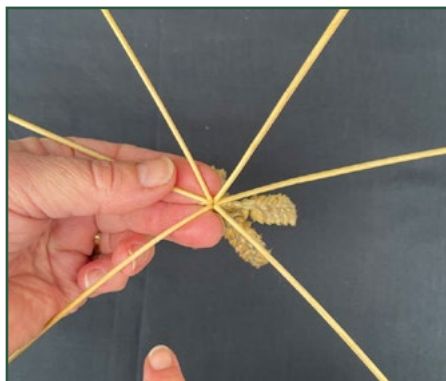
Ribbon, dried flowers etc. for decoration (optional)

If your materials are dry, they need to be dampened by soaking in warm water for $\frac{3}{4}$ hour.

1. Start by tying 6 straws tightly together at the top of the stems just below the ears. I use a Clove Hitch but use a knot that you know, just make sure the straws are tied tightly. Trim the excess thread.



2. The plait we are using is called the Fill The Gap Plait. Start this plait with the corn ears hanging down under your hand. Open up the straws into a circle, imagining that you are looking down on a wheel with 7 spokes. You only have 6 straws so in one of the positions you will have a gap where the missing spoke should be. I like the gap to be sitting right in front of me.



Dig where you stand

3. Begin with the straw on the top right (fig 1.) Fold this straw down over the two straws on the right and place it to 'fill the gap' where the missing spoke would be (fig 2.). Then move to the next straw clockwise (fig 3.), jump the next two straws clockwise and lay the straw in the gap left from the previous move.

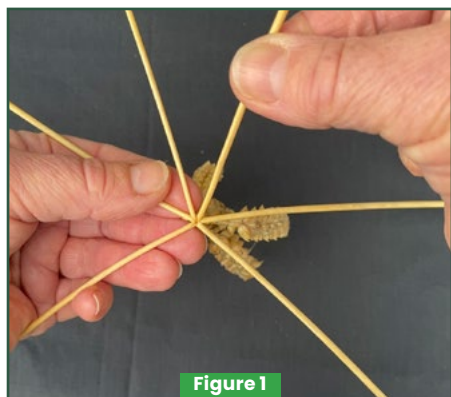


Figure 1

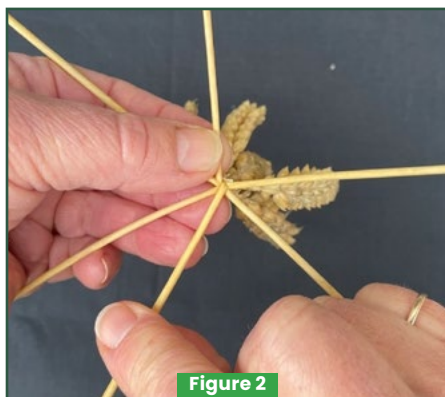
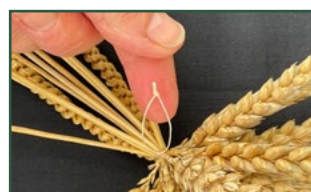


Figure 2



Figure 3

4. Move to the next straw clockwise in the circle and jump 2 straws to fill the gap left by the previous move. Each time folding the straw across the centre of the wheel. Continue following this instruction until the 12-13cm of plait is made.
5. Repeat so that you end up with two plaits of the same length. Tie the two plaits together at both the starting and finishing points of the plait.
6. Take the remaining 10 or 12 straws and tie them tightly together just below the heads. Lay these straws on top of the tied plaits and tie tightly together just below the heads. This will be the back of your work so make a hanging loop with your thread before you trim.
7. Tie the other end of the plaits to the bunch of straws, by first pushing the end of the plaits up to encourage the shape of the design. Once you are happy with the shape tie them tightly to the bunch of straws. Tying tightly will help the straws to splay out.
8. Trim the long straws to approx. 15cm from this last tie. Decorate with a ribbon if you want.



Watch a video of Elaine Lindsay talking you through how to make your own Kirn Maiden at <https://dandelion.scot/schools>

To buy straw, visit [Simply Straw](#)

For videos on straw preparation, have a look [here](#).

For more designs, visit www.somethingcorny.co.uk

Harvest Baskets

Harvest Baskets:

the most sustainable tool of all!



Harvest Basket from Moray, image courtesy of Karen Collins, www.naturallyuseful.co.uk

There are some cultural traditions that are universal, found throughout history all over the world. A good example is the basket: people have been weaving harvest baskets for thousands of years!

Every culture in the world has developed a technique of making baskets unique to their own local place. They come in all shapes, sizes and colours depending on the plants or materials available – such as reeds, rushes, grasses or bendy wood such as willow. We're all encouraged to use less plastic, and the basket is the most sustainable tool of all!

Baskets are crafted for different reasons, including carrying seeds for sowing during planting time or gathering food such as fruit and vegetables at harvest time. Some are very simple and practical while some are highly artistic and ornate with patterns. Baskets often play a part in celebrations and festivals too, and some have special traditions or superstitions associated with them.

Kishie Baskets

There are even different traditions of basket-making in different parts of Scotland. The creel, or **cliabh** in Gaelic, is a word often used to describe baskets in Scotland generally. One famous example is the kishie basket from Shetland. Kishies were traditionally used to carry vegetables, fish or peat on the backs of both ponies and people.

There aren't many willow trees on Shetland, so people had to craft baskets and creels from other materials like oat straw, soft rushes, docken, marram grass and even heather. Resilient and creative! Local materials were harvested carefully to make sure that there would still be some left for other people or for later on.

People would traditionally make their kishie baskets in the winter. This was a social as well as a practical occasion. People would gather together with friends and neighbours to spend the evenings 'winding simmens' – a kind of rope made from plants – while sharing music, song, stories and supper together.

Often, good luck charms would be added to baskets. You can listen to a man called Ertie from Shetland explaining a superstition associated with kishie baskets on Tobar an Dualchais: the online archive resource Tobar an Dualchais - Kist O Riches

<https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/track/35396?l=en>

"There was an old man in Yell who used to put a hen's egg in the kishie, out of which he was sowing his oats. At night he would very carefully hang the kishie up - the idea being that if he broke the egg, he would get a poor crop. As long as the egg was kept safe and whole, then he would be sure of a good crop of oats."



William Stout of Houll, Fair Isle, 1962. Photography by Alexander Fenton, School of Scottish Studies Archives



Citizen Fieldwork Questions:

Baskets hold many stories about people and place. Do you know anyone who has ever made a basket? What material did they use? Is that typical of the area? Were baskets used at special times or events? Are there any traditions or superstitions associated with these baskets?

Suggested Activities

Bling your basket

Find and decorate baskets for your class to use when sowing, planting and harvesting. If you can, try and find baskets from different cultures around the world.

Weave your own basket!

Perhaps there is someone in your local area who can help you.

Grow a basket

If you don't have material for making baskets, why don't you plant some willows for next year's harvest? Basket willows are fast-growing – a special species of willow that have been grown for centuries specifically for basket weaving and farm use. The stems are flexible and can be bent at a 90-degree angle without breaking when they are green!



Harvest Basket from Moray, image courtesy of Karen Collins, www.naturallyuseful.co.uk

Supporting Resources

- [The Art Of Basket Weaving | Loop | BBC Scotland](#)
- [Traditional Basket Weaving with Rhonda Brim](#)
- Woven Communities: Basketmaking Communities in Scotland <http://wovencommunities.org/>



Curriculum for Excellence

Experiences and Outcomes

level	CfE label	explanation
2	RME 2-09d	I am developing my understanding of how my own and other people's beliefs and values affect their actions.
2	SOC 2-04a	I can compare and contrast a society in the past with my own and contribute to a discussion of the similarities and differences.
2	HWB 2-34a	Through exploration and discussion, I can understand that food practices and preferences are influenced by factors such as food sources, finance, culture and religion.
2	EXA 2-02a	I have the opportunity to choose and explore an extended range of media and technologies to create images and objects, comparing and combining them for specific tasks.
3	RME 3-09c	I can explain how the different beliefs that people have, including beliefs which are independent of religion, relate to their moral viewpoints and how this leads them to respond to moral issues.
ALL	HWB 2-13a / HWB 3-13a / HWB 4-13a	Through contributing my views, time and talents, I play a part in bringing about positive change in my school and wider community.
3	EXA 3-02a	I have experimented with a range of media and technologies to create images and objects, using my understanding of their properties.
3AND4	LIT 3-05a / LIT 4-05a	As I listen or watch, I can make notes and organise these to develop thinking, help retain and recall information, explore issues and create new texts, using my own words as appropriate.
4	TCH 4-06a	I can examine a range of materials, processes or designs in my local community to consider their environmental, social and economic impact.
4	RME 4-09d	I am able to offer a basic analysis of the origins and development of beliefs and morality.
4	EXA 4-02a	I have continued to experiment with a range of media and technologies, handling them with control and assurance to create images and objects. I can apply my understanding of the properties of media and of techniques to specific tasks.
4	LIT 4-10a	I can communicate in a clear, expressive manner when engaging with others within and beyond my place of learning, and can independently select and organise appropriate resources as required.

This resource has been researched and brought together by three creative ethnologists, Steve Byrne, Mairi McFadyen and Gary West with editing for school use by Eve Keepax from Keep Scotland Beautiful. An ethnologist is a person who observes and records people's experience of life, their connections to each other, to places, to the past, to what they value and why, to their culture. Creative ethnology involves finding imaginative ways to share people's stories, encouraging us to notice connections from the past to the present and possibly into the future.

With thanks to **Elaine Lindsay**
Something Corny

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