# Mackay Country Schools Pack: How do we 'do' history?

## Why might you want to find out more about local history?

Learning about the past helps us to understand the present better. Different kinds of historical events and processes have shaped the world we live in today. These forces can be seen in lots of things like the food we eat, the languages we speak, the music we listen to, the location of townships and villages, the empty lands in the middle of Sutherland, the buildings around us, the places round the world where you might now have distant relatives, the places your family left to move here in the past – or even where your food and clothes and DVD players are made.

Recording a Tale: Lachlan McNeill (L), shoemaker, John Francis Campbell of Islay (C), and Hector MacLean (R), schoolmaster, Islay. c 1860.

IS0005: *V4b 206* From School of Scottish Studies Archive

## Methods: How can we find out about some of this history?

There are lots of different ways to do this. Can you try 2 methods from the list provided? Look at the cards which describe how to do each METHOD.

| Information Source: | Method |
|---|---|
| Local family and friends | Oral history recording |
| Local Archives, Museums & Libraries | Archive or 'desk-based' research |
| Internet | This is also desk-based research. |
| Observation and Mapping | Fieldwork |
| Everyday Life | Participant Observation |

Mackay Country Fieldworker, Shona Munro, collecting photos and stories. She is using two METHODS. Do you know what they are?
Melvich Hall, 2004. IS0007

## Sharing and recording what we learn

Once you have done your research what are you going to do? There are lots of different ways of sharing what you have found out. Look at the list of Methods and the Cards which describe each one. Can you choose 2 methods to record and share what you have found out?

| Method |
|---|
| Use Music |
| Do a Presentation |
| Try Art |
| Use Language |
| Try Marketing |
| Be a Journalist |
| Lead a Guided Walk |
| Direct a Film |

Essie Stewart telling a story in Skerray Hall. In the background is a Mackay Country slide show and exhibition about The Summer Walkers.
Which METHOD do you think Essie is using?

## Methods: How can we find out about some of this history?

### Information Source: Local family and friends

### Description of Method

Oral history recording – ask local people about the past and the present. Think about what you want to find out and make a list of questions.

### How Do We Do It?

You can take notes, record the person talking or video the person. You must ask permission first. You can also talk to groups of people if you want. Take photos at the same time to keep another kind of record. This is a good way to get detail about life in the past and a good way to get 'forgotten voices' – people often overlooked and ignored in history.

Mackay Country Fieldworker, Gail Ross talking to Hughina Elrick – Achriesgill, Eddrachilles, 2004. IS0007

## Methods: How can we find out about some of this history?

Information Source: Local Archives, Museums & Libraries

### Description of Method
Archive or 'desk-based' research using documentary sources.

### How Do We Do It?
Make a visit and find out what sort of books, photos and documents are there to help you. But remember – always think about who wrote an old record. Often the victors write history – whose voices are missing? Were there people around at the time who might have taken a different view of events from that of the author eg The Statistical Accounts?

Mrs Pennie and friends consulting the Mackay Country Archive.
The Anchorage, Scourie - May 2005 IS007

## Methods: How can we find out about some of this history?

### Information Source: Internet

### Description of Method
This is also desk-based research.

### How Do We Do It?
You can find old records, pictures showing life in the past, memories of days gone by and information about history projects all over the world. You could compare life here with another place. There are lots of useful and interesting websites. There is a list in this pack but you might find other ones that you can share with other pupils or other schools.

Volunteer, Sean Mackay, at the Mackay Country Photoclub
Scourie Hall - 2004 IS0007

## Methods: How can we find out about some of this history?

### Information Source: Observation and Mapping

### Description of Method

Fieldwork

Learn to recognise signs of past life in the landscape. Record what different kinds of land is used for now and in the past. Observe what sort of flowers, birds and animals are found there in different seasons. Find out the old local placenames and record them. Look for clues to geology and the Ice Age.

### How Do We Do It?

For this you need to walk around. Use an old map or a photocopied map that you can use for taking notes. Take a notebook too and a camera. Don't go alone – do this work in twos, tell someone where you are going and when you will come back – and ask permission if you are going into inbye land. Learn to use a map and compass.

Students exploring Smoo Cave, Durness

Photograph by kind permission of North West Highlands Geopark

## Methods: How can we find out about some of this history?

### Information Source: Everyday Life

**Description of Method**

Participant Observation – this is what anthropologists do.

**How Do We Do It?**

Think about what is distinctive about where you live and the local culture. How do people in your area celebrate special occasions? Would people on the other side of the world choose different events as 'special' or celebrate differently? Keep a diary and try to observe and record local stories, traditions and everyday things which might be different from elsewhere. Take special note of what people around you feel is important to them – local views may vary. Take photos too. Find out about another culture and compare your local observations with somewhere else.

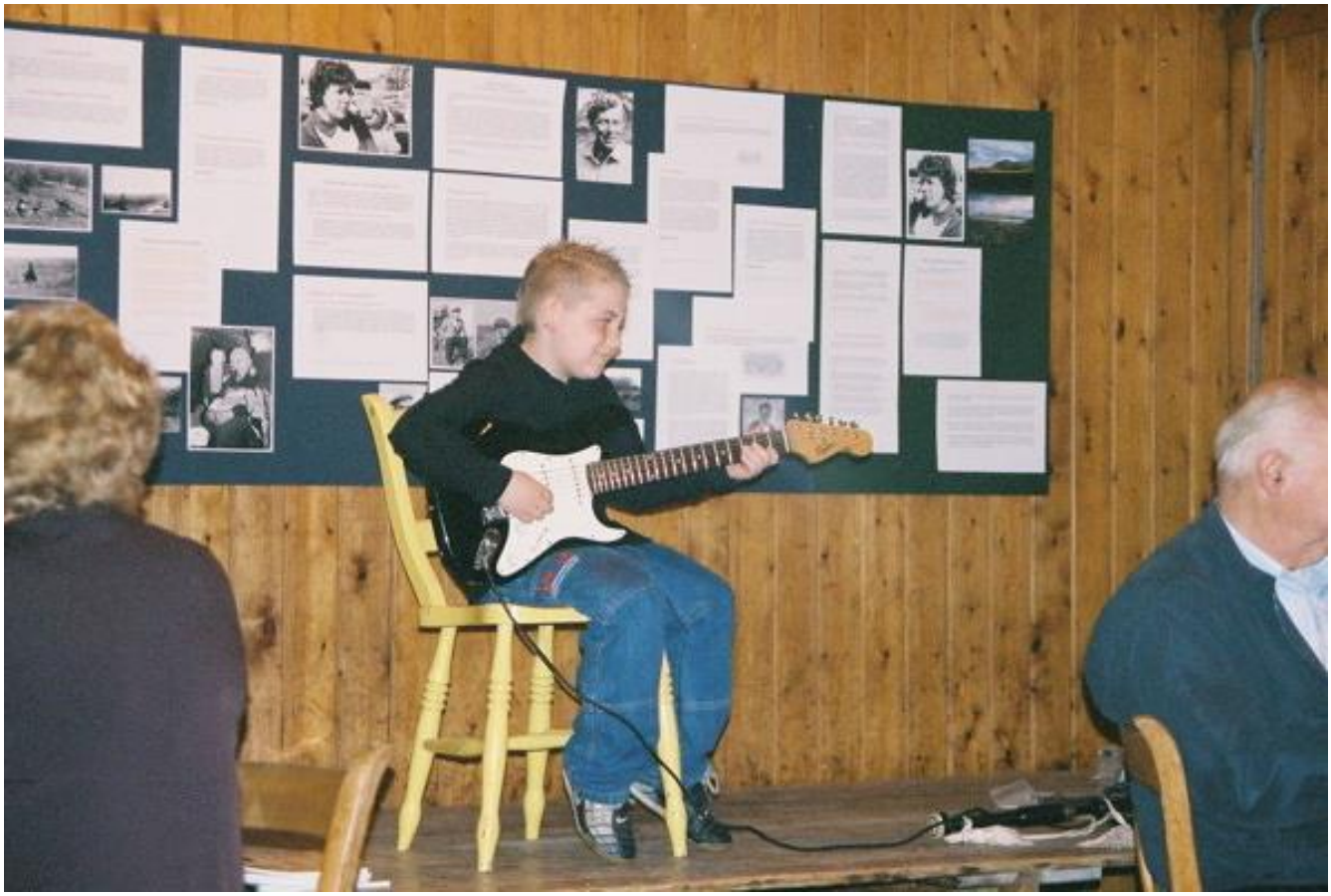
Collecting photos and stories – Mackay Country staff members Meg Telfer and Sarah Beveridge with Nellie Robertson. Strathy Hall 2004.
IS0007 – Strathy Photoclub 2004 - No 24

## Sharing and recording what we learn

**Method:** Use Music

### Description

In the Gaidhealtachd it is traditional to make up songs about history or current events. People often reuse old or popular tunes. Can you make up a song or a tune about what you have learned?



xxx playing at the Mackay Country Music & Bards Ceilidh, Armadale Hall.
May 2005, IS0007

## Sharing and recording what we learn

**Method:** Do a Presentation

### Description

Make a Powerpoint presentation about what you have learned using quotes and pictures. Present this to the class.

Joan Campbell, Melvich, making a presentation in Armadale Hall.

May 2005, IS0007

## Sharing and recording what we learn

**Method:** Try Art

### Description

Use drawing, painting, sculpting, collage, sewing, knitting – or any other artistic approach - to describe what you have learned.

xxx drawing at the Mackay Country Back to the Future Exhibition in Durness Hall. Artwork and poems about local history and everyday life by Mackay Country Primary Schools in background.

May 2005. IS0007.

## Sharing and recording what we learn

**Method:** Use Language

### Description

Can you write a poem, a story or a short play about what you have learned? Make sure you use local words and placenames. Try to use some local Gaelic too.

Essie Stewart telling a story in Skerray Hall. Essie can tell stories in Gaelic and English.
May 2005. IS0007

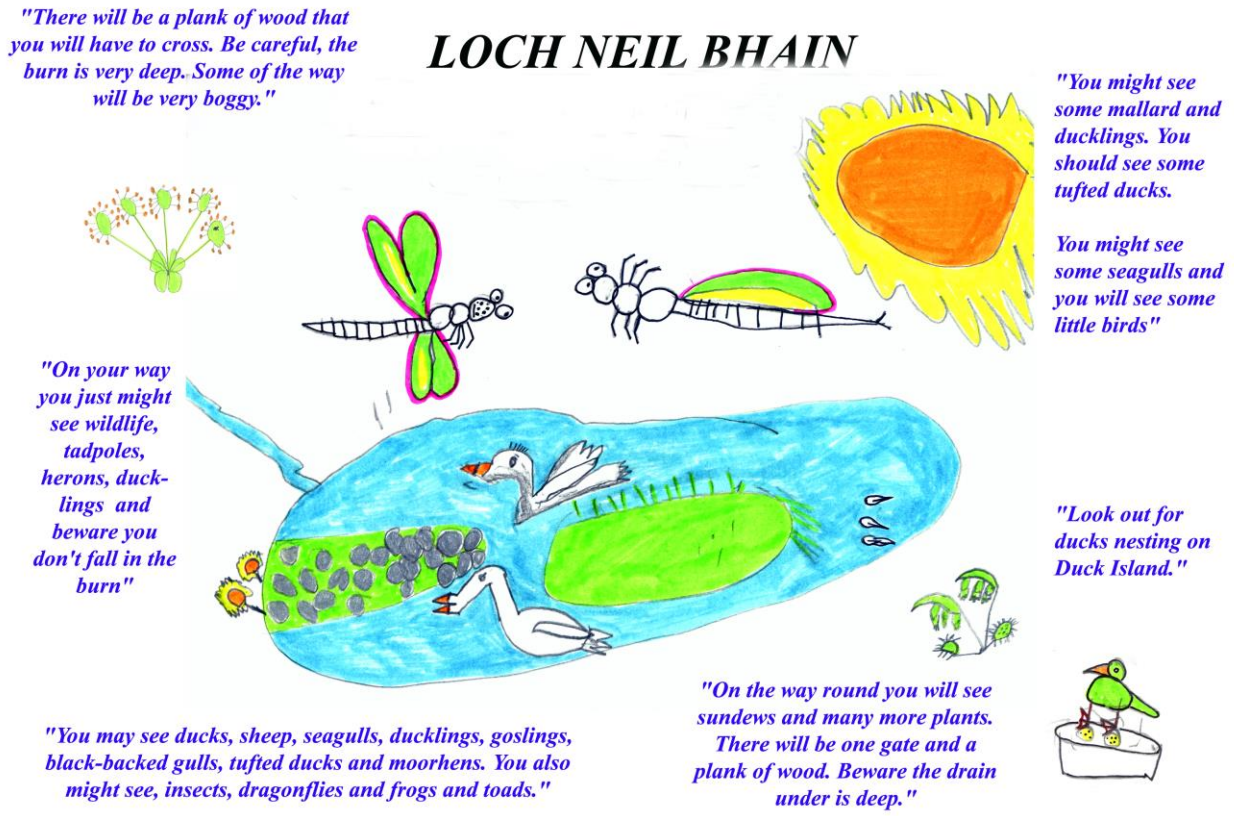
## Sharing and recording what we learn

**Method:** Try Marketing

### Description

*What is there to see here?* Make a brochure about interesting or important local sites. Describe them and use photos or create drawings to illustrate your brochure.

*What makes this area special?* Make a big poster to summarise what you have found out and 'sell it' to other people.




Back page of a leaflet made by Stoer Primary School as part of their 'What Lives in our Loch?' project, 2003. By kind permission of Assynt Crofters Trust.

## Sharing and recording what we learn

**Method:** Be a Journalist

### Description

Use what you have learned like a journalist or historian would. Write it all down in an essay – or report. Add in pictures and maps to illustrate what you have found out. Be sure to use quotes too.

Dr James Hunter, historian and journalist, reading a chapter from his new book at the Mackay Country Back to the Future Exhibition, Durness Hall.
May 2005. IS0007.

## Sharing and recording what we learn

**Method:** Lead a Guided Walk

### Description

Plan a short walk to show local places of interest. Lead the class on a guided walk to tell them all about the places. You might need to write notes for yourself and take a clipboard.

Stoer Primary School pupils lead a guided walk as part of their 'What Lives in Our Loch' project, 2003. By kind permission of Assynt Crofters Trust.

## Sharing and recording what we learn

**Method:** Direct a Film

### Description

Make a short documentary about what you have learned. Write a script. Talk about the history and geography. Go outside to film or film other class members making their own presentations using the different methods described in this pack.

Ronnie Lansley filming at a Strathy Feis led by Fiona Mackenzie.
Strathy Hall 2004. IS0007