

Outdoor Learning in Highland

Jacobikes! - Carr-Bridge Primary School

Sixteen Carrbridge Primary School P5, 6 & 7 pupils, up in the hills, doing Jacobite archaeology, art and drama. Via mountain bike!

After mechanically checking all the pupils' bikes – which were in remarkably good condition (thanks to support from all the parents), we rode out from the school for 3 miles along quiet roads and twisty single track, together with Mrs O'Reilly the class teacher and four other assistants.

The pupils were split into smaller packs of max 3 per adult, keeping well spaced to let any cars pass safely. Mine at the front did a great job of finding places to pull in and regroup.

We soon found ourselves ready to hit General Wade's military road – now an enticing steep and rutted gravel trail, winding through beautiful pine forest to the famous Sluggan Bridge.



Having reached the pretty stone-arched bridge, we began our search for abandoned limekilns. And further up, above the floodplain, we drew and mapped the ruins of a hidden Jacobite settlement.

Malcolm O'Reilly (arc guiding)

We enjoyed a mellow lunch in the tepee and a hot drink courtesy of the Kelly Kettle. Then the kids became tour guides – creating excellent presentations about the dramas of Jacobite and Redcoat life here.



Eventually, it was time to pack up. From an educator's point of view, it felt great to have achieved such a lot whilst at the ruined settlement. But to walk through the heather and see the bikes again, made me think "Wow, and we did all this on mountain bikes, too!"

We left our spot pristine and headed back down the rough grassy single track. Arriving back on the trail, several of the more gung-ho bikes needed a spot of twig and branch removal before going any further! We cleaned the short, steep loose climb back to the road and finished with an easy (and mostly downhill) ride back to school.

We got back with no dramas – just a lovely cruise in early afternoon sun, finding just the lightest spots of drizzle on the way.

A great day out and a brilliant achievement by pupils, parents and staff.

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Many thanks to all the staff and pupils who have contributed to this edition of the newsletter. Its fantastic to see that Outdoor Learning continues to go from strength to strength in Highland. Keep up the good work!

From North to Further North: My Outdoor Learning Experience in Iceland

Allison Howie

On October 6 2013, I began an amazing experience which has had a profound impact on my own personal beliefs, as well as on my teaching. I travelled to Reykjavik, Iceland as a result of a Comenius training grant from the British Council. My visit was organised by Cursus Iceland and I would spend a week with 20 other teachers from across Europe, doing a variety of different activities to develop our knowledge and understanding of outdoor learning in education, education in Iceland, and the use of nature and the landscape in teaching.



Outdoor learning is not a new concept for me. In 2009 I attended a 'Mindstretchers' workshop, looking at outdoor learning in the early years and the concept of forest schools. This concept of taking children outside to learn and use natural materials really spoke to me, and I immediately started using it in my work. Over the next few years I did a great deal of personal research and reading around the topic and regularly tried things out in my teaching, but like many, I lacked confidence. What if I wasn't doing it right? Was there more I could be doing? What were people in countries such as in Scandinavia doing, where outdoor learning is held in such high regard?

As part of my personal research I had read an excellent book called 'Nordic Childhoods and Early Education' edited by Johanna Einarsdottir and Judith T. Wagner, which although focused on many Scandic countries, talks greatly about the Icelandic experience and how Icelanders, up until recently were very rural. This results in a strong relationship with nature, which naturally flows into their educational beliefs, including a strong belief in outdoor learning. So during the dark nights of January 2013, when I found out there was a course in outdoor

learning being held in Iceland, I knew I had to go. I was not disappointed.

The official part of my course lasted from Monday to Friday and each day we looked at different aspects of outdoor learning:

Monday- We looked at theory and research of outdoor learning including the benefits it can have. We talked about the need for low stimulation activities versus the high stimulations, such as technology, that our pupils spend so much time using. Also the concept that outdoor learning is a major part of building a sustainable future for our planet- if our children do not feel connected to and respect the natural world around them, what likelihood is that they will look after it?

Tuesday-One of the best days of my career! Woke up to a good few inches of snow and then went to visit a primary school in the south of Reykjavik. When we arrived, we were allowed to attend morning assembly, given a tour of the school and got to observe some lessons relevant to our own age and stage. I observed an early years reading lesson. I was struck by how calm the children and teachers were and the relaxed nature of the school. I felt that the children were happier and more relaxed than back here in Scotland. After break, the children all go outside and rotate around different activities. This happens no matter what the weather, and on this day it was exceptionally fun due to the snow! I followed a group of seven year olds who participated in Art, Design and technology, P.E and cooking, all outside. The children loved being outside and we all engaged in their learning. As I had observed inside, the teachers were very relaxed in their approach and often allowed the children to lead and direct their learning, as well as expecting them to be self-reliant.



Throughout all the lessons, I saw many examples of the children being very self directed and taking risks that back here in Scotland, we would have prevented them from doing. For example, during the design and technology, children were using hammers, nails and secateurs all independently. The teachers were not hovering over them, and in fact were actually very relaxed about the whole thing, using their time to focus on individual children needing support. I asked the teachers about what happens if a child gets hurt, as we all worry about back here in the UK. The Icelandic teachers told me the children are taught to use the tools from an early age and learn to be respectful of them. There is a great sense of self-autonomy in Iceland and children know that if they misuse a tool and hurt themselves, they will only have themselves to blame. As a result, they use them sensibly.

Wednesday- We worked with Karolina Einarsdottir, who is a teacher in Iceland with an interest in outdoor art. She taught us about creating art outdoors and learning that the purpose is not to always take it with you, you can leave it there for others to enjoy. We looked at the works of Andy Goldsworthy for inspiration and headed to a local park to create our own 'nature art'.



One of our hosts, Gudmundur Arngrimsson is a landscape architect, focusing on natural playground design. Later that same day we went to a local nursery school to look at a natural playground design that he had created.

Thursday- We went to a forest near Reykjavik and built temporary outdoor shelters and play equipment using found materials and rope. This would be great to do with an older class if you had access to a local forest. After that we did some cooking outside using Dutch ovens and muurrika pans.

Friday- This was a day of presentations from all the teachers about their home countries, schools and their experiences of outdoor learning. Getting to know the other teachers also had a major impact on

me. Despite our many differences, we had many similar experiences and we were able to share a great deal of good practice throughout the trip, as well as many laughs. I learned so much about the way education is viewed in different countries and things I could incorporate into my own teaching.



When I came back I was very inspired and have put many things I learned into my practice. We have done more outdoor learning than we did before, and also much more skills-based learning, such as building with wood and nails, as well as outdoor P.E and Art (even in the windy cold and wet that is Caithness!). Although I picked up a number of different activities I hadn't thought of before, the greatest impact on my teaching and the children in my class's learning has been my confidence in teaching them using outdoor learning. Like all teaching, there is no prescriptive method. What works for one school or class may not work for another. Be brave, try new things and then be reflective on the process. What worked? What didn't? What would you do next time? I often ask my class these questions when we try a new activity and they are more than happy to share, even the P1s!

I often liken Outdoor Learning to going to the gym- when you plan to go, the thought of it can sound exhausting and you can pretty much talk yourself out of it. But once you do it and you realise how great you feel, you will be inspired to do it again.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions/ queries allisonhowie@icloud.com

Portree After School Garden Club

Ingrid Bruce

The garden at Portree Primary School is home to our after school garden club. Around 15 pupils attended for the 2013 Autumn and Winter sessions. We started by digging up potatoes and cabbages, picking peas and pulling rhubarb. Everyone got to take something home to contribute towards their favourite teatime dishes. As we found



insects and bugs they were added to our Beastie House which we made last year. One week everything stopped while we studied a toad who had made his home among the bushes and roots in the shadiest part of our garden. A couple of wild, stormy days forced us inside where we made leaf collages, wrote nature poems and tried out some garden word puzzles and quizzes. Other weeks, adding to our colourful garden, we planted some apple and plum trees, then it was time to clean all our tools and prepare them for winter in the shed alongside some bulbs potted up waiting patiently for Spring. Our last Winter session was a showing of the puppet show film 'The Man who Planted Trees' filling us with inspiration for next season.



Competitions and Grants to Support your Outdoor Learning!

Cairngorms National Park Authority

have 2 initiatives that may be of interest and help with developing your outdoor learning:



Travel grant <http://cairngorms.co.uk/learn/learning-resources/outdoor-learning-travel-grant/>

OL Competition <http://cairngorms.co.uk/learn/news-and-events/2014-outdoor-learning-competition>

Creative Star Learning Company Grants List:

<http://creativestarning.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Grants-the-Creative-STAR-Collection.pdf>



Pic shows L to R - Alan Smith, Karolina Palugova, Kiera Stewart, teacher Andrea Fitter, Liam Armitt, Finlay McDonald and Brian Wood in the rain outside the new Aviemore Primary School.

HIGHLAND SEASHORE BIODIVERSITY PROJECT: SCHOOLS COMPETITION

Seashore-themed Art and Writing Competition. Pupils from schools in each of the seven Coastal Regions in Highland are invited to submit artwork, short stories or poems to the Competition. There are three age classes (Primary 4-7, Secondary 1-3 and Secondary 4-6).

Entries must have a connection to coastal biodiversity (e.g. rockpool life, seabirds, marine mammals, coastal plants, fishing, seaweed gathering, fossils, coastal folklore) and must be relevant to your local area (i.e. Scottish seashores).

Prizes will be awarded for first (£15 token), second (£10 token) and third (£5 token). We also plan to collate the winning entries into a book, which we hope will be launched later this year (with free copies distributed to all the featured entrants and their schools). By entering the competition, students agree to have their work displayed in this way.

For full competition details, please contact janet.bromham@highland.gov.uk

Closing dates: Friday 30 May

Outdoor Learning with Kinlochleven High School

Twenty-four young people from Kinlochleven High School took to the high seas on-board two specially adapted 72 foot racing yachts from Ocean Youth Trust Scotland, as part of their third year education.

This is the 6th year the school has partnered up with OYT Scotland and offered the adventure to the young people of Kinlochleven.

Sail training helps develop the skills of enquiry, critical thinking and reflection necessary for young people to meet the social, economic and environmental challenges of life in the 21st century. Outdoor learning connects young people with the natural world, with our built heritage, our culture, our society and encourages lifelong involvement and activity in Scotland's outdoors.

The outdoor environment encourages staff and students to see each other in a different light, building positive relationships and improving self-awareness and understanding of others. There is no better place to achieve this than on board a sail training yacht that has been custom built in order to foster team spirits and to impart knowledge created by experiential learning.



There is no greater leveller than watching your teacher being sea sick over the side of a boat – while still in harbour! The vision of 18 people first thing in the morning sitting around a breakfast table in a variety of 'Onsies' with hair looking like a burst mattress is a sight that never leaves you. Having your dinner made by a young person who has never cooked before is one of the greatest thrills. On the voyage, the young people plan and prepare the meals. Planning sheets show the amount of protein, carbohydrate and fat that are required in each meal to provide a balanced diet. This clearly resonates with promoting healthy eating habits for health promotion and nutrition group leaders provide valuable first hand experience of what can be achieved on a week long voyage. The challenge of making meals for 18 people on a boat sailing at a 45 degree angle is one that has to be overcome during the week.

There are great ways to deliver the Curriculum for Excellence on the boats. Ways that the young people learn without formal structured lessons.

Literacy - develops opportunities for critical thinking, teamwork, reasoning, establishing social values through communication and day to day running of the vessel, from chart work and navigation to sail handling and food preparation.

Numeracy - often a challenging area for many young learners, creating a real time mathematical problem to solve - relevant to situation not abstract, increasing opportunities to use numeracy in the real world. Doing increases the understanding.

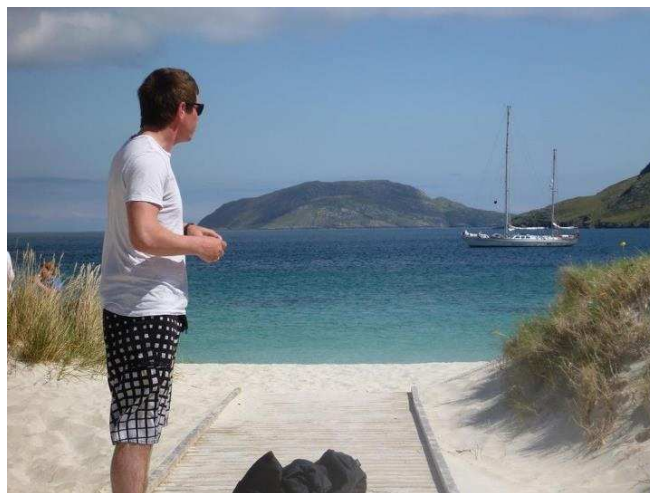
Health & Wellbeing - ultimately promoting confidence, greater sense of self in a happy, safe and respectful environment.

Group Planning Sheets ensure that your aims and goals are clearly stated for the week on board. The Pre Voyage Prep Session, held at the school to all of the third year students was filled with laughter and chaos as the young people tried on the waterproof clothing and life jackets. The best joke is to ask two young people to race each other to get all the kit on. It is also a great opportunity for the young people and their parents, to speak directly to our staff about their voyage and answer any questions they may have.

The Trust provides Personal Logbooks to take notes during the young persons' voyage; their learning journey, and allow for reflection at the end which can then be brought back to school and allow young people to report on their experience. This also provides feedback that can be used towards the Youth Achievement Award.

We also have a feedback sheet where the young people can express their thoughts about their voyage; if they enjoyed the fish finger sandwiches, or trying to serve extra-long spaghetti onto plates when the boat is at an angle, if they enjoyed looking at the faces of other boat owners as they realise there is a teenager steering a 72 foot boat into the berth beside them in the marina or if they managed to find the secret stash of chocolate biscuits in the skipper's cabin!

At the end of the voyage, all the young people from Kinlochleven High School were awarded with their RYA Start Yachting Certificates and a great time was had by all. The school is already booked up for 2014 and 2015 – why not try it for yourself?



A year in the life of Bun-sgoil Shlèite | Sleat Primary School Allotment

Julia Dawber, Morven Graham

During a snowy February in 2013 we were given an opportunity to rent an allotment plot from The Garden of Skye Ltd community gardens and allotments in Armadale, South Skye. The English medium nursery children aged between 3 and 5 years along with their nursery auxiliary and assistant took over main responsibility for the plot.

The location of the plot, a few miles from School gave us a good chance to take the bus for each visit, which for many children in this rural environment was a first experience. We met our usual bus driver each week and within a few months were taking back large bags of produce on the bus. This journey allowed the children to see their outer environment and meet members of the community.



We started with a long strip of mud. The weather outside in February and March can be very unpredictable so wellies and warm clothes along with the red suits nursery provided, enabled our children to run free without worrying about the cold or about getting their clothes dirty. Safety is especially important in the outdoor environment so the children learned how to use the tools and carry them in a safe way. We found child size trowels and spades were too weak to be useful, so the children used lightweight spades designed for adults and normal size trowels which meant they were not frustrated with tools bending etc. Costs were kept down through donations from the local community.

One of the first jobs was to improve the soil. The children helped to dig the soil and the job of digging and collecting the manure (donated by a local member of the community who had 2 horses) was one of their favourite things to do. During their digging they found enormous worms and one day we counted 63. The children all helped each other work as a team to transport the manure in the large wheelbarrow while the resident robin followed the children closely looking out for grubs and worms. As well as digging, one nursery member discovered sprouting broccoli still growing and enjoyed it raw as a tasty snack after a wash in the water butt of course.

A local crofter Henry who had a mini tractor and trailer was very popular with the children. He showed the children how to plant leeks and make straight lines with string. Luckily we had use of a poly tunnels so the children soon sowed lettuce seeds, radish seeds and planted strawberry runners in their area of the poly tunnels. The warmth of the poly tunnel was a great place for us to collect together, have a healthy snack, drink and a story. Many stories fit in well with growing and later in the year when we had turnips ready for harvesting 'The gigantic turnip' was a great read along with real life enactment of each child being able to physically pull their turnip out of the ground and then take it home for dinner.

The nursery staff were able to introduce literacy and numeracy at every stage of growing in the gardens. We read the seed packets and identified the plants on the pictures, counted out the big seeds like broad beans and runner beans, learnt about the growing cycle and what a plant needs to survive. We used drama to reinforce this message, children became curled up seeds while other children were the water sprinkling or the sun shining while the seed grew towards the sun. During times where the plants were just 'growing' we explored the outdoor spaces and we went on our equivalent of a bear hunt. The children were interested in dinosaurs so we went on a dinosaur hunt. We carried on the original words but were looking for the dinosaur instead.

We're going on a 'dinosaur' hunt,
We're going to catch a big one,
What a beautiful day,
We're not scared.

We then swished through grass, climbed under fences, splashed in over the river, squelched through mud- (Scotland often muddy even in summer!) explored the forest and finally found dinosaur bones back where we started.



During the summer months we spent time identifying insects and creatures that shared the same allotment space, we used magnifying glasses and bug books to help us find out which butterfly was which.

Books like The very hungry caterpillar were read outside to reinforce the magical metamorphosis of the caterpillar into a butterfly or moth. Resources such as pens and paper were available for drawing things the children saw at the allotments if they wished to.

At nursery, broad beans were grown in glass jars so the children could learn about the root system and how they suck up water like sucking up juice in a straw. The children then planted broad beans in pots to take home to grow in the Easter holidays. The next visit to the allotment the children planted them outside. Broad beans are great for small children to grow because they are quite strong and not easily broken and the beans produce big pods and inside the beans are encased in a lovely cushion which the children really enjoy opening.

During the summer holidays the children from nursery and the school joined The Garden of Skye for an open day. This was a great opportunity for the local community to see what the children had been doing during the last few months. All the children were able to harvest some potatoes, courgettes and lettuce which they were able to take home and because the children grew their own produce they had easily learnt the names of the different fruits and vegetables.



When we came to complete our big harvest in August and September, the children again had to work as a team to carry large pots or baskets, face challenges and problem solve to move and carrying things. The produce the children had grown was taken back to school. The nursery children then wrote prices to sell their produce to parents. They made a shop and took money and put the vegetables into bags for their 'customers'. This was a great time for the children to learn about healthy eating and to educate the family as well as giving each child a boost in confidence.



Inside nursery we also prepared, chopped, cooked and then ate the vegetables and fruit. The children made soup and enjoyed it. The primary children from P1 to P7 were invited over with us to prepare and taste some of the produce the children had grown. Some of the children who had previously turned their noses up at vegetables ate their own home grown food readily and we hope this introduction to growing at such a young age will be a lifelong trend towards sustainability and healthy eating.

Restoring the Allt Lorgy: Flood Management, Conservation and Film Project

Jill O'Reilly

In early April 2013, Carr-Bridge Primary School was approached by Karen Archer, Cairngorms National Park Media Officer to take part in a ministerial visit to some local "shovel ready" projects. One of these projects was a river restoration pilot along a stretch of the Allt Lorgy, a tributary of the River Dulnain which flows into the River Spey.

The National Park wanted the pupils to come and plant trees beside the river during the visit and to meet the minister for the Environment and Climate Change, Paul Wheelhouse MSP. This seemed like a great opportunity and upon reading more about the Allt Lorgy restoration work, I soon realised that there was the potential for the pupils to have a much greater involvement and richer learning experience through the visit becoming part of a whole term interdisciplinary outdoor learning project. At the same time, the school was also asked to take part in The Scottish National Parks School Short Film Project, which for 2013 was to be tied in with celebrating the Year of Natural Scotland and the 10th Anniversary of the Cairngorms National Park. One of the themes to be explored was Flora and Fauna which seemed to fit well with the evolving project and so began P6/7s summer term adventures at the Allt Lorgy.



The whole class spent 3 full days at the site over the summer term. Small groups also visited on 2 more occasions to film on location for the media project. No transport was required for the visits as the site was only a 45

minute walk from the school along a quiet country lane. On site, the pupils took part in a wide range of practical activities focused on the value of the location for natural flood prevention and biodiversity. These included:

- Tour of the changes made to the artificial constraints imposed on the river channel in the past. Liz Henderson, project leader (Spey Catchment Initiative & Cairngorms National Park Authority) explained how lowering the gravel banks, replacing the mid channel boulders with woody debris, filling in nearby ditches and planting trees would slow the flow of the burn, alter the course of the channel and bring benefits for flood management and wildlife.
- Tree planting to improve river bank stability, increase absorption of precipitation into the ground and vegetation, provide a richer environment for wildlife and shade for the burn to benefit spawning salmon.
- Exploration and identification of fish and invertebrates in the burn through electro fishing and kick sampling.
- Measuring the flow in the burn and effects of channel shape and course on flow, erosion and deposition.

- Creative work, including sketches of the site (present and future) and poetry.
- Filming supported by the Aberdeenshire Media Unit.

The outdoor learning was supported, enriched and further developed through work back in the classroom. The pupils were visited by a member of the Cairngorms National Park Board and learned about the wider context of the Park and how they were contributing to its aims.

They learned about the value of riparian woodlands, the water cycle and issues surrounding climate change and flooding. They explored the role of micro-organisms and invertebrates in decomposition, they used historical and contemporary maps to see how flood plains and rivers have been altered and identified locations within the Spey Catchment where similar projects could be implemented. They learned about landscape features and erosion associated with rivers.

They created a wide variety of artwork, wrote imaginative and functional pieces such as news articles, poems, film scripts, debates, letters, and posters, and used technology to create presentations and film including sound and images. They used data collected through river flow and wildlife surveys to create tables, graphs and other visual representations and interpreted what they found in relation to habitat value and implications for flooding. In all we covered 45 CfE level 2 outcomes across 7 curricular areas.

Not only was the learning through this project; varied, challenging, engaging, interlinked and wide ranging, but it also had significant relevance for the pupils who knew that the work they were doing was part of a real world project which would have positive impacts for the environment, wildlife and people in their locality. The film project also gave them a platform to share their work with a broader audience which added extra value.

The connection the pupils made with the site and their work is clear from the number of them who still visit the Allt Lorgy with their parents to see how the trees are growing and how the river is changing. One member of the class was particularly excited back in November when she went up on her bike and encountered huge salmon spawning in the burn! I believe this will be a project that will stay with many of the pupils for years to come and may well have sparked an interest which will have implications for the values they develop and career choices they make in adult life.

If you would like to watch a clip from our film along with those made by 9 other primary schools across the Cairngorms and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Parks please follow this link:

<http:// Cairngorms.co.uk/learn/learning-projects/schools-media-project/schools-media-project-2013>



Rural Skills Employability Award

Rebekah Everett
(Invergordon Academy Pupil)

In our Rural skills Employability Award we get split into pairs and go to Novar Estate, Ardross Castle, Forestry and the School Garden for our weekly Placements. We are on these placements for 6 weeks each and do different things at each Placement.

At Ardross Castle we were working with the horses with Sue and her colleague. When we arrived we got changed before being allocated a horse to groom and muck out their stalls. Each Thursday morning Meghan and I had to walk up a massive hill to lead the horses to their field which would tire us out. Once we were finished mucking out the stalls each week, we would groom the rest of the stabled horses, take apart a bridal, clean it and then put it together again. Before leaving the stables we would take the rest of the stabled horses out to the fields before going back to school. Being with the horses we needed to be careful on what we did around them for instance walking in front of them rather than behind as they can easily lash out. Some of the horses are unpredictable and so we needed to be aware at all times.

With Forestry a man called Davie Mackay took myself and Meghan to Tain Hill where we cut back some Gorse bushes from the path and we used a Pruning saw. We also had to help Davie and his colleague Fraser to cut down branches and at a walk in Ardross we had stop a man from turning up the pathway on the walk with his Quad bike. Meghan used a winch to drag an 8 tonne rock into the ditch on top of the branches to make sure he could not get back in.



Being on these placements has taught me the safety regulations in which we needed to follow to protect ourselves but also the other people who are working alongside me. Being with the horses we needed to be careful about what we do around them. Being organised is important in any work placement but when we are in Ardross we need to have our boiler suits and our steel toe cap boots to protect our clothes but also our feet. In Forestry we need to be organised with our boiler suits, steel toe cap boots, warm clothing and our water proofs because no matter the weather we need to get the jobs done and so we need to be kept dry and warm. Safety is important on this placement as we are working with sharp and dangerous tools and also in quite dangerous surroundings.

In Rural Skills we have also been to a Fish Farm in Contin where we were milting and fertilising the fish eggs. We also went to a deer larder in Tain where we watched the Forestry Commission process the deer and learned all about deer management.

Crown Primary - Surprises on our doorstep!

Lisa Hutchison

It's incredible what discoveries can be made when you step outside the classroom door! Class 6c5 have been exploring their local environment, man made and natural.



Day 1

Today we had our first trip to Camore Woods. We talked about the four things you need to survive in the wilderness—shelter, food, water and fire. You need fire for warmth, cooking and for boiling water to get rid of the bacteria in the drinking water. Today we built shelters. We learned that you have to choose your place carefully. Try to find a flat, dry place to build your shelter which has no hazards above it and is close to the building materials that you're going to use. We learned that you build shelters in three steps: First build the frame of the shelter with big branches, then put in the filler branches and finally add a water-proofing material—we used bracken. It should be 30cms thick all over the shelter to make it waterproof. Next, we learned one of the secrets of nature: DISCOVERY. We found different ways of looking carefully at the woodland, sometimes on our backs, sometimes by crawling, sometimes on our stomachs. We pulled the letters in the word “discovery” out of a bag one at a time and had to look for specific things that began with those letters. When we pulled the “e” we had to look for something edible and we all tried blaeberrries, wild raspberries and wood sorrel!

Day 2

During this Bush craft session, we had a difficult challenge: We were asked to make fire without matches. We learned that six things are necessary to produce a rubbing-stick fire: a drill or spindle, a fire-block or hearth, a hand-socket, a bow, a small piece of wood to catch the hot ash and tinder—maybe some straw or some birch bark. This was a very difficult task, but we all had a go and some of us made smoke. Most of us managed to produce heat with the friction of the spindle against the hearth. But Ian promised that we would all make fire and we did! We all managed to light a cotton wool ball with a flint steel fire starter, which was very exciting.

After our break, we began to learn how to tie knots. We worked on the clove hitch and the timber hitch. After some practice, we made a stretcher and Ian bravely volunteered to lay on it while we lifted him up!

Day 3

We had another great morning for our third trip to Camore Woods. What fun we had! We had to solve some murder mysteries—ticker taped “crime scenes” where we looked for the evidence of animal tracks, feeding remains, poo or pellets, feathers, nuts, nests or skulls. We used some identification charts to help us figure out what had happened—what “crime” had occurred within the ticker taped areas. It was a great test of observational and thinking skills as we worked out each particular event of a woodland food chain. After our snack, we used our clove hitches once again and learned to make a lashing knot as we created A-frames. This was a real challenge of co-operative working and we all passed with flying colours!

Day 4

Our last time at Camore Woods! We had a great time, as usual. This time we used our knowledge of lashing knots to make miniature frames out of willow. Then we drew pictures of the woods with the charcoal that Ian had made earlier as we made more charcoal in our campfire. To make charcoal, we used a sweetie tin with holes punched in the top. We put willow strips into the tin and put the tin on our campfire. In just under an hour, the charcoal was almost finished. We learned that charcoal is just wood that is heated with very little air until most of the oils and moisture have dried out of it.

We then cooked and enjoyed eating our campfire “snake” bread and s'mores. Yum!

<http://craighillps.edublogs.org/category/out-and-about/>

Lochaber High School Hike



"The hike was a good day out and, although I couldn't walk because of a fractured foot, I enjoyed it from a sitting point of view; my friends wheel-chaired me to the finish line!"
Ruaraidh MacKenzie, 6L

Our annual 'High School Hike' was held on Tuesday 10 September, after a postponement for bad weather at the end of August. This event is one of the most highly anticipated and thoroughly enjoyed on the school calendar. It involves a ten mile walk from the school, along the cycle track to Torlundy and through Leanachan Forest to the Rural Complex and back. The weather remained favourable throughout the day which contributed to the enjoyment. Yet again, Sixth Years pulled out all the stops with their fancy dress outfits - costumes ranged from FBI agents to Bananas in Pyjamas and even a tree using real branches!



The 'Hike' is the school's main fundraiser for extra-curricular activities and is expected to raise around £8000. Ten per cent of the final total will be donated to a children's charity to be chosen by the pupils. Thanks to all who contributed to the success of the event with a special thanks to the Forestry Commission, Police Scotland and Isabel and Linda Campbell of the Rural Complex.

Ally Rowantree, 6R

"I never knew being plastered in mud and soaked to the skin could be so much fun but the relief of finishing the hike was great. I'm already looking forward to next year!"
Heilidh Wilson, 5RS



Lochaber High School Outward Bound

At the beginning of September, 45 S2 pupils embarked on a journey to the Lake District in the North West of England. They participated in a five-day 'Adventure and Challenge' course at the Outward Bound Centre, Ullswater.

On arrival we were split into four groups named after famous explorers: Tenzing, Shackleton, Mallory and Francis and we then went on our own exploration of this mountainous landscape through various outdoor activities. Each group had their own unique adventures and enjoyed activities like rock climbing, gorge walking and tunnelling. The middle of the week included an overnight camping expedition while the week was completed with campfire songs and a contest to build a raft and paddle to the other side of the lake.

It was an excellent experience and all pupils learned how to support each other in a team, adapt to unfamiliar situations, show leadership and challenge themselves to succeed in difficult, yet fun, and rewarding situations.

If any new S1 pupils are interested in going on this course, please note that we will start organising for the 2014 excursion in February. Thanks to all 45 pupils who embodied the spirit of adventure and, of course, to the hard work of staff from Lochaber (Miss Kirkaldy, Miss MacNeill and Mr Ross) and to the Outward Bound instructors.

D Smith, Trip Organiser

Here is a selection of comments from pupils:

Describe your best experience from Outward Bound.

We went rock climbing, gorge walking, rafting, rowing, camping and hiking. My best memory was camping on the expedition with my friends. It was really fun. I really enjoyed the rafting and gorge walking because I liked getting wet.
Caitlin Gilchrist, 2R

The camp fire was fun and everyone sat around the fire singing songs like 'the crazy mouse.' We did lots of activities and I enjoyed being outside challenging myself. Everyone was happy.
Hailie Aitchison, 2S

The best experience was the expedition. We camped out at night and climbed to the top of a mountain. I felt really proud when I reached the top, even though the way up was hard.
Corran Wineberg, 2R

I liked the tunnelling activity when we had to do it without our head torches. It was hard to find the way, but it was still fun. We also had to make a map out of leaves, rocks and sticks so we could not get lost.
Stephen Halliwell, 2S

Describe one experience which you found really challenging.

I found the hiking the most challenging. It was hard work and it was difficult to get our tents up in the wind, but when we settled down and cooked our dinner it was good fun.
Dora Shepherd, 2R

At the end of our gorge walk we jumped into a pool with a 10 foot drop. It looked easy but when you got up to the top it felt really high. Once I jumped in it felt good. It was worth it.
Cameron Ross, 2S

