



Report to Moray Firth Partnership on grant of £500 awarded in 2007 to Workers' Educational Association.

The grant from MFP was used to part fund an archaeological field trip around the Black Isle, held as part of Highland Archaeology Fortnight, and to support two Local Investigation Community Projects.

The events were part of the WEA's two year Exploring Your Past project, which offers courses, fieldtrips, and opportunities to contribute to the Highland Environment Record (the HER, which will imminently replace the Sites and Monuments Record). All fieldtrips try to illustrate multi-period sites within a defined area, showing the range of land use and history. The topics for the community project were chosen by the class members. In both the fieldtrips and projects, the proximity to the sea was a major factor.

The fieldtrip was a great success, with the bus completely full over a week before the event. Altogether we had 35 people. We stopped at Balnaguie (well preserved Neolithic chambered cairn on private land), Kirkmichael chapel (medieval and later remains), Cromarty (18th / 19th century trading town), South Souters (impressive WW I and II remains), Rosemarkie (Groam House Museum and its Pictish remains), and Fortrose Cathedral (medieval). Along the way we also looked at many of the other sites. The weather was lovely, and the views over the North Sutors with its war remains were a highlight. Throughout the day, the importance of the sea to the Black Isle was emphasised.

In the Local Investigation Community Project, the class split into two groups to research two topics: Ferry Crossings on the Black Isle and Human Use of Caves on the shores near Rosemarkie. Both groups made displays which were hosted in Fortrose Library over the summer and at Groam House Museum during Highland Archaeology Fortnight; the displays included mention of MFP support. In addition, the Caves group produced a walking leaflet and the Ferries group some sheets with information about the crossings (enclosed with this report). An archive of work has also been deposited in Fortrose Library. Some members of each group have continued to work on the topics after the course ended, with a brochure in preparation on the ferries, and work towards getting a temporary exhibition of objects from cave excavations arranged.

Evaluation forms were handed out at the end of the fieldtrip and courses. All feedback was positive, as the comments showed:

Selected comments from the field trip:

"I didn't realise the sea was so important to our ancestors"

"Fantastic"

"Great weather! A good taster. I certainly will revisit certain sites with friends and relatives."

"Have enjoyed the round trip and information given on Black Isle sites, will look at it now with a different perspective. Really enjoyed my day. Thank you."

"Inspirational, educational, dedicated. Hope there are lots more like this."

"Varied, excellent guide"

"Leader full of enthusiasm for subject – makes subjects interesting. Well organised - no hanging around"

"I now see how the sea routes were so important."

"excellent trip – really enhanced my local knowledge of sea. So many interesting sites and talks."

"Enjoyable, informative. Made us realise the importance of the sea and travelling in the past."

Selected comments from the Local Investigation course:

"Through research and other people's research I learned much about the Black Isle Ferries (our assignment) It has been a very interesting experience and I have enjoyed working with other people."

"Personally satisfied with the work I have produced. Socially I have been very fortunate in working with a group of great people. This course has both interested and stimulated me. I found it quite hard at times but have enjoyed it greatly."

"I achieved more than I expected. With the help of the rest of the group and tutor I was much better informed re local history, geology and archaeology. The display and brochure reflected only some of the work / study that had taken place ...I feel extremely grateful to have had this experience / educational opportunityI am encouraged to take up further study and have valued and appreciated the experience."

"I achieved more than my goals. I enjoyed the course very much. Have met some interesting people and enjoyed the group skills. I am proud of the leaflet and the display we have all contributed too enthusiastically. I have loved every minute of it and actually feel a little sad it is coming to an end."

Further details are available from myself or the WEA office.

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