Preparing for a Course

These notes relate mainly to running courses in the Highlands, but will be useful to other areas.

1. **TIMINGS**: Decide on daytime / evening. There is no right or wrong answer here. Daytime often gets more elderly people out, but excludes working people. I tend to use 2.5 hour slots to allow tea break in the middle, so evenings tend to be 7-9:30. Many older people have childcare responsibilities too, so daytime during school hours is best.

2. **VENUE**: Look for a local venue which has wifi. Community Centres are usually the first place to look, as they are integral to the community. If no wifi/availability, try other venues (you may need to ask around) where talks are held. Hotels can also work. If there is no wifi, you can alternatively create hotspots on mobile phones (assuming good coverage). When booking, add at least 15 minutes each side for set up and pack up, and if budget permits half hour each side. Ask for kitchen use so you can use their cups/kettle.

3. **PUBLICITY**: This is key as you want to get the word out as widely as possible. Remember sponsor logos/acknowledgments in all publicity!

- Check if there is a community newsletter. These are often quarterly, with long copy deadline so worth checking as soon as possible. The community centre / community council can generally give you contacts

Local Heritage Overview

Interested in the past around you but unsure about what happened when? Find out about the heritage of the area, from the earliest settlers to recent remains. Informal and lively, this course assumes no previous knowledge.

Wednesdays, 7th – 28th September, 7-9:30pm
Boat of Garten Community Hall

- Create a poster. Keep it simple and reassuring, without jargon. Remember that not everyone uses email: have a telephone contact too. Distribute widely, including: all local libraries and museums within travelling distance, community centres etc. Provide printed and electronic copies to people you know who are interested locally, and ask them to distribute locally to shops etc – this is invaluable if you can find volunteers to do this.
- Create a facebook post and alert others to it. If you use twitter, you can use this too.
- In the past we did newspaper articles (which you have to pay for). Try to assess if this will reach others.
- Create a press release with pictures and send to local press. Factor in deadlines.
- Consider making overtures to the primary school. They may be interested in linking up, and at the least they may send out information to the parents in their electronic updates.
- For long courses, I tend to break them into chunks – and advertise separately. You will probably bring most people along from module to module, but it can be daunting for people to sign up for a course lasting several months. See eg Community Timeline posters to the right where the memories module and research module were advertised separately.

Focus on The Past

Investigate sites, buildings or finds from the area, contributing to the creation of a Community Timeline display. Find out where to look for information about local heritage, and learn or hone your research skills. All welcome – no previous experience needed.

Wednesdays, 26th Oct 2011 for 6 weeks, 7-9:30pm
Boat of Garten Community Hall

4. **FINDING OUT ABOUT AN AREA**: This is a balancing act. You need to find out enough to be knowledgeable and lead the sessions, but since the purpose of the course is to share and discover, people will be doing their own research. So hold your knowledge lightly, and be prepared to point people in the right directions!

- If there is a book, obviously this is useful – but for archaeological remains there generally is no such resource available. Check out the local library for any local history resources.
- The Highland Council Historic Environment Record her.highland.gov.uk is the first port of call. You can sort by period (though note many sites are categorised 'Undated' so you will miss some), site type (castle / church / chambered cairn etc). For simple searches use a term plus the parish name to try and keep to relevant area. The Advanced Search facility allows some fielded searches. Most HER records link to Canmore, which often has more complete information for buildings, industrial sites, wartime remains and aerial photos.
- Check out old maps on the maps.nls.uk site, particularly Pont, Gordon, Blaeu, Moll, Roy, Arrowsmith, Thomson, OS series. The NLS site is not as strong on estate maps, but you may be lucky (eg in Highland for the lands owned by the Lovat Frasers). If desired, purchase 1st/2nd ed OS maps from NLS. You can get these at A0 size, black & white, for quite reasonable prices.
- Am Baile and ScRAN websites often have old photos. ScRAN may also have some images of finds and landscape shots. (ScRAN allows full searching for public library users, so dig out your library card, or register for one).
- The Highland Regional ScARF launched in 2021 on the ScARF website, now providing an up-to-date overview for Highland heritage from earliest settlers to modern times. It also has an overview of sources available.

Print out any useful pictures, articles, maps etc to have available for browsing at the courses, together with books and any other resources.

5. **BEFORE THE FIRST SESSION**
- Create a registration form. This will need to have contact details, but also you can use this to capture stats you may need for reporting (eg gender, ethnicity etc). An example is available on the ARCH website Document Library.
- Do a risk assessment.
- Create a plan for the session.
- Assemble some resources for browsing.
- Prepare handouts for those who might want them. I have created the following in the past, and usually have available for those who want them in research module:
  - Chronology handout
  - Highland Archaeology reading list
  - Archive sources materials
  - Maps
  - Secondary & photographic sources
  - Useful websites

  There are available on the ARCH website Document Library. In the past I have sometimes combined these into a place-specific resource, eg for courses at Strathpeffer in the past.

This Document: v.1 July 2022