

## The Maritime Project at Gourdon Primary School:



We are creating a digital resource to document how a primary school project contributed to the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and community transformation in a post-industrial fishing village.

Over the past ten years Gourdon Primary School has been contributing to a slow revolution in community life by increasing the engagement of community members via school initiatives that have drawn on the resources, history and people of Gourdon through inter generational connections. The Maritime Project is one of a number of successful school projects and was undertaken by year 6 pupils with the help of their class teacher in conjunction with the Maggie Law Maritime Museum and a range of local people who were drawn into the project through the excitement and motivation of the pupils.

Ten years ago the effects of de-industrialisation due to the decline in the fishing industry was hitting this once thriving fishing village badly. Vandalism was a growing issue as people, and especially young people, expressed their disenfranchisement through anti social acts such as riding bicycles over the flat roof of the primary school building. The sense of economic decline, together with the depression this brings, has slowly been transformed through the way the teachers have introduced projects that have enlivened the rich legacies of fishing in the local area.

The digital resource being funded by CCNetwork+ will document the Maritime Project undertaken by year 6 pupils in collaboration with the local Maggie Law Museum. The school project highlights the importance of inter generational dialogues as the pupils from Gourdon Primary School undertake research into the rich heritage of their village and the history of fisher communities more generally.



There have been many local heroes in Gourdon and their stories documented in oral testimonies, hand written books, newspapers, scribbled notes, letters, personal diaries and sometimes old audio cassettes are being curated by pupils. The research that pupils undertake involves asking older members of the community to tell stories, find objects and explain fishing practices and customs. These dialogues have rekindled the bonds of trust and pride in place.



The tiny, two story, Maggie Law museum has become the repository for local people's artifacts and the hub for small and more ambitious processes of curating. Gourdon Primary School pupils have been highly involved in the development of the museum and in turn the museum is becoming an important resource for school

projects.

The history of the Maggie Law (from the museum web site <http://www.maggielaw.co.uk>, accessed 09/02/2015)

The building was acquired and adapted to provide a permanent preservation base for the Maggie Law surf boat.

The Museum was officially opened on 4th July 1997 by Gerald Bannerman- grandson of Jeems Mowat after a great effort by a group of enthusiastic volunteers, the local businesses community, and retired fishermen, managed by an enthusiastic management committee.

Over time, enthusiasm dwindled. The old fishermen got frail or passed on, and as the village fishing industry dwindled, there were no younger people coming through to support the Museum. The committee was depleted, and latterly since 2007 the Museum could not be staffed or opened on a regular basis.

As a result, income fell, and heating, and repairs and maintenance costs could not be met, and inevitably the poor condition of the fabric of the building, soon began to affect the exhibits, through dampness and decay.

### **The Turning Point:**

In November 2011, Aberdeenshire Council put up a sum of money to ensure the building was brought back to wind and watertight standard.

It was at this point, that a new concentrated community effort was put in place, with requests for assistance with goods and services, and applications being made to funding organisations.

Another feature which has helped, is that **Gourdon** is designated as a re – generation area, due to the downturn in the local fishing industry.

### **The aims:**

- To create a financially stable social enterprise museum for the community, managed by the community, to ensure the sustainable future of the Museum
- To create an educational area in the Museum which will be able to take 12 school pupils in a mix of indoor and outdoor maritime heritage activities
- To meet the registration standards of Visit Scotland and Historic Scotland, in order to ensure maximum visitor footfall.
- To be positive about people with disabilities, and to be innovative in overcoming some

of the barriers which exist between heritage sites and accessibility.

- To preserve the heritage of the Maggie Law, and the Gourdon village heritage for future generations
- To ensure maximum community engagement in the process
- To explore opportunities for skills development, volunteering, training and work experience or employment.
- To meet the requirements to achieve charitable status for the new committee and organisation, (Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR)) in order to maximise income to achieve maximum benefit and tax
- To provide an integrated social and heritage experience for visitors and families and the local community

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