

Mortlach Story Walks: an arts and place project in Dufftown

Dufftown is a small town (population approximately 1500) on the eastern fringe of the Highlands. Surrounded by beautiful countryside and home to the Glenfiddich Distillery, it is a popular stop on the whisky trail. Over the last year it has also been the location for Mortlach Story Walks, a project developed in partnership between Mortlach Primary School in Dufftown and Speyside Paths Network Group, facilitated by the school's Parent Council. This project has involved the production of arts-based countryside interpretation materials (public artworks and story based guide leaflets) for the footpaths around Dufftown. These were researched and designed by children at the school working with experts in the locality and professional arts practitioners.

For a fuller written account of the project please see Northings:

<http://northings.com/2011/08/11/mortlach-story-walks/>

Credits:

Project Partners:	Speyside Paths Network Group Mortlach Primary School Parent Council
Co-ordinator:	Mary Bourne, Mortlach Parent Council
Artists:	Janie Nicoll Vivien Hendry Mary Bourne, Mortlach Parent Council
Writer:	Ken Cockburn
Storyteller:	Chuck Warren
Exhibition designer:	Jenny Trueman, Mortlach Parent Council
Catering:	Kirsteen Paterson, Mortlach Parent Council
Volunteer assistants:	members of Mortlach Parent Council

Thanks to all the staff at Mortlach Primary School who embraced the project, and local people and organisations who gave their time freely to assist the children.

Mortlach Story Walk Leaflets are available from: Dufftown Tourist Information Office, Dufftown Public Library or Mary Bourne 01340 821162 clunymore@yahoo.co.uk

For further information on the project contact Mary Bourne at the details above.

Mortlach Pre-school Nursery project: “The Magic of Meg’s Widd”



Mortlach Pre-school nursery in Meg’s Widd with Wild Things, Findhorn-based environmental educators



“I liked running in the woods” Logan, Pre-school Nursery

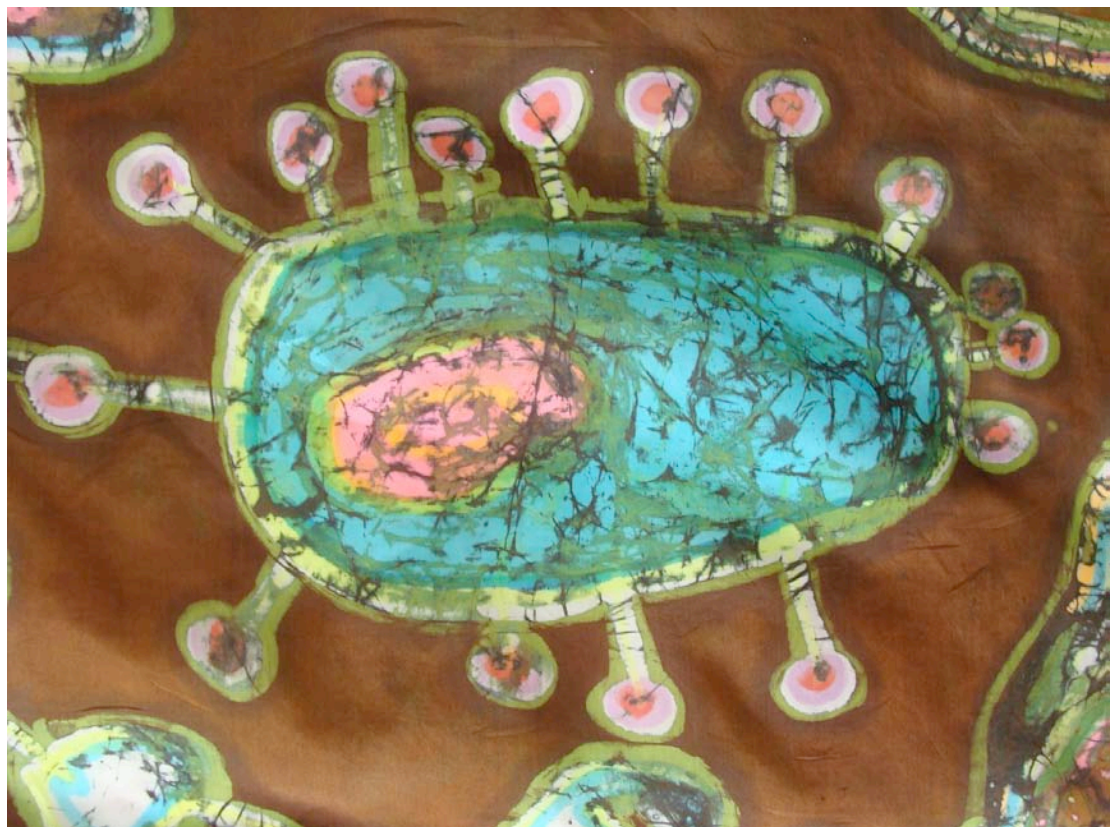




"I liked making the fairy house in the woods", Kaitlyn, Pre-school Nursery



"The Magic of Meg's Widd" limited edition concertina book by children of Mortlach Pre-School Nursery, fairies made with Vivien Hendry and Mary Bourne, story told to Ken Cockburn. Copies available to view at Mortlach Primary School and Dufftown Public Library



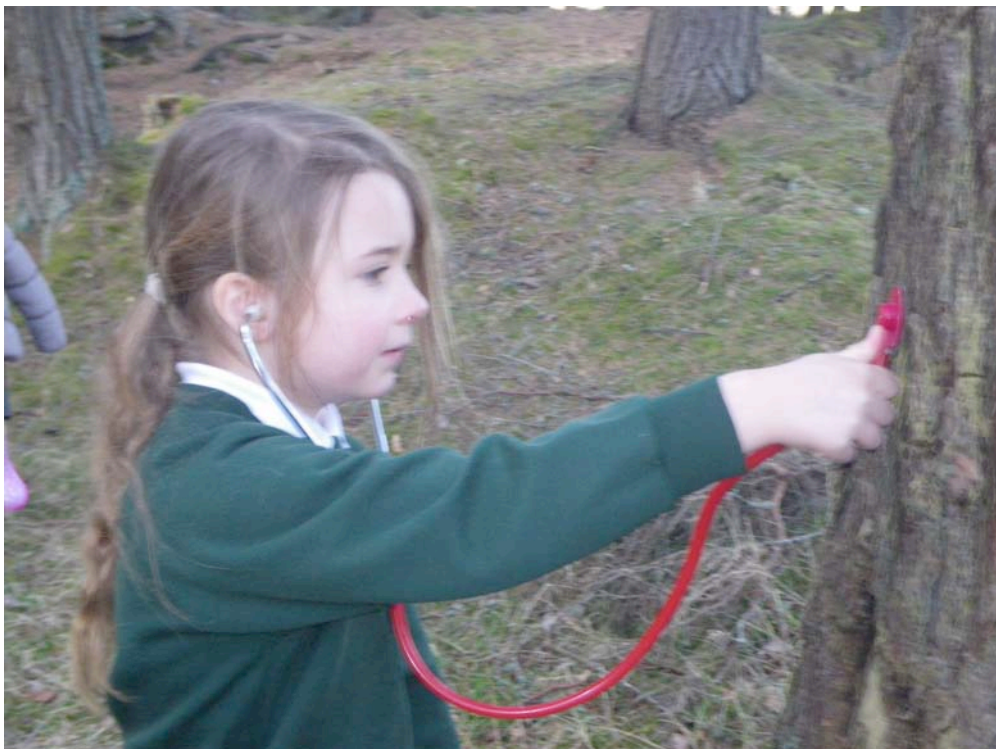
"The Magic of Meg's Widd" batik, Mortlach School Library, children from Mortlach Pre-school nursery with Vivien Hendry

"I liked drawing pictures on the silk." Craig, Mortlach Pre-School nursery

Primary 1 project: Meg's Widd artwork for Dufftown Medical Centre



Primary 1 guided walk with Jean Oliver, Chair of Speyside Paths Network Group



Listening to the sap rising with Wild Things, Findhorn-based environmental educators.

"I enjoyed having our classroom in the woods"

Elise P1



"I enjoyed when Chuck (the native American Indian story teller) told us stories"
Dylan P1



Primary 1 Artwork with Janie Nicoll, Dufftown Medical Centre

"I really liked going to Meg's Widd and finding a nest on the ground." Jack P1

Primary 1 poem



Primary 1 poem ***“Once explorers...”*** Meg’s Widd
Written by Ken Cockburn using material generated by Primary 1’s visit to the woods with him. Stone poems sculptor: Mary Bourne



Preparing the stone for sandblasting: recognising and peeling off letters.

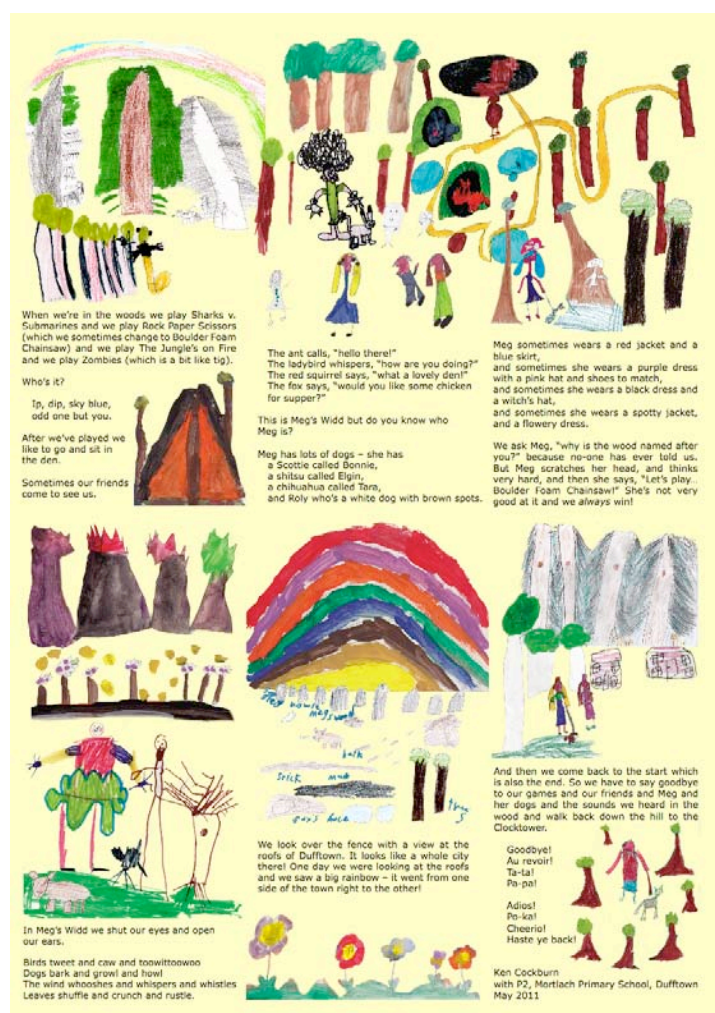
Primary 2 project: Meg's Widd Story Walk leaflet

"There's a whole city over there!"



Snowy sessions in the woods with Jean Oliver and Wild Things

"In the woods it was very fun" Rhea P2



Meg's Widd Story Walk leaflet: inside

Primary 2 poem

"I liked to listen to the birds"

Emma P2



Primary 2 poem, embedded mesostic: ***"BIRDSONG"***, written by Ken Cockburn using material generated by Primary 2's visit to the woods with him. Granite donated by Elgin Marble Company.

listen
Blaeberries
& lIchened baRk
& pine neeDles
& leaf ShadOw
iN meG's widd

"I like climbing trees" Katie P2

"The Story Walks Project it was fun" Arran P2

Primary 3 project: Toon's Widd artwork for Dufftown Public Library



"I enjoyed going to the Castle (Balvenie Castle) with Historic Scotland"
Christopher P 3



Primary 3 artwork with Janie Nicoll, Dufftown Public Library

"I enjoyed drawing. My favourite part was the Castle with the artist Janie."
Sam P3

Primary 3 poems



"I enjoyed helping create the stones for Toon's Widd"

Darcey P3



Primary 3 seasons circle poems, Toon's Widd. Boulders donated by Tennants (Elgin) Ltd.

"I liked walking in the Toon's Widd"

Lauren P3

Primary 4 project: Toon's Widd Story Walks leaflet

"I enjoyed going for walks with Wild Things and sneaking up on the crows"



"...when Ken and Janie came I thought it was wicked awesome x10.."

"Granda Bonkers got his guidebook out but couldn't find Dufftown. He put on another pair of glasses and turned the pages, muttering, "Duddingston... Dull... where has it gone?" So Leigh-Anne asked me a good place to go. I thought about it for a minute, then I said, "start at the Clocktower, walk to the War Memorial and into Tomnamuidh Wood, past Balvenie Castle, through the Toon's Widd, above the River Fiddich, into Tininver Park and back to the Clocktower".

Granda Bonkers had finally found the right page. He looked at it and said, "we can see six distilleries on that walk!"

Leigh-Anne said, "I've heard about the Hielan coos at Balvenie Castle!"

Molly Mora said, "time to fetch my notebook and my pompom hat!"

Nicky Overdrive laughed and said, "it's all good, man, it's all good!"

Granda Bonkers had a map. He turned it to one side, then to the other side, then upside down. He said, "I'm lost already!"

So Nicky Overdrive said to me, "hey, dude, wanna be our pathfinder?"

From P4 Story Walk

Primary 4 poem



Primary 4 poem ***“Toon’s Widd”*** mesostic

“I loved creating poems, stories and art, but when they left I felt sad.”

Primary 5 project: Giant's Chair artwork for Dufftown Tourist Office

"I really enjoyed river dipping and learning about the critters that live in the river with the Spey Fisheries Board" Peter P5



"I have enjoyed going for a walk with Mr Hodge and learning the history of Dufftown" Charlie P5



Primary 5 out at the Giant's Chair with Janie Nicoll

"I have never been there before."



Giant's Chair Artwork (Primary 5 with Janie Nicoll) with Story Walks leaflets and information at Dufftown Tourist Information Office.

"I liked going to the Dullan Water to see if the water was clean."

"I enjoyed finding things out when we were on walks like on our walk with Wild Things like when Ruairaidh told us the ash tree is also known as the toothbrush tree."



"I enjoyed seeing how tranquil it was when we were silent."

Primary 5 poems



“...the puddock leaping as kingcups sway in the wind that makes the branches creak above...”

Primary 5: 2 of 5 circle poems on The Giant's Chair route.
Boulders donated by Tennants (Elgin) Ltd.

Primary 6 project: Story Walks route guide/orienteering leaflet



P6 returning from a walk with Wild Things and out with Janie Nicoll.



Making stone markers for the orienteering course: applying sandblasting stencil tape, drawing out the symbols, peeling off the areas to be sandblasted, removing the stencil from the finished stone

"I really enjoyed having Mrs Fraser (Mary Bourne) in P6 to decorate orienteering stones for Meg's Widd"

Primary 6 orienteering stones



Local builder Gary Cooper of John Cooper (Dufftown) Ltd. installing the orienteering markers in Meg's Widd as an in-kind contribution. Granite off cuts donated by the Elgin Marble Company.



P6 Orienteering markers: as you follow the course, you collect the letters that spell out two words associated with the countryside, one in each direction

“Primary 6 have had an excellent time but the part I enjoyed most was seeing the finished product.”

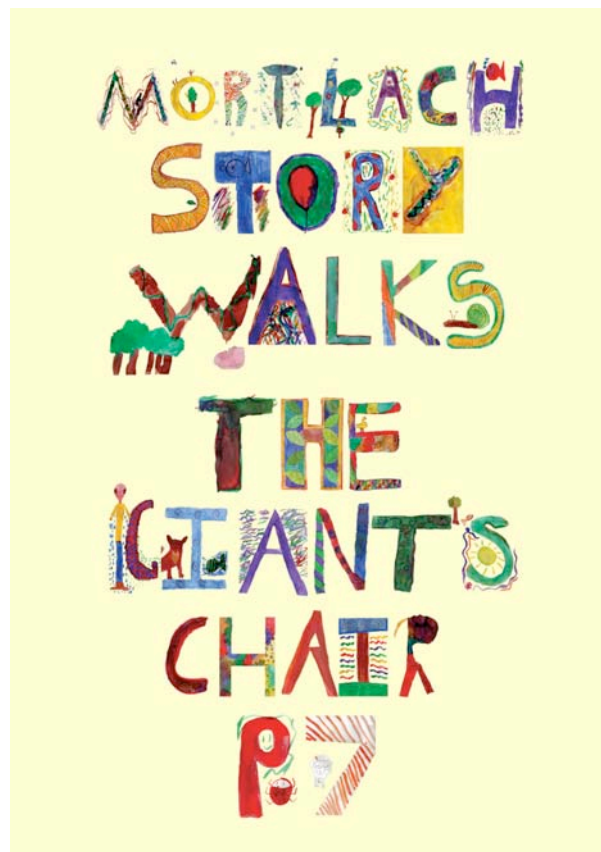
Primary 7 project: Giant's Chair Story Walk leaflet

"I found it interesting that pine martens live on the Giant's Chair walk"



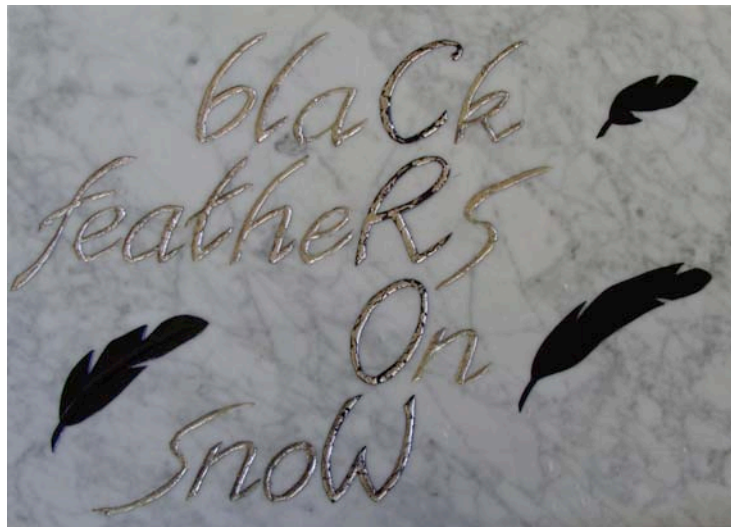
P7 out with Wild Things

"On the Story Walks Project I learned how special trees are and that we need them everywhere." Jodie P7



P7 leaflet cover

Primary 7 poems



P7 mesostic poem on marble off cut donated by the Elgin Marble Company.

“I thought the whole project was awesome, especially the poems we did with Ken”
Ross P7



P7 mesostic poem, ***“LINEN APRON”*** located at the Linen Apron waterfall on the Giant’s Chair walk. Granite off cut donated by the Elgin Marble Company.

“I learned that there were lots of reasons we should respect the walks from nature’s point of view” Emma P7

End of project event/exhibition.



Every class worked with exhibition designer, Jenny Trueman, on display boards detailing their project.



After an event for invited guests (people with an interest in the educational potential of projects such as this, funders, potential funders for future projects, potential partners for the future expansion of the footpath network etc) the exhibition was open to the general public. The exhibition will now also be shown at the Moray Art Centre in Findhorn and the Scottish Sculpture Workshop in Aberdeenshire.



“The Story Walks Project has given the pupils the most amazing opportunities that demonstrated the “Curriculum for Excellence” at its best. Inter-disciplinary working and cross-curricular activities were tackled with enthusiasm by pupils, staff and professionals from all backgrounds. Pupils worked closely with a variety of professional artists and a writer, building on their prior learning in their local environment, to create wonderful artworks and leaflets that can be shared with and appreciated by the whole community. The involvement of everyone who gave their time and hard work as part of their “in-kind” donation was quite remarkable. The school can’t thank them enough for their generosity in making this project possible. Everyone involved can be justifiably proud of their involvement in such a fantastic project.”

Sheena MacKinnon, Head Teacher, Mortlach Primary School



Writer, Ken Cockburn, at the King’s Grave.

“It didn’t take long for the townsfolk to become aware of the stirrings in the widds and for them to become interested and involved, especially when they heard of our visit to the King’s Grave (reputedly the grave of the Danish king killed at the Battle of Mortlach), 1001 years old, yet unknown to many locals as it is situated in private grounds. As a result of our interest it is going to be made accessible to everyone in future, a very unexpected, but very welcome bonus.

The children benefited in many ways, but above all they have appreciated being outside, learning from the natural environment, which hopefully will remain a lifelong source of enjoyment to them. That locals and visitors alike are waxing lyrical about the amazing sculptures, a permanent legacy of the project, demonstrates what a worthwhile project Mortlach Story Walks has proved to be.”

Jean Oliver, Chair, Speyside Paths Network Group



Thomas in Meg's Widd

"The Parent Council was glad to be involved in this project which has helped to develop what we hope will be long lasting links between the community and school. All the feedback from the kids has been very positive and they seem to have really enjoyed the whole project."

Kirsteen Paterson, Chairperson, Mortlach Parent Council

The Mortlach Story Walks Project gratefully acknowledges contributions from the following organisations:

Mortlach Primary School
Parents Council
John Cooper (Dufftown) Ltd



Wild things!
Environmental Education in Action



The Elgin Marble Co



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