



Teaching about Scotland

This is one of a series of units for teaching about Scotland in German Secondary schools. All the materials were created by very motivated students in my Area Studies Scotland class, some with experience of teaching in a “Gymnasium“. The materials can be tried out as they are, or altered as desired. They can also be combined. One basic idea behind them all is that both the teacher and the learners can develop the materials themselves, according to their own interests, and then even offer them to another class. For some of these units printed information material is needed, for example ferry timetables, but if you don't have this, it is no problem to print it out from the Internet. Useful websites are given.

Ancient Scotland and/or Life on the Islands

This is a really interesting introduction to the far distant past of Scotland and how it is connected to life on the Islands today.

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Course: Area Studies Scotland

Target Group

The class should have heard of the different Ages before, such as the Stone Age and their English vocabulary should be good enough to understand most of the material they are given. Thus, the target group would be students around the age of 14. The material, however, can easily be adjusted to the age of the students and their proficiency in English, so that the main section of the unit can be done with younger students as well.

Aims

The students get to know some ancient sites in Scotland and learn about life during the Stone Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age. They have to guess the time of construction of certain historic sites and link these historic sites to the Age they were built in.

In the additional part of the unit, students can get an impression of what life on the Scottish islands is like today. As many of the ancient historic sites are located on the islands, they might be expected to play an important role there. However, there is not much tourism yet (compared to other historic sites like Stonehenge), so the sites are still quiet and peaceful.

Materials

Pictures of the Pyramids of Giza, the Colosseum in Rome, Machu Picchu in Peru and a wheel (or similar)

Pictures of Mousa Broch (Shetland), the Callanish Standing Stones (Lewis), Maeshowe Cairn (Orkney), Skara Brae (Orkney) and the Blackhouse Village (Lewis) or other Scottish ancient historic sites

Pictures of all these sights are available on the internet, e.g. on Wikipedia (See sources below).

Magnets

Map of Scotland

Activity 1

The pictures of all the sites are on the board, but not in chronological order. There are also cards on the board with the names of the sites and location, and a separate set of cards with dates and Ages.

The students work together in pairs (in larger classes, in groups of three or four) to match names and pictures first. Then they have to guess how old each site is and during which Age it was constructed.

They also have to think about the possible purpose of the sites. (To encourage the students to really think and guess, the correct answers are not given at this stage)

Now, the teacher can provide some information on The (Middle and New) Stone, Bronze and Iron age. The information could be structured by systematically answering the following four questions for each age.

WHO lived in Scotland during this Age?

HOW did people live at that time?

What TOOLS did they have?

What FOOD did they live on?

An example is given in the Appendix in Table 1.

Alternatively, the students work in groups of four to find answers to the four questions on one of the Ages and present them to the class. This is only possible if they have access to additional material. (There are many children's books available in English on topics like this, with clear text and excellent illustrations.)

At this stage the class can check their answers with the teacher and can get the "right" answers, finding out about the sites in the pictures, what they were used for, how they were discovered and so on. The best group can be given a prize.

Some information on these sites is given in the Appendix in Table 2.

Activity 2

Discussion in class. The discussion could be based on questions like the following.

What other ancient/historic sites do you know? Do you find them more interesting than the sites we just looked at? Why?

What do you think is special about ancient/historic sites in Scotland?

Here, some more information and comments on Scottish sites can be added. Sample newspaper quotes and readers' comments from the Scotsman are given in the Appendix "Ancient/historic Scottish sites".

Activity 3 (optional) If there are two class periods available or if a whole unit on Scotland is planned, this topic can be nicely linked to exploring life on the Scottish islands today, as all of the above sites are situated on the Scottish islands.

The students get slips of paper with very short texts on life on the islands. Some are given below, in the appendix “Life on the islands”. The students work in groups of three or four, each student getting a different slip of paper on one of the island groups (Orkney, Shetland, Western Isles). They could also be given additional information on the islands themselves, such as the number of inhabitants or climate. Through reading this information, they will get an impression of what life on the islands is like today. They could design a poster on one island each, giving general information as well as their own ideas on what they think life on their island is like.

Sources

pictures

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page

high resolution pictures are available in the articles about the Giza pyramid complex, the Colosseum, Machu Picchu and the Wheel

information about the historic sites

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skara_Brae (neolithic settlement)

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maeshowe> (chambered cairns)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Callanish_stone_circle (Standing Stones)

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Broch> (Brochs in general, Dun Carloway Broch for example)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mousa_Broch (Mousa Broch)

information about the Ages

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stone_age (Stone Age)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bronze_Age (Bronze Age, includes subsection on the British Bronze Age)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Iron_Age_Scotland (Iron Age in Scotland)

comments and historical background

<http://www.scotshistoryonline.co.uk/>

<http://www.scotsman.com/> (for some articles that can be used, please see below)

Appendix Table 1

	WHO	LIFE	TOOLS	FOOD
Mesolithic Age ~8000-4000BC “Middle Stone Age”	Hunter-gatherers reoccupy Scotland after the Ice Age (~10000BC)	Tribes or small extended family groups (~25-100 people);lived along river-banks, lochs,... Nomadic life. Domesticated dogs	Relatively complex tools made from wood, bone, flint and antlers	Hunted: deer, wild boar, game fowl Gathered: fruits, nuts, wild cereal crops, fungi, fish, shellfish
Neolithic Age ~4000-2200BC “New Stone Age”	Immigrants from continental Europe	Tribes, with permanent settlements, planted crops	Advanced tools like stone axes, tools for deforesting	Farming, agriculture, domesticated livestock
Bronze Age ~2200-750BC	Metal workers from Holland immigrated	Societies with chiefs, very individual-centred (Jewellery and high status objects found in graves, sometimes individuals have their own cairns)	Weapons made from bronze. Tools made from copper and bronze	Similar to Neolithic Age
Iron Age ~750BC-500AD	Influenced by European, Celtic culture	Societies and tribes. Very common occupations are farmer, merchant and craftspeople. There are warriors, but not as many as is usually thought. They built hill-forts. Pictish nations are formed, independent, though Romans invaded Scotland	Iron-made tools. New weapons, like spears or swords,are used for warfare	Milk, cheese, butter, fish, pork, chicken, beef, vegetables, cereals, bread,... very similar to today's food (except for preservatives, flavouring etc.)

Appendix Table 2

Historic Site	Date	Description
Skara Brae Orkney	~3100 BC	large, stone built neolithic settlement, very well preserved Europe's most complete historic village Revealed in 1850 when a storm blew away the sand and grass by which Skara Brae was covered Occupied several times
Maeshowe Orkney	~2750 BC	Neolithic chambered cairn and passage grave made of 30 tons of sandstone Was used as a shelter by Vikings, who left "graffiti" on stone walls. With about 30 individual inscriptions, this is the largest collection of runes today
Callanish Standing Stones Lewis	~2000 BC	13 primary stones form a circle of about 13m diameter Long avenue to the north, shorter rows to south, east and west Stones are Lewisian gneiss, their height ranges from 1-5m, the diameter is up to 4m The tallest stone marks the entrance to a burial cairn which was added later Pottery dated 2200 BC was found at the site, which suggests that the circle might have been erected earlier May have served as a calendar system
Mousa Broch Shetland	~100 BC	A "broch" is an Iron Age dry stone structure which is only found in Scotland 3m high, 1 single entrance, an internal staircase and an open walkway at the top The only complete broch Usage ranges from defense purposes to housing for priests
Blackhouse Village Lewis	only 300 years old!!!	Traditional island lifestyle, but similar to Iron Age roundhouses Both livestock and people lived together Thatched roofs The last inhabitants of the blackhouse village left in 1974

Appendix : Ancient/historic Scottish Sites. Newspaper quotes

TOURISTS exploring Britain's ancient spiritual heritage are better off visiting Scotland's stone circles than "noisy, overcrowded" Stonehenge, according to research by the National Geographic Traveller. In a survey of the world's best-known heritage sites, the magazine described the famous Megalithic attraction in the south-west of England as a "mess", lacking "charm and magic". Instead, the magazine recommends the unspoilt stone circles in the north of Scotland which, despite growing visitor numbers, remain unspoiled by noise and intrusion. [...]

(Scotsman, Scotland's magical ancient circles leave Stonehenge standing.
3 November 2006)

Readers' comments:

[3.](#) XXX, Western Isles / 7:38am 3 Nov 2006

Stonehenge is alright but nothing compared to the Ring of Brodgar, Scara Brae and Callinish stones which all outdate the Henge by thousands of years.

[4.](#) YYY, Glasgow, UK / 8:33am 3 Nov 2006

A couple of weeks ago I visited the Ring of Brodgar, the Standing Stones at Stenness, Skara Brae and Maes Howe. Quite magical. It was misty when we went to Brodgar and the stones had an ethereal quality in the dimmed sunlight. Miles better than Stonehenge which has been ruined, and older than the Pyramids. Makes you think.

[11.](#) ZZZ, Argyll / 9:41am 3 Nov 2006

[...] I visited Stonehenge a few years ago, I was put off by the commercialisation of the place, same with the Roman remains in Bath. There are better things in Scotland [.....].
The people who run historical sites in England charge like wounded buffalos.

(Scotsman, Scotland's magical ancient circles leave Stonehenge standing)

The chamber was opened in 1862 but nothing was inside except the biggest-ever collection of runic messages left by Vikings. It seems they broke in to find shelter during a storm in the winter of 1123. Amazingly, their epic messages are everyday, boastful, rude and funny, just like the kind we leave: "Many a woman has come stooping in here no matter how pompous", or "these runes were carved by the man most skilled in runes on the Western Ocean".

The quality of the construction and size of the sandstone blocks used, together with the precision in quarrying and stone-cutting would tax the Scottish Parliament builders. Some of the slabs still fit so well together that a knife-blade cannot be inserted between them. Estimates suggest that the Maes Howe building would have taken 39,000 man-hours.

(Scotsman, Stone Age marvels which inspire and astonish)

Skara Brae today comprises eight well-preserved houses, with the remains of others below and around them; all but one are inter-connected by passages with stone roofs which must have provided much-needed shelter in the harsh Orcadian winters. The buildings are sub-circular, skilfully constructed using local stone, and there is considerable uniformity in their design. Each contains a single room with central hearth, a dresser opposite the low doorway and a bed to either side. Small cells were built into the walls, some of which provided storage while others have interconnected drains and may indicate early internal plumbing. Smaller fittings include stone seats and watertight tanks to keep shellfish and fish.

A wealth of beads and fine pendants attest that life was not just a daily grind. There was leisure to provide for other needs and these included jewellery and art. Decorative motifs are scratched on to the stones of the houses and passages, and remains of haematite and ochre suggest that these were highly coloured.

The inhabitants were farmers who cultivated barley and some wheat, and they kept cattle, sheep, goats and pigs. They supplemented their diet with wild birds and their eggs, fish, shellfish, fruits, berries and nuts gathered from the surrounding landscape.

(Scotsman, Footsteps from the past: the ancient village of Skara Brae)

Appendix: Life on the islands. Newspaper quotes

WITH its remote windswept location and long dark winters, living on the Shetland Isles could be perceived as a hard existence.

But a new survey reveals that the islands' inhabitants have the best quality of life in Scotland.

The highest levels of employment in the UK, good earnings, and affordable large homes, mean the islands are rated higher than the convenience of life on the mainland.

(Scotsman, Remote and Barren? No, it's the good life on wintry Shetland Isles)

During the winter our island life takes on a different rhythm. Outdoor tasks are more easily done in the short hours of daylight and by 5pm we usually have the living-room fire lit and members of the family are to be found either next to that or by the Rayburn in the kitchen. Homework, fiddles and cellos; the winter Olympics on telly; a game of Pass the Pigs or something the boys call the Lighthouse Game; a big hot deep bath with a glass of red; these are our most regular winter evening activities. Bedtimes are a round of hot chocolate, hot toddies and hot-water bottles (although I admit to having discovered the wicked delight of the electric blanket).

We take ferry trips into town (Kirkwall) less frequently and when we do go the day passes in a mad rush, as we try to achieve everything on a list that has been growing ever longer since our last visit. For about six weeks of mid-winter our ferry times alter to a "re-fit timetable" which allows for each of our fleet of three boats to take turns at sailing off to Rosyth for maintenance. This means less time in Kirkwall, more time on the sea, as the two remaining boats struggle to serve all six North Isles ports (Eday, North Ronaldsay, Papay, Sanday, Stronsay and Westray).

(Scotsman, Time for reflection and hot toddies)

"We talk about Orkney and the community and say it's a great place to be. But we have to be realistic about it," [Richard Thomas, head of personnel with Orkney Islands Council] says. Positives to stress are the safe environment, great education system and superb recreational facilities. Negatives can include the weather and its knock-on effects on transport links. Another downside is the cost of petrol - about ten pence a litre more expensive than on the mainland.

(Scotsman, Dive into history and culture)

Yet even the casual window-shopper can see Kirkwall is also a sophisticated and cultured place with an amazing array of galleries, craft shops and jewellery workshops. [...]

And the past is everywhere in Orkney. There are literally thousands of strange looking mounds, many of which have never been excavated.

(Scotsman, Where past is present)

FORGET flying south for sun, sea and sangria. Instead, head north for wind, waves and whisky.

The Western Isles is marketing itself as a bracing alternative to traditional "out of season" holiday destinations, using the slogan:

"A Winter vacation in the Outer Hebrides. Unimaginable!"

(Scotsman, Come on in... the water's freezing)

A more traditional form of Scottish religion holds sway, in Lewis and Harris, and it is still considered rebellious to hang your washing on the Sabbath. [...]

(Scotsman, Our hearts are in the Islands)

The Sabbath is strictly observed, especially on Lewis and Harris, so don't expect to find many tourist attractions, cafes or restaurants opening on Sundays. But little offence will be caused by going for a walk.

(Scotsman, Walk of the week)

"Our perspective is that God is sovereign and sometimes he allows things like the ferry service to happen, but there will eventually be a judgment. We don't want it, but it's on God's hands" - Iain Macdonald, Scottish secretary Lord's Day Observance Society

One woman said: "We welcome this, it was only a matter of time before it started. However I don't want to give my name as my mother would throw me off the island."

It was just ten days since Caledonian MacBrayne took the decision to make the previous six-days-a-week crossing a seven-day service. The move has split the islands community and membership of Western Isles Council which has a long-standing policy opposed to Sunday ferries to Lewis and Harris.

While regular Sunday services operate to the largely Catholic islands of South Uist and Barra, they have never run to the joined Presbyterian islands of Lewis and Harris where strict Sabbath observance is generally adhered to. However the tradition has gradually been eroded. Seven-day ferries between Skye and North Uist began in 1989 and Sabbath flights took off to Lewis in 2002.

(Scotsman, Plain sailing as Sabbath ferry breaks taboo)

A £5.3 MILLION arts centre opening today in the Outer Hebrides is the biggest arts development in the north since Eden Court in Inverness.

The state-of-the-art An Lanntair centre in Stornoway, funded mainly by the lottery as a centre of regional excellence, is the first purpose-built arts centre in the Western Isles.

From December, it will also be home to the first permanent cinema in the islands for 30 years, offering three days of films a week. The design of the 240-seater auditorium, with moving walls, is unique in Britain.

It is expected that islanders from neighbouring Harris - and even those on Uist, taking advantage of improved ferry connections - will also visit the centre, which has kept the name of its predecessor, An Lanntair, meaning "lantern" in Gaelic.

(Scotsman, Arts centre set to shine light on island life)

Konstanz, August 2010