

# THE SUTHERLAND LONGHOUSE PROJECT

## WILLOW WEAVING WORKSHOP

Our willow workshop led by Pippa Tran took place on 18th January at Dornoch Social Club. Working outdoors, learning to weave willow using age-old techniques wasn't the only hurdle the attendees had to master. On soaking ground, in a biting cold wind, showers of driving rain and only occasional sunshine, teacher and participants powered on in what felt like authentic pre-clearance conditions. Amazingly, the event was voted a success by all.

Pippa began by explaining the use of the ancient practice of coppicing in woodland management. She talked about different trees that would have been coppiced, and willow and its many uses. Then the group set off



outside to learn how to weave hurdles - an everyday item in pre-settlement life.

Using clamps to hold their supporting stakes or 'sails' in place, the group were taught the skill of pairing with willow. This involved the weaving of pairs of single rods tightly through the supporting sails to form a strong foundation for the hurdle.

Next Pippa demonstrated the 'slewing' method which is weaving with 2 or 3 rods together. When mastered, this type of weaving is faster and is used to build the majority of the hurdle.



Pippa demonstrated how to avoid snapping the willow rods when bending them around the end stakes by twisting them to make them flexible.

*A welcome lunch  
provided by  
Historylinks: hot  
soup and cheese  
scones followed  
by sweet treats  
and tea/coffee*



Thawed out, and fortified by lunch, the intrepid willow weavers set to work again. And now the hurdles began to grow rapidly. A companionable silence was evidence of serious concentration on the task in hand!

Finishing the weave with another round of pairing, a hurdler's wrap and the trimming of loose ends, the hurdles were soon complete. Each one different; all fantastic! With a smile on every face, the sun finally appeared.

