

Hard Vrocht Grun Project

Objection and Exemption



TOPIC



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The 'Hard Vrocht Grun' is an Aberdeenshire Council project supported by Heritage Lottery Fund to create educational resources based on locally held heritage material about the effect of World War One on the NE of Scotland for Secondary schools.

The Hard Vrocht Grun is a Doric phrase meaning 'hard worked / wrought ground'; this is not only a term used in the region to describe the harshness of farming the land but is also a metaphor used to describe the difficulties of winning ground on the battlefields of Europe and Mesopotamia.

The project is orchestrated by the Heritage Education Partnership (HEP), which comprises officers from: Archives, Libraries, Registrars, Museums, Arts Development and Education (Secondary schools).

David Atherton, Arts Education Officer, February 2014

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The First World War was characterised by a fervent sense of national and individual obligation to fight or otherwise contribute to the 'war effort'. Kitchener's famous recruitment poster pointed directly at the individual man and woman, linking their decision to fight to the fate of the whole country.

In the first year or so of the war many thousands volunteered but this flood reduced as the war extended. In 1916 the Government introduced conscription, a law requiring men between 18 and 41 to serve in the armed forces. A 'conscience clause' was included in the law for those who chose not to bear arms for moral, philosophical or religious reasons. These men became known as 'conscientious objectors'. They were required to attend a tribunal to explain why they would not fight, and most of them were interned or required to undertake non-combat 'war work' in place of serving in the armed forces.

Some men were exempted from serving in the armed forces because of ill health, family poverty or being involved in work considered essential in the community. These men were also required to apply to a local tribunal for an exemption certificate, explaining their reasons.

By examining original sources from the time we can deepen our understanding of those who objected to fighting in the War, the attitudes that existed towards them, and what happened to them. We can look, too, at those who were exempted and consider why they were regarded so differently.

Task overview

Your task in this topic is to create a presentation about an aspect of Objection and Exemption in World War One. You will do this with a small group working in collaboration.

The purpose of your presentation is to help your audience understand the strong feelings that were generated in local communities and the country by those who applied to be exempted from fighting in the War.

To prepare for this you will study original source materials from the period, using research questions to decide what further investigation you will do, and how you will present your findings.

You can undertake further research with the assistance of Library, Archive, Museum and Registrar services, together with local historians, your teacher and other experts who are available to you.

You may find some of the handwriting unfamiliar but with a little perseverance you will find the writing similar to what we use today and you may also find it useful to copy out any difficult word - this should help you to decypher the text. Discussing difficult words in groups and with your teacher is also helpful.

Your work is in three stages:

Stage 1:

- Research the document extracts activity and discuss the questions
- Research the document bundles provided for this topic and discuss the research questions for each bundle.
- Choose an area that interests your group for further research.
- Decide provisionally on what form of presentation you will use, and what further research you need to undertake to create your presentation successfully. (You can make a definite decision about the presentation once you've done the research)

Stage 2:

- Devise up to three questions that your further research will answer. This will help to focus your work.
- Research your chosen area of the topic in more depth using the resources available and record your findings. Use your research questions to keep your work relevant. All your research should be based on original sources.
- Make a final decision, in consultation with your teacher, on what form your presentation will take.

Stage 3

- Create your presentation, ensuring that everyone in the group makes a contribution.
- Make your presentation available to your audience

Researching the topic

Exemption from War service generated strong feelings in local communities, particularly when men were exempted because they objected to fighting for religious, moral or philosophical reasons. They were often branded as cowards and traitors, treated harshly and expected to contribute to 'war work' in other ways than fighting.

Others were exempted from War service for family, financial or business reasons, or because their work was considered essential to the running of the country or winning the war. These men were regarded more favourably in society and by the authorities. Through your research you will consider these different attitudes towards Objectors and Exempted men.

This topic pack contains several document bundles, which are collections of original materials from the time of the War related to particular aspects of Objection and Exemption. Each document bundle has a set of research questions for you to discuss in your group. This discussion should help you decide what aspect of the topic you will research in more detail, and what further questions to ask.

When you have decided what further research you will undertake, there are several sources of original material and expertise available for you to use in addition to your school's resources.

- Local Archives
- School, Local and Regional libraries
- Registrars Service
- Museums Service
- Local history organisations

A description of the resources available from each of these sources is included with this topic pack. You can request specific information from staff in these organisations, and use their expertise to deepen your understanding of the material you are researching.

Presenting your work

You will present your research as a group. Your presentation should help your audience understand more about exemption from War service, the reasons for it and how it worked in practice.

Your presentation can debate the different points of view about objection and exemption, or it can present one point of view and attempt to persuade others by using argument and evidence.

There are several different ways you can create the presentation of your research. You should discuss with your teacher which of these might be suitable for your group, and what time and resources are available with which to create it.

Options include:

A computer/screen-based presentation using e.g. PowerPoint including text, images, sounds and spoken words. This might be used to illustrate a live talk from members of the group.

A computer/screen-based interactive website including text, images, sounds and spoken words or short video clips spoken to camera or showing discussion or re-enactment.

A short dramatised presentation involving members of the group as characters enacting an aspect of the topic, or debating the issues, or reporting events. Any storyline should be based clearly on actual events backed up by evidence from original sources.

A list of other options is provided further on in this unit, and you should discuss with your teacher what form of presentation might be appropriate for your group, given the resources and time available.

Document extracts activity

Some extracts from original documents related to Objection and Exemption are provided on the following two pages.

Look through these extracts and consider what you can deduce from them about Conscientious Objectors during World War One.

In your group, discuss the following questions and write your conclusions on the sheets provided.

Document Extracts group questions:

- What reasons are given by conscientious objectors for refusing to fight?
- What appears to be the public attitude towards objectors?
- Why do you think the men at the Dyce Work Camp are compared to men in the trenches?
- Do you agree with the '18-year-old-recruit'? Why, or why not?

HERE'S A PRETTY KETTLE OF FISH!

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?



Here is a conscientious objector in a quandary. He has run up against a snag, as the Americans say. But though he is armed, his convictions will not allow him to defend himself or take human life. WHAT WOULD YOU DO IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES?

Answer

MARCH 25.

Name

Address

Make your answer as pointed and as humorous as you can. You may send as many replies as you please, but write each in a coupon cut from this week's "People's Journal," and post to 8 Bank Street, Dundee, to reach us not later than Tuesday morning, marking your envelope "Problem."

PRIZES: £2, £1, Six of 5/-, and Four of 2/6.

Extract from People's Journal 25th March 1916
advertising a caption competition

Bailie Duncan—If everybody in the country took the same view of the situation, where would our country be?

Applicant — If everybody had the same views as I have there would be no war. The war would be finished directly.

Bailie Duncan — We have got a war. Everybody has not the same view as you, seeing so many of our fellow-countrymen have made the final sacrifice. Don't you think it is your duty as a man to go and fight for your country?

Applicant—I think it is my duty as a man to try as hard as I can to have peace.

Bailie Duncan—Is it not better to go and fight for it?

Applicant—All the countries in the world at present have put the peoples up against one another without their consent or consideration.

Mr Wilkie—What do you mean when you say people have been forced to fight against their will when millions of free men have gone to fight? It has nothing to do with Scripture.

Applicant—No. It is on moral grounds that I based my claim.

At the Kintore Burgh Tribunal... Mr. W. McBain, solicitor, Aberdeen, submitted an appeal by William Polson, M.A., B.Sc, Ashgrove, Kintore, in which he stated that he was a Socialist, and had been for four years a member of a Socialist society ... whose fundamental belief was the solidarity of humanity. He held that the life and personality of every man was sacred, and that there was something of divinity in every human being, irrespective of nationality or colour, that was, for example, German as well as British, or black as well as white. Hence, he believed in the brotherhood of all men, and at all times refused to have anything to do with the waging of war. He would be false to his convictions and false to his fellow society members if he accepted military service in any form and of any nature whatsoever.

Captain Constable: You object to be associated with work in any way that bears upon the war?

Any work of military service.

Is it because you think this war is wrong and might have been avoided?

Yes, I disapprove of the war on the grounds that it is wrong to take any man's life.

In this war, is it not a case of good predominating over evil?

Right always prevails in the end.

And ought to be assisted to prevail?

Not necessarily; it will come of itself (Laughter)

And that is the root of your doctrine — on no ground can you offer physical resistance to the enemy?

I cannot.

Do you carry your doctrine this length—that if anyone were before your eyes to violate a woman's honour, you would refuse to slay him?

Certainly I would refuse. The only thing that can be done to prevent these things is to prevent all war — namely, stop the war.

What is our proposal for stopping the war? *International agreements.*

Extract from report of Aberdeen District Exemption
Tribunal hearing, April 1916

Mearns Leader 24th March 1915 reporting the discussion between an applicant for exemption from War Service and the committee considering his application.

Hard Vrocht Grun Project

In 1916 a work camp for conscientious objectors was established at Dyce, outside Aberdeen. Over 200 men were sent to the camp to break stones for road-building. In September 1916 one of the men died of influenza caught at the camp.

September 12th 1916

Sir,—We, the Men's Committee of the Dyce Camp, have come to the following conclusions concerning the death in this camp of Mr W. L. Roberts, of Stockport, which occurred on Friday, September 8th last:-

We view the present position as extremely serious, and assert that but for indifference and neglect, our late comrade Roberts would be alive now. His death can be traced to the following main causes:-

Men have been sent direct from prisons, hundreds of miles, into exposed and harsh conditions of life.

The camp was not in readiness to receive the men sent as regards ordinary feeding arrangements, the provision of nursing facilities, including suitable feeding and housing of sick, etc.

The medical attention is inadequate.

The recommendations of the Men's Committee re accommodation, clothing, and general conditions were largely ignored.

Up to the time of our late comrade's decease, there appeared to be no proper appreciation of the position by those responsible, and the urgency of adequate improvements in the conditions obtaining in the camp.

The extract above is from a letter published the Aberdeen Daily Journal on September 12th 1916 from a committee of the men at the Dyce camp.

The extracts below are from a letter by an anonymous "18-year-old recruit, and an editorial both published by the Aberdeen Daily Journal.

"SHEER IMPERTINENCE."

Sir,—In your issue of Tuesday there appeared an order from the "good men" stationed at Dyce demanding what they call their rights. I understood that they were under military rule, and if this is so, why should they be allowed the freedom they enjoy? After the death of one of their number they thought fit to slander their camp in various ways, and demand a number of improvements. This is sheer impertinence, and the punishment should be of a very serious nature. The true Briton will not stand these men much longer. Are our brave men at the front allowed to ask questions such as these? No. Therefore, why let a few of these quibbling idiots who refuse to fight come with such a story? They deserve as much as some of the women and old men in Belgium got at the hands of the Huns.—Yours, etc.,

AN 18-YEAR-OLD RESERVE.

Aberdeen, 13th Sept., 1916.

no severity of climate during the past two months at least in the north. Complaint is also made because of the strain of "ten hours' work in a quarry every "day," of leaking tents, and of the hardship of sleeping in "barns and "cottages." Some will fall by the way under any state differing from their normal routine, but when we think of the conditions which the men in the trenches have had to bear during the past two years in fighting and dying for the safety and the liberty of these conscientious objectors, the complaints fall extremely flat, especially as the conditions complained of only apply to a comparatively small number who have for the most part refused to work or committed other offences.

The conscientious objector in war-time is a degenerate, or worse, who is out of harmony with the people of the nation which protects him in peace-time, and safeguards him in war-time,

Discussion notes about document extracts

What reasons are given by conscientious objectors for refusing to fight?

What appears to be the public attitude towards objectors?

Discussion notes about document extracts

Why do you think the men at the Dyce Work Camp are compared to men in the trenches?

Do you agree with the '18-year-old-recruit'? Why, or Why not?

Document Bundle 1

Case studies from Stonehaven

This document bundle contains original records related to William Main, a gardener from Stonehaven, who applied for exemption from all War service on the grounds that he was a pacifist and a socialist.

Other documents provide some background about the Exemption Tribunal, and other cases of men who applied for exemption.

Read through the documents and discuss the following questions. There are sometimes no 'right answers' to these questions; they are opportunities for you to learn more about the topic by hearing each other's observations and points of view. Make notes about your discussion on the sheet provided.

Research Questions

- What did William Main want the Exemption Tribunal to give him ? Why ?
- What were the Tribunal's objections to William Main's application ?
- What do the newspaper reports suggest to you about the Tribunal's attitude towards William Main ? Why do you think this is different to other cases ?
- Do you agree with the Tribunal about William Main ? Why ?
- Who were the D'Agostino family and what applications did they make to the Exemption Tribunal ? Were they successful ?
- Why did John Falconer, the County Clerk, apply for an exemption for his cashier, Henry Taylor ? Why did the Tribunal argue with him about it ?

Discussion notes about Bundle 1

What did William Main want the Exemption Tribunal to give him ? Why ?

What were the Tribunal's objections to William Main's application ?

What do the newspaper reports suggest to you about the Tribunal's attitude towards William Main ? Why do you think this is different to other cases ?

Discussion notes about Bundle 1

Do you agree with the Tribunal about William Main ? Why ?

Who were the D'Agostino family and what applications did they make to the Exemption Tribunal ? Were they successful ?

Why did John Falconer, the County Clerk, apply for an exemption for his cashier, Henry Taylor ? Why did the Tribunal argue with him about it ?

Document bundle 2

The Huntly and Deer tribunal disputes

This document bundle details disputes that arose about bias on Exemption Tribunals, specifically about farmers granting exemptions to their own workers.

Read the documents and discuss the questions below. There are sometimes no 'right answers' to these questions; they are opportunities for you to learn more about the topic by hearing each other's observations and points of view. Make notes about your discussion on the sheet provided.

Research Questions

- How did the Exemption Tribunals decide which applications should be granted ?
- What were the War Office's complaints about the Deer District Tribunal ?
- What was the Tribunal's reason for exempting so many agricultural workers ?
- What was the War Office's answer to this ?
- What was Captain Medhurst and Henry Spence's complaint to the Aberdeen Recruiting Officer about the Huntly Tribunal ?
- If you were the Recruiting Officer, how would you reply to this letter ?

Discussion notes about Bundle 2

How did the Exemption Tribunals decide which applications should be granted ?

What were the War Office's complaints about the Deer District Tribunal ?

What was the Tribunal's reason for exempting so many agricultural workers ?

Discussion notes about Bundle 2

What was the War Office's answer to this ?

What was Captain Medhurst and Henry Spence's complaint to the Aberdeen Recruiting Officer about the Huntly Tribunal ?

If you were the Recruiting Officer, how would you reply to this letter ?

Document bundle 3

The Dyce work camp for Conscientious Objectors

This document bundle contains material about a work camp for Conscientious Objectors which was set up at Dyce in Aberdeenshire in 1916. 250 men from all over Britain were compulsorily sent to the camp to work because they had objected to fighting in the War.

The camp only existed for a few months but its presence in Aberdeenshire generated strong feelings among locals. The evidence for this is contained in local newspaper articles and letters. You will find more information in Joyce Walker's book about the Dyce Camp which is available from Aberdeenshire Libraries and Information Service.

Read the documents and discuss the questions below. There are sometimes no 'right answers' to these questions; they are opportunities for you to learn more about the topic by hearing each other's observations and points of view. Make notes about your discussion on the sheet provided.

Research Questions

- What do you think were the purposes of a work camp like the one at Dyce ?
- Why do you think many members of the public had such negative feelings about conscientious objectors ?
- Who defended the conscientious objectors, and why ?
- Study the cartoon competition. What stereotypes are contained in the drawing ?
What do the winning answers tell you about attitudes at the time ?
How do you think people today would respond to the cartoon competition ?
- Were work camps like Dyce an appropriate answer to the question of what to do with conscientious objectors ? What alternatives can you think of ?
- Read pp5-10 of Joyce Walker's book *A Cloak of Conscience: Dyce Work Camp, Conscientious Objectors, and the Public of NE Scotland, 1916* (which is available from Aberdeenshire Libraries and Information Service) Why do you think the Government of the time created a law that allowed people to become conscientious objectors ?

Discussion notes about Bundle 3

What do you think were the purposes of a work camp like the one at Dyce ?

Why do you think many members of the public had such negative feelings about conscientious objectors ?

Who defended the conscientious objectors, and why ?

Discussion notes about Bundle 3

Study the cartoon competition. What stereotypes are contained in the drawing? What do the winning answers tell you about attitudes at the time? How do you think people today would respond to the cartoon competition?

Were work camps like Dyce an appropriate answer to the question of what to do with conscientious objectors? What alternatives can you think of?

Why do you think the Government of the time created a law that allowed people to become conscientious objectors?

Planning further research

Choose an area of the topic that interests your group

There are three aspects of the topic explored through the document bundles. These are:

- 1 Conscientious objectors and their reasons for refusing to fight in the War, the attitudes of the local Exemption Tribunals and their arguments against conscientious objectors.
- 2 Tensions between military and civil authorities in Aberdeenshire about who qualified for exemption, the 'reserved occupations' such as farming, the idea of 'essential' and 'non-essential' work, and what constituted 'war work'.
- 3 The work camp at Dyce, the treatment of conscientious objectors by the military authorities, the attitudes of the general public towards them, and the question of how to respond to those who object to a government's actions on principle.

Discuss in your group and with your teacher which one of these aspects you will research further. Your research will deepen your understanding of people's experience of objection and exemption in Aberdeenshire. For example you may wish to learn more about William Main and what happened to him during the War. This would involve getting more biographical information about him, but also exploring the arguments he raised and learning what others locally felt about the War.

Alternatively you may wish to find out more about the people who applied for exemption in your own local area, or about the men from the Dyce Camp and their activities while they were there.

Presenting your research

Consider what sort of presentation your group will create to present its findings. You don't have to make a final decision about the presentation now as you may change your mind once you have researched more material, but make a provisional choice now so you have something to work towards.

Planning further research

Devise research questions

Devise **at least three questions** about the topic that you will seek to answer in your research and presentation. The questions are intended to deepen your understanding of the local Aberdeenshire experience of objection and exemption.

These should be open questions that aim to explore the topic further rather than closed questions with simple answers. These questions will give you a focus for your work and ensure your research is relevant to your presentation.

Closed Questions

Closed questions often have a short, definite answer such as “How many people applied for exemption in Aberdeenshire ?” or “What were the reserved occupations ?” These types of questions are useful for obtaining specific information but have limited value when you are trying to deepen your understanding of a subject.

Open Questions

Open questions have a wider range of possible answers and so are useful for researching a subject that requires deeper understanding. Examples might be “Why were certain occupations in the local area considered essential ?” or “What arguments did conscientious objectors in our local area use with the Tribunal ?”

Spend some time writing a wide range of questions that you think will be useful, then discuss and edit them down until you have three or more that you think will direct your research in the direction you wish it to go.

Planning further research

Collecting research material

There is a wide range of material available for you to use in researching your topic. In addition, you can consult local agencies and local historical research groups for specific original records and local stories.

Libraries

Conscience And Politics, John Rae Aberdeen Free Press and Evening Express archive 1916

Dyce Work Camp, Public Opinion and Conscientious Objectors in North East Scotland, 1916, Joyce Walker

'Dockens Afore His Pee rs' poem by Charles Murray about a farmer applying for exemption (also available at Aberdeen University website and NEFA website)

Sunset Song, Lewis Grassic Gibbon (character of Long Rob)

Archives

Research by Diane May on individuals that appeared before Exemption Tribunals in Stonehaven (reproduced in Objection and Exemption Bundle 3)

Aberdeen County Clerk Letters

Stonehaven Town Clerk Letters

Registrars

Birth and Death records of individuals who were involved with the Tribunals

Local history societies

Stories of local events and individuals involved with the Tribunals, reserved occupations, or who objected to the War

Expertise in researching local history from different sources

Researching your questions

The emphasis of the Hard Vocht Grun project is on the Aberdeenshire experience of the War, understood as much as possible through the evidence of original sources.

- What information do you need to begin answering your research questions ?
- What original sources might supply you with that information ?
- Who can you ask for assistance in finding the information and understanding it ?

Planning further research

Use the document bundles as your starting point in deciding what types of information your group requires to undertake the research.

Much original source material has been digitised and is available online or can be sent to you by e-mail. Aberdeenshire Library resources such as books and local newspapers can all be obtained through your local library, for example. Read through the descriptors from different agencies to see what they can supply and how you can request the information.

There can be a short delay between requesting information from agencies and receiving it. Plan your work so you have books, web resources and other materials to be working on while you wait for requested information to arrive.

Working as a group

All the members of your group should have a role in researching your Objection and Exemption topic, and in creating and sharing the presentation.

You may decide to divide the work into different tasks such as requesting information from different sources, making notes on specific materials, reading and selecting relevant quotes from books or papers, searching newspapers etc, or you may share the work between you to gain experience of each task.

Decide on how you will work together as a group before you start to undertake the research. Ensure that each group member is clear about the work they will do for the project.

This may not happen straight away. Experimenting with ideas, trying things out and exploring a wide range of options before narrowing down are all essential for a successful outcome. If you try something out and it doesn't seem to work, try something else.

Presenting your research

The purpose of your presentation is to help your audience understand an aspect of Objection and Exemption during World War One. As part of your presentation you should introduce the different points of view that existed at the time, and either debate them or present one side in a way that seeks to persuade your audience.

There are several different ways you can create the presentation of your research. Some are suggested here, or you may have a different idea. You should discuss with each other and with your teacher what might be suitable for your group's work, and what time and resources are available with which to create it.

Here are some options to consider:

Physical reporting such as

- a wall exhibition or collage of images and words,
- a replica wartime 'discovery' box filled with materials displaying your sources and conclusions

Screen-based reporting such as

- An interactive website including text, images, sounds and spoken words, or short video clips spoken to camera
- PowerPoint slideshow of images and words, perhaps to support a live talk from members of the group

Performance reporting such as

- a sound recording of personal accounts;
- a guided walk through an exhibition of images;
- a short scripted performance using words, music, objects, actions and characters;
- a talk presented by all members of the group together.

Expressive Arts project

In addition to presenting your research into Objection and Exemption you have the opportunity to work with an Arts professional to create a performance or art work that explores your research in a different way.

Objection and Exemption was an aspect of the War that generated strong feelings in individuals and communities at the time. The pressure on men to join the armed services was almost overwhelming, and many men wanted to join the War as soon as they could because they felt a powerful loyalty and duty to a national cause.

Those who objected were often regarded as cowards or traitors to their country, undeserving of the privileges of citizenship or understanding of their moral or religious views. They were the targets of anger, resentment, sometimes violence, and they were sometimes excluded from mainstream society.

Exemption from active service was less contentious, depending on the reason for the exemption. Some men wanted to fight but were prevented because they were considered too valuable in their jobs at home, and others may have used exemption as a way of avoiding War service without being labelled as conscientious objectors.

The topic lends itself particularly to drama and debate. For example, using the original transcripts of William Main's Tribunal hearings, as published in the local Stonehaven newspaper, you might script a tense 'courtroom drama' for performance on stage or as an audio recording.

Discuss with your teacher what options are available for you to develop your research as an Expressive Arts project.

Debate

Aberdeen University Special Collections Department holds a collection of papers related to the University Peace Group. This was a student group formed at the start of the War that opposed Britain's entry to the War on principle.

The Peace Group held regular meetings at which speakers presented the arguments against the War and explored alternatives to resolving the conflict in Europe.

A small group from your class has the opportunity to work with the University staff to research these records and learn about the different views on the War that were discussed at their meetings. You will also investigate some of the individual members of the Peace Group, their views and attitudes, and what happened to them as the War went on.

The outcome of your research will be a debate between two opposing teams about the rights and wrongs of going to War in 1914, using the opinions that people held at the time. You will take the role of a man or woman from the time and argue their views with the intention of persuading your audience of your team's point of view.

Teacher's Notes

The topic pack is ideally undertaken by students working together in collaborative groups of up to six.

Document Extracts activity

Extracts of documents are provided, alongside questions for student groups to discuss. This introductory activity is intended to prepare the groups for the more in-depth Document Bundle activities. It might usefully be undertaken by the whole class with the teacher as facilitator, as described in the Facilitating Discussion section below.

Document Bundle activity

There are three document bundles containing a mixture of original sources related to a common theme. Students are required to read the materials, discuss their contents using the research questions and make notes of their answers. Note sheets are provided and are best enlarged to A3 size to provide sufficient space for notes.

The research questions are intended to provoke open-ended discussion and initial class discussion about discussion techniques may be valuable. Teachers should determine an appropriate time period for groups to undertake each document bundle activity depending on the ability and disposition of the class. The bundles can be duplicated so that up to six groups can be undertaking the task at the same time.

A single document bundle activity might be undertaken by a whole class at the same time if sufficient copies can be made available. This is valuable where teacher facilitation is desirable for the best outcome. Teachers may wish to do this for one document bundle in order to model good practice before setting the groups to work on the other two.

The document extract activity can also be used for this purpose.

Some guidance may be required for students to access the arcane language of some newspaper reports, official letters and reports.

A class plenary session may be useful once each group has worked on all three document bundles. On completion of the document bundle activity each group should be in a position to identify an area of further research.

Teacher's Notes

Facilitating discussion

Many students will require some structured facilitation and modelling of the discussion process for it to have value in originating good-quality research questions.

It can be valuable to agree 'ground rules' for group discussions, even where students are already experienced in discussion and debate.

For example:

- The goal of the group's discussion is not to reach agreement but to gain a deeper understanding
- Listen with respect and curiosity to others when they are speaking
- All views and ideas are worth consideration
- All members of the group have a chance to speak and be heard
- The discussion is a place to test out ideas, even if they are not fully formed
- There are not necessarily 'right' answers to the questions being asked
- Disagreement should be honest, respectful and seen as an opportunity to explore different ideas
- Listen and check you understand before responding
- Question and challenge ideas, not individuals
- Make notes

Teachers should consider facilitating a group discussion or a class discussion to model good practice for the whole class of students before embarking on separate group discussions.

Facilitation involves asking relevant questions, ensuring the group stays on the subject and follows the ground rules, and redirecting the group back to the subject if the discussion wanders away. The teacher as facilitator should avoid contributing to the discussion itself, but act as a guide to a constructive discussion process.

Successful group discussion is a curricular goal in itself and worth taking the time to ensure students have learned how to do it.

Further research questions

Groups are asked to devise a minimum of three open questions about the topic to focus their research. These questions should direct research towards local sources with the intention of deepening understanding of the local experience of objection and exemption. Students should be encouraged to draft multiple questions and variations on questions, then edit them down through discussion and re-wording.

Teacher guidance is important to ensure relevance. Cross-referencing with other groups may also be useful. Students should see this exercise of devising the questions as a valuable learning activity in its own right.

At this stage it is useful for students to have considered how they might present their research findings. A list of possibilities is included in the topic notes, and teachers may present further or a different set of options depending on resources available in the school, anticipated timetables and the students' own experiences and abilities.

Students should be encouraged to see this as a provisional choice that can be changed later in the light of the research they undertake. Some students may prefer to have the certainty of a form of presentation already decided if this will assist in focussing the research.

Further research using original sources

The emphasis of the Hard Vocht Grun project is on the Aberdeenshire experience of the War, understood as much as possible through the evidence of original sources.

Students are encouraged to obtain original source materials from a variety of agencies, groups and individuals. The Aberdeenshire Council's Archives, Registrars, Libraries and Museums services are part of the project and are prepared for student requests for material. Named contacts with e-mail addresses and phone numbers are listed in the topic pack, together with descriptors of the types of relevant material available from each.

Local community history societies are part of the project and are available to supply students with locally researched material, copies of original records and expertise in understanding how to interpret original sources. Some have collections of photographs, others documents and objects, researched pamphlets and papers about specific individuals, families, buildings, organisations, community groups etc.

Students should spend time deciding what specific materials they wish to request from different agencies before contacting them. There may be short delays between requesting information from agencies and receiving it, either electronically or by post, so students should ensure they have library and web-based resources available to be researching while they wait for records to be sent from agencies.

As much as possible, Aberdeenshire agencies have material already prepared for Hard Vocht Grun project requests and the turnaround should be rapid.

Teacher's Notes

Group working

In the topic notes students are instructed to plan how they will work as a group. Teacher input and support is discretionary in this process depending on students' past experience of cooperative group working and the teacher's knowledge of personalities in the class.

Students should be clear that group working is itself a learning process and an important aspect of the topic work. Discussion, speculation, and the exercise of ideas is integral to the success of their research and presentation. Making mistakes and trying something else is also essential for developing an effective group.

The unit notes encourage students to experiment with ideas and try different ways of working together in order to develop an effective modus operandi for their group.

Presenting research

Teacher guidance on timescales and available resources is important for students to make realistic choices about their research presentation. Sufficient time plus a little extra should be available for students to collate and prepare their research material in a form suitable for presentation, and 'rehearsal time' used effectively.

While ideas are listed in the topic unit the range of options will depend on school resources, and could well be wider than the range presented in the unit.

Experiences and Outcomes for Hard Vrocht Grun topic packs

| Outcome statement | Curriculum area | Group(s) used in |
|---|--|------------------|
| I have used the skills I have developed in the expressive arts to contribute to a public presentation/performance. EXA 3-01a | Expressive Arts > Participation in performances and presentations | |
| I can use and combine the visual elements and concepts to convey ideas, thoughts and feelings in expressive and design work. EXA 3-03a | Expressive Arts > Art and design | |
| I can use the visual elements and concepts with sensitivity to express qualities and relationships and convey information, thoughts and feelings. I can use my skills and creativity to generate original ideas in my expressive and design work. EXA 4-03a | Expressive Arts > Art and design | |
| When I engage with others, I can make a relevant contribution, encourage others to contribute and acknowledge that they have the right to hold a different opinion. I can respond in ways appropriate to my role and use contributions to reflect on, clarify or adapt thinking. LIT 3-02a * Responsibility of all | Literacy > Listening and talking > Tools for listening and talking | |
| When listening and talking with others for different purposes, I can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communicate detailed information, ideas or opinions • explain processes, concepts or ideas with some relevant supporting detail • sum up ideas, issues, findings or conclusions. LIT 4-09a Responsibility of all * | Literacy > Listening and talking > Creating texts | |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>I can use my knowledge of a historical period to interpret the evidence and present an informed view. SOC 3-01a</p> | <p>Social studies > People, past events and societies</p> | |
| <p>I can make links between my current and previous studies, and show my understanding of how people and events have contributed to the development of the Scottish nation. SOC 3-02a</p> | <p>Social studies > People, past events and societies</p> | |
| <p>I can describe the factors contributing to a major social, political or economic change in the past and can assess the impact on people's lives. SOC 3-05a</p> | <p>Social studies > People, past events and societies</p> | |
| <p>I can discuss the motives of those involved in a significant turning point in the past and assess the consequences it had then and since. SOC 3-06a</p> | <p>Social studies > People, past events and societies</p> | |
| <p>I can evaluate conflicting sources of evidence to sustain a line of argument. SOC 4-01a</p> | <p>Social studies > People, past events and societies</p> | |
| <p>I can express an informed view about the changing nature of conflict over time, appreciate its impact and empathise with the experiences of those involved. SOC 4-06b</p> | <p>Social studies > People, past events and societies</p> | |
| <p>Through discussion, I have identified aspects of a social issue to investigate and by gathering information I can assess its impact and the attitudes of the people affected. SOC 4-16b</p> | <p>Social studies > People in society, economy and business</p> | |

External sources of information and assistance

Getting professional assistance with your research

When your group is ready to undertake research using your research questions there are several sources of valuable information, original source material and expert assistance you can use.

Your Teachers and Network Librarians can provide school-based resources and guidance as to organising your research. They can also advise you about how to use external agencies.

For example the Registrars Office can search for birth, death and marriage records for individuals you wish to investigate further. The Libraries service can find extracts from local newspapers from the time, some of which are digitised and available locally.

Local History societies are a valuable source of local knowledge, original documents and objects, and expertise in research methods.

Look through the descriptions of the different agencies and discuss with your teacher how each can help you further your research.

Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Archives

Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Archives provides a joint Archive service for Aberdeenshire Council and Aberdeen City Council and access to collections relating mostly to local administration in North East Scotland along with some collections from external depositors, such as businesses.

The main Aberdeenshire resources relating to the First World War period include County Council records, Town Council records, school records and poor relief records.

Once you have developed your research questions after completing the first part of your research project you can contact us at our Old Aberdeen House address below to discuss what sources we may have to help you. You can also find more information about our collections on our website and our online catalogue, and links to these are provided below along with our contact details.

Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Archives

Old Aberdeen House

Dunbar Street

Aberdeen AB24 3UJ

T. 01224 481775

E. archives@aberdeencity.gov.uk

W. www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/archives

Catalogue. www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/archivecatalogue

External sources of information and assistance

Aberdeenshire Libraries

The Aberdeenshire Library Service also holds a number of published books which include WW1 poetry and deal with WW1 combatants and casualties in various localities and for different organisations (e.g. University of Aberdeen, Gordon Highlanders). We also hold digitised newspapers from the period, which are a rich resource for your project.

Our contact details are :

Aberdeenshire Libraries, Local Studies Department,

Meldrum Meg Way, Oldmeldrum AB51 0GN.

T. 01651 871219/871220.

E. local.studies@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

The Department is open Monday - Friday, 9.00 - 5.00 and visitors are welcome by appointment.

The principal resource relevant to your project is digitised newspapers; the Aberdeen Journal, the Aberdeen Free Press, the Peoples Journal and the Evening Express, which all cover the conduct of the war in some detail and the home front in Aberdeenshire.

A number of local newspapers also contain general war news and cover their local area in more detail:

- the Banffshire Journal for Banffshire
- the Buchan Observer for Peterhead
- the Fraserburgh Advertiser
- the Fraserburgh Herald for Fraserburgh
- the Huntly Express for the Huntly area
- the Kincardineshire Observer, the Mearns Leader and the Stonehaven Journal (to 1917 only) for the Stonehaven area.

Contact us for assistance in searching the newspapers and finding published books relevant to your project research.

For information and updates please go to our website:

www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/libraries/index.asp

External sources of information and assistance

Aberdeenshire Registrars

Aberdeenshire Registration Service comprises of staff located at offices throughout Aberdeenshire. These offices are geographically spread across all 6 administrative area of Aberdeenshire.

Staff have a wealth of experience and are fully trained in providing guidance and assistance in respect of all Registration matters, including births, deaths, marriages, civil partnerships and family history and genealogy services.

If you or your school wishes to access records via the Registration Service, please contact registrars@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Aberdeenshire Museums Service

Aberdeenshire Museums Service is the museums section of Aberdeenshire Council's Education, Learning & Leisure Service. We operate 4 museums across Aberdeenshire including the Mintlaw Discovery Centre, and work in partnership with others, from Fordyce in the north to Stonehaven in the south.

The collections are wide-ranging, including weaponry, archival material and other items from the Western Front in the First World War, and letters from the Egyptian and Mesopotamian campaigns.

Enquiries about the collections and advice on using them for further research as part of a Hard Vrocht Grun research project can be directed to:

Aberdeenshire Museums Service Headquarters and Discovery Centre

Mintlaw Industrial Estate

Station Road

Mintlaw AB42 5EE

T. 01771 622807

E. museums@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

External sources of information and assistance

North East Folklore Archive

An internet resource for the study of the cultural heritage and traditions of North East Scotland. The site contains specific materials related to the Hard Vrocht Grun project as well as a wide range of materials about life in the North East.

www.nefa.net

David Atherton, Arts Education Officer

David is one of the coordinators of the Hard Vrocht Grun project. He is a point of contact for you in finding the best local sources of information and local partner organisations.

david.atherton@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Community History and Heritage Groups

Aberdeenshire has many local history and heritage groups which research the local area, publish leaflets and booklets, collect original source materials and stories from local history. These groups are an invaluable source of information for your project. There are several ways to access local heritage groups in your area:

- Your teacher or school librarian will know which local groups would be the best for you to contact about your project.
- The Aberdeenshire Council website has a list of Community groups which you can search by subject and by area. www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/clubs/index

University of Aberdeen Special Collections Centre

The Special Collections Centre is home to the University of Aberdeen's historic collections of books, manuscripts, archives and photographs.

The University holds several collections related to WWI. Foremost is the Roll of Honour, a list of all staff, students and alumni of the University who served in WWI, with biographies and photographs of those who were killed in the war. This commemorative book is now digitised and available online at <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/library/roll-of-honour/>

The archive collections contain a number of WWI-related collections, highlights of which include the letters of Amelia Nyasa Laws, a nurse, physiotherapist and masseuse who rehabilitated soldiers wounded on the front and the journals of Sir Alexander Ogston spanning 1915-1917, which record his experiences as a surgeon in hospitals in Serbia and Italy. There is also an oral history collection with interviews recollecting the impact of the war on life at the University.

To use any of the collections for your research, contact the Learning and Outreach team at

email: scc.learning@abdn.ac.uk

scc.learning@abdn.ac.uk.

There is also a WWI factsheet available to help you get started which you can download at <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/library/about/special/>

Special Collections Centre

The Sir Duncan Rice Library University of Aberdeen Bedford Road Aberdeen AB25 2WN

Tel: (01224) 272598E:

email: scc.learning@abdn.ac.uk

scc.learning@abdn.ac.uk (school enquiries)

email: speclib@abdn.ac.uk

speclib@abdn.ac.uk (general public enquiries)

Web: <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/library/about/special/>

Hard Vrocht Grun Project

Aberdeenshire 
COUNCIL

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