

# Basketry

Basketry is the process of taking flexible lengths of wood, usually whole sticks, and weaving them into useful objects. These include baskets, small fencing panels called hurdles, the core of walls for a house or even fish traps. We have direct evidence for this craft in Scotland from at



*Preparing bait, Cromatry c.1910*



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*The Ballachulish figure was found with wickerwork around the figure*

In the 1800 and 1900's woven baskets played an essential part in the highland fishing industry, particularly for collecting bait (usually mussels) but also for a range of other tasks. In the countryside cut peats for fuel were carried in special types of baskets.

least 2,500 years ago but evidence from the rest of the UK suggests the technique has been used since at least the Mesolithic. This makes basketry one of our most long-lived crafts. It is carried out in much the same way today as it was by the first people in Scotland.

Basketry uses any flexible wood but willow and hazel are the most common, as they are fast growing and tend to be straight. The trees were often 'coppiced' or cut each year to produce good straight branches to weave with. It is possible to grow willow in a number of colors and willow was sometimes stripped of its bark to make 'buff' willow baskets.

Basketry is incredibly versatile and the woven items are both strong and light. As they are made from natural organic material baskets and other items tend to rot away and are not common archaeological finds, although they would have been used by almost all groups throughout Scottish history and prehistory.



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*Beginning a basket*



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*Wattle walls at Dornie*

**See also:**

Box 3 object sheets: Hurdles, Baskets  
Additional images: Ballachulish Figure

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