

# **‘It happened at the berry-time when Travellers came to Blair’: Traveller Voices in *Tobar an Dualchais/Kist o Riches***

*Robert Fell*<sup>1</sup>

Drawing on under-utilised sources, this article introduces the reader to one of Scotland’s most marginalised and underrepresented ethnic minority communities, the Travellers. Many Travellers throughout Scotland have expressed having a shared sense of cultural identity, an identity that is borne out through a long history of persecution and misunderstanding from much of the Scottish population. The article engages with a selection of Traveller voices contained within the School of Scottish Studies Archives held at the University of Edinburgh. It demonstrates how our archives represent a unique resource when it comes to the study of Scotland’s Traveller communities. Paying close attention to the archive material, the discussion shows how a variety of Traveller tradition-bearers express an acute awareness of cultural legitimacy both within their communities and beyond. It illustrates how considered engagement with our archives can demonstrably assist in preventing the erosion of some of Scotland’s most marginalised cultural identities.

After the School of Scottish Studies was established in 1951 at the University of Edinburgh, the new school aimed to, ‘collect, archive, research and publish material relating to the cultural life, folklore and traditional arts of Scotland’.<sup>2</sup> Generations of fieldworkers, tradition-bearers, researchers and archivists have now contributed to the associated School of Scottish Studies Archives housed at the University of Edinburgh (hereafter SSSA). The SSSA is a rich repository of songs, stories, instrumental music, verse, customs, biographical information and local history. Utilising material deposited in the SSSA, this article focuses on one of Scotland’s most marginalised and underrepresented ethnic minority communities, the Travellers. Scotland’s Gypsy/Travellers – to give the communities their official *National Records of Scotland* designation<sup>3</sup> – are not a single community. Instead, they are made up of many different groups who have been known by a variety of names over the past millennium. It must be noted from the outset that I use the term ‘Traveller’ advisedly here because it

<sup>1</sup> Prizewinning essay in the Scottish Records Association’s Tunnock Prize, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> University of Edinburgh, History and Resources of the School of Scottish Studies Sound Archive, <https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/library-museum-gallery/cultural-heritage-collections/school-scottish-studies-archives/sound-archive>.

<sup>3</sup> Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland – A Comprehensive Analysis of the 2011 Census, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/gypsy-travellers-scotland-comprehensive-analysis-2011-census/>.

helps to differentiate certain ethnic groups from others. As Lynne Tammi noted recently, the term ‘Traveller’ is an official one used by governments and other policymakers, but it remains contested within the communities themselves.<sup>4</sup>

In this article, I consider a selection of Traveller voices contained within the SSSA to demonstrate how this archive represents a unique resource when it comes to the study of Scotland’s underrepresented communities during the twentieth century. Many of these voices have been made available through the *Tobar an Dualchais/Kist o Riches* (hereafter TAD) project, which is ‘dedicated to the presentation and promotion of audio recordings of Scotland’s cultural heritage through its website and subsidiary projects’.<sup>5</sup> I present examples of Travellers’ and others’ oral histories from SSSA, placing these histories within the broader context of documented Scottish history relating to Traveller communities. I begin by contextualising the communities under discussion and describe the utility of oral history as an investigative tool. I then situate my discussions within the wider literature relating to Gypsy/Traveller communities and reflect on how the SSSA can help us to better understand the lived experiences of Scotland’s Travellers. The final part of this article reveals how the Travellers’ voices preserved in the SSSA – many of which have subsequently been made available digitally through TAD – express an acute awareness of cultural legitimacy within the communities which challenges more ‘official’ conceptualisations and earlier attempts at assimilation by the authorities.

The term ‘Travellers’ describes a series of interlinked social and familial groups that have existed in Scotland as distinct from mainstream Scottish society since at least the twelfth century.<sup>6</sup> After spending several years engaging with Scotland’s diverse communities of Travellers, Hamish Henderson remarked that it is vain to speak with any certainty about the ultimate origins of these people.<sup>7</sup> However, Henderson does suggest that they are likely to be descended from an ancient caste of itinerant metalworkers whose status in earlier modes of society was probably very high.<sup>8</sup> Timothy Neat casts the origin of the Travellers in the Highlands further back in time, speculating that ‘they are the descendants of the Palaeolithic hunter-gatherers’ who were forced out of northern Europe as the Neolithic agriculturalists began to dominate the landscape.<sup>9</sup> What is certain is that as early as the twelfth century, a group known as ‘Tinklers’ are

<sup>4</sup> L. Tammi, ‘Across the Great Divide: The Impact of Digital Inequality on Scotland’s Gypsy/Traveller Children and Young People during the COVID-19 Emergency’, *International Journal of Roma Studies*, 2:2 (2020), 52–65, 63.

<sup>5</sup> TAD, ‘About Us’, <https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/about>.

<sup>6</sup> D. Kenrick and C. Clark, *Moving On: The Gypsies and Travellers of Britain* (Hatfield, 1999), 51.

<sup>7</sup> H. Henderson, ‘The Tinklers’, in (ed.) A. Finlay, *Alias MacAlias: Writings on Songs, Folk and Literature* (Edinburgh, 2004), 229–30, 229.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> T. Neat, *The Summer Walkers: Travelling People and Pearl-fishers in the Highlands of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1996), ix.

mentioned in Scotland's legal system. 'Tinkler' is an occupational term referring to a person's skill in metalwork. Although now condemned as a racial slur, the term 'Tinklers' or 'Tinkers/Tinks' came to represent distinct groups who were valued members of Scotland's pre-industrial society. Traveller communities have also been known in Gaelic as *Ceàrdan*, a term referring to skill in metalwork and again related to historical occupations and valued skill sets.

Some individuals from contemporary communities define themselves as 'Nacken' [also spelled 'Nawken', 'Nyakim' and 'Nachin']. This term has obscure origins, but it represents a more self-defining ethnic identity and one that is not based on their working lives. Despite the different labels used to identify them, these diverse communities share cultural characteristics that were, historically at least, based on nomadic lifestyles and working practices. Today, most of Scotland's Gypsy/Travellers, Nacken and *Ceàrdan* do not lead nomadic lifestyles, but have nevertheless retained a distinctive cultural identity which reflects the historical development of their communities. These cultural identities are understood here as membership of a discrete ethnic group that exists in contradistinction to a larger social system. The Travellers' group status as an ethnic minority was officially recognised in Scotland in 2008 after a legal precedent was set during an industrial tribunal brought in Aberdeen. Chaired by Judge Hosie, the unanimous judgment of the tribunal resulted in protection for the communities under the Race Relations Act (1976, amended 2000).<sup>10</sup>

Unfortunately, despite their participation in the socio-economic fabric of Scotland, Traveller communities have faced many centuries of persecution and misunderstanding from mainstream society. To better understand the perspectives of members of the communities, oral history is a useful methodological approach. The discipline of oral history is concerned with the recording and interpretation of first-hand verbal testimony; based on their lived experience, oral history aims to capture people's memories, reflections and insights, and to understand what their history *means to them*. Critics of the method have highlighted not only the fallibility of human memory, but also the subjective nature of any testimony and opinions that are recorded. For West, the issue of subjectivity is somewhat moot because oral history is concerned with 'how people reflect on their own past, and why they choose to voice some aspects and not others [which is] just as valid a line of enquiry as "what actually happened"'.<sup>11</sup> The subjectivity of the person's testimony, from this perspective, is a key strength of the method. By recognising the subjective nature of the material recorded, oral history can provide unparalleled insights into the relationships people have with the past and their experience of it. In terms of how we use such material, Thompson explains that 'all testimonies normally carry within them a triple potential: to explore and

<sup>10</sup> University of Strathclyde, 'Delivering Rights for Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland: Ethnicity Defined in Law', <https://impact.ref.ac.uk/casestudies/CaseStudy.aspx?Id=42372>.

<sup>11</sup> G. J. West, 'Oral Testimony', in (ed.) A. Fenton and M. A. Mackay, *An Introduction to Scottish Ethnology: A Compendium of Scottish Ethnology*, I (Edinburgh, 2013), 753.

develop new interpretations, to establish or confirm an interpretation of past patterns or change, and to express what it felt like'.<sup>12</sup> Using archived oral histories in tandem with other documented evidence means that new interpretations of the past are possible. Perhaps more importantly, and particularly in the context of the present article, Perks and Thomson observe:

The most distinctive contribution of oral history has been to include within the historical record the experiences and perspectives of groups of people who might otherwise have been 'hidden from history', perhaps written about by social observers or in official documents, but only rarely preserved in personal papers or scraps of autobiographical writing. Through oral history interviews, working-class men and women, indigenous peoples or members of cultural minorities, among others, have inscribed their experiences on the historical record and offered their own interpretations of history.<sup>13</sup>

In a 2021 article, Taylor and Hinks raise the issue of the under-representation of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller history in current scholarship: 'what field?', they ask, noting that 'Gypsy and Traveller history remains something of a backwater, seemingly cut off from this same flow of historical attention' that is given to other minority ethnic populations.<sup>14</sup> Despite this, earlier commentators such as Grellmann (1787), Hoyland (1816), Simson (1865) and Macritchie (1894) are evidence of a fascination with the 'Other' in elite European society during the late-eighteenth century, and throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>15</sup> Grellmann's account in particular, *Historischer Versuch über die Zigeuner [Dissertation on the Gipsies]*, began an association in the literature between native itinerant groups and immigrants from the Orient by consolidating various stereotypes. Grellmann's negative, stereotypical images of heathen wanderers who 'like locusts, have overrun most European countries' homogenised all itinerant peoples who shared similar nomadic lifestyles.<sup>16</sup> In the Scottish context, it is Macritchie's *Scottish Gypsies Under the Stewarts* (1894) that finally recognises Scottish Travellers as a distinct and separate group from Gypsies. 'The word "tinker" or "tinkler", although often applied to genuine Gypsies', says Macritchie, 'cannot be regarded as actually synonymous with "Gypsy"'.<sup>17</sup> In

<sup>12</sup> P. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 3rd edn (Oxford, 2000), 265.

<sup>13</sup> R. Perks and A. Thomson, 'Introduction to the Third Edition', in (ed.) R. Perks and A. Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*, 3rd edn (London, 2015), xiii.

<sup>14</sup> B. Taylor and J. Hinks, 'What Field? Where? Bringing Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History into View', *Cultural and Social History: The Journal of the Social History Society*, 18:5 (2021), 629–50, 629.

<sup>15</sup> H. Grellmann, *Dissertation on the Gipsies*, (trans.) M. Raper (London, 1787); J. Hoyland, *A Historical Survey of the Customs, Habits & Present State of the Gypsies* (York, 1816); W. Simson, (ed.) J. Simson, *A History of the Gipsies: With Specimens of the Gipsy Language* (London, 1865); D. Macritchie, *Scottish Gypsies Under the Stewarts* (Edinburgh, 1894).

<sup>16</sup> Grellmann, *Dissertation on the Gipsies*, 2.

<sup>17</sup> Macritchie, *Scottish Gypsies*, 13.

1907, McCormick recognised the same, noting that ‘there were in Scotland, prior to the wave of Romani-speaking Gypsies of 1505, so called Gypsies, or, to put it more specifically, Tinklers’.<sup>18</sup> The distinction between Scotland’s indigenous Traveller communities and arrivals from elsewhere was clear by the beginning of the twentieth century. By the turn of the twenty-first century, the cultural distinctiveness of Scotland’s Traveller communities inspired authors such as Braid to assert that ‘Travellers are creative human beings fully engaged in the modern world and perfectly capable of participating in a dialogue on issues of cultural identity’.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, Scotland’s Traveller communities have been attracting the attention of historians and cultural commentators for many years, yet until relatively recently the ethnocentricity of their views has been difficult to ignore. And it is from a different perspective that Taylor and Hinks assess ‘the field’ as it is now: ‘a number of historians have turned to oral history as a means of generating new evidence and constructing Traveller and Romani-centred histories’.<sup>20</sup>

Before moving on to consider testimonies from Travellers, I furnish the reader with documented examples that demonstrate the way that society’s elite viewed the communities through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to contextualise my subsequent examples from the SSSA. Some of the most extant and accessible documentary evidence for this persecution can be found in *The Statistical Accounts of Scotland*. Both the ‘Old’ *Statistical Account* (1791–99, hereafter OSA) and the ‘New’ (1834–45, hereafter NSA) include parish reports detailing the life of Scotland’s people during the industrial and agrarian revolutions taking place throughout Europe. The confusion around their origins, coupled with their alternative lifestyles and associations with other itinerant groups, makes representations of Travellers in historical records bleak reading. In the OSA for Auchterderran in Fife, The Reverend Andrew Murray includes a description of ‘a few persons, called *tinkers* and *horners*, half-resident, and half-itinerant, who are feared and suspected by the community’.<sup>21</sup> Elsewhere, Reverend Alexander Dobie’s contribution to OSA tells us that the parish of Eaglesham ‘is oppressed with gangs of gypsies, commonly called tinkers, or randy-beggars’.<sup>22</sup> More evidence of the denigration of Travellers comes from the parish of Kinnetles, where the Reverend David Ferney informs OSA that there are ‘bands of sturdy beggars, male and female, or, as they are usually called, tinkers; whose insolence, idleness, and dishonesty, are an affront to the

<sup>18</sup> A. McCormick, *The Tinkler-Gypsies* (Edinburgh, 1907), 393.

<sup>19</sup> D. Braid, ‘The Construction of Identity Through Narrative: Folklore and the Travelling People of Scotland’, in (ed.) T. Acton and G. Mundy, *Romani Culture and Gypsy Identity* (Hatfield, 1997), 40–68, 44.

<sup>20</sup> Taylor and Hinks, ‘What Field? Where?’, 639.

<sup>21</sup> OSA, Parish of Auchterderran, County of Fife (Edinburgh, 1791), I, 458. The OSA and the NSA can be viewed using the search facility on the University of Edinburgh’s Edina website: <https://stataccscot.edina.ac.uk/>.

<sup>22</sup> OSA, Parish of Eaglesham, County of Renfrew (Edinburgh, 1792), II, 124.

police of our country'.<sup>23</sup> The Reverend Duncan M'Aras reports to OSA that Fortingal is also plagued by 'swarms of tinkers'.<sup>24</sup>

The animosity displayed by the clergy towards Travellers continued into the nineteenth century in the same pejorative tone. In the NSA, Reverend William Duff of Grange complained that the parish 'has long been infested by cairds, tinkers, and sturdy beggars'.<sup>25</sup> In the NSA for Monteith, Reverend Alexander Gray recorded that 'vagrants, tinkers, and gipsies from various quarters were numerous; but, by the vigilance of the local police, they have been suppressed'.<sup>26</sup> In Knockando, Reverend George Gordon explained to the NSA that the parish is 'much infested by sturdy beggars, and tinkers, especially during the summer season, who drain away a great deal of what might otherwise be given to the home-poor'.<sup>27</sup> Writing in *The Friend; A Religious and Literary Journal*, the anonymous author of an article entitled 'Savages in Scotland' reported that the 'tinkers of Caithness [...] herd like cattle [...] and the entire social condition of the tinker tribe is of the most degraded character'.<sup>28</sup> In George Webster's autobiographical *A Criminal Officer of the Old School*, he describes the Traveller communities as 'great roch [rough] villains, men an' women [...] ye dinna see the breed o' them noo'.<sup>29</sup> Recounting one violent case in particular, Webster contends that 'that was the style o' the tinklers' frays o' forty year syne' and expresses his satisfaction when the group are found guilty and transported.<sup>30</sup> These accounts from the various Reverends contributing to the OSA and the NSA – and the evidence from elsewhere – convey the rancorous attitudes that existed towards Travellers in the past. The evidence presented here corroborates what Annette and Farnham Rehfish conclude: Travellers in Scotland have existed, and survived, in a hostile environment for many centuries.<sup>31</sup> However, it must be noted that these disparaging accounts are the opinions of an elite class – embodied by the clergy and the published intelligentsia – and that they are only one side of the story. It can be taken for granted that the men composing these narratives would not have consulted what were deemed undesirable members of their communities – the Travellers themselves – when collating the information included in their accounts of their parishes. It is therefore not difficult to imagine the Travellers' *persona non grata* status in the parish communities cited above.

<sup>23</sup> OSA, Parish of Kinnettles, County of Forfar (Edinburgh, 1793), IX, 201.

<sup>24</sup> OSA, Parish of Fortingal, County of Perth (Edinburgh, 1792), II, 455.

<sup>25</sup> NSA, Parish of Grange, County of Banff (Edinburgh, 1845), XIII, 219.

<sup>26</sup> NSA, Parish of Monteith, County of Perth (Edinburgh, 1845), X, 1281.

<sup>27</sup> NSA, Parish of Knockando, County of Elgin (Edinburgh, 1845), XIII, 81.

<sup>28</sup> Anonymous, 'Savages in Scotland', *The Friend; A Religious and Literary Journal*, 43:13 (1869), 102–3, 102.

<sup>29</sup> G. Webster, *A Criminal Officer of the Old School: Being Passages in the Life and Experience of George Webster* (Aberdeen, 1880), 82.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>31</sup> A. Rehfish and F. Rehfish, 'Scottish Travellers or Tinkers', in (ed.) F. Rehfish, *Gypsies, Tinkers and other Travellers* (London, 1975), 271–83, 283.

As an initial example of how Scottish Travellers' distinctiveness is revealed in the SSSA, I turn to a prominent voice within the collected material, that of Traveller Betsy Whyte. Discussing her early childhood and schooling in the 1920s, Whyte explains that despite the teachers at her first school treating her very well, 'if any damage was done to the school, a window broken, or anything like that ... "they damn tinks"' would get the blame.<sup>32</sup> Whyte goes on to describe how, if there was any trouble, people would 'take anybody's word against the Travellers', no matter what was done'.<sup>33</sup> Elsewhere, in her autobiography *The Yellow on the Broom*, Whyte recalls the 'horrors of school' where she met 'cruel and sarcastic' individuals that made her Traveller ethnicity a routine source of animosity.<sup>34</sup> However, outside of the educational system, Whyte portrays a contented lifestyle where 'everybody went to the fields [...] from the youngest to the oldest'.<sup>35</sup> Whyte fondly remembers how the children would 'play about in the fields, the mothers would go and feed their bairns when they wanted to. [At] dinnertime they would make a big fire and cook something, and boil tea, tea, all the time'.<sup>36</sup> The Travellers undertook what Whyte calls 'piecework', a system of payment where the labourers are paid for work done, rather than how long it takes them to do it. In this way, Whyte explains, a measure of freedom was achieved; because the work was not compulsory as with perhaps a salaried position, the Travellers could say 'if it was a summertime and a nice lovely day, "come on boys, we'll all go to the burn, leave it for the day"', it was just a matter of being able tae be free, I think'.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, this piecework system also suits the farmer, as Whyte explains, 'when you were working in piecework, you never wanted to go [leave employment], but when it was compulsory tae be there, ye jist didnae want to be there'.<sup>38</sup> From this perspective, Travellers as seasonal workers would have been an integral part of the agricultural economy during the early twentieth century, and even more so further into the past.

In contrast during the twentieth century, Whyte gives an informative account of how Travellers in the Perthshire region of Scotland would make a

<sup>32</sup> Betsy Whyte, 'Betsy Whyte answers questions about the Traveller lifestyle and traditional cures', A. J. Bruford (fieldworker), ref. SA1985.120 (SSSA, October 1985). The archival objects cited here can also be accessed on the Tobar an Dualchais (TAD) digital platform which contains a selection of material from the School of Scottish Studies, The Canna Collection and BBC Radio nan Gàidheal (<https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk>). Hereafter, all references beginning 'TAD' refer to the track ID and can be accessed via the TAD website by searching the numerical track ID using the search function. In this case, for instance, Betsy Whyte's conversation with Alan J. Bruford can be found using the track ID 82053 on the TAD website.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., TAD 82053.

<sup>34</sup> Betsy Whyte, *The Yellow on the Broom: The Early Days of a Traveller Woman* (London, 1979), 55, 56.

<sup>35</sup> Whyte, 'Betsy Whyte answers questions', TAD 82053.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.



living during the months between December and April. During these winter months, when little or no agricultural work was to be had, Whyte recounts how Travellers would trade various domestic items with their settled neighbours, and exchange labour with gamekeepers for raw materials, such as various animal horns.<sup>39</sup> Similar to Whyte's description of the harvest months spent in the fields with families, there is no sense of antagonism between Travellers and the settled population. On the contrary, Whyte tells us that 'where we lived, there was no vans [mobile shops] or nae shops, or anything'.<sup>40</sup> This meant that their settled neighbours 'were glad to see a Traveller comin', even to get news sometimes'.<sup>41</sup> Considering the evidence presented from the OSA and the NSA, Whyte's conceptualisations of the relationship between Travellers and the settled population paints a somewhat ambiguous picture. On one hand, Travellers are scapegoats for society's ills and a burden on the parishes, whereas on the other they are valued seasonal workers and welcomed in many ways on account of their itinerancy. Other non-Traveller contributors to the SSSA attest to the reciprocal relationship that the communities enjoyed. Discussing his life in Glenlivet, Moray, during the first half of the twentieth century, Adam Lamb acknowledges that he knew Travellers as 'cyards [cairds, Gaelic *Ceàrdan*]', and notes that the community had 'no animosity or ony-thing like [that towards the] tinkers'.<sup>42</sup> Lamb's experiences with Travellers is quite the opposite of animosity, explaining that 'they [Travellers] would get any amount o meal or tatties or ony-thing that they wanted'.<sup>43</sup> Notably, Lamb comments that he makes a differentiation between Gypsies and Travellers; for Lamb, speaking in 1956, there were people 'with oily skin that disnae belong to this country, but then again, you'd see many of them that hudnae that look at aw'.<sup>44</sup> From Lamb's perspective, there existed a certain difference in appearance that marked out the Travellers, thereby differentiating them from 'the real Gypsy'.<sup>45</sup> Despite the racism of Lamb's perspective, his testimony demonstrates that positive relationships existed between Travellers and the settled population during his lifetime.

To put the testimonies from the SSSA into their sociopolitical context, the Scottish Government's *Advisory Committee on Scotland's Travelling People* (hereafter ACSTP) have provided a useful chronology of the central government's interactions with Traveller communities. 'Earlier central government initiatives in Scotland', say the ACSTP, 'where a search for effective information as a basis for policy either specifically on, or at least including Travellers, now stretch back

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> A. Lamb, 'Travelling people in Glenlivet', Hamish Henderson (fieldworker), ref. SA1956.45.A16 (SSSA, 1956), TAD 3135.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.



more than a century'.<sup>46</sup> It is apparent from the titles of the historical 'initiatives' – such as 'The Report of the Departmental Committee on Habitual Offenders, Vagrants, Beggars, Inebriates and Juvenile Delinquents' (1895), or the 'Report of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy in Scotland' (1936) – that the officials conducting the reporting were far from sympathetic to the situations or lifestyles of their subjects.<sup>47</sup> For Travellers in particular, it soon becomes clear that the official line is to attempt to assimilate families into the mainstream population by focusing on their children. For instance, a 1905 report prepared by Inspector J. Boyd for Education (Scotland) contains evidence from a 'Mr Macdonald' regarding 'the problem of tinker children' in the Caithness district during the year 1904.<sup>48</sup> Macdonald reports that 'the children seem to be trained to regard their fellow creatures as natural enemies; they grow up as outcasts without ambition to rise above the squalor of their surroundings'.<sup>49</sup> Given the evidence of the persecution of Travellers from the OSA, the NSA and elsewhere, the aversion of the Traveller children to officialdom is perhaps understandable. Macdonald goes on to assert about the Traveller children that it is 'impossible with the present *machinery of compulsion* to bring them within the range of the Education Acts [...] even if an educational *net of smaller mesh* be provided'.<sup>50</sup> The rhetoric of these early governmental reports often reduces Traveller communities to unthinking and insidious parasites. Within the context of Inspector Boyd's ostensibly objective report, Macdonald is clearly vying for additional funds to tackle 'the problem' or attempting to wash his hands of the Travellers altogether. According to Macdonald, the educational authorities in his district cannot be 'reasonably expected to trouble themselves and burden the local rates with the education of a class that contributes nothing to the parish but work for the police'.<sup>51</sup>

The earlier 1895 report, prepared for the then Scottish Secretary George Trevelyan, published as *The Report of the Departmental Committee on Habitual Offenders, Vagrants, Beggars, Inebriates and Juvenile Delinquents* anticipates Macdonald's fiscal concerns. Commenting on the compulsory education of Traveller children, the Committee concludes 'that one of the chief reasons why the law is not enforced is because to do so would entail expenditure on the parish enforcing it'.<sup>52</sup> The Committee provide an example from Perthshire where the lack of enthusiasm for the law is obvious, and where the Magistrates presumably did not consider the Traveller child worth the expenditure.<sup>53</sup> However, the Committee

<sup>46</sup> The Scottish Government, *Advisory Committee on Scotland's Travelling People: Final Report* (2000), Section 10.1 'The Information Base'.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> J. Boyd, *Education (Scotland) Northern Division: General Report for the Year 1904* (London, 1905), 9.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., my italics.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> C. Cameron *et al.*, 'Introductory', in *The Report of the Departmental Committee on Habitual Offenders, Vagrants, Beggars, Inebriates and Juvenile Delinquents* (Edinburgh, 1895), xxxii.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

become insistent and recommends that ‘powers should be given to School Board districts and parishes in a county or adjoining counties to unite in enforcing the attendance at school of the children of nomadic parents’.<sup>54</sup> The effect of this new power, the Committee explains, would be ‘to enable to be borne by an extensive area the expense of contributing to the maintenance of children liable to be sent to Industrial Schools’.<sup>55</sup>

In other words, School Board districts are being officially encouraged to remove ‘problem’ children to Industrial Schools regardless of their opinions around whether it would be ‘worth it’. Viewed together, the reporting of the central government during the early twentieth century amounts to hostility towards non-sedentary communities and openly advocates their assimilation into mainstream Scottish society. This was not a fate peculiar to Scotland’s Travellers. Jim MacLaughlin notes that Ireland’s Travellers were similarly maligned as outcasts in the post-Enlightenment atmosphere of ‘social Darwinism’.<sup>56</sup> Across European philosophy, the concept of ‘stages of civilisation’ – stages based on successively more regimented modes of subsistence – placed nomadic groups such as the Travellers in the ‘barbarous’ category.<sup>57</sup> The transition to urban, sedentary and industrialised societies coupled with the racialisation of nomadic groups during this period has had a major and long-lasting effect on our understanding of nomadic communities throughout Europe. In the ‘Minutes of Evidence’ section of the same 1895 report, for example, William Mitchell – the Vice-Chairman of Glasgow School Board and Juvenile Delinquency Board – believes that the Travellers ‘might gradually be absorbed with the labouring population’, and ‘their children looked after and sent to school, and the whole tinker clan thus gradually brought into association with the other labourer’.<sup>58</sup> Mitchell’s class prejudice was in all likelihood compounded by his membership of the Glasgow School Board Attendance Committee (1873–1903) and his published views on the centrality of scholastic education: ‘Education is the leading spirit of the age’, says Mitchell in 1885, ‘children must have the natural and material wants of the body supplied ere the benefits and blessings of education can be either received or valued’.<sup>59</sup> The vitriol continues in the appendices of the 1895 report where the Committee of the School Board of the Burgh of Wick and Pulteneytown submit that:

The tinker community is composed of a tribe or family quite alien to the local population, among whom they do not mix in social life or intercourse, neither work

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., xxxiii.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> J. MacLaughlin, *Travellers and Ireland: Whose Country, Whose History?* (Cork, 1995), 23.

<sup>57</sup> R. L. Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge, 1976), 5.

<sup>58</sup> W. Mitchell, ‘Minutes of Evidence’, in *Report of the Departmental Committee on Habitual Offenders, Vagrants*, 9.

<sup>59</sup> W. Mitchell, *Rescue the Children, or Twelve Years’ Dealing with Neglected Girls and Boys* (London, 1885), 16.

nor help in any way to alleviate the burden of local taxation, but by their mode of life, their obscene ways and conversation, their squalor and drunken habits, are a menace to our very civilisation.<sup>60</sup>

Contrary to the above School Board's anxieties, Agnes MacKenzie's testimony in the SSSA recalls how Travellers would come to Tiree every summer.<sup>61</sup> At one point, MacKenzie responds emphatically that, in her experience, the Traveller families that came to Tiree were 'honest, very honest' and goes on to provide information about one Traveller family's habits at other times of the year: 'The MacAllister's headquarters were Tobermory [Isle of Mull], they have a house there', MacKenzie explains, 'the children went to school there'.<sup>62</sup> Speaking in 1971, MacKenzie's testimony is indicative of a relationship with Travellers that extended beyond the 'toleration and non-harassment of Travelling People' policy, later introduced by the central government in 1977.<sup>63</sup> Such policies, unfortunately, encompass the legacy of the earlier governmental reports.

Further evidence of understanding and appreciation of Travellers' alternative lifestyles comes from Annie Forbes' testimony in the SSSA. Describing her life in and around Caithness – again in the early twentieth century – Forbes recalls that 'we had a lot of tinkers in these days'.<sup>64</sup> During an interview, Forbes lists some of the Traveller 'clans' that she remembers, and their various occupations. Forbes chuckles while recalling the violent disputes between the different Traveller families, then admits that despite this infighting 'they were fairly decent'.<sup>65</sup> More evidence from the SSSA comes from Hector Kennedy, who recalls 'getting great entertainment from the old [Traveller] folk' on the Isle of Tiree.<sup>66</sup> Kennedy tells how the settled population would exchange pipe tunes with Travellers, and that Travellers would be present during ceilidhs.<sup>67</sup> Further printed evidence of positive relationships between Travellers and the mainstream population comes from Duncan Campbell. In his *Reminiscences and Reflections of an Octogenarian Highlander* (1910), Campbell believes that Scotland's Travellers antedate immigrant Gypsy groups and laments their decline. 'It seems to me', writes Campbell, 'that the tinkers had been a feature of the Highlands long before any "Lord of Little

<sup>60</sup> Committee of the School Board of the Burgh of Wick and Pulteneytown, 'Appendix LXII', in *Report of the Departmental Committee on Habitual Offenders, Vagrants*, 606.

<sup>61</sup> Agnes MacKenzie, 'Travellers came to Tiree every summer; they lived in tents and worked as tinsmiths', Eric R. Cregeen (fieldworker), ref. SA1971.095 (SSSA, 1971), TAD 51886.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> The Scottish Government, *Advisory Committee on Scotland's Travelling People: Final Report* (2000), Section 5.1, 'Pitch Targets and Non-Harassment Policies – The Past and the Future'.

<sup>64</sup> Annie Forbes, 'Reminiscences of Travellers in Caithness before about 1918', Hamish Henderson (fieldworker), ref. SA1968.323.A35 (SSSA, 30 November 1968), TAD 24874.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Hector Kennedy, 'Travelling people used to come to Tiree, and brought songs and stories', Eric R. Cregeen (fieldworker), ref. SA1971.093 (SSSA, 1971), TAD 50181.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

Egypt” [Gypsy] with his followers came to Scotland and imposed on James V. and his Parliament’.<sup>68</sup> Campbell remembers:

In my young days tinkers mended pots and pans, and made spoons out of the horns of rams and cattle. In the time of my grandfather, and even later, they still retained their old repute for being capable silversmiths to whom people brought silver and gold to be melted down and to be converted into brooches, rings, and clasps for girdles, or to decorate hilts of swords and daggers [...] With the end of plaid, girdle, and buckled-shoe fashion among the Highland men and women came the end of the demand for the neatly finished and artistically designed ornaments the tinkers had been making for untold generations, and when the demand ceased, the art was soon lost.<sup>69</sup>

Contrary to the opinions of the authors of the OSA, the NSA and the governmental reports cited above, it is clear that convivial social and commercial interactions were taking place between Travellers and the settled population in Scotland’s relatively recent past.

Some years after the 1895 report cited above, the Children Act (1908) included legislation aimed at persons who ‘habitually wander from place to place’.<sup>70</sup> Under the provisions of the Children Act, parents were obliged to ensure that their children attended public elementary school during the months of October to March on at least two hundred occasions.<sup>71</sup> According to Becky Taylor, the Children Act was a part of reformers’ belief that ‘Travellers were capable of change, and that their characteristics were not inherent’, and that the 1908 Act aimed to ‘promote education as a prime tool in their reformation’.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, the 1908 legislation gave the authorities the power, without a warrant, to remove children to ‘a place of safety’ should their living conditions contravene any part of the legislation. This legislation was anticipated by the Education Committee of the Free Church of Scotland in 1897: ‘the Education Acts, as they stand’, noted a committee deputation to Lord Balfour, ‘do not reach this class of the community’.<sup>73</sup> It was felt that the peripatetic lifestyle of the Traveller families meant that the local county authorities found it difficult to enforce the children’s attendance at school. ‘Little or nothing could be done by School Boards’, the deputation continues, ‘without the aid of fresh legislation’.<sup>74</sup> The Children Act could assert control not only over the education of Traveller children, but also their upbringing more generally. Essentially, the Children Act aimed to take

<sup>68</sup> D. Campbell, *Reminiscences and Reflections of an Octogenarian Highlander* (Inverness, 1910), 24.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 24–5.

<sup>70</sup> UK Government, ‘Children Act (1908)’ (1908), Section 118.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> B. Taylor, *A Minority and the State: Travellers in Britain in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester, 2008), 80.

<sup>73</sup> Education Committee of the Free Church of Scotland, ‘The Education of Tinker Children’, *The Scotsman*, 3 February 1897, 5.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

control of the early scholastic and cultural education of Traveller children to integrate new generations of Travellers into mainstream society.

This attempt to undermine Traveller culture through their children did not escape the public's eye, with sympathetic citizens recognising the cruelty of such oppression. Writing in protest to the editor of *The Scotsman* in 1917, G. A. Mackay exclaims that 'to separate the [Traveller] children from their parents would be something like a death sentence [...] and would be one of the cruellest and most useless acts'.<sup>75</sup> Similarly, one anonymous contributor to *The Scotsman*, writing in 1918, after the Children Act was passed, commented that educating Traveller children 'out of their natural instincts and traditions may be a greater form of cruelty than that which it is supposed to cure'.<sup>76</sup> Similar concerns about Travellers' welfare were raised by the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church of Scotland during the same period. The Central Committee on the Welfare of Tinkers was established sometime before 1917, recognising 'a class that had been neglected for centuries' and yet, despite an awareness of the social problems, were unable to establish a 'correct diagnosis'.<sup>77</sup> By the 1970s, a Scottish Development Department report reflected on the issues raised in *The Scotsman* and by Scotland's clergy cited above; the 1971 report stated that little or nothing had been done to improve the situation during the intervening decades and that 'the need for action is now more compelling'.<sup>78</sup> The SSSA offers oral evidence of the impact that this had on Travellers and their families during the first half of the twentieth century. Commenting on the Children Act and compulsory schooling in the 1970s, Traveller Lucy Stewart explains that:

The Traveller bairns got leave tae travel the summer and school a' winter. An' ye couldnae be absent because the takar [one who seizes or captures] wis doon fir ye, tae take ye up, march ye up. You couldnae bide away, skulkin [playing truant] school there, oh no.<sup>79</sup>

Betsy Whyte goes further, recalling that up until the 1930s, the authorities would take Traveller children away from their families and place them in homes:

[The children] had to be taught fi that size [i.e., a toddler] to be wise for them [the authorities] ye see. If they [the authorities] thought you were hungry, [then] 'they kids are neglected, we'll take them into a home'. And these bairns that were taken

<sup>75</sup> G. A. Mackay, 'The Tinker Problem', *The Scotsman*, 4 April 1917, 10.

<sup>76</sup> Anonymous, 'The Wandering Tribes', *The Scotsman*, 17 May 1918, 4.

<sup>77</sup> D. Sutherland, 'The Work of the Churches', in (ed.) H. Gentleman and S. Swift, *Scotland's Travelling People: Problems and Solutions* (Edinburgh, 1971), 14–18, 14, 18.

<sup>78</sup> H. Gentleman and S. Swift, 'Conclusions', in (ed.) Gentleman and Swift, *Scotland's Travelling People*, 112–13, 113.

<sup>79</sup> Lucy Stewart, 'Lucy Stewart, as a Traveller child, went to school in the winter, and had chores to do at home', Rosalind MacAskill (fieldworker), ref. SA1975.148.A3 (SSSA, April 1975), TAD 39943.

into homes, when they come home they had to be looked after because they'd learned to steal, they'd learned to do things that we'd never even heard about [...] They [the children] were never any good, they never had much sense after comin' oot o' a home.<sup>80</sup>

The anxieties expressed by Stewart and Whyte come not only from the devastation of having children taken away from families, but also the negative impact that this has on children during their formative years. Lucy Stewart makes a similar point about compulsory schooling and how this affected her home life:

I didnae hate it, ye see, but I didnae like it, I'd rather be at hame [...] I hud to be at home for the work, ye see. If I didnae be at home [during the day], ye see, I had to come home and do all this work.<sup>81</sup>

In terms of the perceived neglect of children, 'we [Travellers] wisnae aw brought up hard', Traveller Jeannie Robertson assures us in the SSSA during the 1960s, 'I nivir kent what it wis to want a diet, [I] nivir wis hungry in ma life.'<sup>82</sup> Mackay's point about the futility of separating Traveller families, cited above, is echoed by Robertson's testimony in that the neglect perceived by the authorities was often not the reality. Similarly, the perceived negative impact of scholastic education was not ubiquitous among Traveller children who attended school in the years after the Children Act. For renowned Traveller storyteller Duncan Williamson, school in the 1930s was a place where he began to pursue his craft: when asked where he learned stories, Williamson explains that he 'got them stories at school, the teacher used to read [us] these stories'.<sup>83</sup> Williamson goes on to comment on his teacher, 'she was a good teacher, she wis a Miss Crawford, she wis a very nice teacher, I liked her a lot' and of the stories that he 'liked her stories very much, she read them from a book for us'.<sup>84</sup> In terms of 'education', then, it is important to note that the consternation of *The Scotsman's* anonymous author – who worried about the 'natural instincts and traditions' of the Travellers being undermined by the authorities – was not a pervasive experience in the years after the 1908 Children Act took effect.

The documentary evidence from official sources presented above may appear anachronistic, and even offensive, to the twenty-first-century reader.

<sup>80</sup> Betsy Whyte, 'Travellers used Cant words when people in authority were about; Traveller children put in homes', Peter Cooke (fieldworker), ref. SA1973.161 (SSSA, 14 December 1973), TAD 76578.

<sup>81</sup> Stewart, 'Lucy Stewart, as a Traveller child', TAD 39943.

<sup>82</sup> Jeannie Robertson, 'Good upbringing of Traveller children in general; Donald Higgins' hard upbringing', Hamish Henderson (fieldworker), ref. SA1965.171.B (SSSA, 1965), TAD 24005.

<sup>83</sup> Duncan Williamson, 'Duncan Williamson learned many stories at school; school classes', Linda Williamson (fieldworker), ref. SA1976.112.B3 (SSSA, 31 July 1976), TAD 31797.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

However, I draw upon these sources because the legacy of such attitudes to non-sedentary communities has an impact to this day on how Traveller communities are depicted. The mass media, for instance, continue to make ill-informed stereotypical representations that fuel misunderstandings.<sup>85</sup> Citing examples of ‘everyday racism’ faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in contemporary Scotland, Colin Clark points out that ‘the consequences of racism have a profound impact on the communities effected [*sic*] and there is a need for an action plan to combat such destructive behaviours and actions’.<sup>86</sup> The evidence presented in this article has shown that there is a deeply rooted sense of ‘otherness’ connected to Scotland’s Traveller communities. The Traveller communities themselves are not passive in this respect, as can be evidenced from the material within the SSSA. Discussing non-Travellers, Jeannie Robertson explains that ‘we used to just call them “scaldies” or “hantle” [both terms refer to non-Travellers]’.<sup>87</sup> Robertson goes on to reveal that ““Bucks” wis people that just took to the roads and tried to follow the life that we led [they have] nivr been proper Travellers’.<sup>88</sup> Elsewhere in the SSSA, Traveller Stanley Robertson tells us that his father ‘couldnae speak tae the Aberdeen scaldie folk, he just had nothing in common with them, and he remained aloof fae them’.<sup>89</sup> Speaking in the 1950s and 1980s respectively, both Jeannie and Stanley reflect the reciprocal nature of Travellers’ cultural distinctiveness. Stanley Robertson goes on to suggest that ‘with him [his father] being like that, every one of the family became like that, ken? We’ve a’ got this same way wi’ us [...] I’m very much aloof, I dinnae mix wi’ scaldies’.<sup>90</sup> The sense of ‘otherness’, then, goes both ways because the Traveller communities have a variety of appellations that they use to refer to members of mainstream Scottish society and to differentiate themselves.

Robertson continues, describing himself as ‘a thoroughbred Traveller, on all sides, and I enjoy being part of that great and wonderful culture’.<sup>91</sup> Despite this, Robertson describes his childhood experience as being tainted by a ‘great,

<sup>85</sup> Amnesty International, ‘Caught in the Headlines’ (2012). After analysis of 190 articles published in the Scottish media in 2011, Amnesty International reported that nearly half of the articles presented a negative picture of the communities.

<sup>86</sup> C. Clark, ‘Sites, Welfare and “Barefoot Begging”: Roma, and Gypsy/Traveller Experiences of Racism in Scotland’, in (ed.) Neil Davidson *et al.*, *No Problem Here: Understanding Racism in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2018), 107–18, 117.

<sup>87</sup> Jeannie Robertson, ‘Cant words for groups of people’, Hamish Henderson (fieldworker), ref. SA1954.94.B13 (SSSA, August 1954), TAD 10285.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Stanley Robertson, ‘William Robertson liked hawking, travelling was in his blood, and he never mixed with townspeople’, Barbara McDermitt (fieldworker), ref. SA1981.25.6 (SSSA, 1981), TAD 42990.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> Stanley Robertson, ‘Stanley Robertson’s experience of prejudice against Travellers, summer travelling and storytelling’, Alan J. Bruford (fieldworker), ref. SA1988.006 (SSSA, 26 March 1988), TAD 85439.



strong prejudice against us [Traveller children]', exclaiming that he does not 'understand what makes people grow up with prejudice'.<sup>92</sup> Robertson recalls that when he was a boy, during the 1940s and early 1950s, he would have stones thrown at him, be called names and be excluded from regular activities at school: in one instance, Robertson recalls 'a wee lassie went up and telt the most awfy lies about me and I got a public strapping in front of the school'.<sup>93</sup> Unfortunately, from the mainstream's perspective, the otherness of the Traveller communities continues to manifest itself negatively in the present day. For example, Geetha Marcus' work with contemporary Traveller children has shown that this sense of otherness persists within the most recent generation of Travellers in Scotland.<sup>94</sup> Marcus suggests that young Travellers' reluctance to associate in any meaningful way with members of the mainstream population exacerbates misunderstandings between the two sectors of Scottish society.<sup>95</sup> Other commentators are firmer on such points: 'it is fair comment', says Gypsy/Traveller researcher Shamus McPhee, 'that an onslaught of reprisals and thoroughly oppressive practice in Scotland can be evidenced from as long ago as 1571 through to the most recent incarnations designed to target those of a nomadic bent'.<sup>96</sup> What these examples demonstrate is that Travellers, both past and present, overtly distinguish themselves from the 'settled' or 'mainstream' population of Scotland. Moreover, it is clear that the present generation of Scotland's Travellers continue to experience misunderstanding around their enduring and distinctive cultural identities and heritage.

Travellers throughout Scotland have expressed having a shared sense of cultural identity, one that is borne out through a long history of persecution and misunderstanding from much of the Scottish population.<sup>97</sup> Stanley Robertson, from whom we heard above, laments the decline of Travellers' shared cultural identity: 'there has been many changes in the traditions of the Travelling people', says Robertson, 'due to that fact that the scaldie [non-Traveller] influence has come upon them [...] they're ashamed of their heritages'.<sup>98</sup> What is at stake here, then, is not only political differentiation based on ethnicity, but a tangible sense that Travellers' unique cultural identities are being undermined and denigrated.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Stanley Robertson, 'Stanley Robertson biography', Barbara McDermitt (fieldworker), ref. SA1981.26.1 (SSSA, 3 July 1981), TAD 110214.

<sup>94</sup> G. Marcus, 'Marginalisation and the Voices of Gypsy/Traveller Girls', *Cambridge Open-Review Educational Research e-Journal*, 2 (2015), 55–77, 60–1.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> S. McPhee, 'The Uglier Side of Bonnie Scotland: The Tinker Housing Experiments', *International Journal of Roma Studies*, 3:2 (2021), 180–208, 180.

<sup>97</sup> C. Clark and M. Greenfields, *Here to Stay: The Gypsies and Travellers of Britain* (Hatfield, 2006), 53, 55.

<sup>98</sup> Stanley Robertson, 'The decline of Traveller traditions through intermarriage; Stanley Robertson's passing on of tradition', Barbara McDermitt (fieldworker), ref. SA1979.133. A2 (SSSA, 7 July 1979), TAD 67492.

A sense of the cultural legitimacy of the Travellers is something that is expressed by members of the communities. For Traveller John Stewart, Travellers' 'way of thinking, our deep concern inside, our jealousies and our hatreds, our loves and our likes are far different from yours'.<sup>99</sup> Stewart also expresses a sense of inherent self-esteem when he remarks that 'if you're Traveller brained, and you had the education, you're jumps ahead of the country folk [mainstream population]'.<sup>100</sup> During an interview on her views of non-Travellers' perceptions of Travellers, Betsy Whyte explains that she 'didnae really feel that I wisnae good enough, I didnae really feel that inside o' me, but I knew that they thought that, so I was having nothing tae dae wi' them'.<sup>101</sup>

The evidence I presented from the OSA, the NSA and elsewhere is clearly out of date, but present-day representations of the communities in the mainstream media often betray the very same misunderstandings. Utilising archives such as the SSSA, we gain a clearer understanding of the roots of our misconceptions and can celebrate, rather than denigrate, the cultural diversity that is so important to a progressive Scotland. For instance, the Scottish Government's most recent initiative – the 'Ministerial Working Group on Gypsy/Travellers' – shares the same aims when they 'consider how to improve engagement with Scotland's Gypsy/Traveller community and their participation influencing and shaping policy'.<sup>102</sup> Despite the dramatic change in working lifestyles – lamented by Duncan Campbell above – and a mainstream shift towards sedentary ideals, considered engagement with archives can demonstrably assist in preventing the erosion of marginalised cultural identities. The examples from the SSSA that I have presented here are but a sample of the wealth of material waiting to be discovered in the SSSA. I alluded to a strong sense of cultural identity being at the heart of the Travellers' sense of distinctiveness and therefore conclude with an example of said culture from the SSSA, Belle Stewart's untitled poem about the berry harvest in Blair:

It happened at the berry-time when Travellers came to Blair,  
 They pitched their tents on the berry fields without a worry or care.  
 But they hadn't been long settled there when some heid yins [authorities] cam'  
     frae Perth,  
 And told them they must go at once and get off the face o' the earth.  
 [...]  
 It's a hard life being a Traveller, but I've proved it to be true,

<sup>99</sup> John Stewart, 'The Scottish Traveller outlook on life; some terms and idioms', Sheila Douglas (fieldworker), ref. SA1978.167 (SSSA, December 1978), TAD 56424.

<sup>100</sup> John Stewart, 'Travellers' ways of affirming the truth; the distinctiveness and enviableness of Scottish Travellers', Barbara McDermitt (fieldworker), ref. SA1978.131 (SSSA, December 1978), TAD 65889.

<sup>101</sup> Betsy Whyte, 'The impact on Betsy Whyte of her relationship with the School of Scottish Studies', Peter Cooke (fieldworker), ref. SA1978.122 (SSSA, October 1978), TAD 64239.

<sup>102</sup> The Scottish Government, Ministerial Working Group on Gypsy/Travellers, 'Overview' (undated), <https://www.gov.scot/groups/ministerial-working-group-on-gypsy-travellers/>.

I've tried in every possible way to live with times that's new.  
 But we're always hit below the belt, no matter what we do,  
 But when it comes to Judgement Day, we'll be just the same as you.<sup>103</sup>

Stewart's verse is not only evocative of the plight of the Travellers in a general sense, but also of the serious existential threat posed by unsympathetic policymakers. The perceived threat is palpable when Stewart speaks of leaving the 'face of the earth', and the sense of continuous persecution despite the Travellers' best efforts to adapt to changing socio-economic and political circumstances. Stewart's hope of an ultimate reconciliation is an affecting reminder that, despite differences in culture and lifestyle, Traveller and mainstream communities are both important sectors of modern Scottish society. As I have demonstrated here, repositories such as the SSSA, and digital projects like TAD, are valuable resources when it comes to understanding Scotland's past. Perhaps more importantly, such resources offer unique opportunities to discover more about the rich variety of Scotland's diverse and distinctive people.

<sup>103</sup> Belle Stewart, 'It Happened at the Berry-time', Hamish Henderson (fieldworker), ref. SA1977.157.3 (SSSA, 18 November 1977), TAD 74588.