



**Tinkers' Heart
Desk-based and Field Research Report**

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Section 1: Background

1. Tinkers' Heart is a heart-shaped setting of quartz stones embedded in the road surface of the former junction of the A815 and B839 roads, near Cairndow, Argyll and Bute. The public roads have been realigned and moved to the east, leaving the heart within a pasture field.
2. The site is important to the Scottish Traveller community as a location where people gathered for meetings and celebrations of events such as weddings and christenings. The site is also recognised as historically significant by the local settled community.
3. In May 2014 a petition was lodged with the Scottish Parliament to call on the Scottish Government to direct Historic Scotland 'to investigate what action can be taken to ensure the restoration and preservation of the Heart'. The petition was signed by over 1,100 people. The representations made to the Parliament have highlighted the importance of the site to the Traveller community and people of Argyll. The strength of that evidence has led Historic Scotland to re-examine the evidence for the cultural significance of the site. As part of the review a public consultation was undertaken between 09 March and May 2015.
4. In addition, further desk-based research on the site was undertaken, along with field visits to the site and interviews conducted with various interested parties to try to gain a fuller understanding of the cultural significance of the site and accumulate further evidence. This report presents the results of that research.

Section 2: Report Objectives

5. The objective of this report is to analyse and report on the research carried out regarding Tinkers' Heart to inform an assessment of the site for inclusion on the Schedule of monuments of National Importance.

Section 3: Methodology

Desk-based research

6. A number of sources were consulted in order to gain a fuller picture of the documentary evidence available for Tinkers' Heart and the broader history and practices of the Scottish Traveller culture. Resources at the National Library of Scotland and Argyll and Bute Library headquarters were consulted. A full list of the sources consulted is included at the end of the report, these included:
 - Historical maps
 - Aerial photographs from the 1940s
 - Books and journals

- Newspaper articles
- Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) record for Tinkers' Heart
- Various unpublished documents including minutes from local area committees

Field visits

7. A team of three people from Historic Scotland visited the site of Tinkers' Heart towards the end of March 2015 to carry out a detailed photographic and written record of the site. In addition, the team visited a number of other sites in the locality which traditionally had associations with the Traveller community.

Interviews and meetings

8. During the week of the field visits the team also attended a number of meetings with interested parties and carried out interviews to acquire any stories, memories or traditions associated with Tinkers' Heart from the people who have the most knowledge about the site.
9. Meetings were carried out with:
 - The Auchindrain Trust – 31/03/15
 - A number of Scottish Travellers and non-Travellers with an interest in the site – 31/03/15
 - 'Here We Are' a local community charity based at Cairndow – 01/04/15
 - Ardno Estate, the land owner of Tinkers' Heart – 02/04/15

Section 4: Findings

Oral tradition

10. There is a tradition among the Scottish Traveller community that Tinkers' Heart was originally created by Traveller women as a memorial to honour the Traveller men who had died during the Jacobite rebellion of 1745, and specifically at the battle of Culloden in 1746. One Traveller related that this was the story her mother had passed down to her when she was taken to Tinkers' Heart as a child.
11. We have not been able to find any documentary evidence to support this tradition of the origin of the site. Such documentation would, however, have been a rare occurrence, as transmission of culture of the Scottish Travellers has until very recently been almost entirely dependent upon oral tradition.

Evidence for the location of the road junction

12. Historical map evidence indicates that prior to c.1801 (George Langlands' map of 1771-1810, printed in 1801) there was no road between Cairndow and Ardno along the south east side of Loch Fyne.

13. The Roy military survey of Scotland (1747-55) shows the road through Glen Croe to the head of Loch Fyne, which would become the A83. It also shows the road through Hells Glen from Lochgoilhead to St Catherines going past Ardno where there was a bend in the road (now the B839). However, no road linking the two between Ardno and Cairndow is shown.
14. The map of 1801 (George Langlands) shows that a road between Cairndow and Ardno (now the A815) had been constructed along the south east side of the Loch.
15. None of the historical maps indicate the location of Tinkers' Heart, however, the majority of the maps are not at a scale which would be conducive to illustrating such a feature.
16. Aerial photographs from the 1940s clearly show that the road junction of the A815 and B839 was present and that there does not appear to have been any major alterations to the road layout at this time.
17. Photographs taken in the 1950s show that Tinkers' Heart is located in the centre of the road junction with no obvious alteration to the road layout at this time (photographs by Alasdair Alpin MacGregor).
18. Minutes from Argyll County Council between 1965 and 1969 show that a new section of road was constructed between Cairndow, Strachur and Toward. Local residents were able to confirm that the new section of road was completed in c. 1967 and that it simply by-passed the old section of road which was left completely intact but now located within a field to the north west of the new road. The road junction between the A815 and B839 was moved slightly further north on the new road.
19. The minutes also indicate that a section of land was acquired by the Council at no cost from the landowners at the time, J.S.B and M.A.C. Noble of Ardkinglas (Argyll County Council Minutes, Book No's 19, 20). The land with the old road junction containing Tinkers' Heart was then returned to the ownership of the landowners from whom it had previously been acquired without cost under section 43 of the Roads and Bridges (Scotland) Act 1878 (Letter from Argyll & Bute Council to Public Petitions Committee).

Physical form of Tinkers' Heart

20. There is no evidence for the physical form of Tinkers' Heart prior to 1928. The first documentary evidence for the site is contained within the minutes of the Cowal District Committee in April 1928, which contains the following note:

It was remitted to the Road surveyor to reform the heart-shaped patch of grass at the junction of the Ardkinglas and Lochgoilhead Road, which was removed when the road there was being repaired.

(Minutes of Cowal District Committee, 17 April 1928)

21. Newspaper articles from the time reported further details of the meeting of the Committee at which Lady George Campbell of Strachur protested against the disappearance of a heart-shaped patch of grass at the cross-roads. There is no mention of any stones forming part of the site at this time (Dunoon Observer & Argyllshire Standard, 21 April 1928, Campbeltown Courier, 28 April 1928).
22. Photographs from the 1950s show that Tinkers Heart at that time was formed of a large number of stones laid within the surface of the road junction (Alasdair Alpin MacGregor, SCRAN). It is possible that the stones were introduced to the site when the road surveyor was instructed to reform the monument in 1928. The newspaper articles suggest that the Cowal District Committee requested that an area of turf designed as a heart could be 'edged off' at the site and the stones may have been used as the 'edging' (Dunoon Observer & Argyllshire Standard, 21 April 1928). Local residents of the area were able to confirm that the monument had originally been formed of turf but that by the time of repairs and realignment in the 1960s the site was formed by stones in the tar road surface (pers. comm. representative of Here We Are).
23. The 1950s photographs show a far greater number of stones forming the shape of a heart than are present at the site today. RCAHMS carried out a site visit to Tinkers' Heart in June 2012, and carried out a measured drawing and survey of the site including a written record of the monument. The NMRS record for the site states that the monument measures 1.75m by 1.4m in size and is picked out by 25 quartz pebbles with a 26th pebble in the centre of the heart (Canmore, event ID 931604).
24. At the field visit carried out in March 2015, Historic Scotland's officers noted that there was clear evidence that the quartz stones had been re-laid in the past as there are clearly areas of different tar around some of the stones indicating that repairs have been carried out to the site. Local residents were able to confirm that the road surface around the monument has been repaired or resurfaced at least three times in the past.
25. Tinkers' Heart is currently enclosed by a steel fence which was erected by the local community charity, Here We Are, and the landowner with a further financial contribution from the Clachan Wind Farm Trust in 2013. Prior to this, at least two previous fences had been erected around the monument by the landowner in an attempt to prevent the cattle in the surrounding pasture field from trampling over the site. The current fence design was implemented following the failure of the previous fences to deter the cattle (pers. comm. representative of Here We Are).

Name of the site

26. Local Cairndow residents informed the team that the site has always been known in the area as 'Tinkers' Heart' (pers. comm. representative of Here We Are).
27. It is likely that the Travellers who used the site would not have known the site by this name and instead may have referred to it as 'Hell's Glen' or 'the Top o the Rest' (pers. comm. representative of the Travellers).

Use/meaning of Tinkers' Heart to the Scottish Travellers

28. Oral tradition amongst the Traveller community suggests that Tinkers' Heart was originally created as a memorial to Travellers who died during the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 and the tradition of using the site as a memorial to the dead appears to have continued. A number of Travellers have indicated that they consider the site to be a memorial.
29. The site has also historically been used as a place for weddings and christenings or namings in the Traveller community. In 1928 Lady George Campbell is reported as having described the site as a place of historical and sentimental interest as it was known from time immemorial to have been the place where tinkers' weddings were celebrated in days gone by (Dunoon Observer & Argyllshire Standard, 21 April 1928, Campbeltown Courier, 28 April 1928). We have not been able to identify any other documentary evidence for Traveller weddings at the site. This is likely to be because they were not registered with the authorities.
30. The site was still being used for Traveller weddings until the late 1970s (pers. comm. representatives of the Travellers).
31. The monument was also used as a meeting point for the Travellers in this location for other reasons. It is a place for Travellers to come together, for meetings to strike bargains or resolve disputes (pers. comm. The Auchindrain Trust).
32. The realignment of the new road to bypass the monument in the 1960s meant that a number of Travellers who sought to return to the site or visit it for the first time were unable to locate it and this led to confusion over the existence of the site with some Travellers believing that Tinkers' Heart had been removed (pers. comm. representative of the Travellers).
33. Responses received to the public consultation, along with the large numbers of signatures to the petition lodged in May 2014, and comments on the petition and on social media indicate that the Travellers feel very strongly about both the site of Tinkers' Heart itself and the need to record and preserve their culture.
34. The site has a very strong symbolic and spiritual meaning for the Scottish Traveller community. The site itself, the location of the site and its continuation through generations in one form or another in the same spot,

rather than the physical form of the monument is one of its most important features. Because of this, they do not consider the change from a heart-shaped area of turf to a heart-shape of stones and repairs or replacement of the stones to be significant, but the maintenance of a site in this location is very significant to them.

Use/meaning of Tinkers' Heart to the local settled community

35. The site also has cultural and historical significance to the local settled community. It has been used for weddings and christenings by the local settled community. The members of Here We Are referred to a christening that had taken place at Tinkers' Heart c. 1850 when the minister from Lochgoilhead travelled to the site to carry out the christening.
36. One member of Here We Are stated that his grandmother's ashes had been scattered at Tinkers' Heart in the 1940s (pers. comm. representative of Here We Are).
37. Here We Are have also carried out research which identified that a local couple, John Luke and Isabella Brodie were married at Tinkers' Heart in 1872 by a minister from Lochgoilhead (information available at Here We Are in Cairndow, The Tinkers' Heart, unpublished project study, Alexander Mack).
38. It is recognised that the monument is located in a prominent position and that its location, either at a major bend in the very early road or at the junction in the later roads, is easily identified and was a convenient meeting place for locals in the surrounding area as well as the Travellers.
39. The local settled community have a strongly held respect for the site and its association with the Travellers. The Travellers were an intrinsic part of the local history of Cairndow and the local residents stated that the Travellers were a very valued part of the agricultural community as they were needed for various tasks at different times of the year and were always welcomed by the locals (pers. comm. representatives of Here We Are).
40. More recently Tinkers' Heart has taken on a more romantic symbolism in the wider community due to social media and the internet. The site has been used by non-Travellers from outwith the local area to renew wedding vows and there are photographs of wedding parties at the site from the 1990s (photograph available at Here We Are in Cairndow). There have also been non-Traveller weddings carried out at the site within the last ten years (pers. comm. representative of the Travellers).

Evidence for Travellers in the surrounding area

41. During the meetings and interviews carried out with members of the Travelling community and members of the local settled community it became apparent that although the site was a significant meeting place for the Travellers, they did not camp at, or in close proximity to, the site itself.

42. The local residents of Cairndow noted that to their knowledge the Travellers in the past had usually camped down by the old stone bridge at the head of Loch Fyne (pers. comm. representatives of Here We Are). A photograph showing Travellers camping in this location is available in the file of information about Tinkers' Heart held at Here We Are, Cairndow.
43. During the meeting with the Travellers at the site of Tinkers' Heart, several people commented that the Travellers also used to camp in Hell's Glen near the Moses Well. Information was also provided about a grave marker for a Traveller who was killed, located beside the road near Port Ann on the opposite side of Loch Fyne. Photographs of this site, the Tinker's Cross, were also provided.
44. The team from Historic Scotland were able to locate the site of Tinker's Cross during the field visits. The site of the Moses Well in Hell's Glen was also visited but no upstanding evidence for a campsite was identified. Finding existing structures would have been an unusual survival given the nature of the very temporary structures of Scottish Traveller culture.

Documentary references to Tinkers' Heart

45. We were unable to identify any documentary references specifically to Tinkers' Heart earlier than the newspaper articles in 1928.
46. There is a brief reference to the site in the Third Statistical Account of Scotland which suggests that the site was a known landmark at the time:

This main road is good, but the two connecting roads to Lochgoilhead, the first by way of Glen More above Loch Restil and the second leaving the Cairndow-Dunoon road at the 'Heart' at the cross-roads to climb into Hell's Glen are somewhat narrow...

(Third Statistical Account of Scotland,
The County of Argyll, 1961, pg 306)

47. There are a number of references to the site in travel guides from the late 1960s and 1970s, for example:

At the junction with the old main road to Dunoon, a heart-shaped ring of white quartzite stones at the crown of the road is the Wedding Ring of the Argyll tinkers. When the road was first laid with tarmac they asked the county's road engineers to preserve the ring at which they still held their marriages. This was done and the agreement has been honoured ever since. The site is omitted by the new main road made in 1967.

(The Companion Guide to the West Highlands
of Scotland, Murray, 1968)

At the junction of this road with the *old* A815 highway to Dunoon, now realigned, is set in the road surface a heart-shaped design of white quartz stones, about 4 feet by 3, and quite readily found, at a

good viewpoint overlooking the loch. This is the Wedding Ring of the Argyll tinkers, a traditional gypsy venue.

(The Queen's Scotland: Argyll & Bute, Tranter, 1977)

48. The monument is mentioned in *Mystical Scotland* by Ann Lindsay Mitchell along with a copy of the photograph of the site from the 1950s:

Travelling folk were frequently married by one of their own folk. Embedded in the road near Strachur, Argyll, is a stone 'heart' inlaid using large pebbles. No one is sure why this spot was chosen, but it has been used for at least two centuries.

At this remote and beautiful place many gypsy weddings were solemnised. Today, marriages there are unknown, but it has been adopted as an impromptu proposal spot for modern day romantics.

(*Mystical Scotland*, Mitchell, 1994)

49. A letter to the Editor in *The Scots Magazine* of 2005 also mentions Tinkers' Heart in connection with 'Gipsy' weddings where the couple would stand inside the heart, along with a photograph of the site (*The Scots Magazine*, April 2005, pg 435).

50. The documentary references available for the site clearly indicate that Tinkers' Heart was a well-known local landmark into the late 20th century and that the tradition of the site being associated with the Travellers was equally well-known.

Evidence for similar Traveller monuments

51. In November 2012 RCAHMS placed their written record of Tinkers' Heart on the Canmore website. The record states that the site 'may be unique as the only physical monument to the tinker community in the Highlands.'
52. At the meetings with the Traveller community and Here We Are it was indicated that no one present at the meetings knew of any other similar monuments to the Traveller community, either in the local Argyll area or further afield in the rest of Scotland.
53. During the public consultation on Tinkers' Heart a number of local authority archaeology services throughout Scotland were consulted about the site. They were specifically asked to share any information about similar sites in their areas. Of the responses returned all indicated that there were no similar sites in their local authority areas and that they were not aware of any similar traditions.
54. Of the 50 responses received to the public consultation there were none which indicated that another similar monument exists in Scotland.
55. The responses to the consultation received from heritage bodies and universities also indicate that Tinkers' Heart is a very rare, indeed unique physical monument to the Travellers:

For a community to whom a sense of place was, historically, little more than where we will stay tonight, it is a rare and thus especially important physical location.

(The Auchindrain Trust)

The Tinkers' Heart is a distinctive and unusual monument and one that appears, on current evidence, to be a unique feature.

(University of Glasgow)

56. We have not been able to identify any similar permanent physical monuments to the Scottish Traveller community, either in Argyll or in the rest of Scotland.

Section 5: Conclusions

57. We have not been able to corroborate the oral tradition that Tinkers' Heart was originally constructed as a memorial to the Travellers who died in the Jacobite rebellion. We have been unable to identify a definite date of primary establishment for the monument.
58. We have identified detailed evidence for the location and sequence of the original roads and road junction at which Tinkers' Heart is located.
59. There is sound evidence for the physical form of the site and its evolution over time from the late 1920s to the present day. There is also clear documentation that the site of Tinkers' Heart has been maintained in its original and current location since the 1920s and has been repaired a number of times by the local authority and its predecessors.
60. Tinkers' Heart has a very strong symbolic and traditional meaning to the Travellers. It is a place of collective remembrance, for gatherings, weddings and blessings.
61. The site is also valued by the local settled community who consider it to be part of the rich cultural heritage of the Cairndow area.
62. There are a number of documentary references to Tinkers' Heart in travel guides from the late 1960s and 1970s. There are also a small number of later references to the site in other sources. These indicate that the site was known as a local landmark and that the tradition of the site being associated with the Travellers was also well-known.
63. We have not identified any evidence for any other similar monuments to the Travellers in the Argyll area or in the rest of Scotland. From the available evidence it appears that Tinkers' Heart is unique as a permanent physical monument to the Scottish Travellers.

Section 6: Acknowledgements

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- Jess Smith, Gavin McGregor, Fiona McAllister and all the Scottish Travellers and friends who spoke to us.
- Representatives of Here We Are for speaking to us and allowing us to use the information from their own research on Tinkers' Heart.
- Ardno Estate
- The Auchindrain Trust
- Alexander Mack for use of his unpublished project study on Tinkers' Heart
- Eleanor McKay, Argyll & Bute Information & Local Studies Librarian for all her help

Section 7: Annexes

Source Material

Historical Maps

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Social Media

Representative comments regarding recognition of Traveller culture:

- I hope we get the recognition we deserve.
- Hope this will encourage more people to be proud of who they are and bring the youngest to the oldest Travellers together and share their talents and pass on to the young ones up and coming so the old ways is not forgotten.
- The Traveller's folk's story deserves a greater platform and recognition. We all have so much to learn from their history and heritage, which is far too overlooked.
- Good to see that others are also calling for a site that recognises the contribution of Gypsy/Travellers.
- The Travellers are a part of Scottish history – their contribution to our culture is important and makes us what we are – a discreet and colorful culture one that I am very proud to belong. Let's not forget that a lot of Travellers become so, because they were forced out of their homes and lands during the clearances.
- I have no direct connection with the Traveller community - other than that of just about everyone else in rural Scotland - in that you were part of my environment growing up. As a boy there was always a degree of excitement when these exotic people we called tinkers or macafees (?) called, selling clothes pegs & 'stretchers', telling fortunes, sharpening knives and garden shears and so on. One of my neighbours' grandfathers used to take us boys walking all over Stirlingshire and he seemed to know everyone, from the tinkers who camped around Sauchieburn to the farmers who employed them from time to time. I can remember on many occasions the strangely illicit thrill of brewing our billy cans on a camp fire beside a bendy (?).

As I got older, and to my shame, these same people became 'dirty tinks', to be shouted abuse at, disparaged. Not an excuse, but when you are 12 or 14 years old peer pressure is a powerful thing!

Anyway, as I got still older, I discovered the works of the likes of Duncan Williamson, Betsy White and yourself [Jess Smith], and then the wonderful singing of Jeanie & Belle Stewart (via also discovering Hamish Henderson) and re-discovered that old connection.

The long winded point I'm trying to make though is that your culture is as much my culture as is my great grandfathers Nairnshire Gaelic, my great grandmothers Donegal economic migrants (they came to Scotland to work in the pits) or my Mothers Lancashire mother & Yorkshire father (maybe a bit of traveller in there somewhere after all!) and 'your' heritage has every bit as much right to be preserved as 'mine'.

- I'm not a Traveller myself and, as far as I know, my family never were. But the way in which your [Traveller] people have been forgotten and marginalised in Scotland is a national disgrace.
- People's traditions should be honoured and preserved.
- The validation of this sacred site will honour past, present and future generations of Travellers.

Representative comments extracted from the Petition lodged in May 2014:

- There isn't much left of traveller tradition this should be protected for future generations to come for our children to be proud of their culture.
- A community which deserves to be remembered and valued for the important contribution it has made over the centuries to the very fabric of this country of ours.
- All over the world ethnic groups who had been robbed of their sacred sites, have now had their sacred sites restored to them, the Aborigines of Australia, the Maoris or New Zealand, Native Americans – where is Scotland going to stand in this hour. Shall she be a nation that recognises all that have given her a special uniqueness and stand with the nations that have been willing to acknowledge both Equality and Diversity for all, or shall Scotland remain in the darkness afraid to release her true potential by allowing commercial interests to destroy true heritage.
- It's the little sticks and stones, the words from the past and the amazing pride and history of the Scottish people that make Scotland the country it is.
- There are so many historic and listed buildings in Scotland, and that is a good thing. However, the Tinker's heart is more significant than any grand castle or stately home. Just as the great wealth of music, song and story that the Tinkers' held in their hearts and memories with no need for libraries or great literary tomes, the heart tykes up a small space, yet is deeply significant and special, pulling people in towards it. Not only is this an important site for Tinkers, but it is also (whether we are aware of it or not), perhaps a very special place for the whole of Scotland.
- Since time immemorial provided a service for Scotland whether farm work, tin smiths & etc or fighting and dying for King and Country. Also never awarded any recognition whatsoever down through the ages and in this 21st century when most of the above mentioned were likely as not around when the tinkers were actively going about their business all over Scotland. Judgement never the less seems to have been passed by negative action. Those in power should hang their heads in shame.

- All Scots should be recognised regardless how the past treated and saw them.
- All historic places in Scotland should be preserved for future generations, regardless of culture. This site should be enhanced to include more information on the people who deem it to be sacred.
- Having gypsy ancestry, I am keen to see greater recognition of and protection for Scotland's gypsy and tinker heritage.
- I sign this from respect for the Scottish Travellers I have been privileged to know and so that their ancient traditions will not be lost- to lose Traveller traditions diminishes us all- Traveller and non-Traveller alike.
- Makes me angry that historical sites even have to prove their rights... If it's not enough trying to end the travelling ways and their culture but also their history too.
- I do not live in Scotland, but her history needs to be preserved for future generations to see and for travellers as myself to be able to see it in person.
- The neglect & vilification of the history & culture of Scotland's travelling people, going back many centuries, shames us all. This might go some small way towards rectifying that recognition & in some small way help contribute to moving towards the official & legal parity they should definitely be given.
- The contributions that tinker and travelling people have made to our country are to be celebrated and their stories told and are told.
- It is so important that Scotland's heritage is preserved for future generations we have lost too much of it already.
- Travelling people in Scotland should be remembered, not forgotten about.
- If you do not know your past you do not know your future. Any distinct cultural group which has contributed to our national history deserves at the very least recognition of its existence. If we have any sense of honour we will not turn our faces away. We will grant the travelling people, through the auspices of Historic Scotland, assistance to restore and preserve the Tinkers' Heart. This will signify to our humanity and show the world that Scotland is genuine in its respect of minority cultures.
- We owe the travellers a huge debt of gratitude for the retention of songs and tunes and stories which would have been lost to our culture without the Travellers.
- The Travellers are part of history and their sites deserve as much to be noted and protected as anybody else's.

- I live in England but was born in Glasgow. It is vital that the Scottish Government embrace and celebrate the diversity of groups and traditions of the many that makes Scotland unique.

Images



Photograph of a gypsy wedding heart in the middle of the road, near Strachur, Argyll, c. 1950 (© National Museums Scotland. Licensor www.scran.ac.uk)



Above: Photograph of the Tinkers' Heart taken on site visit 31/03/15



Above: Photograph of the Tinkers' Heart taken on site visit 31/03/15

Map of the location of Tinkers' Heart site

