

Gypsy Traveller history in Scotland

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GYPSY TRAVELLER HISTORY IN SCOTLAND

Gypsy Travellers are largely absent from history or misrepresented and mythologised in our culture and folklore — often in the crudest and most damaging of ways. Their story is often untold or misunderstood, reinforcing their marginalisation in society with denial of identity, visibility and respect.

This pictorial history was borne out of an *Iriss Insight* — an evidence summary exploring social work's role in supporting and championing the human rights of Gypsy Travellers (2017)¹. This recognises historic mistrust between social workers and Gypsy Travellers and generally poor treatment by all public sector bodies. It calls for more culturally sensitive practice, effective advocacy and 'doing *with* rather than *to*' in addition to stronger leadership in this area.

The timeline that follows sets out to tell the story of Gypsy Travellers in Scotland. It begins in the 10th century with their Indic origins and takes us through to the present day.

This is a history that is a battle for rights — with the freedoms, choices and standards of living that universal human rights should afford yet to be achieved in reality. Life expectancy for Gypsy Travellers is, at minimum, 10 years lower than the national average². They experience widespread discriminatory attitudes³ and their children are often bullied in schools⁴.

It is a history that acknowledges previous wrongs, with attempts to 'integrate' or assimilate Gypsy Travellers into the

dominant culture: preventing nomadism, promoting settlement into substandard housing and expelling children to the colonies. It's also a story about changes to land use and legislation, and the erosion of traditional employment opportunities that have led to further economic marginalisation. If we were to go back further to the 16th century, this history includes hangings and drownings reminiscent of witch trials.

There has also been a fight for legal recognition of Gypsy Travellers as a distinct ethnic minority; one with its own history, culture and customs, and whose contribution should be celebrated. In Scotland this legal victory was achieved in 2008 and Gypsy Travellers were identified in Scotland's Census for the first time in 2011. Irish Travellers, or Pavees, did not achieve ethnic minority status in Ireland until 2017. While these rulings provide protection against race discrimination under the Equality Act 2010, we know much still needs to change — and should be mindful that history is still being written...

All research and original artwork for this timeline has been produced by Shamus McPhee, a Gypsy Traveller.

1. MacLennan K, McPhee R, McPhee S; and Turbett C (March 2017) Gypsy Travellers: Human rights and social work's role, *Insight* 35
2. Equalities and Human Rights Commission 2009: Gypsies and Travellers: simple solutions for living together
3. Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2010: Attitudes to Discrimination and Positive Action, Scottish Centre for Social Research
4. Save the Children (2005), *Having our Say* — peer research by young Gypsy Travellers found that three-quarters of young Gypsy Travellers said they have been picked on by other school pupils because of their background

998–1040 AD

GAZNAVID RAIDS: FROM WARRIORS TO NOMADS



A blend of Indian castes are forcibly conscripted into the army of Mahmud of Ghazni, a Persian-speaking Turkic Mamluk, who assumes power in AD 998. They become known as the Rajput Army of 60,000 warriors and camp non-combatants. From Afghanistan, he wages 17 raids on Hindustan, sacking temples and pillaging across Iran, Pakistan and north-west India; the first to use war elephants. The Rajput army includes Tandals, Lohars and Banjaras. Following the Sultan's death by malaria in 1030, the Rajputs are repelled by Muslim Seljuks around 1040 and driven into Rûm in Anatolia (Armenia), subsequently swapping a military existence for a nomadic one. The name Romaivi, later Romani, is adopted.

SOURCES/SUGGESTED READING

- Bosworth CE (1998) The Ghaznavids. In Asimov MS and Bosworth CE, *History of civilisations of Central Asia*. UNESCO
- Romani history (OoCities) <http://s.iriss.org.uk/2pFNfiU>
- Ammon U (2002) *Sociolinguistics: an international handbook of the science of...*, Part 3, (Rajput Hypothesis, Hancock, Ian, p.1872)
- Wikipedia <http://s.iriss.org.uk/2o6WcC8>

1100s

FARANDMAN LAWS IDENTIFY 'TINKLERS'



Ancient laws in twelfth century Scotland identify a distinct group as 'tinklers' from the tinkling sound of their occupation as tinsmiths. They are differentiated from mainstream society, viewed as members of a separate nomadic group possessing its own customs, dialect and distinctive ethnic identity. They are reported to enjoy the freedom to go about their business under the aegis of the king.

SOURCES/SUGGESTED READING

- Kenrick D and Clark C (1999) *Moving on: the Gypsies and Travellers of Britain*. University of Hertfordshire Press, p.51-52
- Liégeois J (1998) *School provision for ethnic minorities: The Gypsy Paradigm*. University of Hertfordshire Press, p.32-33

1491

GYPSIES ON THE STREETS OF EDINBURGH



A small number of people referred to as 'Spaniards', otherwise thought to be Roma/Gypsies are reported to have danced in the presence of the Scottish monarch, King James IV on the causeway at Edinburgh. An entry in the Book of the Lord High Treasurer records a payment of four shillings to Peter Ker, to go to the king and get letters subscribed to the 'King of Rowmais'. Two days later the 'King of Rowmais' receives payment of £20 from King James IV and a letter guaranteeing safe passage throughout the realm.

SOURCES/SUGGESTED READING

- The Gypsies - Gypsies in Scotland
<http://s.iriss.org.uk/2opMmak>

1505

FIRST OFFICIAL RECORD OF ROMA/GYPSIES IN SCOTLAND



Considered to be the first official record of Gypsies in Scotland and noted in the Book of the Treasurer to the King, James IV in 1505. A sum of £7 is 'paid to the Egyptians by the King's command', whether for entertainment or because they are pilgrims carrying out penance remains unclear.

In 1506, Anthony Gavino ('Earl of Little Egypt') receives a letter of commendation from King James to his uncle, King of Denmark. This assures the Gypsies safe passage to Denmark. They are thought to carry a papal order from Rome urging some degree of sympathy.

SOURCES/SUGGESTED READING

- Hayward J (2003) Gypsy Jib. Suffolk: Holm Oak Publishing, p.19-23
- Romani Gypsies in sixteenth century Britain
<http://s.iriss.org.uk/2pFONcl>
- Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month
<http://s.iriss.org.uk/2outK8i>
- Wikipedia, Scottish Gypsy and Traveller groups
<http://s.iriss.org.uk/2opym0m>

1514

FIRST OFFICIAL RECORD OF ROMA/GYPSIES IN ENGLAND



The arrival of Gypsies en route from Scotland is noted at Lambeth Palace. This constitutes the first official record of the presence of Gypsies in England.

The record describes a woman fortune-teller in a Dialogue by Sir Thomas More as an 'Egyptian' who has been residing in lodgings at Lambeth, and who can tell 'marvellous things by looking into one's hand'. She is thought to have gone overseas a month beforehand, but she is most probably on the move by this point.

SOURCES/SUGGESTED READING

- Okely J (2005) *Own or Other Culture*. Routledge, p.85-86 <http://s.iriss.org.uk/2opv39y>
- Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month — a brief history <http://s.iriss.org.uk/2oSf005>

1541

FIRST ANTI-GYPSY LAWS ENACTED IN SCOTLAND



This year witnesses the introduction of a tranche of punitive measures designed to deter Gypsies from entering Scotland. They are to be condemned 'on pain of death'.

It is followed by the 1571 Act, which legalises hanging and drowning of Gypsies. By 1579, reprisals have intensified: 'the idle peopill calling themselves Egyptians are to be nailed to a tree by the ears and, thereafter, the said ears cut off' as punishment for their offence. Large numbers are burned at the stake. 1611 sees three Gypsies hanged. By 1714 Gypsies are being shipped to the Caribbean as slaves and in 1715 ten are deported to Virginia.

SOURCES/SUGGESTED READING

- Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month — History Timeline <http://s.iriss.org.uk/2pFQyXj>
- Perthshire Diary — The Gypsies come to Scotland <http://s.iriss.org.uk/2pVtZKM>

1746

CULLODEN: INTERMARRIAGE AND EMERGENCE OF GYPSY TRAVELLER GROUP



Following the Jacobite defeat at Culloden, tinsmiths, reputedly armourers and fashioners of accessories for clansmen, are displaced. The clan system is in collapse and they merge on the roads with Roma/Gypsies.

It is noted that 'A nomadic group formed in Scotland in the period 1500-1800 from the inter-marriage and social integration between local nomadic craftsmen and immigrant Romanies from France and Spain in particular.' It becomes impractical to determine who is a Gypsy from who is a Traveller — many assume clan names, e.g. McPhee, Stewart, McDonald. A unified group, Gypsy Travellers, emerges.

SOURCES/SUGGESTED READING

- Kenrick D and Clark C (1999) *Moving on: the Gypsies and Travellers of Britain*. University of Hertfordshire Press, p.51-52
- Liégeois J (1998), *School provision for ethnic minorities: the Gypsy Paradigm*. University of Hertfordshire Press, p.32-33
- Highland ornaments and weapons <http://www.tartansauthority.com>

1865

TRESPASS (SCOTLAND ACT) CRIMINALISES CAMPING ON PRIVATE LAND



By Royal assent on 29th June 1865, it is made a criminal offence under the Trespass (Scotland) Act for a person to encamp on private property without the prior consent and permission of the owner. Anyone who encamps or lights a fire on a road or cultivated land in or near to any plantation is to be punishable under the law. This effectively outlaws Gypsy Traveller culture and is part of a continuation of ongoing measures to combat nomadism and impose a more settled existence.

SOURCES/SUGGESTED READING

- Police Scotland: Ask the Police www.askthe.scottish.police.uk

1895

SCOTTISH TRAVELLER REPORT RECOMMENDS EXTERMINATION AND MORE



A Commission is appointed in 1894 to investigate ways of combating nomadism in Scotland. Evidence is taken by the Inquiry at various locations — Glasgow, Perth, Aberdeen, etc. — from prominent members of society. The subsequent 1895 report proposes several remedies: 'extirpation' (extermination); deportation to the colonies; Industrial Schools to wean nomad children away from a wandering existence; Mars ships as a deterrent for boys.

The Report takes account of tribal head counts listed in the Census of 1893. Children are rounded up and sent to the colonies — Australia, Canada — a practice that continues until WW1, and is resumed until WW2.

SOURCES/SUGGESTED READING

- Dawson R (2005) *The 1895 Scottish Traveller report*. Derbyshire: Blackwell Press
<http://s.iriss.org.uk/2pFScIG>

1908

CHILDREN ACT (SCOTLAND) MAKES NOMADISM AN OFFENCE



Following an outcry, the Liberal administration decrees it a punishable offence to wander from place to place and thereby deprive a child over the age of five of an education. Clause 118 imposes a duty on parents to ensure that children attend school for 200 days per calendar year and Gypsy Travellers for six months.

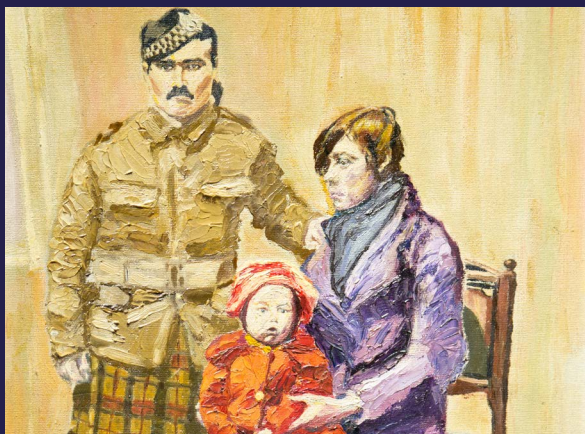
Living in tents and caves is banned and police are encouraged to monitor caves to ensure that they are not being re-occupied. Scottish Chief Constables recommend placement of all Gypsy children in Industrial Schools. In Perth and Kinross, nomadic children are 'made to feel like lepers'.

SOURCES/SUGGESTED READING

- Helen C (2002) *Journal of Contemporary History*, Issue Five. University of Sussex
- Blair Castle Archives, (see Katherine Ramsay, 8th Duchess of Atholl) *The report of the departmental committee on Tinkers in Scotland*, Oct.1917

1917

DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON TINKERS



The findings of the Departmental Committee's Report on Tinkers(1917), leads to the emergence of a new debate on how best to eradicate 'tinkerness', a primary theme of the Report of the Departmental Committee on Tinkers, stating their opposition to their nomadic lifestyle. As part of the Committee's 'Forward Planning Exercise', various Acts of parliament are promoted as solutions. These include invoking the 1916 Small Holding Colonies act to establish labour colonies like crofting communities, upon the demobilization of First World War Gypsy Traveller servicemen. Also, the use of channel payments at designated Post Offices responsible for ring-fencing payment books, to enforce assimilation.

SOURCES/SUGGESTED READING

- Blair Castle Archives, (see Katherine Ramsay, 8th Duchess of Atholl), The report of the departmental committee on Tinkers in Scotland, October 1917
- The Courier and Advertiser (2015) *Tribute paid to Gypsy Travellers at First World War exhibition*, Perth and Perthshire Edition, 10 October <http://s.iriss.org.uk/2ouxWoR>

1940s

EXPERIMENT SITES



Post-WW2 along comes the emergence of the 'experiment site'. These are to encourage sedentarisation and it's to be hoped, integration into council housing schemes. The idea is to provide sub-standard accommodation initially, and once adapted to a sedentary life, to be gradually rewarded with better housing stock. These wooden Nissen huts with cold running water and a toilet adjoining the scullery can be found in various locations: Muir of Ord, Aberdeenshire, Argyllshire, Bobbin Mill, Perthshire, as well as the Borders, New Forest, Kent. These represent an historic abuse of the human rights of Gypsy Travellers.

SOURCES/SUGGESTED READING

- Taylor B, *Blackwell Synergy Historical Research*, 77, 198, p.575-590
- AK Bell Library (Archives), *Accommodation for Tinkers (1945-65)*. Perth

1958

FURTHER ATTEMPTS TO 'INTEGRATE'



Crearie writes in *The Scotsman* (October 11, 1958) on the subject of the 'Integration of the Tinker in Society', reporting on the Local Authority Department of Health conference in Inverness, where town and county councils met representatives from the Department of Health. Delegates suggest Hut encampments 'with warden control' similar to Edinburgh Town Council's correction houses, established in 1632. Ross and Cromarty approaches the problem of tinkering sensibly, providing adequate huts. 'This is an experiment,' Crearie explains, 'and should these families prove they are reasonable tenants, they will be upgraded to a better standard of house', in a bid to rehabilitate and reclaim the tinker.

SOURCES/SUGGESTED READING

- Crearie RS, *Integration of the Tinker in Society*. *The Scotsman*, Saturday 11 October, 1958

1960

CONTROL AND DEVELOPMENT OF CARAVANS ACT 1960 AFFORDS SEASONAL WORK



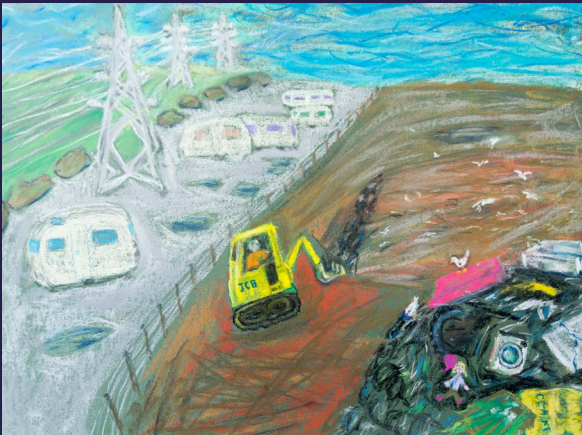
With the passing of the Control and Development of Caravans Act 1960, there appears to be leeway for stationing of caravans on farming and forestry land. A site licence is not required by farmers or the forestry for seasonal workers under the First Schedule, Paragraph 13. This explains why so many Gypsy Travellers are engaging in farming and wood work. These occupational opportunities are therefore dictating their patterns of travel. Common stereotypes or accusations of aimlessness and shiftlessness against nomadic Gypsies are therefore not well-founded. In Scotland, licences do not apply to council sites.

SOURCES/SUGGESTED READING

- The Control and Development of Caravans Act 1960 <http://s.iriss.org.uk/2phvjKU>

1968

THE CARAVAN SITES ACT FAILS TO DELIVER ADEQUATE SITES



It is now incumbent upon local authorities to provide sites for Gypsies and Travellers as a result of the passing of recent legislation. Under the 1968, Caravan sites Act, local authorities have a statutory duty to create sites where none currently exist. However, there is a prevalent feeling that many councils are flouting the law in this respect and not building the sites needed to meet the current deficit in accommodation. As a result, many Gypsies and Travellers are displaced, homeless; travelling round and round in circles.

SOURCES/SUGGESTED READING

- Select Committee on Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions; Thirteenth Report <http://s.iriss.org.uk/2olccqj>

1984

ROADS ACT (SCOTLAND) CRIMINALISES ROADSIDE CAMPING



The 1984 Roads Act (Scotland) comes into force with new provisions to illegalise roadside camping, declaring that ‘Without prejudice to subsection(2) ... a person who, in a road, pitches a tent or encamps commits an offence.’ Section 64 also criminalises leading a horse or vehicle on a foot-way, footpath or cycle track. Occupation of quarries — traditional camping grounds — is now prohibited by law. Furthermore, any display for sale of goods is also now considered to be an offence, and a street trader, private market operator without a licence under section 97(6) of the 1871 Pedlars Act is liable on summary conviction.

SOURCES/SUGGESTED READING

- Roads (Scotland) Act 1984
<http://s.iriss.org.uk/2oTqeX8>

1994

CREATION OF THE NEW OFFENCES OF STOPPAGE AND TRESPASS



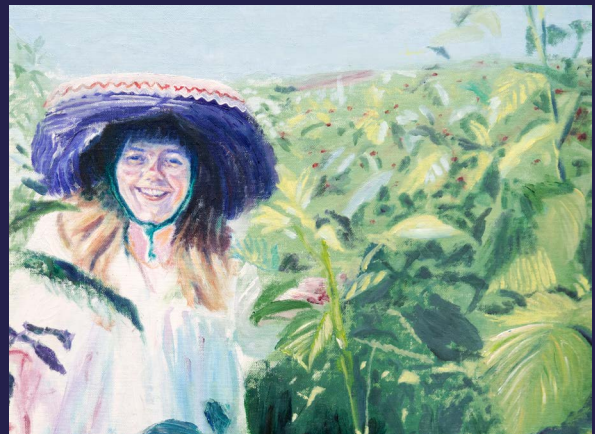
The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act(1994) creates the new offences of stoppage and trespass, removing any incumbency to provide for Gypsy Traveller sites under the Caravan Sites Act (1968). It is unlawful to stop on private land, even where the landowner has given consent. Sections 61,63 and 68 create offences of trespass in circumstances posing a threat to public order. It is left to the discretion of the police officer at the scene to decide whether an offence has been committed. No more than two persons or six vehicles are allowed. Up to three months imprisonment or a fine not exceeding Scale 4 is the penalty.

SOURCES/SUGGESTED READING

- Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 <http://s.iriss.org.uk/2pVAa1J>
- Section 61 of the above: Power to remove trespassers on land <http://s.iriss.org.uk/2ouAHq2>

1995–2007

TRADITIONAL/SEASONAL EMPLOYMENT NO LONGER AVAILABLE



Traditional forms of employment are becoming increasingly inaccessible since the formation of New Labour in 1994 and its accession to Downing Street in 1997. Berry-picking and agricultural work, shellfish, forestry work, pearl-fishing, hawking and busking are being picked off by government policies one by one, and either banned or placed elsewhere. This is true of scrap metal dealing. Police Scotland (formed in 2013) insists that council licensing boards enforce the Itinerant Scrap Metal Dealer's Licensing Act (1982). Award of the licence is discretionary. There is a conflict of interests: council recycling services versus Gypsy Travellers metal dealers — these are increasingly disappearing.

SOURCES/SUGGESTED READING

- Ethnicity, Nomadism and 'Traveller' Identity: in Pursuit of Common Ground? <http://s.iriss.org.uk/2pw8GTX>
- Britain's Home Secretary denounced for inciting racial hatred against Gypsies <http://s.iriss.org.uk/2p0Uq4i>
- Police Scotland, Police Join Forces to Tackle Metal Theft in Edinburgh, October 2015 <http://s.iriss.org.uk/2q0SEyF>

2008

LANDMARK RULING CONFIRMS ETHNICITY



A landmark ruling in *K. MacLennan v GTEIP* establishes that Scottish Gypsy Travellers have ethnic status, a protected characteristic under the terms of the Race Relations Act (1976). Aberdeen Employment Tribunal Judge Hosie in summing up adds that the evidence is 'overwhelming' and he is satisfied that both the essential and other non-essential characteristics are fulfilled in accordance with the criteria set out in *Lord Fraser in Mandla v Dowell and Lee* (1983), and that, therefore, with reference in particular to Section 3(1) of the Act, Scottish Gypsy Travellers enjoy the protection of the Act.

SOURCES/SUGGESTED READING

- Equality and Human Rights Commission (2013) *Gypsy Travellers in Scotland: a resource for the media* <http://s.iriss.org.uk/2oYRRjm>

2015

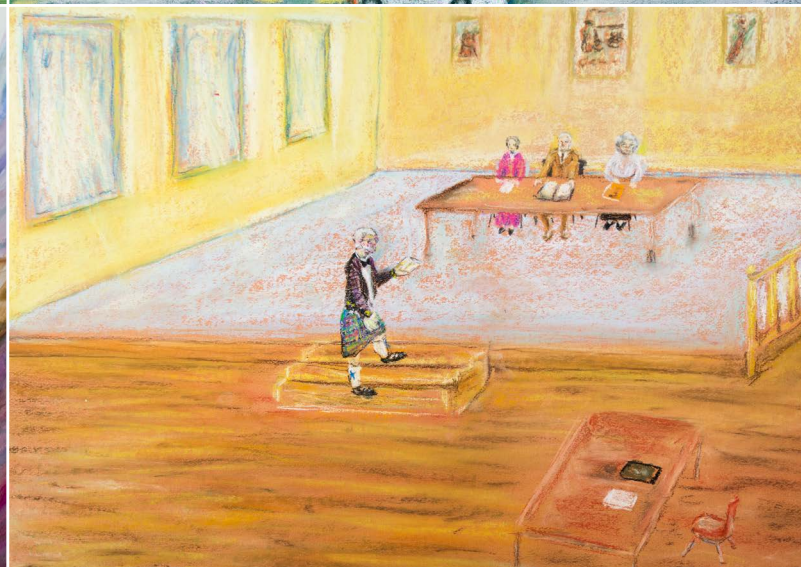
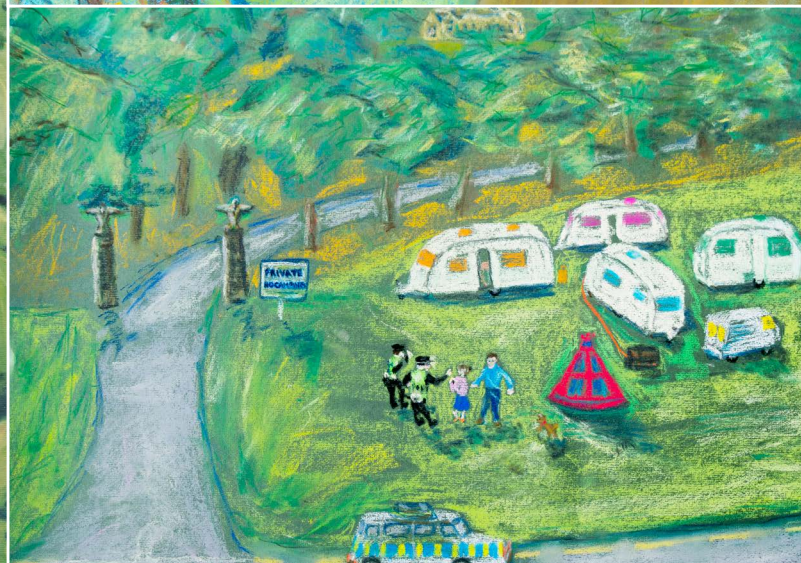
CLAMPDOWN ON WILD CAMPING AT LOCH LOMOND ANNOUNCED



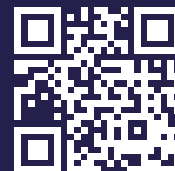
A ban on wild camping is to be introduced from 1st March until 30th September in three zones in the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park. It is reported that the Government approves of this national park camping by-law campaign. Lay-bys are now inaccessible to Gypsy Travellers. Stopping-places form a growing percentage of rural Scotland swallowed up as sites of outstanding natural beauty or of scientific interest expand. Dave Gibson, of the Mountaineering Council, fears that 'those who would otherwise wish to exercise their rights to wild camp responsibly under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003' will be criminalised.

SOURCES/SUGGESTED READING

- BBC News — Camping crackdown approved by Loch Lomond park board <http://s.iriss.org.uk/2oOdqmw>
- BBC News — Government approves national park camping by-law plan <http://s.iriss.org.uk/2oTGkA4>







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