



HOTT

Heart of the Travellers

CONSERVATION - EDUCATION – INCLUSION - CELEBRATION



REGISTERED CHARITY NO:
SCO045416

WHO WE ARE

HOTT is a Scottish Travellers organisation dedicated to preserving the only physical monument to Scottish Travellers – the Tinkers’ Heart in Argyll. HOTT is also dedicated to conserving and recording the stories, songs, genealogies and histories of Travellers.

What is the Tinkers’ Heart?

It is a Heart laid out in quartz stones positioned in a field next to the A815, opposite the junction of the B839, overlooking Loch Fyne, known as the Gypsy Wedding Place, referred to locally as the Tinkers’ Heart.

It is the only monument that Scottish Travellers have, indicating their timeline and presence in Scotland. Excluded by church and state these ancient people have visited the Heart to marry and christen babies for centuries. The site was still used for Tinkers’ weddings as late as 1978 and it seems that its importance as a place of beginnings is still understood today by couples who visit the Heart on their wedding day.

It is also a sacred place to remember the dead, evident by the coins and flowers that lie scattered at the Heart: some people still visit to pay respect and honour their ancestors.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

CONSERVATION:

- We will conserve the Tinkers' Heart in Argyll by petitioning Historic Scotland to schedule the Heart as a monument to the Travelling people of Scotland.
- We will work with the various groups, both locally and nationally, who have an interest in the Heart to ensure its historic and present importance is understood and celebrated.

EDUCATION:

- We will promote an understanding of the roles Scottish Travellers have played in the history of Scotland through wider dissemination and understanding of our stories, songs, oral histories and culture.
- We will promote the values of *One Scotland, Many Cultures* by contributing to the complete story of Scotland's people.

INCLUSION:

- We will collect and collate our cultural heritage and safeguard it for future generations, Travellers and Non-Travellers alike.
- We will work to ensure the cultural needs of Travellers are understood to enable equality of access to services such as education and health.

CELEBRATION:

- We will promote positively Scottish Traveller culture and celebrate our contributions to the story of Scotland.

WHY HOTT FORMED

HOTT came into existence as a campaigning group to save the Tinkers' Heart. Through discussion, we realised that our culture was in danger of being lost, despite the work of the Schools of Scottish Studies at various universities. It is prudent to promote our own culture through our own interpretations; which will augment the work done by academics.

More about the Heart

How long the Heart has been in Argyll is not known but stories of Caird men (Tinkers from the area) who fought and did not return from the Battle of Culloden of 1745, were remembered by their kinsfolk, in way of the ancient practice of laying a quartz stone for each one lost, culminating in the heart shape and its significance both to the area and the culture. The same understanding of the Tinkers Heart as a place of memory to honour those who travelled away to war and never came home is still extant in tales told of those who went to war in the 20th c and never came home again. The Tinkers Heart is not a huge site in physical terms, but in terms of love, of memory and of sacred significance, it is a site of enormous proportions and cultural, historical and religious significance.