

Intermittent Citizens. Scotland's Travellers, Welfare and the Shifting Boundary of State and Voluntary Action in the Early Twentieth-Century

In May 1932 Miss Dora Maitland, of the Church of Scotland's Home Mission Committee, travelled south to meet Colonel Bray at Hurtwood Common in Surrey. Bray owned most of the 1700 acre common and as its landlord, and with considerable local support, had established a Control Committee to 'more constructive[ly]' manage the 'increasingly vexatious gipsy and vagrant' presence in Hurtwood.¹ Under the eye of the Committee, one hundred acres of the common had been set aside to house around twenty Gypsy families who had been granted a permit and lived under the supervision of a ranger. These permits to camp on the common were only issued to families who sent their children to school, kept their camps free of rubbish, and who could demonstrate 'cleanliness' and 'good behaviour'.² Surrey Education Committee paid for a wooden building to house two teachers and a special school for the children of the common. There, education was 'specially adapted to the needs of the gipsy children', with lessons concentrating heavily on handicrafts and practical subjects. The teachers were also expected to encourage 'the gipsy children into suitable employment' when they left school, a task in which they had some success: Surrey's education inspector noted that a 'number of girls have been placed in domestic service and show no desire to return to camp life'. On top of the classes for the children, the teacher ran evening sessions for their parents, events which were reportedly attended by up to fifty people.³

By its own measure, at the time of Dora Maitland's visit, the Hurtwood camp scheme was successful: the commons had been cleaned up, Gypsy children attended school regularly, with some going on to waged employment. When the scheme closed in 1934 the families were housed locally in 'modern bungalows', where, as one local newspaper put it, they were

¹ National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh (hereafter NAS): HH 55/241, Tinkers: Control Committees: D. Maitland, *An Account of Gipsy Camps in Surrey Supervised by the Hurtwood Control Committee with bearing on Tinker Camps in Scotland, 1932*, unpaginated.

² NAS: HH 55/241, Maitland, 'An Account of Gipsy Camps', unpaginated.

³ The National Archives, Kew (hereafter TNA): ED41/433, BoE minute on HMI Mr Charles' visit to Hurtwood school, 24 Mar 1926. Given the Gypsy Traveller population of the camp, this figure should be used with caution.

‘given the opportunity to take their places as ordinary citizens’, noting how ‘with education has come a desire for a higher standard of living and comfort.’⁴ Licenced camps, it seemed, could offer sedentary society a means to end the ‘nuisance’ Gypsies caused, requiring them to conform to standards of behaviour increasingly required of the wider population. And, ultimately, it seemed, camps, particularly when combined with regular education, could push them towards the settled life of ‘ordinary citizens’. Maitland was certainly impressed by the scheme, noting how ‘these gipsies have ceased wandering and now stay on the common throughout the year, occupying themselves with agricultural work, miscellaneous occupations or hawking’. Moreover, and crucially to her mind, ‘in every case’, the families were ‘self-supporting without any public assistance.’ In her final report to Scotland’s Home Mission Committee, using Hurtwood as inspiration, she sketched out a proposal for network of sites to be established along similar lines in Perthshire for some of the county’s ‘tinkers’, as Scots Travellers were commonly called at this time.⁵

What is the purpose of re-visiting this small piece of history? In this article I argue that we can draw multiple levels of historical meaning from efforts to settle and assimilate Scots Travellers in the first decades of the twentieth century. As we shall see, Maitland’s Perthshire scheme was not the first time that the living conditions and behaviour of Scotland’s Travellers had come to the attention of reformers. Maitland herself had been preoccupied with ‘the Tinker question’ since at least the end of the first world war, while both the Church of Scotland’s Home Mission and various government bodies had, for at least the previous thirty-five years, intermittently wrestled with the question of the place – social and spatial – of Scotland’s hereditary nomadic population in their increasingly industrialising and modernising country. In setting Maitland’s work and that of the Home Mission Committee of the Church of Scotland within a longer context – going back to the last years of the nineteenth century – and a wider framework – considering their work alongside other voluntary efforts as well as the state’s activities – we gain a new view, not only of Gypsy and Traveller history, but also the shifting boundaries of voluntary-state action in the early twentieth century and how these intersected with emerging ideas of domestic citizenship.

⁴ ‘Successful Gypsy Experiment’ *Surrey Times*, 8 Dec 1933; see also ‘Exit the Gypsy: Civilisation Extends its Conquering Sway’, *West Lancashire Evening Gazette*, 11 Dec 1933.

⁵ NAS: HH 55/241, Maitland, ‘An Account of Gypsy Camps’, unpaginated.

Part of the aim of this article is to extend back histories of welfare and stopping grounds for Britain's Gypsy and Traveller populations to the years before the second world war. This itself is a little-written history. Where it does exist, it tends to focus on the post-war years, the build up to the 1968 Caravan Sites Act and its requirement that local authorities provide designated sites for Gypsies and Travellers residing in or resorting to their district.⁶ While this historiographical focus has been valuable, not least in demonstrating how the expansion of the post-war British (welfare) state drew its Gypsy and Traveller populations into its orbit along with the rest of the British population, we should be wary of foreshortening the historical story it tells.⁷ By extending our gaze back to the end of the nineteenth century and first decades of the twentieth century we can see how some of the debates raging in the late 1960s and into the 1970s, over the role of official sites in mediating Gypsies' and Travellers' relationship with wider society, were already emerging. These debates revealed welfare provision and camping grounds as sites of tension. Were they spaces where Britain's Gypsies and Travellers might gradually become socialised, via education and enforced sedentarism, into the ways of modernity? Or were they protected spaces, small sanctuaries where, with some small adjustments, Gypsies and Travellers were maintain key parts of their social structures, identity and lifestyle?

Framing the question in these terms also allows us to set the provision of camping grounds and other welfare for Gypsies and Travellers within a far larger set of concerns. Ones which revolve around the histories of (coercive) welfare interventions, and the place of particular institutions – religious, voluntary, state – as well as the role of particular individuals – missionaries, voluntary workers, state officials – in delivering them. Doing so opens up the world of British civil society, in which home mission activity formed part of a wider subset of British voluntary welfare-orientated work.⁸ Framing this history this way also opens up a way to thinking too about the state, as by the last decades of the nineteenth century, the rise

⁶ See for example Thomas Acton, *Gypsy Politics and Social Change: The Development of Ethnic Ideology and Pressure Politics among British Gypsies from Victorian Reformism to Romany Nationalism* (Oxford, 1974); Taylor, *A Minority and the State*.

⁷ David Sibley, *Outsiders in Urban Societies* (Oxford, 1981); Taylor, *A Minority and the State*; [author(s) to be inserted after review], 'The vexing case of Ernest Smith's pony: Hampshire's Gypsy rehabilitation centres, welfare and agency in mid-twentieth century Britain', *History Workshop Journal*, 94: Autumn (2022).

⁸ Jose Harris, *Civil Society in British History: Ideas, Identities, Institutions* (Oxford, 2003).

of the labour movement, the Fabians and a disparate collection of reformers had begun to push it towards having a more active, interventionist role in British society. As the proportion of the British population thought of as citizens – with a right to vote and participate in the activities of government – increased, the state also needed to adapt to their growing presence. This change has been most often thought of in relation to the working class and women, but we will see how Scotland's Travellers at certain times, and in certain contexts, were seen as citizens who should be included in this more expansive state.

The diverse and over-lapping nature of voluntary and state in this period are well-illustrated in the working biographies of three women who were prominently involved in Scottish initiatives towards Travellers in the first decades of the twentieth century. Dora Maitland spent her early years working in Edinburgh's slums alongside university settlement workers, before spending six years as a Police Sister in Aberdeen and then moving on to her work with the Home Mission Committee. Eva Campbell Calquhoun from Perth brought a strong Christian ethos to her role as Honourable Secretary for the Central Committee for the Welfare of Travellers and her work with the city's Traveller population. Here she was closely aligned with the NSPCC but also promoted votes for women and the idea of women's active citizenship. Finally, Margaret Mackie worked as a school teacher at Merkinch school in Inverness, running its separate Traveller school for a number of years. Between them, with their mix of religious, charity and local authority roles they embodied the complexity of reforming initiatives in this period and the diverse ways in which women might intersect with the public sphere.⁹ Thus, in line with a broader historiographical shift away from constructing accounts of the decline of voluntarism and the rise of the state across the twentieth century we can characterise the first decades of the century as a period of extraordinary activity, state and voluntary alike.¹⁰ Rather than a simple case of state replacing voluntary action, in this article I illustrate how often the latter worked in a dynamic relationship with the former,

⁹ See NAS: HH55/237, Dorothea Maitland, 'Welfare of Tinkers', Police Sister for Aberdeen City Police, 20th Sept 1919; Eva Campbell Colquhoun, 'Welfare of Tinkers: An explanatory booklet' (Perth, n.d); NAS: ED15/67, Miss Margaret Mackie, 'Vagrants', n.d.

¹⁰ Geoffrey Finlayson, "A Moving Frontier: Voluntarism and the State in British Social Welfare 1911-1949." *Twentieth Century British History*," 1, no. 2 (1990): 183-206; James McKay and Matthew Hilton, 'Introduction', in Nick Crowson, Matthew Hilton and James McKay (eds.) *NGOs in Contemporary Britain: Non-State Actors in Society and Politics since 1945* (Basingstoke, 2009), 1-20.

while at both the national and local levels the state was continually exploring the boundaries of its responsibility and action.

The biographies of these women also push us to think about the links between state institutions, voluntary associations and developing ideas of domestic citizenship, that is, what Francesca Moore has called ‘citizenship beyond voting rights’.¹¹ Maitland, Colquhoun Campbell and Mackie were all women who were what can be thought of as ‘active’ citizens, who expended their energies trying to create ‘good’ citizens.¹² Historians have suggested that the decades surrounding the First World War saw the emergence of new ideas of citizenship, with Eugenia Low arguing that pre-1914 attempts to create a morally motivated and socially cohesive community saw the emergence of ideas of ‘active’ citizenship. Brad Beaven and John Griffiths have refined this to suggest that we can create a distinct periodisation of active citizenship, viewing citizenship in the last three decades of the nineteenth century as associated with civic spirit and civic engagement that morphed to see citizenship becoming increasingly infused with ideas of duty and discipline, with the First World War marking an important turning point in contemporary discussions over the relationship between the individual and the state.¹³ In essence, the nineteenth century expansion of the franchise and the rise of Labour, the Liberal reforms of 1906-14 and of Lloyd George’s government, and the demands and impact of the First World War, all combined to recast not only *what* the state was for, but *who* it was for and how they might be shaped into a new generation of ‘good citizens’. How these ideas played out for Scotland’s Travellers is something I explore in the first substantive section of this article.

¹¹ Francesca Moore, “‘A band of public-spirited women’: middle-class female philanthropy and citizenship in Bolton, Lancashire before 1918.” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 41: 2 (2016): 149-162.

¹² On women, voluntarism and active citizenship more generally see Moore, “‘A band of public-spirited women’”; Susan Pedersen, *Eleanor Rathbone and the Politics of Conscience* (New Haven, 2004); Linda Mahood, *Feminism and voluntary action: Eglantyne Jebb and Save the Children, 1876–1928* (New York, 2009); Eve Colpus, “Women, Service and Self-actualization in Inter-war Britain,” *Past and Present* 238, no. 1 (2018): 197-232; Ruth Davidson, “Working-Class Women Activists: Citizenship at the Local Level,” in *Alternatives to State-Socialism in Britain. Other Worlds of Labour in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Peter Ackers and Alastair J. Reid (Basingstoke, 2016), 93-120.

¹³ Eugenia Low, ‘The concept of citizenship in twentieth century Britain: analysing contexts of development’. In *Reforming the Constitution*, edited by P. Catterall, W. Kaiser, and U. Walton Jordan. London: Frank Cass, 2000; Brad Beaven and John Griffiths, “Creating the Exemplary Citizen: The Changing Notion of Citizenship in Britain 1870–1939.” *Contemporary British History* 22: 2 (2008): 203-225.

This article also explores *where* these ideas of citizenship were being played out. Tom Hulme's consideration of the role of education in promoting good citizenship, as contemporaries worried about how to create healthy and efficient children for Britain and empire, has focussed on the physical design and construction of schools in promoting this. His approach chimes with Carole O'Reilly's research on how Edwardian ideas of self-help and social responsibility achieved spatial expression through the creation of citizens' municipal parks.¹⁴ The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the creation of a host of other spaces - the asylum, the industrial school, labour colony or camp – that sought to act as a reforming institution for 'failing' citizens. And Barbara Arnell has demonstrated just how closely entwined ideas of citizenship and behaviour became in the modern period, not only in British and Dutch ideas of liberalism, but also French and American republicanism which associated citizenship with labour. To be a citizen in a modern liberal state, was to be industrious, and so, by extension 'one of the greatest political and economic sins of the modern era was to be idle and poor.'¹⁵ We see these attitudes expressed in the ethos of the workhouse and the growing number of initiatives by reformers from the last decades of the nineteenth century onwards to 'rehabilitate' the idle poor through institutionalised work. For the children of vagrants – there being nothing more inimical to modernity than perpetual and undirected 'drifting' – industrial schools were intended to remove them from the harmful effects of their birth environment and to instil in them habits of industry and religious observance. Here I extend our historical gaze to the site of the mission hall, school and licenced camping ground to demonstrate the importance of particular spaces in trying to create the 'good' Traveller citizen.

But who were the 'tinkers' who received the attentions of Maitland, Campbell Calquhoun, Mackie, and different agents of the state, and whose lives underpin this article? A census taken of Scots Travellers in 1893 counted 977 adults and 725 children, and described them as living 'principally in tents, and marry[ing] amongst themselves, according to their own rights; [and] support themselves ostensibly by petty industries, such as tinker-work, umbrella

¹⁴ Carole O'Reilly 'From 'the people' to 'the citizen': the emergence of the Edwardian municipal park in Manchester, 1902–1912', *Urban History*, 40: 1 (2013): 136-155.

¹⁵ Barbara Arnell, *Domestic Colonies. The Turn Inward to Colonies* (Oxford, 2017), 37.

mending, and occasional field labour, but really to a large extent by begging.’¹⁶ This census was used by a Departmental Committee, formed two years later, as part of its exploration of the ‘problem’ of ‘habitual offenders, vagrants, beggars, inebriates and juvenile delinquents’ in Scotland, and although not named in its title, Travellers were taken to exist as a subset within these overlapping and problematic groups. The Committee was tasked with not only finding the causes of their behaviour, but also suggesting ‘remedies to act as a deterrent and reformation.’

Travellers were universally described by witnesses to the Committee as irredeemably workshy drunkards who lived in caves or tents which were both ‘insanitary’ and ‘immoral’. Even when witnesses accepted that some of the work they did – particularly seasonal farm work – was useful to society, or that they were ‘faithful to their own marriage ties, and fond of their children’, they insisted that this did not offset other characteristics, such as a propensity for alcoholism and their refusal to send their children to school. Even when pressed to admit that living outside was ‘healthy’, witnesses nevertheless argued it was ‘a great evil that there should be this miserable camping out of men, women and children all huddled together.’ Observations such as this led many witnesses to suggest that direct and concerted interventions were needed: ‘I would make that mode of living illegal and I would take the children away, and have them committed under the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act to some school farm and taught farmwork.’ These ambitions were stopped, not due to any sympathy of the Committee with the lives of Travellers, but because it couldn’t condone the practice of targeting resources at a largely self-supporting and able-bodied section of society that were withheld from the rest of the labouring poor.¹⁷

This report highlights some of the challenges presented to historians seeking to write histories of Britain’s Gypsy and Traveller populations. It offers us a detailed insight into the place of Travellers in Scottish life in the late nineteenth century, but does so only through the eyes of outsiders. We need to wait to the 1930s to have direct testimonies from Scots Travellers, and although there is now some work being done by Travellers themselves collecting families memories of the early twentieth century, the fact remains that the bulk of evidence to which

¹⁶ Report [and Minutes of Evidence] to the Departmental Committee on Habitual Offenders, Vagrants, Beggars, Inebriates and Juvenile Delinquents (Scotland), 1895 (Edinburgh, HMSO, 1895), xxxi.

¹⁷ Ibid., xxxi and paras 6349, 6443-4, 6605 and 13,151.

we have access was generated by the state, missions and welfare organisations, all outsiders who were in the main predisposed to see them as social failures, nuisances and in need of reform.¹⁸ This, though, doesn't mean that Traveller experiences and voices are unrecoverable. Becky Taylor and Jim Hinks have reminded us of the importance of learning from post-colonial historians and others who work with non-literate and subaltern populations, to hold an awareness of 'the grain' of an archive when writing Gypsy and Traveller histories.¹⁹ If we take, for example, the evidence from the Committee above, we can read back from the comments made by the witnesses a different understanding of Scots Traveller lives than the one they thought they were presenting. An understanding based around what Judith Okely would later characterise as 'commercial nomadism' – where mobility, self-employment and a diverse skill-set filled gaps in the economy not easily plugged by settled individuals – that saw Travellers covering even the most remote parts of the country, and where the centrality of children and close family ties sustained everyday social meaning.²⁰ Thus, as I go forward now into the rest of the article and explore the different ways in which voluntary and state agents sought to settle and assimilate Scots Travellers, although by necessity the majority of the sources were generated by non-Travellers, I seek to read against the grain of the archive to offer a glimpse of their world views and perspectives.

Building Good Citizens and the First World War

As the 1895 Habitual Offenders investigation and report made clear, by the end of the nineteenth century Travellers had begun to come into the sights of the state, beyond the established expedients of evictions, moving them on or prosecuting them for vagrancy and begging. In fact we can trace the beginning of the state's active – rather than reactive – interest in Scots Travellers back to the establishment, from 1866, of the network of industrial

¹⁸ The Scots Traveller autobiographies dealing with the inter-war years are Roger Leitch (ed.), *The Book of Sandy Stewart* (Edinburgh, 1988); Betsy Whyte, *The Yellow in the Broom* (Edinburgh, 1979) and *Red Rowans and Wild Honey* (Edinburgh, 1990). For an example of current collecting of testimony see testimony of David Donaldson in Mike Doherty, 'Tinkers and Gypsies'. The historical tragedy of the attempted eradication of Scotland's Travellers', *Traveller Times*, 24 May 2018.

¹⁹ Becky Taylor and Jim Hinks, 'What field? Where? Bringing Gypsy, Roma and Traveller history into view', *Cultural and Social History*, 18: 5 (2021): 629-50; Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton and Oxford, 2009).

²⁰ Judith Okely, *The Traveller-Gypsies* (Cambridge, 1983).

schools.²¹ Anticipating the Habitual Offenders Committee's interest in 'remedies to act as a deterrent and reformation,' and chiming with wider Victorian thinking on the innocence of the child and the possibility to shape and reform them away from the pernicious influence of failing parents, these combined a vision of social improvement with spatial separation. As Mr Hutchinson, manager of Perth's industrial school put it, 'to do real permanent good... you must restrict them to civilised walks of life.'²² For some Traveller families this separation was not simply local and temporary – removal to a local industrial school always offered the possibility of occasional family visits and return of the child after release from the school – but was made permanent via forcible emigration under child empire settlement schemes.²³

The witness testimonies and the Habitual Offenders report made it clear both that there was an appetite among at least some to coercively settle and assimilate Travellers, and that through the industrial schools, there was the beginning of the mechanisms for enacting this. Yet it is far less clear how extensive and systematic the practice of removing children from their families actually was, as it remained cheaper for local authorities to move Travellers out of their district than it did to cover the cost of children being boarded in an industrial school. The hard figures we do have comes two decades later, from the 'tinker census' of October 1917, which gave the total number of Scots Travellers as 2728, of whom 171 were children in industrial schools.²⁴ This indicates that by this point, something between 5 and 10 per cent of Traveller children were removed from their families and institutionalised. On top of this, following the Education (Scotland) Act 1908, mainstream schooling more broadly was beginning to shape Travellers lives. This legislation instituted the practice of requiring children to make two hundred school attendances a year, upon which point their parents could be issued with an attendance certificate allowing them to travel without fear of

²¹ The Industrial Schools Act, 1857, which covered England and Wales, and was extended to include Scotland in 1866, gave magistrates the power to sentence homeless children aged seven to fourteen years, who were brought before the courts for vagrancy to a spell in an industrial school. The costs were borne by local education authorities. Industrial schools and reformatories were merged under the Approved Schools Act, 1933. Gillian Carol Gear, 'Industrial Schools in England, 1857-1933: "Moral hospitals" or "Oppressive Institutions"?' PhD thesis, Institute of Education, University of London, 1999.

²² Report of the Departmental Committee, preamble, & para 6672.

²³ Report of the Department Committee, paras 6672 and 6681.

²⁴ Report of the Departmental Committee on Tinkers in Scotland (Edinburgh, 1918), 4.

prosecution.²⁵ The effect of the legislation was to make travelling families ‘confine their movements to certain areas and... not wander so widely as they once did.’ Given the choice between having their children forcibly removed to an industrial school and needing to limit their nomadism for certain parts of the year for them to attend regular schools, it seems that many families chose the latter. Even so, those in the northern and highland regions were far less affected, keeping ‘to their old habits’, in part because in many remoter areas they were still made ‘pretty welcome.... [being] the only strangers that the country people have among them, and the people get news from the tinkers.’²⁶

By the outbreak of the First World War then, the state, largely through the medium of enforced attendance, and via the space of the classroom or residential industrial school – engagement with which might in turn serve to circumscribe a family’s nomadism - was beginning to reshape Travellers’ lives and behaviours. The outbreak of the First World War intensified state engagement with Travellers in two key ways. First, a significant number of Traveller men joined the Army, either voluntarily or were conscripted, so that by 1917 309 were recorded as serving in the Forces.²⁷ Second, the Defence of the Realm Act, particularly its prohibitions over the lighting of fires and in barring civilians from large parts of the coast and other areas, hit Travellers in specific ways. Cooking on open fires outside now saw them running the risk of prosecution; while the requisition of large swathes of land led to the closure of some long-standing stopping places.²⁸

Contrary to the firmly held stereotypes that ‘true’ Travellers were perpetually nomadic, in fact even before the impact of enforced school attendance was felt, given the harsh reality of life on the road in the winter, it had long been common practice for families, whenever possible, to find a stopping place which might tide them over from October through to March. Travellers either sought a stable camping grounds or found lodging in the poorer parts of towns and cities.²⁹ But war regulations made it hard, even in summer, to maintain a

²⁵ The school day was split into two halves, with morning and afternoon attendance counted separately. In essence, a child attending every school day from the beginning of October to the end of March could fulfil the annual attendance requirement.

²⁶ *Tinkers in Scotland*, 12-13.

²⁷ *Tinkers in Scotland*, 9.

²⁸ *Tinkers in Scotland*, 19.

²⁹ R. Leitch (ed.), *The Book of Sandy Stewart* (Edinburgh, 1988), xxiv & 45.

peripatetic way of life, as the absence of able-bodied men, now serving on the front, made the tasks involved in making and breaking camp far more arduous. Added to the difficulties to life on the road was the draw of the town: ‘the constant need to be near a Post Office for the eagerly-expected news from India, Mesopotamia, Egypt, France’ as well as the ‘advantage of having a ‘fixed place to welcome the boys to when they come home on leave.’³⁰ All these factors converged so that many ‘families were driven into towns’, typically moving into ‘slum or derelict houses.’³¹ Women who were left on the road with the remainder of their families were to find themselves in increasingly difficult circumstances.

If the increased challenges of life on the road were one consequence of the war, another major change seemed to indicate that things might be made easier for Traveller women. As with all wives whose husbands were in the Forces, Traveller wives had a right to an Army separation allowance. This was paid at a uniform rate, and in fact, as Susan Pedersen has pointed out, represented the first non-contributory rights-based state benefit paid to women. It therefore represented a significant extension of the state’s sphere of activity, one which acknowledged fighting husbands as citizens, and by proxy their wives, as having claims on the state.³² However, as both Pedersen has shown for Liverpool, and Annemarie Hughes and Jeff Meek have shown for Scotland, the state did not have the staff and systems in place to assess and manage the allowance system. Government insufficiency saw it relying heavily on voluntary organisations, particularly the network of women visitors working under the auspices of the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Families Association, to ensure that women received the allowances that were due to them.³³ And the involvement of these women visitors extended beyond simply smoothing the administrative process. Working class wives receiving these allowances became the subject of increased scrutiny: from local state agents and agencies, as well as from charitable organisations such as the Scottish NSPCC keen to

³⁰ NAS: HH55/237, Eva Campbell Colquhoun, ‘Welfare of Tinkers: An Explanatory Booklet’ (Perth, n.d.).

³¹ *Tinkers in Scotland*, 4.

³² Susan Pedersen, "Gender, Welfare, and Citizenship in Britain during the Great War," *The American Historical Review* 95, no. 4 (1990): 983-1006. It also represented a significant financial commitment, one that by 1918 cost the government c.£120 million a year and was paid to over 1.5 million women.

³³ Susan Pedersen, "Gender, Welfare, and Citizenship in Britain during the Great War," *The American Historical Review* 95, no. 4 (1990): 983-1006; Annemarie Hughes and Jeff Meek, "State Regulation, Family Breakdown, and Lone Motherhood: The Hidden Costs of World War I in Scotland," *Journal of Family History* 39, no. 4 (2014): 364-387.

ensure that women's access to government money led to neither drunkenness nor child neglect. Supplementary cash allowances were granted on condition of 'good behaviour', whereas in-kind contributions were given if the applicant was seen as 'unreliable', thus ensuring that visitors acted as the 'advocates, disciplinarians, troubleshooters, and the morality police of soldier's wives'.³⁴ Therefore although the war might have seen the significant expansion of the state, it did not mean that voluntary work contracted, in fact they expanded hand-in-hand.³⁵ This is useful background, for understanding how working-class women in receipt of separation allowances were subjected to outside visitors and scrutiny, enables us to contextualise the attention given to Traveller women in similar circumstances. The Provost of Callander, for example, was not alone in commenting disapprovingly that the allowances gave Traveller women 'more money than they have ever had; and it is simply stating the truth to say that much of this money is squandered on Drink.'³⁶

We have one insight into how the multiple pressures on Travellers during the war played out through the reports of Perth's Central Committee on the Welfare of Tinkers. Throughout the war years it worked closely with roughly fifty Traveller families who had moved into the city and largely lodging 'in the worst parts of Perth: such bad localities that the better Tinkers are themselves anxious to "flit"'.³⁷ The Committee's honourable secretary, Eva Campbell Colquhoun, recorded that a large number of families now headed by women were living in 'great poverty.' They had either not yet secured their separation allowance or received a 'inadequate' amount – probably through a combination of lack of knowledge about their entitlement and illiteracy. She also saw how moving to the city had made sustaining an independent livelihood through hawking more difficult 'especially in districts where the Tinkers [were] not well-known.' Not only was their presence on people's doorsteps less welcome in towns than in isolated communities, but wartime high prices saw their profits much reduced.³⁸

³⁴ Pedersen, "Gender, Welfare, and Citizenship in Britain," 992.

³⁵ More generally on this see Peter Grant, *Philanthropy and Voluntary Action in the First World War: Mobilizing Charity* (London, 2014).

³⁶ NAS: HH55/237, letter from Thomas Macdonald, the Provost of Callander to Robert Munro, HM Secretary for Scotland, 23 Mar 1917.

³⁷ NAS: HH55/237, Report from Miss Eva Campbell Colquhoun, 27 Feb 1918.

³⁸ NAS: HH55/237, Report from Miss Eva Campbell Colquhoun, 27 Feb 1918.

In the face of this need the Central Committee developed a two-pronged strategy based on two difference spaces: the home and the mission hall. 'Constant visiting' of women in their homes not only allowed visitors to help the women secure their allowances and disburse small loans to cover certain expenses, but also built up trust. This then enabled the visitors to encourage the women and their wider families to attend Sunday services and the Committee's special 'Saturday parties' at the mission hall, where the mission workers put on a programme of speakers and children's games, and the local health visitor was present to give advice. Talks covered subjects ranging from the 'care of houses' and children, to focussing on the countries where men were fighting. To make the events more attractive, the sessions often ending in 'bagpipes and recitations by the Travellers themselves', with the mission taking 'great trouble... to secure really good speakers, and to have good lively music.' Behind this public work in visible spaces, behind the scenes, Committee members also visited the Travellers' landlords to check on their tenants' behaviour. And as their relationship with individual women developed the mission workers also began encouraging them to sign a teetotal pledge and to send their children to school regularly. As with other working class women then, helping them to secure separation allowances was one small part of a wider package of intervention that aimed to re-shaped their everyday habits. And children were seen as key to the long-term success of their work. Committee members kept a keen look out for any 'signs of "good sense" with regard to the children's future', as Colquhoun Campbell felt that a 'good deal could be done by encouragement of the children and interest in the progress at school, by the "visitor"', particularly when the 'home atmosphere' was 'illiterate and discouraging'.³⁹ Success in this regard though was mixed:

Of course there are great 'sets back' and discouragement, as when a 'promising case' gets her 'man' back from the front – a drunken fracas succeeds - this 'man' attacks the old mother-in-law with a gun and the 'promising case' sells up her furniture and departs into the void... But on the whole the general trend has been upward and the main conclusion reached is that the best hope is in long-continued personal intercourse – individual and unofficial and in constant appreciation of 'missionary methods'.⁴⁰

³⁹ NAS: HH55/237, report from Miss Eva Campbell Colquhoun, 27 Feb 1918.

⁴⁰ Ibid

Colquhoun Campbell's mention of 'missionary methods' here reminds us that the Committee's work was not exceptional in regard to Travellers, but was rather part of well-honed spectrum of activities which had been deployed among Britain's poorest for decades and which aimed to bring not only salvation, but also the a life of teetotalism and domestic routine. Her observations also provide us with a glimpse of some of the different ways in which the Traveller women who were subject to her attentions, actually received them. The 'promising cases' may have genuinely appreciated the support they received, not least in securing separation allowances, but this should not be mistaken for full acceptance of the mission's ambitions for them. The return of a husband, however disreputable he might have appeared, or the opportunity to sell furniture and use the proceeds to cushion life on the road suggests that the Traveller women in Perth accepted what was offered on their own terms while waiting out the war or until they could pick up their familiar lives again.

That these women were right to be chary of the missionaries' long-term aims is revealed in archival evidence demonstrating how the Central Committee sought to make the most of the opportunity provided by war conditions to encourage permanent settlement. It proposed, for example, that separation allowances should only be paid through one designated post office as this would 'not allow them to change about from place to place.' This, though was only the first step in a bigger plan, one which aimed to see Perthshire Travellers becoming fully settled in 'country centres where they could be properly supervised and obtain work of a congenial kind.' The Chair of the Committee, Rev. Menzies Fergusson, went as far as identifying two places in the county close to Perthshire's fruit growing districts with 'empty cottages' in which the Travellers might be settled. To supplement this highly seasonal work, the Committee suggested 'training the Tinkers in such industries as basket-making and similar crafts.' This, like the mission visitors' work with separated wives, was to combine state and voluntary initiative: while suggesting that the cost of housing might be covered by rents paid by the Travellers themselves, Fergusson was determined that government should cover the cost of 'suitable instructors... and do something for this vagrant class.'⁴¹

Fergusson was not a lone voice in insisting that government had a role to play in pushing Travellers to a sedentary life, nor was the Central Committee out on a limb in suggesting that

⁴¹ NAS: HH55/237, letter from Rev R Menzies Fergusson, Bridge of Allan to Munro, Sec for Scotland, 1 Jul 1917.

the war provided an important opportunity to ‘civilise’ them.⁴² Through tracing the response of state and voluntary workers to the plight of a group of Travellers in Caithness, north-east Scotland over the second half of 1916, we can see how attempts to extend welfare to Scots Travellers became entwined both with assumptions of the desirability of settling them and that the state might be the natural actor to lead this process. Rev. George Jeffrey was chaplain to Sutherland’s United Navy and Army Board, and his attention had been drawn to the position of Traveller women when their husbands had joined the army during the general call-up in the summer of 1916. In his official capacity he had been asked ‘to get the necessary certificates arranged’ to support the women’s claims for separate allowances, and in the process had come into contact with the forty Traveller families – seventy-two adults and 112 children. Of these nineteen men had joined up, and thirteen of them were married, having thirty-five children between them. Most of the families were not housed, but rather lived in camping grounds which had been dug from the peat moors and where they faced constant harassment from the agents of the big estates. Beyond facing court appearances and fines, the Traveller families, far from being the subject of concerted state interference, Jeffrey maintained, suffered acutely from state neglect: ‘Army authorities will do no more than pay separation allowance, the Parish Councils repudiate all liability, the local authorities do not care to act.’⁴³

Jeffrey’s concern had grown as he watched the situation of the soldiers’ families deteriorating despite the women receiving their separation allowances. The men had previously ‘created fairly substantial tents’ in which the families lived, but in their absence this had become ‘impossible’; while the constant harrying by agents had made it even more difficult for the women to construct anything other than the most rudimentary of structures on any piece of waste ground where they could make a temporary halt. Local prejudice meant that although the women had money, no one was willing to rent them a house: ‘We have had one tragedy already the little band. The first born of a soldier being born practically on the roadside and living only a fortnight for want of shelter.’⁴⁴

⁴² NAS: HH55/237, letter from Thomas Macdonald, the Provost of Callander to Robert Munro, HM Secretary for Scotland, 23 Mar 1917.

⁴³ NAS: HH55/237, letter from Rev. George A. Jeffrey to the Secretary of State for Scotland, 4 Dec 1916.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

In making his to the Secretary of State for Scotland Jeffrey argued it was ‘poor recognition of a soldier’s effort to [evict] his wife in the man’s absence.’ But, he felt, there was a solution, if government was willing to help. He had developed a cabin design ‘similar to that in an army camp’ to house eight families, had found people willing to construct the cabin and ‘secured the support of a substantial farmer’ who offered him a piece of land. As estate officials had ‘refused to allow the erection’, he had asked the town council to allow the women to stay in the empty smallpox hospital while the cabins were erected in its grounds. This plan though had been stymied by the County Council, which refused to give its permission. Undeterred, Jeffrey was now turning to central government, asking it to buy an old Poor House to convert it into housing for the Traveller families.⁴⁵

It is perhaps significant that, having first tried a purely philanthropic approach, and then having appealed to, but failed to move, local authorities, Jeffrey shifted his attention to national government. In doing so he both revealed the diversity of avenues for civil society action in early twentieth-century Britain, and showed how, despite the country’s engrained traditions of localism, central government, particularly in a wartime context, was increasingly seen as an appropriate vehicle for managing and solving social problems. This appetite for greater government involvement in the lives of Scottish Travellers did not stop with Jeffrey: his letter prompted an investigation by the Local Government Board into the situation in Caithness, and resulted in a number of the families being found temporary housing in Wick.⁴⁶ Locally, the Duke of Portland, who had donated money to the Traveller families settled in Wick for household items, took up the cause. Like Jeffrey, he firmly believed that the war offered an opportunity to civilise these citizens of the empire:

Military service will doubtless give the men a sense of discipline and will teach them to respect themselves, while the separation allowances to which their wives are entitled have, for the time being, opened up the possibility of a new condition of life for their families.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ On the position of the families housed in Wick as a result of Jeffrey’s intervention see NAS: HH55/237, correspondence and reports of G. A. Mackay, Local Government Board, 9 Dec 1916 to 23 Feb 1917.

⁴⁷ NAS: HH55/237, Duke of Portland, letter to the editor, ‘The Housing of Tinkers’, *The Scotsman*, 15 Mar 1917.

The Local Government Board agreed with Portland, arguing that there ‘never before has been such an opportunity for breaking the tinkers of their nomadic habits.’⁴⁸ And so the last two years of the war were to mark a period of concentrated interest by government in Travellers that culminated in a Scottish departmental report, published at the end of the war.⁴⁹ Like Portland, the departmental committee, supported by the evidence it collected - from a selection of police, public health and voluntary officers, and its own visits to particular locations across Scotland - was determined that the moment would not be lost:

It was desired to seize the opportunity of settling a class... who never otherwise could be induced to live in houses. The services of the men in the Army demanded recognition on the part of their country; and... it would be unfair, both to the tinkers and to the community, to permit the return of discharged tinker soldiers to their former wretched existence. This would mean a dissipation of any benefits that the men had derived from the Army training and discipline.⁵⁰

The Committee recognised that both the legal requirement to attend school and the demands of war had ‘placed duties of citizenship on tinkers,’ and this being the case, society was now duty-bound to reciprocate.⁵¹ Although it believed that Travellers’ lifestyles were chaotic and empty of purpose, describing the youth as ‘practically illiterate, with no habit of industry and no prospect of any but the most casual employment,’ the Committee was not despondent. For, although its report expounded on the ‘racial’ and hereditary elements that meant ‘wandering’ was an ‘instinct’ both ‘inbred and ingrained’ in Travellers, the mood of the moment was on reform: ‘tinkers possess a capacity for usefulness in common with other persons, but... this capacity has not been developed.’⁵²

⁴⁸ NAS: HH55/237, letter from John Maxwell, Local Government Board to the Under-Secretary for Scotland, 22 Mar 1917.

⁴⁹ *Tinkers in Scotland*. The Committee was chaired by Rev. Menzies Fergusson and was allocated £400 for expenses.

⁵⁰ *Tinkers in Scotland*, 4.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 22.

⁵² *Tinkers in Scotland*, 11, evidence of Rev. A. B. Scott; and 16.

Building on existing practice and chiming with the Home Mission's concern with ending nomadism, the Committee outlined two means through which Travellers could be brought into line with the rest of the nation: education and settlement. Although educators bemoaned Traveller children's 'backwardness', in comparison to south of the border, where school attendance was rarely enforced, in Scotland the intervening years had seen growing numbers of local authorities beginning to take its provisions seriously.⁵³ Moreover in some places work was being done to keep them engaged in schooling: Merkinch school in Inverness, just before the outbreak of war, had set up a special Traveller section with Margaret Mackie as its teacher and dedicated curriculum. In return for the stick of a strict adherence to the two hundred attendances rule Mackie had developed the carrot of tailored lessons and activities for the Traveller children, viewing many of the families as her 'friends': 'Many people look on Vagrants as being made of a different sort of clay to themselves, whereas I find 'We are a' Jock Tamson's Bairns.''⁵⁴ For those families who were not within Merkinch's catchment or who turned their back on the opportunities presented by regular schooling, there were the industrial schools, where, in a repeat of evidence to the 1895 Committee, some of their superintendents insisted the 'reverting to tinkering' could only be prevented by completely severing all ties between child and family. The 1918 report contained evidence of the 'success' of this approach: of those who had left industrial schools in the previous seventeen years, many of the girls had either gone into domestic service or mill work, while the boys had taken up 'various trades' or had joined either the army or navy. Overall, the statistics showed that just over a quarter – 27 per cent – had 'relapsed' and re-joined their families, a figure which gave the Committee hope for the success of any future reforming measures.⁵⁵

On the second plank of the Committee's reforming strategy – settlement – we see a similar optimism for its potential to make Travellers 'not only a self-supporting but a wealth-producing member of the community.' Committee members articulated how they were anxious that Travellers avoided becoming settled in the slums, where they ran the risk of consorting with the lowest sections of society, nor did they trust that Travellers could be left to their own devices, as this ran the risk of allowing them to continue any drunken or wayward habits. To secure both settlement and reformed behaviour the Committee developed

⁵³ Taylor, *A Minority and the State*, 81-5.

⁵⁴ NAS: ED15/67, Miss Margaret Mackie, 'Vagrants', n.d..

⁵⁵ *Tinkers in Scotland*, 17-18.

a detailed fifteen point plan of action. Although declaring they had ‘no desire that the individuality of the tinker should be destroyed,’ its plan made it clear that it was only through breaking up Scots Travellers’ current way of life that they could become ‘civilised’: ‘we are hopeful that in two generations, the tinker, as he is now, will have ceased to exist, and that his virility and capacity for persistence under adverse conditions will have been advantageously absorbed by the community.’⁵⁶

At its most basic the plan required that all current legislation that might be used to control Travellers’ behaviour should be consistently and fully enforced, whether it related to encampments, education, begging, cruelty to children, or supplying alcohol to children. Second, it envisaged a new central government body to take ultimate responsibility for an entirely state-funded approach to settling Travellers and finding them suitable regular employment. Using local authorities as the unit of enforcement, each with an Inspector of Tinkers, all Travellers were to be registered and those with ‘a drink problem’ prohibited from buying alcohol. To prevent families ‘congregating’ and so undermining reforming efforts, each district would have no more than two or three families allocated to it, where they would be given simple housing and a plot of land to encourage them towards farming. The inspectors were expected to find those under their charge suitable work, ideally in agriculture, afforestation or quarrying, all of which would allow Travellers to work outdoors while preventing them from travelling.⁵⁷ Although the Committee decided to set its face against moving all Travellers to live in labour colonies – as that ran the risk of them continuing to consort with each other - its proposals nevertheless contained a strong supervisory element:

the Inspector of Tinkers will be expected to act in a very real sense *in loco parentis* to his wards. He should shepherd them continually until such time as they are able to take their place among responsible and self-respecting citizens.⁵⁸

Supplementing the work of the (assumed male) inspector would be a network of local women who would be assigned to each settled Traveller family, to teach mothers housewifery. Here

⁵⁶ *Tinkers in Scotland*, 23. & 29.

⁵⁷ *Tinkers in Scotland*, 23- 28.

⁵⁸ *Tinkers in Scotland*, 27.

we see how an ideal of a regular, sedentary lifestyle, supported by waged labour and certain behaviours underpinned ideas of who would be seen as a good citizen in post-war Britain.

Even before the report was published, Local Government Board officials started exploring the possibility of turning some of these ideas into reality. Meeting with the Board of Agriculture, they discussed the possibility of using a portion of Crown lands in Caithness to form a state-subsidised ‘crofting settlement for the tinkers in that county, especially for those men of the tinker class who are now serving in HM Forces.’ In a mark of how far thinking had moved from 1895, when government had refused to single-out Travellers for state funding, now officials developing the plan accepted that proposals ‘should be looked at in the broadest economic sense,’ and that anything ‘which promised to raise a class from being parasitic on the community to the level of self-supporting citizens, warranted outlay,’ even if the scheme itself was not be self-supporting.⁵⁹

We can place both this specific initiative, and the ambitions of the 1918 Report, in the context of what its Chair described as ‘the lines of national reconstruction.’⁶⁰ That is, the larger picture of growing state involvement and investment in the lives of its citizens which Lloyd George’s government, as it led the country out of war, sought to develop. Having expanded who was considered a citizen – through drawing unprecedented numbers of the civilian population in the war effort, and through the Representation of the People Act 1918 - it now aimed to repay their efforts. The 1919 Addison Act, the legislative embodiment of the call for ‘homes for heroes’ was the best publicised plank of a far wider programme of post-war reform. The Small Holding Colonies Act, 1916 had already established the principle that the Board of Agriculture might initiate and finance settlement schemes in the empire, now the 1919 Land Settlement (Facilities) Act, was to allow councils to provide smallholdings and farms for veterans, irrespective of whether or not they had any previous farming experience. Similarly, through a range of new permissive public health powers, through university grants, assisted emigration and other schemes for ex-servicemen government sought simultaneously

⁵⁹ NAS: HH55/237, letter from David Brown, Assistant Secretary, Local Government Board, Edinburgh to the Under-Secretary for Scotland, 6 Jun 1917.

⁶⁰ NAS: HH55/237, letter from R Menzies Ferguson to James Dodds, Under Secretary for Scotland, 13 Mar 1918.

to better the lives of its citizens, and in the process strengthen both state and empire.⁶¹ And so, in having been drawn into the war, and into the gaze of state and voluntary organisations, through recruitment and separation allowances; and through the *Report on Tinkers'* vision of a more active state promoting a more efficient, better housed and healthier citizenship, Scots Travellers, rather than being exceptional, perhaps unexpectedly found their experiences chiming closely with that of the wider population. That these reforms aimed to entirely annihilate their way of life was seen as no more than a necessary step on the road to full citizenship.

The Perthshire Camp Scheme

If the recommendations of the Committee on Tinkers in Scotland had been implemented in the years following the war, then it is unlikely that we would, over ten years later, find Dora Maitland visiting Hurtwood Common in Surrey looking for answers to how to solve Scotland's 'tinker problem.' Despite the Local Government Board's active interest in the Committee's scheme at the end of the war, engagement that included chairing a committee which sought to bring off the experimental crofting settlement for Travellers in Caithness, no action was ever taken as a consequence of the 1918 report.⁶² The plan to forcibly settle and integrate Scots Travellers into wider society was never realised. By the time of Maitland's Perthshire camps scheme one would never even know that the state had ever taken any interest in its nomadic population. What had happened?

In part we can see it as the simple result of government reorganisation. In all likelihood the Report and its recommendations fell into an administrative void as a result of the dismantling of the Local Government Board – long seen as over-sprawling and inefficient – and its

⁶¹ See for example Alys Levene, Martin Powell, John Stewart, and Becky Taylor. *Cradle to Grave: Municipal Medicine in Inter-war England and Wales* (Bern, 2011); Georgina Brewis, Sarah Hellawell, and Daniel Laqua, "Rebuilding the Universities after the Great War: Ex-Service Students, Scholarships and the Reconstruction of Student Life in England." *History* 105, no. 364 (2020): 82-106; Kent Fedorowich, "The Assisted Emigration of British Ex-servicemen to the Dominions, 1914-1922," in *Emigrants and Empire. British Settlement in the Dominions between the Wars* (ed.) Stephen Constantine (Manchester, 2017), 45-71;

⁶² NAS: HH55.237, minute of conference between Board of Agriculture and Local Government Board, 24 Jul 1917.

replacement with the more tightly-conceived, but perennially underfunded, Ministry of Health.⁶³ And if it had slipped through this hurdle, it would undoubtedly have fallen victim to the Geddes axe.⁶⁴ But even so, even before the end of the war, it was clear that the idea was going to run into difficulties. If Travellers had come to government attention in no small part because of their position as citizens, albeit imperfect ones, then it was the continued feeling that it could not treat them more preferentially than the rest of the population that ensured that the scheme had little hope of getting off the ground. As the Secretary of State for Scotland put it, the 1918 Report's ideas meant 'treating the tinkers as a separate class in the community.' This, for a government that insisted all citizens should be treated without preference – however far from reality this might actually have been – was not politically practical. And so it did nothing more than 'promise to consider them in their proper place in connection with the general housing problem.'⁶⁵ Although locally Caithness council officials and voluntary workers continued their efforts to get a scheme for 'tinker housing' off the ground, the ambitions of the Tinker Committee disappeared into the long grass: 'times are not propitious.'⁶⁶ The 1920s consequently saw a retreat in the state's ambitions towards Travellers. Aside from continued attempts to require Traveller children to fulfil the two hundred attendance required by the 1908 Act – 'there is no doubt at all that the children could be trained and yet become useful citizens of the Empire' –⁶⁷ this was a time when government withdrew from any ambition to either reform or assimilate its Traveller population.⁶⁸

⁶³ Christine Bellamy, *Administering Central-Local Relations, 1871-1919: The Local Government Board in its Fiscal and Cultural Context* (Manchester, 1988); J. P. Bradbury, "The 1929 Local Government Act: The Formulation and Implementation of Poor Law (Health Care) and Exchequer Grants Reform for England and Wales (Outside London)," PhD thesis (University of Bristol, 1991).

⁶⁴ Geoff Burrows and Phillip Cobbin, "Controlling government expenditure by external review: The 1921—2 "Geddes Axe"." *Accounting History* 14, no. 3 (2009): 199-220.

⁶⁵ NAS: HH55/237, minute to Mr Lamb, 3 Jul 1918. For more on central government's unwillingness to single out Gypsies and Travellers for special legislative attention in the first half of the twentieth century see Becky Taylor, *A Minority and the State*.

⁶⁶ See correspondence in NAS: HH55/237 over the course of 1918-19. The Caithness scheme never came to fruition. See NAS: HH55/240, Scottish Board of Health, notes of meeting held with Joint Scottish Churches, Scottish NSPCC, Miss Campbell and a few others in regard to welfare of tinkers, 4 Jun 1925.

⁶⁷ NAS: HH55/237, letter to the editor from William Sinclair, Armadale Castle, Isle of Skye, *The Scotsman*, 22 Jun 1917.

⁶⁸ For discussions of how to draw Scottish Traveller children into the education system in this period see NAS: ED15/67.

If it had been the war which had precipitated the last sustained period of interest in Travellers, it was to be another global crisis – the 1930s depression - which was to provide the point of stimulus for the next new initiative, Dora Maitland's Perthshire camping scheme. Once again, the focus of effort lay in using education in tandem with the provision of longer term stopping places as two sites of control on a longer road to moving Travellers towards a fully sedentary life.

By the early 1930s the depression was being felt across Scotland in multiple ways with unemployment reaching, by 1932, 27.7 per cent of the uninsured population. Among the effects of this wide-spread unemployment was a general rise in vagrancy and of door-to-door selling among those who had failed to find waged work.⁶⁹ Lower household incomes increased pressure on the poorest accommodation, as unemployed families began moving into the very cheapest and least attractive housing, including condemned and other slum housing that had previously been rented over-winter by Travellers. At the same time the long-established practice of poor families sub-letting rooms to Travellers over-winter was effectively stopped by the Means Test.⁷⁰ For Travellers the knock-on effect of these developments were both that there was more competition in hawking and door-to-door sales and in finding winter accommodation. With their background in casual and informal work, Travellers were perhaps better insulated than the wider population from the loss of waged employment, so that, and as Dora Maitland pointed out, during the depth of the depression across Perthshire and Kinross, around 330 Travellers, adults and children, were still supporting themselves with 'little reliance on public assistance.'⁷¹

Pressure on accommodation was more difficult to manage, as shortages in cheap housing led more Travellers than usual to use traditional camping grounds all year round, in some cases causing over-crowding and prompting complaints from the surrounding population. Although it is not absolutely clear why, this was perhaps the reason that the authorities began to more

⁶⁹ William W. Knox, and Alan MacKinlay, "The re-making of Scottish Labour in the 1930s," *Twentieth Century British History* 6, no. 2 (1995): 174-193, 184. See also R. H. Campbell, "The Scottish Office and the special areas in the 1930s." *The Historical Journal* 22, no. 1 (1979): 167-183.

⁷⁰ Leitch, *The Book of Sandy Stewart*, 45.

⁷¹ NAS: HH 55/241, Maitland, 'An Account of Gypsy Camps', 5.

actively move Travellers on from their well-established camping grounds in this period. As Scots Traveller, Betsy Whyte remembered of this time:

A policeman, or perhaps two would come to Old Trinity Road, and tell them that they would have to move on the next day. So they would shift to Green Tree, perhaps, and live there for a few days before being told to move on again... This went on the whole time... take their tents down in freezing weather and go on for five or six miles.⁷²

This general closing of traditional stopping places and the shortage of cheap winter accommodation provided a catalyst for the Home Mission', and Dora Maitland's own, reforming or missionizing ambitions. As we have seen, Maitland drew inspiration from the apparently successful Hurtwood Common initiative, which used the Gypsies' need for secure camping grounds as a means to require their children to attend school. This, it was hoped, would be simply the first of many 'steps taken for the permanent improvement of their conditions.'⁷³ The Perthshire scheme similarly involved securing the co-operation of landowners who were asked to allow Travellers to camp on a number of defined camping grounds in a rough circular area encompassing Birnam in the south and Killiecrankie to the north. As with Hurtwood, this did not actually mean creating new sites for Travellers, for all that Sandy Stewart, who as a boy lived in Strathtay camp, remembered how Maitland 'got thae camps for hus ye see, from the lairds,' as the camps were simply long-standing stopping places now used with landowners' consent. But under the new scheme camping was restricted to families with Perthshire connections who were guaranteed security of tenure for six months over winter if they fulfilled the 'primary condition' of regularly sending their children to school.⁷⁴ In another echo of the Hurtwood scheme, the mission contributed to the cost of engaging an extra teacher at the school in the nearby village of Dull to teach Traveller children, as well as securing the use of one of its classrooms out of school hours 'for religious and social purposes.'⁷⁵ Camp residents were also expected to abide by a strict code of cleanliness and behaviour, with unlicensed families robustly ejected from the sites:⁷⁶

⁷² Betsy Whyte, *The Yellow in the Broom* (Edinburgh, 1979), 94.

⁷³ NAS: CH1/16/26, Appendix II, sub-committee minutes of work among Tinkers, 26 Oct 1932.

⁷⁴ Leitch, *The Book of Sandy Stewart*, 45, quoting Church of Scotland, Home Department Reports, VIII, Report of the Home Mission Committee, May 1933.

⁷⁵ NAS: CH1/16/26, Appendix III, sub-committee minutes of work among Tinkers, 21 Nov 1933.

⁷⁶ NAS: HH 55/241, Maitland, 'An Account of Gypsy Camps', 7.

[My parents] needed a licence to use them: thir wes naebuddie supposetae come in but wirsel. Ye see ye hed a little book an it wes made like a motor licence, green covered. Any police that came intae you when you wir in the camp, ye just let them see that.⁷⁷

In further homage to the Hurtwood initiative, the Home Mission Committee employed a ranger to ensure that only Travellers carrying permits used the sites and that they were abiding by the rules of the camp. In addition to fostering regular school attendances, the Perthshire scheme also had the goal of inculcating an ethos of regular industry in its families:

Tinkers who are basket makers will be encouraged in this trade, while every possible help will be given towards the learning of new crafts and the equipment of the tinker family, so that they may take their places in the ordinary normal life of the community.⁷⁸

As Sandy Stewart remembered, mission workers acted as agents for the Travellers, providing them with the materials to make baskets and then selling them to Highland Home Industries Ltd in Edinburgh on their behalf:

Miss Maitland got camps an then she wid hae ye mak baskets for her... She got big truck loads, taen them ower tae Edinburgh as she paid ye for them. An if ye couldnae get enough stuff growing fer tae mak them, she sent ye stuff... tinwork or oniething – the lady Maitland wed buy it.⁷⁹

As ethnologist, Roger Leitch, who recorded Sandy Stewart's life history in the 1980s, observed, although the scheme was 'ostensibly concerned with education, its underlying aims were to bring religious influences to bear on Traveller families', and, in the words of the Home Mission itself, 'to reconcile them to a better mode of life.'⁸⁰ Indeed, Maitland herself was granted permission by the Home Mission Committee, for the first three years that the

⁷⁷ Leitch, *The Book of Sandy Stewart*, 31.

⁷⁸ NAS: CH1/16/26, Appendix II, sub-committee on work among Tinkers, 26 Oct 1932.

⁷⁹ Leitch, *The Book of Sandy Stewart*, 31-2, & 46 fn. 6.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 45, quoting 'Particulars of a Scheme for the Welfare of Tinkers in Perthshire', 1932.

camping scheme was operating, to conduct a Scotland-wide ‘exhaustive investigation’ into the ‘tinker and vagrancy’ problem.⁸¹ Maitland saw the Perthshire scheme as the first step in a far bigger project: by 1934 the Mission was considering expanding the scheme into the Valley of the Tay and subsidising another teacher at Pitlochry school; the following year, Miss Hardie of Dull school was able to report that two of the ‘Tinker girls’ were being trained for domestic service.⁸²

The scheme is significant not only in revealing the deep and automatic connections that the mission made between education, settlement and ‘civilisation’. It also demonstrated how, at a time of severe depression, when the state, at both national and local levels, was showing itself to be inadequate in its ability to provide support for the general population, it had retreated from any ambition to socially engineer its Traveller population: as Scottish civil servants admitted among themselves in 1932, ‘nothing is likely to be done by the Government or by Local Authorities.’⁸³ Travellers, largely regarded as non-workers, stood separate in the minds of civil servants to the recently and catastrophically unemployed of Britain’s heavy industries. If there was, often grudging and inadequate, state aid to be given – via the Depressed Areas schemes, various local and national labour (colony) schemes, and the increasing punitive Means Test – it would be channelled to the unemployed citizen-worker, not the nation’s Travellers. And so, as the Perthshire scheme showed, if there was reforming work to be done at this time, it required civil society to take the initiative.

Despite the schemes’ ambitions and publicised successes, Sandy Stewart’s memories offer us a sideways slant. He remembered, not only his brother’s intermittent attendances, but also how when Sandy reached thirteen he was taken out of school and the whole family left the camp to return to a more mobile way of life. Travellers’ strategic approach to the camp sites – useful as a means of securing school attendances, which in turn ensured that the family evaded police attention and the threat of the industrial school - was also embedded in the recollections of May Robertson, one of Sandy’s teachers:

⁸¹NAS: CH1/16/26, sub-committee minutes of work amongst the Tinkers, 2 Dec 1932.

⁸² NAS: CH1/16/27, Appendix III, sub-committee minutes of work among Tinkers, 27 Mar 1934; Appendix VIII, sub-committee minutes of work among Tinkers, 25 Oct 1934; and CH1/16/28, Appendix VIII, minutes of the meeting the sub-committee on work among Tinkers, 30 Oct 1935.

⁸³ NAS: HH 55/241, letter from A. Smail, Department of Health for Scotland to P. J. Rose, Scottish Office, 27 Jun 1932.

As soon as the two hundred attendances were made they were off. They would come to us for weeks before, say, 'My father wants to know how many attendances we've got', and they would keep asking that. And when the two hundred arrived, even if it was lunchtime, they were off. That was the last we saw of them until the following autumn.⁸⁴

Conclusion

It is clear that reformers and state officials saw Travellers as an anomaly, and their continued presence in modern Britain an aberration. Yet it is equally clear that Travellers sat alongside other groups – vagrants, habitual offenders – who were similarly seen as a blot on society. And so the tools reformers reached for when thinking of reforming Travellers' ways of life were by no means unique and, as in the case of other deviant groups, were often focussed on particular spaces where citizenship might be inculcated. Education, through the standard state system, through industrial schools, and through targeted separate schools; supervision via regular home visiting; and ideas of colonies and settlements, were all practiced on other groups in British society, including children with disabilities, working class wives and the unemployed.⁸⁵ Given that the wider working class population faced punitive and coercive welfare measures in this period, with those in receipt of out-door relief losing their right to vote up to 1929, it is no surprise that Travellers faced a similarly intrusive range of measures. Sandy Stewart's memories of leaving the camp as soon as possible, as much as Eva Colquhoun Campbell's record of recidivist Travellers who upped sticks and left Perth suggest that there remains untapped potential for reading against the grain of the archives, to develop deeper understandings of how Scots Travellers themselves responded to attempts at being 'reformed'. Evidence here suggests that many strategically accepted the need to perform a presence in these particular sites of regulation - mission halls, schools, licensed camping grounds - while seeking to retain the core of their way of life and identity, even as certain active citizens sought to impose on them the outwards signs of 'good citizenship'.

⁸⁴ Leitch, *The Book of Sandy Stewart*, 46, fn8.

⁸⁵ Mark Jackson, *The Borderland of Imbecility: Medicine, Society and the Fabrication of the Feeble Mind in late Victorian and Edwardian England* (Manchester, 2000).

Coming cold to the accounts from Hurtwood and the Perthshire camping scheme of the 1930s, it would be easy to assume that these were some of the first attempts to try and draw Scotland's Travellers into the realm of both mission activity and the demands of the modern state. Neither of these assumptions hold up under scrutiny. The Home Mission Committee's activities formed part of a far longer history of missions towards Travellers and reformist interest in using schooling combined with settlement as a means of assimilating Travellers.⁸⁶ In this latter concern they were not alone, and it is through compulsory schooling that we also find the earliest state attempts to draw Travellers into its sphere. Here children were being seen as potential future citizens of nation and empire, and the explicit desire to shape them as such was most clearly manifested when Traveller children were removed from their families and sent to the colonies as part of empire child resettlement schemes.

Even so, the ambitions of state action were far from overarching. The refusal of the 1895 Committee to forcibly house Travellers spoke nothing of sympathy with their lifestyles, but everything of a cautious, liberal state unwilling to extend itself more than absolutely necessary. And so it wasn't until the unprecedented swelling of the state during the First World War that we see government extend its attention to Traveller adults, as men were called up and their wives became recipients of separation allowances. The idea that service in the trenches could be viewed as a civilising force might be a startling idea for present readers.⁸⁷ But nevertheless for a diverse combination of actors – missionaries, NSPCC workers, army clergymen, Local Government Board civil servants - it was the urgency of the historical moment, one which had brought Travellers into the state's orbit as never before, that was seen as a compelling starting point for a programme of state-sponsored reform. The vision of the 1917 Committee, if enacted, would have seen Scots Travellers as a people forcibly scattered and deliberately settled with the aim of wiping them out as a separate people within two generations.

Thus one of the things which is most significant about the Perthshire camp scheme was the very absence of the state and the smallness of its aim. Despite the long-established use of

⁸⁶ Smith, *I've Been A-Gypsying*, 280.

⁸⁷ Or indeed contemporary society in the immediate post-war years. See Jon Lawrence, "Forging a Peaceable Kingdom: War, Violence and Fear of Brutalisation in Post-First World War Britain," *Journal of Modern History* 75 (2003): 557-589.

education – via the two hundred attendance rule and the use of industrial schools – to try and draw Traveller children away from their community’s influence, we find the Home Mission Committee paying for teachers, not the state. And despite the plans for a Scotland-wide settlement programme conceived of in 1918, by 1932 it was owing to the determination of one individual, Dora Maitland, that the Church of Scotland agreed to creating a network of six camping grounds in Perthshire. This interwar retreat from the expansionist aims of the First World War exposes the uncertain boundaries of state action in these years. This was a time when state support and funding for large sections of the population was still deeply contested, as well as being, during times of recession, financially challenging. Ultimately then, in exploring the shifting and never-determined boundary between state and voluntary action this article argues that there was a relationship between the status of Travellers as citizens and the attention bestowed upon them by the state. If we accept that being eligible for state resources - rather than being in receipt of punitive attention – is a marker of citizenship, with charitable welfare dealing with those seen as being beyond the bounds of state attention, it was Traveller children, via the provision of compulsory education, who were the first to be accepted as potential and future citizens by the state. Their parents only came to this citizen-status during the war, and only then if they were involved in the war effort. Otherwise, Travellers remained outside the boundary of government action and resources, of interest only to charitable and mission organisations. This was perhaps no bad thing. Given that state attention, in the short period of time when it was directed at Travellers, threatened to eradicate them as a separate community, they remained protected as a community by their status as intermittent, and often invisible, citizens.