

# Caird's Cave

Caird's Cave, one of the twenty known caves along this shore, is located 1.4 km NNE of Rosemarkie, close to the shoreline. It is situated on a 5m high raised beach at the base of an Old Red Sandstone cliff, close to the Flower Burn.

It is a particularly shallow cave, perhaps more of a rock shelter and is partially blocked by *talus* (rock fall).

Interestingly, a midden and the remains of a recent building have been identified in front of the cave.

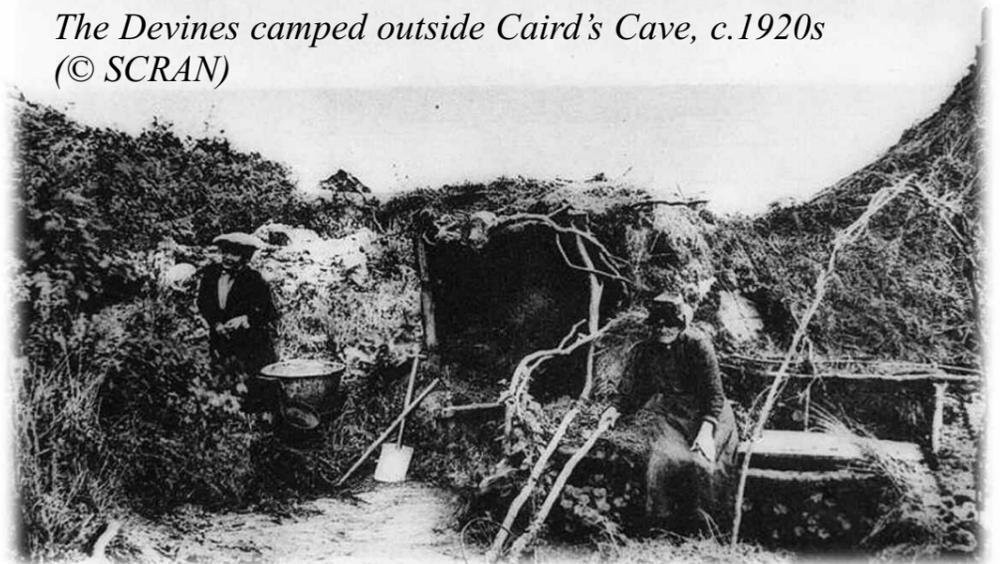
The word **caird** comes from the Gaelic *ceard*, meaning travelling craft worker or *tinker*-smith.

The use of the word tinker to refer to travelling people comes from the description of their metal craft and repairing as 'tinkering'. The original Old Irish word *cerd* literally translates as 'skill'.

There is also a Caird's Cave in Aberdeenshire, and the place names Tinker's Cave near Wick and Tinkler's Cave in Argyll suggest the same identification of these caves as places stayed in by travelling people during their summer walking.

These 'summer walkers' also used caves as stores and workshops for their traditional metal-working and basket-making.

*The Devines camped outside Caird's Cave, c.1920s*  
(© SCRAN)



There are accounts of a family named the Devines camping at Caird's Cave as recently as the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. There are also 18<sup>th</sup> century accounts of the Rosemarkie caves being used by local fishermen and by smugglers. The building work at the front may indicate another known possible use as an animal pen.

There is some debate as to whether this is the cave excavated by Dr Maclean in 1907-12. The finds were presented to the National Museum in 1931 after Maclean's death but its catalogue simply says "objects found in a cave at Rosemarkie".

Some accounts of the excavation tell us that the cave that was dug measured 10m wide and was 4m high and 9m deep, but these are not the dimensions of Caird's Cave.

There is no known archive of the excavation records. However, accounts from the time, including a review of a talk given by Dr Maclean to the Inverness Scientific Society and Field Club in 1913, describe the site as being near to the Flower Burn. The closeness of Caird's Cave to this freshwater source suggests that this *is* the cave in question.

