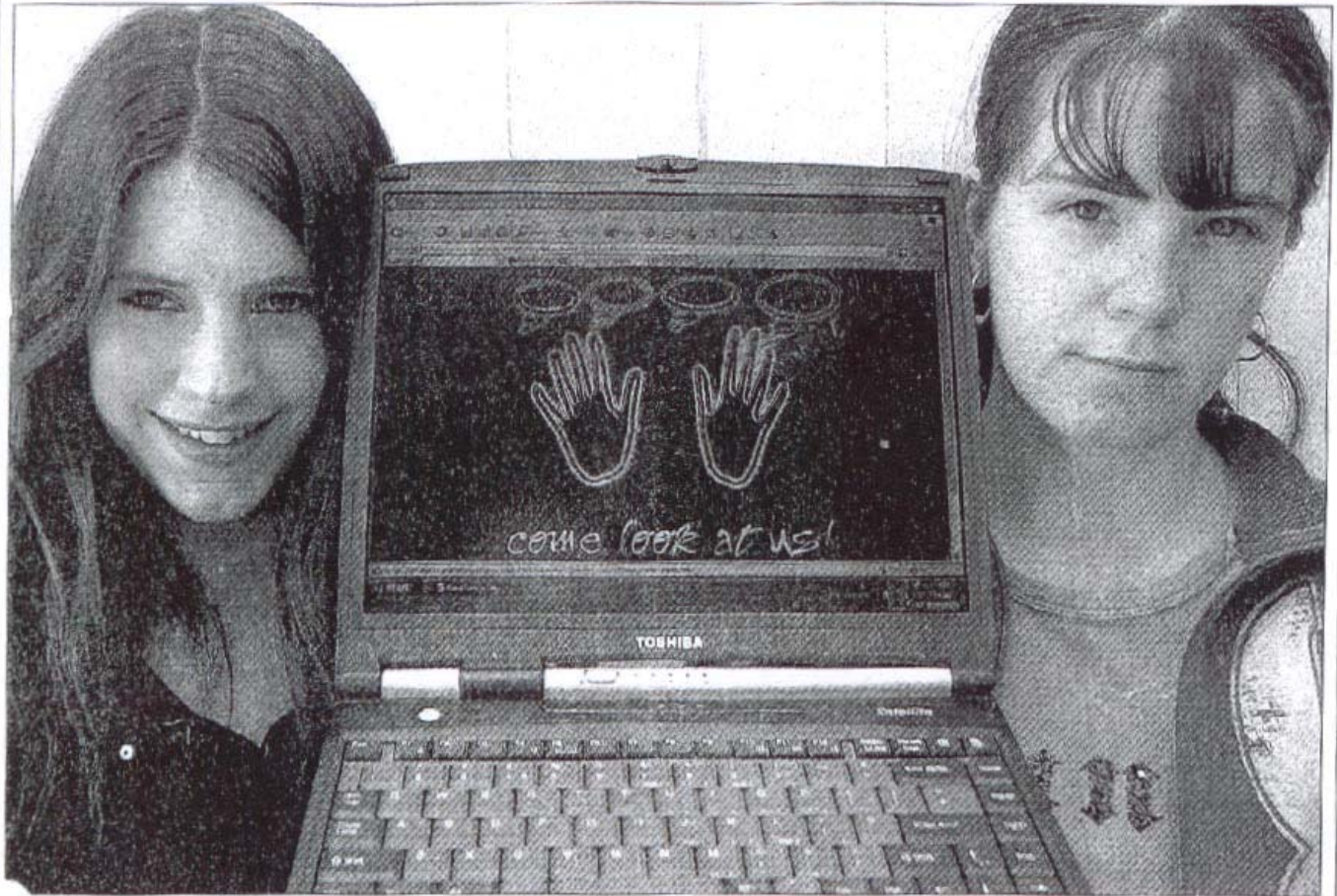


Young travellers give insight into their world



Triona Allan, left, and Valerie Whyte, who helped create the website for travelling people

by Sarah Bruce

A GROUP of young travelling people from across the Highlands and elsewhere in Scotland have set up a website to explain what their community is about.

With the help of project funding, the five teenagers decided to try to narrow the huge gulf in understanding between gypsies and travelling people and the communities they move into.

'Come Look At Us' is the fruits of seven months of hard work, offering an insight into the travelling world across Scotland – and the site also provides a meeting point for young people within the itinerant community itself.

Traveller Valerie Whyte, 18, had never lived in one place for as long as two years until her family moved to Wick in 2001. She is completely autodidactic – never having attended a mainstream school – and now attends Thurso College, where she plans to sit her Highers next session.

Valerie said: "We hope the website will show people what we do – it should particularly help other young people to understand our lifestyle a bit better."

She also hopes that, by relaying their experiences on to the site, the team will encourage other travelling children and teenagers to get on in life.

She added: "I got into

Thurso College, and did an art course for one year. It was a bit weird at first, to have a teacher leaning over me and telling what to do – but I got used to it.

"I hope the website will show other travelling people what we've done, and make it easier for us all to keep in touch."

Triona Allan, 17, who lives on Skye, was also a member of the project group, and explained why she got involved.

She said: "The site tells people all about the different kinds of travellers, their problems and cultures. I like helping, and I like doing anything that's extra-curricular and could be fun."

Also involved in the project

were Inverness 15-year-old Lizanne Magrory, Joe Townsley, 14, and 16-year-old Lisa Devers, both from Perth.

The project was made possible by funding from the Chase Millennium Award project, part of the Scottish Communities Fund.

Chase mentor Kate Powell said: "The point of the project was to try to dispel the stigma that's attached to travelling people. They're just living ordinary lives and getting on with things." The group was also helped with more technical matters by Tammy Furey, who undertook many trips from Brighton to the North as part of the project.

Visit Valerie, Triona and co at www.comelookatus.org.