

# Travellers' TIMES

The only magazine for Gypsies and Travellers

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## Food, fire and family

The Gypsy Chef Tom Ewer on what drives him to create his unique dishes

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Could new law destroy a traditional way of life?

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Unique portraits of visitors to Appleby Fair

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Travellers' Times is the national magazine for Gypsies and Travellers, and people and organisations who work with them. We are guided by our editorial group and strive for accuracy and fairness.

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# No cash for scrap: what does it mean for Travellers?



PHOTO: Nathan Kesinger. [www.nathankesinger.com](http://www.nathankesinger.com)

**Concern that even more changes to scrap metal laws could destroy the traditional Gypsy "rag-and-bone" man's trade**

3RD DECEMBER 2012 saw the end of cash-in-hand payments at scrap metal yards across England and Wales.

But it doesn't stop there. Offences related to scrap metal theft will now get harsher sentences than they did under the old law.

The increased punishments are covered in the new Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012, which makes changes to the old 1964 Scrap Metal Dealers Act.

It appears some of these changes target Travellers specifically. An "itinerant collector failing to keep receipts" will now face a level 5 fine of up to £5,000 under Section 145 of the new Act.

"These amendments are part of our wider attempts to tackle all stages in the illegal trading of stolen scrap metal, and we shall bring forward further measures in due course," the Home Secretary, Theresa May, has said.

The coalition has stressed that the changes are needed to tackle the rise in scrap metal theft, which the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) has estimated costs the UK economy up to £770 million per year.

Little has been said about how the changes could affect the legitimate "rag and bone" trade. This traditional, door-to-door recycling service, in which Gypsies and Travellers have played a huge part, has been kept in families

since the days of the "general dealer" with their horse and flat cart.

In theory, "itinerant collectors" should still be able to receive cash payments.

But any Traveller wishing to do so will have to register with the local authority and obtain a special order under Section 3 (1) of the Scrap Metal Dealers Act.

"In other words, any Gypsy rag-and-bone man going door to door calling for scrap can no longer do so unless he is registered," said Michael Smith of Tatchipen Media.

"If that registration is similar to the one for the Hawker's License then many will have to give up their trade."

The government's moves could "destroy the businesses of the Gypsy scrap metal collectors and dealers," added Michael. You can read his full assessment at [greenreview.blogspot.co.uk](http://greenreview.blogspot.co.uk)

Simon Ripley, director of H Ripley & Co scrap dealers, is unsure how much the changes will achieve. "Unscrupulous people have been buying stolen metal for years and will continue to do so," he told the BBC.

"A great deal of theft happens from scrap yards themselves.

"We think this is all about raising revenue for the tax man," said Mr Ripley.

The government has also set out "proposals to repeal the 1964 Act altogether and replace it with a new regime to regulate the scrap metal trade", which could come into force this year.

## Thank you Jane!

**TT would like to say a massive thank you to Jane Jackson for leading Travellers' Times over the past 14 years. Jane will still be keeping a keen eye on TT and is looking forward to staying involved with its development in the future. Jane's passion for Gypsy and Traveller rights has seen her working with Romany people and Travellers all over the UK and Europe and is an inspiration to her friends and colleagues. "Te aves bakhtali Jane! And bute kushti bok!"**



PHOTO: Joel Munson

# Equal rights for Travellers in trailers, says Welsh government

- Councils will have to “explain why a Gypsy should be evicted”
- Wales to catch up with England, where security of tenure now exists

THE WELSH GOVERNMENT has outlined plans to make sure Gypsies and Travellers living in mobile homes get the same protection from eviction as house-dwellers.

The Welsh Assembly’s Finance Minister Jane Hutt, who is also responsible for equalities, has said “We want to change the law in Wales to make sure that Gypsies and Travellers are protected from unfair eviction from their home.

“We plan to make councils fully explain to the court why they think a Gypsy or Traveller should be evicted from one of their sites. If the court disagrees, the family won’t be evicted.

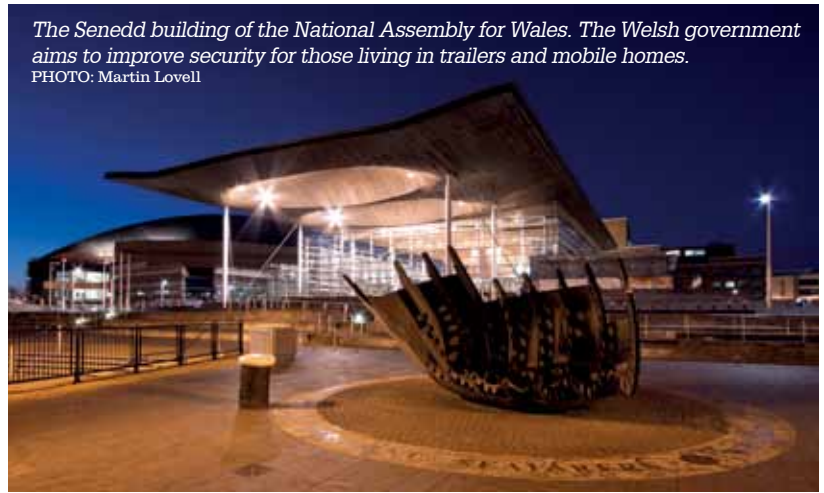
“We are also making sure that councils are able to manage sites well, so that everyone who lives on these sites is treated fairly,” Jane Hutt said.

A public consultation on the new plans has

been released and will remain open until the end of March this year.

The 1983 Mobile Homes Act was amended in 2011 to give full security of tenure to residents of local authority-run Gypsy and Traveller sites.

However, the changes did not apply to Wales, where Travellers can still be evicted from council pitches at 28 days’ notice.



The Senedd building of the National Assembly for Wales. The Welsh government aims to improve security for those living in trailers and mobile homes. PHOTO: Martin Lovell

# The trailers of Gloucester: county’s Travellers and planners to discuss ways forward

By Nettie Edwards

WITH A NEW Needs Assessment for Gloucestershire due out in April, Travellers, planners and other stakeholders met at the county’s historic Folk Museum to discuss ways forward.

The event was organised by independent consultants Peter Brett Associates. PBA acknowledged past frustrations on all sides of the debate, but see their involvement as a positive, new beginning which is working elsewhere in England.

The workshop did not set out to identify specific land for sites, but looked at the sorts of “broad locations” planners might consider, and how they are affected by Travellers’ work and lifestyles.

Topics discussed included schools, health provision, transport, shopping and the difficulty of finding suitable, affordable land in rural areas.

Those in attendance stressed the importance of trust, and of actively involving even more



PHOTO: Nettie Edwards

Gypsies, Travellers and Showpeople in consultations.

PBA planning consultant Sharon Jefferies said: “As we don’t know what the findings of April’s needs assessment will be, our starting point must be that currently, the need for provision is not being met”.

## DIARY DATES *For more info visit the Travellers’ Times website and click on the “Events” tab*

- 10th March** Langley Fair & Drive
- 31st March** Lynnmouth Drive, Newcastle under Lyme
- 1st April** Selby Fair (held at the Cattle market in Yorkshire: used to be in Holmfirth but it’s moved)
- 7th April** Nottingly Fair & Drive
- 14th April** Dick Smith Show-out Day
- 28th April** Kenilworth
- 9th May** Stow Fair
- 20th May** Wickham Fair



PHOTO: Alison Chapman

## Update on plans for new sites

### NORTH EAST

- The Haven site at South Bank, Redcar & Cleveland, is in line to receive £860,000 worth of improvement work. The site will get five new pitches (for a total of 18); eight existing amenity blocks will be demolished, and nine new and improved ones will be built.

### YORKSHIRE & THE HUMBER

- Plans for a new site off the M62 near Stanley, Wakefield, have been shelved after protests from locals. Local councillor Jacqui Williams (Labour) said she was worried "Travellers from other areas" would be drawn to the site. Elizabeth Spaven, representing the landowners, told the planning committee: "We want to be part of the community and get along with people but also maintain our own culture and live the way we choose."



Sir Peter Soulsby

### EAST MIDLANDS

- Work is set to start on two new sites in Leicester after the city Mayor, Sir Peter Soulsby, saw off a challenge from fellow Labour politicians. The new sites will be at Red Hill Way, Mowmacre Hill; and Greengate Lane, Beaumont Leys. Paul Westley, Labour's councillor for the Beaumont Leys ward, said the plan was "totally unacceptable" and that the proposed site, due to contain only 6 pitches, had "too many plots". The Mayor himself told the Leicester Mercury: "I am glad the council has endorsed my decision".

### WEST MIDLANDS

- A group of villagers that have been protesting since 2010 against the development of a private site at Eaves Green Lane, Meriden, were pictured in the January snow smiling and holding aloft a banner that read "1,000 days protecting the green belt!" They had previously set up a protest camp near the site, which was found to be in breach of planning regulations and ordered to be taken down last year. A retrospective planning application for the shelter was rejected.



PHOTO: Darran Le Bas

### EAST

- Work on a new site at Meadow Lane in Bedford has been delayed due to drainage issues. "I am frustrated by the delays but our officers are working with the Environment Agency to solve the matter," said local Mayor Dave Hodgson.
- South Cambridgeshire District Council has scrapped plans to re-open the site at Mettle Hill, Meldreth, which was closed in 1996. The local parish council plans to buy the site, which it says "had a history of trouble."

### SOUTH EAST

- Surrey: A "protected group of Gypsies and Travelling people" residing in the village of Capel have served Mole Valley District Council with a Notice of Intended Prosecution for failing to comply with its Public Sector Equalities Duty and provide enough sites. "We are known in Sussex for our good work securing derelict buildings and land which are at risk from robbers," said Christine Alleyn, representing the Travellers. Local councillor Vivienne Michael (Conservative) said: "Mole Valley District Council has not issued any legal notices to the travellers at this property. MVDC does have a duty of care to the travellers and an environmental health officer has visited the site to ensure those living there are safe."
- Planners have approved the £1.4m upgrade of Twyford Orchard site in Twyford, Berkshire. The government agreed that Wokingham Borough Council should be able to allowed to expand the site onto greenbelt land due to "exceptional circumstances".
- White Horse District Council has given the go-ahead for a new 16-pitch site next to the A420 at Watchfield in Oxfordshire.



### "Here's looking at 'igloo', kid!"

THE PRICE FAMILY enjoying the snow back in January at their place in Staffordshire. In parts of the county, snow was falling more than 50% of the time between January 18th and 25th.



A demonstration against racism organized by Hungary's Democratic Coalition (DK), Budapest, January 13th . Hundreds gathered outside the headquarters of Zsolt Bayer's ruling Fidesz party. PHOTO: Attila Kisbenedek/AFP/Getty Images

## Anti-Gypsy politician expelled from Hungary's ruling party

A founding member of Hungary's ruling Fidesz party has been expelled from the organisation after writing a newspaper opinion piece in which he referred to Romani people as "f\*\*\*ing Gypsy animals".

ZSOLT BAYER, who currently holds no political office but enjoys a high profile in Hungary's right-wing media, wrote the piece with reference to a night-club brawl on New Year's Eve in which one of the alleged assailants was a young Romani man.

Bayer's column appeared in the 5th January edition of the newspaper Magyar Hirlap (Hungarian News). It stated that "a

significant part of the Roma is not suitable for coexistence", and that Romani people are "animals" with "animal behaviour".

"I do not need to tolerate and understand, but to have revenge," he wrote. He also attacked so-called "b\*\*\*\*ards" and "politically correct idiots of the Western world" who try to uphold Roma rights.

The National Forum of Hungarian Roma told journalists that it planned to file a

criminal complaint against Bayer, whose article was widely seen as an incitement to racial hatred.

Hungary's Deputy Prime Minister, Tibor Navracsics, told the TV station ATV that "there is no room in Fidesz for people who consider groups of people to be animals."

Bayer, a 49-year-old native of Budapest, served as head of press for the Fidesz party during the early 1990s.

## Romanies in Europe for 1,500 years, says DNA study

A STUDY DONE by 22 experts on genetics has found that the ancestors of Europe's Romanies arrived in Europe around 1,500 years ago - which is much further back in time than previously thought.

Evidence from 13 different groups of Romanies - living as far apart as Estonia and Portugal - has shown that regardless of where they now live, their ancestors arrived in the Balkans around 500 AD, not long after the fall of the western Roman Empire.

"We can see that they arrived in one single wave from the north-west of India around 1,500 years ago", said researcher David Comas, as reported by the Guardian newspaper. Scholars had thought the first

Romanies left India around the year 1000 AD.

The new study looked at distinctive Romani genes, called haplotypes. Its results were published last month in the journal Current Biology.

Over the centuries it has been believed that Romanies either came from Egypt - the source of the name "Gypsies" - or the Holy Land, or even from the surface of the moon.

In the 18th century, scholars looking at the Indian roots of the Romani language realised that the first Romanies came from what is now northern India.

Europe's Romanies, who may number 11 million, are the continent's largest ethnic minority group.



Respect your elders: a Romani woman stands by her home in Cluj, Romania. PHOTO: Alison Chapman

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## Dear Violet...

I'm a 13-year-old travelling boy and my favourite thing to do is draw pictures. I'm at school with my brother and I love art class the best.

I wanted to stay in school, learn how to paint pictures and maybe even go to college and try and become good enough to earn my living from being an artist. I've learned how to draw very well and the teacher says I could be a professional.

My dad wants me to leave school this year to go to work with him. What should I do to try and convince my dad to let me stay?

## Dear Artistic in Aylesbury...

Congratulations on finding a passion. I would love to see some of your drawings, please send some into us.

More and more Gypsy and Traveller young people are staying in mainstream education and pursuing professions which do not conform to our stereotypes. But who wants to be a stereotype?

In his mind, your dad just wants to make sure you can provide for yourself, and being an artist is a new thing to him.

How about you start by saying you will still learn your family business and are willing to not narrow yourself down to just one possibility?

I would also show him some of your work and tell him what your teacher has said.

Think about other professions, too. Being good at art doesn't restrict you to being an artist.

Drawing skills can develop into such areas as graphic design, illustration or lining out and painting wagons and carts.

Whatever you do make sure you don't pigeonhole yourself. Keep your horizons open and put as much passion into your other lessons.

A well rounded education will open many doors for you. And if you have the aptitude for learning and a real love for it, I am sure you will be able to convince your dad.

Here's a competition for young artists that you might want to submit work to.

<http://www.thenationalopenartcompetition.com/how-to-enter.php>

and a forum you might want to join. <http://www.youth-arts-forum.com/>

Artistic in Aylesbury

If you need some advice, get in touch with Violet at: Cannon's Counsel, Travellers' Times, Sullivan House, 72-80 Widemarsh Street, Hereford HR4 9HG

# Big Survey 2012

A big thanks to all who took part!

By Jane Jackson

Thanks to the hundreds of our readers who answered the 2012 TT Big Survey, we've learned a lot about the Gypsies and Travellers, and others besides, who read Travellers' Times.



### IT KEEPS RIGHT ON A-HURTIN'

Almost everyone (89%) agreed that they'd actually experienced racial prejudice or discrimination. 93% said they don't get a fair press, so they need Travellers' Times to give them a voice and tell them what's happening in the community.

### HEARD IT ON THE GRAPEVINE

9 out of 10 of readers come to Travellers' Times magazine and website for the community news and information, and most like to share it with their friends and family. **INFORMATION SUPERHIGHWAY**

In the past few years, more and more Travellers have cottoned on to the internet: three quarters are now online, the same as the rest of the population.

### FACEBOOK'S THE PLACE

Gypsies, Roma and Travellers are even more likely to be Facebook users than non-Travellers! And nearly half of them use the internet on their mobile 'phone.

### HELP YOURSELVES!

About a third of TT's readers are non-Travellers: people who work with Travellers in areas like Education, Health and Housing. But of the 234 professionals who told us about their work with Gypsy and Traveller people, nearly half are Travellers themselves.



### HERE COMES EVERYBODY

We asked our Traveller readers how they'd describe themselves: Most, 53%, said they were Roman, 24% Mixed/part Gypsy or Travellers, 8% Irish Traveller, 7% New Traveller, 3% Welsh Traveller, 2% Scottish Traveller, 2% Show Person, and 1% Roma.

### THE WORD FROM YOUR WORLD: QUOTES FROM OUR READERS

"TT is the only news about our community - it makes us feel counted and shows our culture will always exist."

"Because non-Gypsies read it, it helps them value and understand our community."

"With TT we have a useful resource to share with others - to educate, to gain support, to show respect and to honour an ancient and valuable culture."



## The Travellers rule the waves: defending our culture on the air and in the press

THE TRAVELLING VOICES project moved into a new phase during the winter as four of our hard-working advocates met up at TT headquarters to try out new equipment and trade ideas about defending their community.

Johanna Price, Laura Marshall, Patricia Knight and Chrissy Alleyn, who had already done basic media skills training on the Travelling Voices course, met the Travellers' Times team at the Rural Media Company offices in Hereford. They looked at how the magazine is put together, from jottings on a whiteboard to shiny colour print, and how Travellers' Times Online has taken TT forward

into the age of the internet. The four also got advice from experienced journalist Christina Maclean on how to deal with tough interview questions and reporters who might want to give Travellers a hard time. Using an iPad and nothing else, they worked together to make a short film in one afternoon, and Johanna and Laura ruled the waves when they went live on air for the first time on BBC Radio Hereford & Worcester to talk about their culture.

It was an "inspiring and positive experience," said Laura, whose piece on Travellers and animals features on p11 of this issue of TT. Chrissy learnt how to construct

a movie "from start to finish" on an iPad. Patricia said the course made her "feel like a valued member of the Gypsy and Traveller community." Johanna said the training "has helped me develop advocacy skills by telling the truth about our people."

**If you're interested in learning media skills with the Travellers' Times team, then call the Rural Media Company on 01432 344039 and ask to speak to Shanterlena, or email [shanterlenak@ruralmedia.co.uk](mailto:shanterlenak@ruralmedia.co.uk)**



PHOTOS: Alison Chapman



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Tom pictured with wife Abi and children Savanna and Tomboy Smith.  
PHOTO: Alison Chapman

# Crown Derby prizewinner Tom says "It'll keep the missus quiet!"

Travellers' Times is pleased to announce the winner of its exclusive hand-painted Old Imari Sold Gold Band fruit basket, courtesy of makers Royal Crown Derby.

Entrants had to say in one sentence why they wanted to win the prize. The winning entry was Tom Smith from Bredon near Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, who said "It'll keep the missus quiet!"

Tom was pleased as punch with his prize. "I've never won a competition before in my life!" said Tom.

## Goodbye Emma

**TRAVELLERS' TIMES BIDS a fond farewell to Emma Johnson, who has been working for us as an editorial assistant since 2011. Emma is a proud Romany Traveller who has been a great asset to TT and its publishers the Rural Media Company over the past couple of years.**

**She is moving on to a career in hospitality management where she has a bright future ahead of her. All the staff at TT would like to wish her all the best, as we're sure our readers do too!**

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# “Good Enough For You?”

“HIDDEN AWAY BEHIND flyovers, railway tracks, high brick walls and national grid pylons, communities of Gypsies and Travellers are to be found,” says Sophie Brocks.

Sophie is a photographer whose project “*Good Enough For You?*” worked with Gypsy and Traveller women to take their picture in their own place, rather than a place chosen by the photographer.

“My intention was to give these women a vehicle to construct

their own self-portraits while instilling a sense of pride in their own identity,” said Sophie.

“The title “*Good Enough For You?*” echoes a phrase frequently asked of me by the women when working on the shoots,” she said.

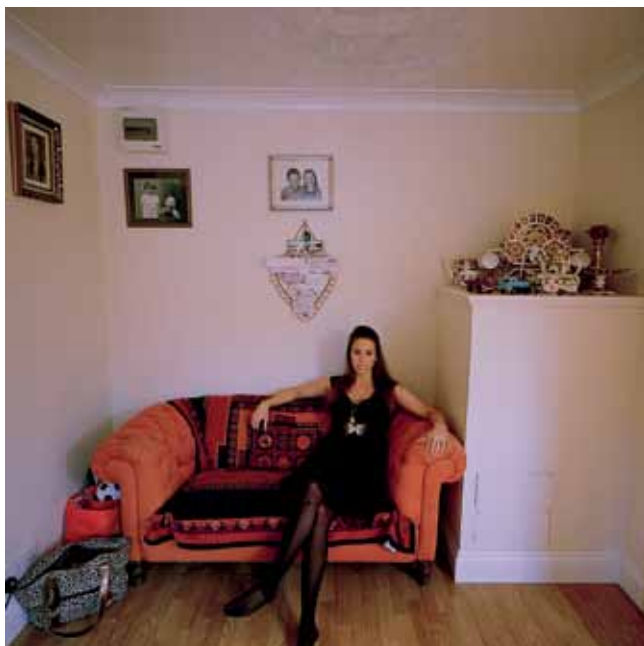
“This is a much needed break away from the dictatorial approach most people from the ‘outside’ take when wanting to take photos of the community,” said Delaine Le Bas, who took part in the project.



Ella-Rose



Ivy



Candis



Tracey

# Travellers and animals: fighting back against ignorance

By Laura Marshall

IN THE BEGINNING the first tribes of man closely observed animals who taught them a lot about survival, hunting, shelter, finding water sources and plants for eating and healing.

Without the kingdom of animals our world would be nothing.

My people still observe animal behaviour today, watching for signs and omens. Some Travellers I have known are horse whisperers and even animal healers. They know how to take care of their animals and do so with love and joy.

Because of the damage man is doing to the environment, many animals are acting out of character, showing us that we must act to save the forests, and fight for animals' right to live freely just like we fight for our own freedom. Travellers are among the last of a few tribes around the world struggling to live freely today but sadly so many have now been forced into houses liked caged animals.

I know Travellers who rescue animals working with the RSPCA. Many speak out and support animal rights and do not like animal-tested products, cock or dog fighting or cruelty of any sort. It is not as one-sided as TV shows like *Gypsy Blood* would have you believe.

The most important animal to a Traveller was and still is the grai, or horse. Without the grai and its willingness to serve, pulling our wagons and carts, Travellers would never have been able to travel the great distances and carry the loads

that they did. The horse is an honoured and highly prized animal for Travellers, and the relationship between the horse and its rider is a very special bond indeed.

Another sacred animal to a Traveller is the juckal or dog, man's best friend. The dog signals a warning of approaching danger and guards the trailers, homes and children. Their gift to us is unlimited love and loyalty, characteristics that Travellers themselves value in their families.

The sushi, or rabbit, is another sacred animal to the Traveller, often eaten in a stew. Many Travellers I know that eat meat give thanks for the animal that has died so we might live. That is the old way of many tribes that is still just as important today, and many Travellers are even vegetarian because they love animals so much.



PHOTO: Alison Chapman

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## Pupils celebrate heritage

PUPILS FROM PEMBROKE Comprehensive School in Wales had a fantastic opportunity to celebrate their heritage when they attended a Gypsy Convention in Cardiff. Ryan Jones, Liam Evans, Leon Hughes, William Price, Chloe Dilworth, Angelina McDonagh, Jessica Jones and Courtney Jones were accompanied by Gypsy teacher Miss Probert and they even met ex-Welsh rugby player Scott Quinnell on the way!

The students enjoyed catching up with friends and family whilst enjoying the singing, dancing and storytelling by Gypsies from across Wales.

When the kids are back in school they enjoy having extra lessons on Gypsy culture with Miss Probert who attended the school herself.

Alan Bowen, head of PSE and Careers, said: "It was a great day out and the pupils were a credit to the school and their families."



*Pembroke Comprehensive School Gypsy Convention*

## Ever wondered the importance of learning first aid?

WELL ROSEMARY BIRMINGHAM aged 17 from Warwickshire knows exactly how vital it is after her younger sister Francesca started choking on a hard-boiled sweet.

Rosemary and Francesca were on their way home from a local shop when Francesca started choking on a lollipop that came off the stick and flew into the back of her throat, leaving her gasping for air.

Luckily enough, Rosemary had completed a first aid training session run by The British Red Cross and immediately started giving her sister back blows and on the third blow the sweet came out and little Francesca started to breathe again.

Remembering the incident Rosemary said: "If I hadn't known what

to do I wouldn't have made it back to the site in time to get help. We were on a country road where there were no houses and no way could I have carried Francesca back on my own. I was so relieved when the lollipop came out."

Peter Bayley-Bligh, a coordinator who taught the session on the site where Rosemary lives said: "It goes to show that a little bit of first aid knowledge saves lives. I'm chuffed to bits that the training helped Rosemary and her family."

If you would like to find out about first aid training for your community please email [infotraining@redcross.org.uk](mailto:infotraining@redcross.org.uk) or visit [redcross.org.uk/firstaid](http://redcross.org.uk/firstaid).



*Lucky Francesca Birmingham*

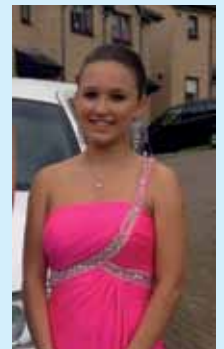
## A degree of success

YOUNG TIMES SENDS huge congratulations to seventeen-year-old Melissa Beckett from Scotland who has been offered a conditional place at Glasgow Caledonian University.

Melissa is preparing to study Accountancy with the ambition that once qualified she'll secure a job as an accountant.

Her dad Gary said: "Melissa is really excited about being given the offer and will continue to work at her best to achieve the grades she needs."

Everyone from Travellers' Times wishes her good luck!



*Melissa Beckett*



Ready to learn in their new learning bus

## All aboard and learn!

LINCOLNSHIRE TRAVELLER INITIATIVE has a unique way of delivering its services to the Gypsy and Traveller community thanks to a funding grant from The Clothworkers' Foundation which has paid for a new minibus.

The minibus, which has been transformed into a mobile learning bus, now enables its staff to visit sites in the county. It offers new learning opportunities and helps members gain

access to a range of learning courses from different training providers.

Paul Boucher, of the Lincolnshire Traveller Initiative, said: "You can imagine how pleased we were to receive the offer letter.

We worked hard consulting the Traveller community about their learning needs and now we can take to the road ensuring they get easier access to our services."

## Promoting their community with new DVD

A BIG WELL-DONE to a group of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children from Worcestershire who have produced a new DVD which promotes greater understanding of their community.

Vicky Smith, Teagan Hodgkins, Jade Smith and Liam White were some of the kids who took part in the making of the DVD with the assistance of the GRT Education Team and Romany journalist Jake Bowers.

Kay Poole, head of the GRT education team, said: "The young people that worked with us on this project were amazing. They were willing to discuss the changes that have taken place and also willing to discuss rationally some of their own experiences as young Travellers growing up in Worcestershire."

**To get hold of a copy call 01905 766609 or email [kpoo1@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:kpoo1@worcestershire.gov.uk).**



Jade Smith (16), Teagan Hodgkins (12), Vicky Smith (15) and Liam White (11).  
PHOTO: Shanterlena Knowles

# The Wagon

by Cindy Upton

**T**he wagon stood in the corner of the garden, overgrown and neglected. No one had set foot in it since Rebecca.

Her body was found by a friend. Rebecca had wanted to sleep in the wagon and had made a fire in the little stove in the corner. It must have gone out in the early hours of the morning, and she had died of the cold.

Years earlier, a Gypsy woman had sold it to her, and she had used it as her studio. She could paint so much better when she was sat in the wagon.

Hearing the faint sound of a violin made her relax. People said it was her imagination but she knew it was real.

The Gypsy woman had told Rebecca about her father, Bill: how he played the violin as his grandchildren danced on the wagon's steps.

Rebecca's son John hadn't been back to the house since his mother's funeral. The thing he was looking forward to seeing the most was the wagon. He had spent many happy hours

in there with his mother, watching her paint, listening to the violin. He could hear it too.

Walking past the apple trees and seeing the wagon made him catch his breath. The trees were full of blossom but their branches were overgrown, and the wagon was covered in ivy and nettles. Overhanging branches had dropped their fruit onto the roof and rotted it away.

He ripped away the nettles: they stung his arms but he didn't care. How could he have left it so long to return? His mother loved this special place.

As he opened the door the old wagon seemed to welcome him in. He went and sat on the bed at the back where he had slept on summer nights. He could see that his mother had started a painting before she had died. He would finish it.

He looked in the drawer where he knew there would be the photo of the old man standing proudly near his wagon.

He had loved the wagon like his mother had. It had finally taken her home. Only John



*Bill Chapman, proudly standing by his wagon*

knew his mother was a Gypsy, and that this was where he got his travelling bug from.

The wagon stood proudly in the garden once more, and when John moved back in the house, his children loved it as he did.

Bill looked down and smiled. He played his violin and the children danced. He was happy.

## The Travellers Advice Team at Community Law Partnership

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**BritishRedCross**

## Circles Project

The British Red Cross Circles project provides floating housing related-support and assistance to the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities living in Birmingham. For more information contact

Tel: **0121 772 7340**

Email **vwilliams@redcross.org.uk**



**To advertise in Travellers' Times, call Jan on 01432 344039 or visit [www.travellerstimes.org.uk](http://www.travellerstimes.org.uk)**

# Drummer Jack *PART TWO*

by Stephen Adams

**Last issue, we followed the story of Jack, a young Gypsy boy who left his family behind at the end of the 19th Century and sailed away to fight in Africa with the Durham Light Infantry. We left Jack on his way to Sunderland harbour, and here's how his tale concludes...**

The ships looked bigger than any house he'd ever seen. Sailors scampered on the rigging like spiders on their webs: it took his breath away to see such speed so high up, amongst the mass of timber and ropes.

As the boys walked up the gangplank they were given a bed-rolled hammock then taken down below to a long, dark and damp room. It took him over a week to get used to sleeping in a hammock. He'd never even seen one before.

During the two months they were at sea some boys learned the bugle; Jack was put with the drums. They would drum their messages day and night until their hands were raw and bleeding. Bound up in salt water rags, they drummed some more. The drum major was not satisfied until they could send and receive any messages faultlessly. They practised during meals, when woken from sleep, and especially during action drills or cannon firing practise.

At last they were marched inland, arriving just in time for the battle of Spion Kop. Jack had drummed his messages, covering behind whatever shelter he could find, rock or tree, often a fallen man. He only marched with the line because the fear his own officers instilled in him was greater than his fear of the enemy.

During the battle, hot stifling air forced Jack to breathe in heavily and swallow the stink of fear. He never forgot the smell of fear, blood and guts. Rocks exploded. Rifles fired. Bodies collapsed and someone's friend died. Bit by bit, so did he.

Then there was the noise. Men screaming like cats; shouted orders; bugles and drums all drowned out when the guns roared and cannons exploded. Then it would stop, and hours of terror would be followed by weeks of boredom. Jack never quite decided which was worse, the battle or the waiting. One thing he was certain of, though, was that there never seemed to be an end to it. Even when it was over it still lived on, in his head were constant unwelcome thoughts and memories. Dark places. Evil times.

The first man he'd killed had been unexpected. The battle was over. He'd come out onto the field to see what he could

scavenge. The corporal grabbed him by the collar and dragged him over to an assortment of bodies lying beside the pile of stones they'd been fighting around. One man was groaning, claspings his stomach. The corporal had given Jack the soldier's pistol.

"Put him out of his misery, lad!" he barked.

Jack stood and looked down at the enemy, suddenly aware of the man, a person close and real. He couldn't do it. The longer he looked at the man the worse it became: he turned and begged the corporal to let him go.

"It's time you became a man," he'd said as he pulled his own pistol from his waistband and pointed it unwaveringly. The glint of madness unmistakable in his stare, Jack was in no doubt his life was in the balance. Making his choice, Jack looked quickly into the man's eyes, mouthed a true "Sorry" then shut his eyes tight. It got easier, but not much.

When in the camps he'd tried to stick with his mates: When they got a chance they would find their way to the edge of the camp and set up their own tents, under the shelter were mattresses of piled sand covered with coats, horse hessian or canvas, anything they could find.

He'd lost his innocence there, what was left of it. A tall, dark faced, kitchen maid had cornered him. She'd smelt of stale grease and smiled with a half empty mouth. They were just chatting at first: she was at least thrice his age and he'd been flattered at the attention. Then she'd reached out and grabbed him, pulling him in as if to eat him. He'd found another distraction to ease his mind.

His closest friend was Robbie Carpenter, from Errol. They'd immediately hit it off, being of the same build and temperament, smokers and beer swiggers, they'd found a brotherly affection. Robbie was short, squat and a true red headed Scot.

They bunked together and looked out for each other. They were put in adjoining sections of the troop and practised their own brand of shorthand drumming. Their accurate and quick messaging earned them much praise and extra booty from the men whose lives they saved.

It was a full two years later, just a month before his 15th birthday, that Jack returned to English shores. Jack and Robbie made their way by cargo ship, cart and foot back to Northumberland and a warm welcome, Robbie carried on north to his beloved Scotland, never to be seen or heard of again.



# *Family Album* SNAPSHOTS OF YOUR LIFE

## The Sykes family's Midland memories



*Joe Toogood  
at Belton Fair,  
Leicestershire,  
mid 1950s*



*Wedding of Ted and Betty Sykes, 1971*



*Clem Sykes and family at Brigg Fair, 1959*





Sally Sykes standing in a wagon, with two friends Fred and Pearl Holmes (Appleby 1968)



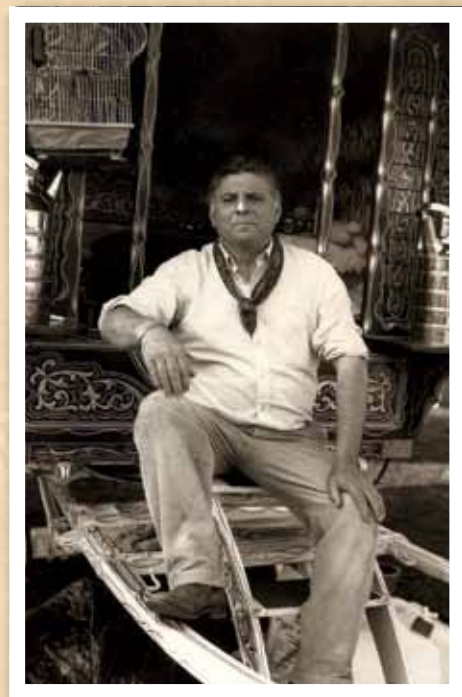
Clem Sykes and son Clem



Teddy Sykes and Wissy Smith 1967



John Sykes and Tom Harker, Bourne Lincolnshire 1950s



Ted Sykes



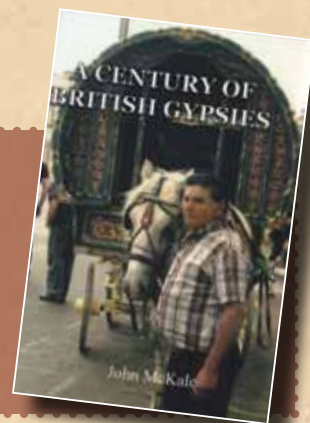
On the way home from Loughborough Fair. The Sykes family travelling through Leicester city centre

A special thanks from Travellers' Times to the Sykes family and their relations for this selection of their wonderful family photographs, including some which go back to the 1950s at Belton and Brigg fairs.

Thanks also to John McKale, in whose latest book, **A Century of British Gypsies**, you'll find these pictures and many, many more besides.

John says: "This is my fourth book and will be of great interest to all who are part of the Romany and travelling culture."

"Call 07769 660194 or search on Amazon to order any of my books," says John.



Have you any photos to share from your Family Album? Get in touch with us on **01432 344039**

**SPECIAL REPORT**

# It's never too late to give up smoking



In spite of the well-known risks, most Gypsies and Travellers still smoke, but if you want to give up you don't have to go it alone, says *Lizzie Isaacs*

WHEN I WAS invited to an NHS stop smoking course I did wonder if it would be of any use to me as I have always been a non-smoker.

I do, however, have lots of relatives and friends who are long-term smokers and, sadly, I do know lots who have suffered with cancer. So I decided I would go along and see if I could, in turn, help someone else.

We can all see the warnings on packets of cigarettes telling us that "smoking kills," but it doesn't really tell us how or why. On the course they gave us a list of about 24 ingredients, excluding tobacco, that go into cigarettes. I found it sickening to think what people are happily putting into their bodies without even knowing it.

What struck me most was that we, at the Plymouth and Devon Racial Equality Council, have recently made a film about the Gypsies who died in the Holocaust and how cyanide gas was used in the gas chambers: I learnt on the course that cyanide is one of the ingredients in cigarettes. The people in the gas chambers didn't have a choice but we do.

The Department of Health says that our (Gypsies and Travellers) health is worse than any other disadvantaged group in the UK so I think it is about time we started taking control of our own health to try to improve those statistics.

If you smoke you stand a much higher risk of developing cancer. We saw a true but very sad and scary film about a man who deteriorated so fast once he had developed cancer leaving a young family behind

With the right support, even long-term smokers can give up. And the benefits far outweigh the hardship.

Just two days after stopping smoking, your body will be free of nicotine. After two to twelve weeks your circulation improves, and after three to nine months wheezing and breathing improves too. Once you have quit for a year then the risk of a heart attack is half that of a smoker.

As well as the health benefits, there are financial ones, too. If you smoke 40 a day for a year then you will spend over £5000, so think of all the money you can save just by quitting. After 10 years you will have saved over £50,000. I should think that alone would be a good incentive for some.

If you would like to give up smoking don't go it alone as it works much better if you get help from those who understand. The NHS Stop Smoking Services are there for you, to help you through the tough times or whatever triggers the need to smoke and to give you the all the support you will need to be a successful "quitter".

Sometimes as Gypsies or Travellers we think that services like these are there just

for the Gorja, but that is not true. The NHS trained staff are committed to helping us all: call them on 0800 022 4332 to speak to a specially trained advisor who can tell you about your local Stop Smoking service. Information is also available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) or [www.smokefree.nhs.uk](http://www.smokefree.nhs.uk).

**For more information on courses like the one Lizzie attended please contact Penny Dane at Health Promotion Devon 07979 838138 or email [p.dane@nhs.net](mailto:p.dane@nhs.net)**



*Lizzie Isaacs*

# Red Cross training's the 'kiss of life' for Gypsy and Traveller health

By Mike Doherty

HERTFORDSHIRE Gypsy And Traveller Empowerment (GATE) is helping to tackle the poor health of many Gypsies and Travellers by collaborating with the British Red Cross to bring first aid training to Hertfordshire's Traveller sites.

"It's important that Travellers know what to do in an emergency," says Josephine O'Driscoll, who helped to set up Hertfordshire GATE and organise the first aid sessions.

Those taking part learn what to do if someone has a heart attack, how to give the kiss of life, how to deal with cuts and bruises and how to contact the emergency services to get help.

The first course took place at the Holywell site near Cheshunt and was a complete success with nine Traveller women completing the course and receiving British Red Cross First Aid certificates.

The training is for three sessions spread over three weeks. It is free and provided on site by a qualified Red Cross first aid trainer.



Josie O'Driscoll with the Red Cross Trainer. PHOTO:

PHOTO: Mike Doherty

**To find out more about first aid courses with the British Red Cross, visit [redcrossfirstaidtraining.co.uk](http://redcrossfirstaidtraining.co.uk) or call 0844 871 8000**

## "Tell Someone", say Travellers in new mental health DVD

By Mike Doherty

A GROUNDBREAKING DVD exploring mental health amongst Travellers and the discrimination that many face when trying to get treatment has been launched by the Irish Traveller Movement in Britain.

Gypsies, Travellers and professionals from all over the UK recently attended the London launch at the Tricycle Theatre in Kilburn.

The DVD, called "Tell Someone", is both for the community and for health professionals and service providers. It includes Travellers talking about their mental health and recovery, as well as interviews with health professionals and a look at how one clinic made changes to help



MECOPP Gypsy/Traveller volunteers from Scotland at the Tell Someone launch. From left to right: Lizzie Johnstone, Sophia Vale (ITMB), Corrina O'Donnell, Shannon McDonald and Fiona MacDonald

PHOTO: Mike Doherty

include Gypsies and Travellers.

Produced by Flexible Films, the film includes interviews with Thomas McCann, the Irish Traveller psychologist who runs Ireland's only dedicated Traveller counselling service; Paul Farmer, CEO of Mind; and Father Jed Barry, prison chaplain at Feltham prison.

Sophia Vale, English Traveller and Health Promotion Officer for the ITMB who features in the DVD, said: "When they are feeling low, many Gypsies and Travellers tend to bottle it up and keep their problems to themselves.

A lot of Gypsies and Travellers do not

know how to access health and mental health services, and health service providers are not always very good at accommodating them when they do.

"It was a chance to share my experience with the community about how I learnt to cope with and eventually recover from postnatal depression," she says.

"Telling someone is very therapeutic and can be the first step towards recovery."

**Copies of the DVD are available for a donation from The Irish Traveller Movement in Britain.  
Telephone: 0207 607 2002.**



Eleri Griffiths is a professional photographer based in North Wales. She was a finalist for the Welsh Artist of the Year prize in 2011.

At last year's Appleby Fair, Eleri invited Travellers on their way up and down the hill to stop and have their picture taken.

The canvas backdrop helped to let people's personalities stand out from the hustle and bustle of the biggest horse fair in the country.

Travellers' Times is proud to present a selection of these portraits.

# Appleby people



*Pretty in pink at Appleby*



*Carl and his dog*



*Billy Gaskin, Henry Gaskin and Lisa Marie Flannagan*



*Nathan Smith*



*Margaret Jane Nunney, Lucille Chatman and baby Rhianna Rose*



*George Platt*



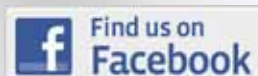
*Angeline Lee*

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## The Road

BY ANDREW LAMB

Too slow were the wagons around the corners.  
Too fragile for the tides of the falling hill  
They cast no shadow in the moon's dream of light.  
They caught no memory, when moving still.

Sounds of the country as it breaks to become free,  
The sight of trees swaying; their chimes fade with the forgotten past.  
Dust floats between the man's breath as he  
Leads the family to a place seen a year of last.

Lay-bys no longer hold vacancy for the seasons,  
For the fields that were once bathed by dirty hands  
Now hold the sight of a broken past.  
Crouching to the merciless ground, all are aching to stand.

A place where pride fell with the sun  
And dreams disappeared with the stars  
It was work, the last place winner in the race.  
Down the rows they go. All are bent, searching for the line to start.

Like a feather in the wind  
Cutting the breeze to find peace within,  
Mirrors reflect his voiceless sound.  
It's time to settle down  
Because no-one cares anymore.  
It's time to close and lock your door.

Present and familiar clocks beat the hands,  
Waiting for another minor change.  
Clouds mark the sky then fade away  
As roads grow thinner, unused throughout the days.

I can't hear the wagons roll along  
Or the horse beat the new road home.  
It's time to settle down  
Because it's all gone  
Gone without a sound

So settle down.  
They don't care anymore  
It's time to shut and lock your door  
Because the road is not the same no more.



Old days, old ways:  
Andrew Lamb's  
family in the fields



**Here's the Rev Keith Barrett proudly sporting his Traveller's Times hoodie (available from the TT online shop).**

**Keith is a retired minister with the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC), but he is now kept very busy as an itinerant preacher in Kent. He is a member of the Romany and Traveller Family History Society (RTFHS). He tells Travellers' Times about his Romany roots...**

"As a boy, I was told by my father that his mother, Elisabeth May Barrett (nee Smith) was, in fact, a 'Gypsy Smith'. Sadly, my grandmother died when my father was only a baby, so my father and I never knew her. Elisabeth May's father was Joel Smith, a bricklayer, whose family had settled in Basingstoke, Hampshire. Joel's father was William Smith, who was born in the nearby village of Old Basing.

"On my mother's side of the family, I have a distant Gypsy ancestor called Anselmo Cook, who was born in Northeath, near Winterbourne in Berkshire."

Keith very much appreciates TT's positive approach, and he "loves to see Gypsy folk getting a good education and standing up for their legitimate rights."

## "You Must Live How We Say"

BY JANE RANGER BAKER

A whole generation told they cannot live their way:

People from the government tell them, 'You must live how we say.'

To our boys: "If you want to go iron carting, you need a trader's licence and trader's insurance."

Will they be able to earn money for their families? They get no reassurance.

Our girls are called sluts for no reason at all,

If they want to start a family young it don't make them a fool.

Who are we, who are we really? Now they have tried to take our skills,

Forced to live in cold lonely houses, not in a trailer with wheels.

What will our future now hold?

We will still be able to class ourselves as Romany when we grow old?

If we can't, do we still want to grow old in a land that rejected us?

Why couldn't they embrace and welcome us, or just have accepted us?

I want to remain a Gypsy but will this county let me be?

It tried to take my culture and ways. I no longer feel free.



# The Gypsy Chef



Tom Ewer isn't just proud of his Romany heritage: it's a constant inspiration to him in his work as a professional chef. In this special feature, Tom tells us about how food, fire and family have influenced his career

"ONE OF MY strongest childhood memories is making bubble and squeak with my Granddad on a Monday morning," says Tom Ewer. "The smell of potato and cabbage combined with some bacon: food heaven. I have always linked food with family, and quality time talking about times past and stories of old.

"I grew up in Birmingham, where my Granddad's family settled in the early 1900s. Food was always at the centre of my family's life, whether it was my mum growing vegetables, or helping my Grandma in her kitchen baking cakes and cooking the Sunday roast.

"Having been in the kitchen from a very early age, it was only natural that I would end up working in them. I started from the bottom when I was sixteen: working in kitchens helped pay for my education.

"When I finished university, I stood back and realized that food was what I truly loved and that a career as a chef was my calling in life. I have never looked back."

Romany culture and tradition offers the modern chef a wealth of intrigue and interest, says Tom. "Food is life-giving but it also brings the family together. I love nothing more than slow cooking an inexpensive piece of meat with a selection of humble vegetables, served with some homemade bread to clean my plate.

"I enjoy traditional cooking methods such as braising and cooking on a spit. The simplicity of cooking at the roadside or in a field gives birth to some of the most amazing, honest and simply unique food!

"I would give up all the modern equipment you find in a kitchen today for a couple of green sticks, a good fire and some locally caught rabbits and foraged produce."

Tom's Granddad John's family originally came from South Wales, but as the Welsh mining industry grew and the valleys became crowded, they moved to Birmingham at the start of the 1900's in search of a new life settled in bricks.

"Sadly, Birmingham was a far cry from





the valleys of South Wales,” says Tom. “Life became peppered with disease and poverty. At one point my Granddad lived with 14 other family members in a one-up, one-down tenement block with a shared toilet and wash area.”

No longer able to live off the land, John and his siblings were forced to walk around the suburbs of Birmingham collecting firewood and clothes from households and selling pegs and cut flowers. “There was never a day that my Granddad would complain about his load in life,” says Tom. “He has always lived for his family, doing whatever was required to look after and see that everybody was fed, watered, clothed and happy.”

His Granddad’s skill with his hands has been an inspiration to Tom. “He is the most industrious person I have ever known, able to fashion anything with limited tools and time, never needing to measure anything: just using his eye! I learned how to be a true man from my Granddad and this will be something that I will never forget and will pass on to my own children.”

“I would sit for many an hour listening to his stories of when he was a child, stories he’d heard from his own mother, whose hair came down to her knees!”

“I will make sure that his stories live on and that his traditional understanding of life and the world will never die,” says Tom, as his unique approach to cookery definitely proves.

[www.thegypsychef.co.uk](http://www.thegypsychef.co.uk)



## Tom shares one of his favourite recipes: stuffed rabbit cooked on a spit, and if you’re feeling ambitious, two lovely side dishes to go with it!

### *Spitted Stuffed Rabbit, Beetroot and Cobnut Salad, Fried Field Mushrooms and Greens* (Serves 6)

#### **For the rabbits, you’ll need:**

- 2 *skinned, cleaned, fresh rabbits*
- 10 *rashers of smoked bacon*
- 10 *dried figs, chopped*
- 1 *large white onion, chopped*
- 4 *handfuls of breadcrumbs*
- 2 *pinches of dried sage*
- 2 *pinches of salt and pepper*
- 1/2 *cup of melted butter*

Mix the figs, onion, breadcrumbs, butter and seasoning and place in the cavity of the two rabbits. Sew them up with a large clean needle and thread. Now wrap the bacon round the rabbit, secure with wire and attach to a good straight green stick as your spit. Cook above a low fire until brown and cooked through.

#### **For the cobnut salad:**

- 4 *large beetroots*
- 2 *apples*
- 4 *spring onions*
- 2 *handfuls of toasted cobnuts*
- 1/2 *cup of soured cream*

Boil your beetroot over the fire until softened, cool, peel and dice, core and dice apple, slice spring onion and mix with nuts and soured cream.

#### **For the mushrooms:**

- 6 *large field mushrooms, peeled*
- 1 *bunch of fresh spring greens or cabbage, sliced*
- *Cooked bacon rashers from the rabbit*
- 1 *tablespoon of lard*

Slice the greens and mushrooms and fry with lard in a large skillet, dice and add the bacon from rabbit and cook until mushrooms are cooked.

*Serve with jointed rabbit and a big hunk of fresh bread. Enjoy!*



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# Paint your wagon and I'll paint you!

The Travelling community was a rich resource for artists for centuries. But do artists do us any favours? *Bill Laws* looks at two London exhibitions that have focused on Gypsy and Traveller people.



*The Gyppos* by Dame Laura Knight.  
PHOTO: Ferrens Art Gallery, Hull Museums



*Gypsy Encampment* by Dame Laura Knight.  
PHOTO: The Bowerman Charitable Trust

**ARTISTS LOVE GYPSIES.** There's never been a shortage of painters prepared to portray the community. Grab a laptop and type 'Gypsy art' into Google images: you'll find everything from Henri Rousseau's *The Sleeping Gypsy* (1897: the slumbering nomad is about to be eaten by a lion), to rafts of racy young fortune tellers.

Should we worry? Arts curator Angela Kingston, who's proud of the Gypsy blood on her father's side, thinks so. "Artists always seem to be looking in [at the community] from the outside while painters like Dame Laura Knight [she painted Travellers working the Malvern hop gardens] seem more interested in Gypsies as 'exotics'. One of her portraits of a group of Gypsy girls is called *The Gyppos*, which just about sums it up."

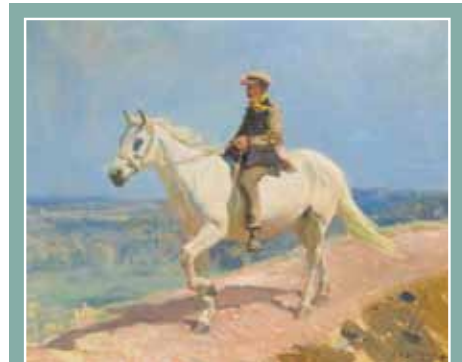
London recently hosted two exhibitions focusing on *Gypsies and Travellers: An Artist's Life* and *To Gypsyland*. The first, a posh show in a Bond Street gallery late last year, featured Travelling families around the 1920s including the Grays from Epsom and the Gregory, Loveday, Lee and Stevens families from Hampshire (Mrs Mark Stevens was a favourite model).

The painter was Sir Alfred Munnings, who died in 1959. Despite poking his eye out on a briar in his twenties, he made a fortune from his paintings. He also paid his models and they dubbed him 'Mr Money'. But when he managed to flog *Gypsy Life* to Aberdeen Art Gallery for £850 he reportedly said they would "skin me alive" if they knew how much he'd made.

*To Gypsyland*, which opened in Brixton in January, features images from earlier days. More a myth-busting event than a swanky exhibition, *To Gypsyland* takes a closer look at the portrayal of city Gypsies. It's been created by curator Barby Asante and artist Delaine Le Bas. "The descriptions that accompany these nineteenth century drawings are not so different to some of the descriptions given to the community these days," says Delaine. "It's strange: after all this time the stereotyping has hardly changed."

Angela Kingston again: "When you look at the portrayal of Travelling people you're left with the impression that all they do is ride horses, play the guitar or tell fortunes. And one particular concern is the way Gypsy women are often depicted in a highly sexualized way. It just doesn't fit in with what I know."

Barby and Delaine want Travellers to drop in to Brixton and add their own stories and photos to *To Gypsyland*. "Gypsies and Travellers are part of a world-wide community," says Delaine, "and there are a lot of artists coming from the community who are going to challenge those stereotypes."



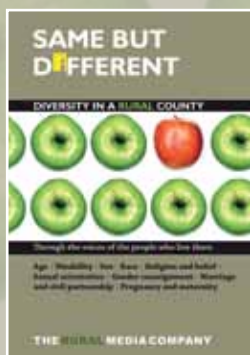
'Shrimp' on a White Welsh Horse by Sir Alfred Munnings

## Mysterious Gypsy Boy

The Gypsy and Traveller families painted by Alfred Munnings were well known in the community. But one lad remains a mystery. He not only figured in several of Munnings' paintings, but also worked as the artist's groom. He was, said Munnings, "an undersized, tough, artful young brigand" and a wonder when it came to handling horses. But who was he?

**To Gypsyland: A Studio Practice and Archive Project runs at 198 Railton Road, London SE24 OJT until March 16. [www.198.org.uk](http://www.198.org.uk)**

PHOTO: © Estate of Sir Alfred Munnings. All rights reserved. DACS 2013



## Same But Different *rural equality and diversity resource*

A NEW RESOURCE created by registered charity The Rural Media Company is helping to put issues of equality and diversity on the agenda for local businesses, schools, community and church groups in rural areas.

Called *Same But Different*, the DVD focuses on the lives and stories of people living in Herefordshire, one of the most sparsely populated counties in England, to reveal how diverse rural communities really are.

The films explore attitudes to 'difference' through film-making with individuals and groups who have been at the sharp end of ignorance or prejudice, whether it be because of their age, disability, race, faith, gender or sexual orientation. Each participant talks candidly about how being 'the same but different' has affected their lives in a poignant and thought-provoking manner.

**Copies of the DVD pack, which include an accessible guide to the Equality Act 2010, cost £25 each (including P&P and VAT). Anyone interested in obtaining a copy should contact Julie Colman on 01432 344039 or [juliec@ruralmedia.co.uk](mailto:juliec@ruralmedia.co.uk)**



*Don: Has a learning disability and is a member of the About Face Theatre Company. He recalls a harrowing story of being bullied by young girls, and how he plucked up the courage to walk away. PHOTO: Camilla Watkins*

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# After All These Years: Our Gypsy Journey Continues

MAGGIE SMITH-BENDELL

224 pages, paperback. RRP £8.99  
Published by University of Hertfordshire Press

Review by Johanna Price



I WAS VERY pleased to be asked to review this book, but as I know Maggie Smith-Bendell I was a bit worried!

This book will give people a greater understanding of the Romany Gypsy people.

Maggie looks back on her childhood with the fondest memories, putting it into words with deep feelings.

When she speaks about the horses, the flowers, the herbs, remedies and medicines it makes you want to know more.

This book will let people know about good times our people has had, and some very hard times.

This is a book for Gypsies and the settled community: they all will learn a bit of history and what is still going on now.

This book lets people know about our rules we can't break, our beliefs we must stand by and the caring for one another we must keep.

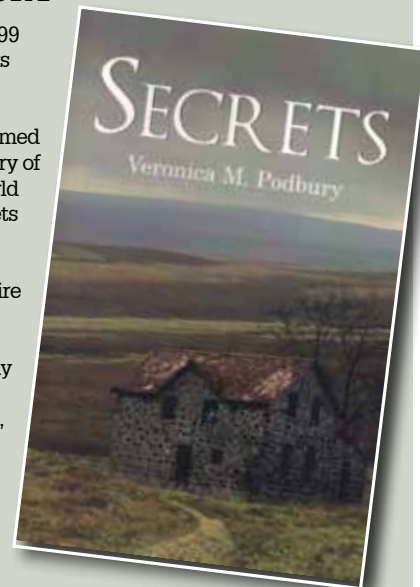


PHOTO: Alison Chapman

# Secrets

VERONICA PODBURY

157 pages, paperback. RRP £8.99  
Published by Nightingale Books



SECRETS IS A mystery novel aimed at young readers. It tells the story of Brooke, a young girl whose world is changed when her mum meets a new man on the internet. He takes them and his son to the remote Moor Cottage in Yorkshire to start a new life.

Brooke begins to uncover clues that her new step-dad may be hiding something. She also meets a young Gypsy girl, Rose, and her brother John Paul, who live in the nearby woods. As dark secrets begin to emerge, Brooke's dreams seem to be telling her something is wrong. Only she can decide who to trust, and whether appearances are always what they seem.

Secrets is a well-written story for children and young teenagers. A map of Moor Cottage is included to help make it seem more real, and each chapter starts with a small drawing giving clues about the twists and turns to come.

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# Cave Life in Granada: Romany Roots in Spain

The cave where Curro Albaicín lives is the same one he was born in 64 years ago, and where his family have lived for generations. *Jamal Jimenez* tells us how the search for his own roots brought him to the coast of Spain, and to the caves where many of its Romany people have lived for centuries.



Curro Albaicín. PHOTO: José Luis Pérez Martínez

I WAS BROUGHT up an only child by my Grandmother, a Welsh woman who adopted my Mum and me when I was aged two. My father had always been the Spanish man who had run out on us.

I had no idea about his roots and when I found out and told my Mum she said she didn't know my Dad was a Gypsy. I had only been to Granada as a baby and was in my late twenties before I returned and found out about my Gitano (Spanish Romany) roots.

The Gitano community is very close knit and I met family members in Granada who put me in contact with my father. I hadn't known what a Gypsy really was and thought they lived in caravans, begged in the West End or washed cars on motorways. The extended Gypsy family I found in Spain, including two half-sisters, was nothing like that.

After I made contact with my father, I was invited to Bodas Gitanas, Spanish Gypsy weddings in Barcelona where my father now lived. The weddings were colourful and loud, the DJs playing salsa-like Gitano Rumba music, with fast up-tempo rhythms; clapping; flamenco guitar, and brass. I also witnessed and learnt of many Gitano traditions and spent some time with my father and family in the street markets of Catalonia. I was given access to the day-to-day life of a community many non-Spanish Gypsies don't get to see.

500 miles away in Granada, on the other side of Spain, I visited the cave of Curro Albaicín. He was born 64 years ago in this same cave, where his family have lived for generations. Adorned with copper pots and pans and old black and white photographs, the cave is in Sacromonte, the traditional Gitaneria or 'Romany Quarter'

of Granada, where the Gitanos (Spanish Romanies) built their homes.

Visited recently by Michelle Obama, the wife of the US President, the area has become a tourist cliché, with nightly Flamenco shows for tourists. Yet Sacromonte has a rich and complex history that includes Romany, Arabic, African, Jewish, Muslim and Christian influences.

Unusually blond and blue-eyed but undoubtedly Romany, Albaicín wears his long hair in a ponytail and looks like a Gitano version of 'the Dude' character played by actor Jeff Bridges in the Coen brothers film, *The Big Lebowski*.

Albaicín is a patron of Sacromonte culture, and as you enter his cave there is a blown up iconic photograph of renowned Granadino poet and dramatist, Federico García Lorca. Initiated into Gypsy culture, one of Lorca's inspirations was "cante jondo", the "deep song" folk music of Andalusia, considered the true essence of Flamenco.

In Albaicín's cave there are also pictures of his family performing in the Zambras (Romany flamenco dances); famous celebrities and politicians from across the globe; celebrated Gitanos including Camarón de la Isla, one of the all time greatest flamenco singers, and legendary flamenco dancer Carmen Amaya.

Albaicín was dancing in the Zambras by the age of 13, and has continued to be an artist all his life. The Zambras is a Sacromonte tradition, with music and choreographed dances based on the Romany Wedding of Spain, the Boda Gitana.

As well as a dancer, Albaicín is a singer, a poet and author. His book 'Zambras de Granada y Flamencos del Sacromonte' tells the history of the Gitanos of Sacromonte and some of the great artists of the Zambras. Many died in poverty after they retired.

One artist who particularly influenced Albaicín when he was growing up was guitarist Paco Amaya: "He was my master," he told me.

I asked Albaicín to explain what Sacromonte



Cave Curro Albayzín. PHOTO: R.Jáuregui - www.photaki.com

meant to him and he answered by reciting one of his poems:

*"Sacromonte de cal y cobre,  
herida en la tierra llena de flores,  
Gitanos de verde oliva,  
donde tengo mis amores"*

Translated, this means:

*Sacromonte of lime and copper,  
wound on earth full of flowers,  
Gitanos of green olive,  
where I have my loves*

With its powerful and visible Spanish Romany presence, Sacromonte has also become a roadmap I have used to explore my own Gitano roots.

It was in Sacromonte that I spoke to and befriended Gitanos like Albaicín, who have lived in these incredible cave houses for centuries. There are multiple entrances with chambers that serve as different rooms; there are houses and buildings which began as caves and where rock and concrete merge. The caves are hollowed deep into the mountain and are whitewashed inside and out to better reflect the light. Excavated in such a way and with its doors, additional building work and bright colours, the caves give the appearance of cottages.

Through speaking to these Gitanos, I also found a community who still live a traditional way of life.

Several narrow winding pebble paths connect the various cave dwellings together and as you venture deeper into Sacromonte you find other caves that are almost hacked together, asymmetrical doors and windows poking out from beneath the cactus and agave-covered cliffs.

In Sacromonte I feel equally Gitano and Gadjó - the name given to non-Gypsy people. I question whether I'm like European

Romantics of the nineteenth century who painted and photographed the 'exotic Gitanos' of Sacromonte. I am drawn to it because it presents a life so different from my own upbringing in a South Wales town, and my later life in London: a life that is one not necessarily lived in a house.

Above Albaicín's cave is the Venta El Gallo Cueva De Baile Flamenco Restaurante, which was owned by Juanillo Heredia, who died in 2011, aged 58. A Gitano artist and patron of Sacromonte, like Albaicín he was born in a cave. I visited him in 2006 during the World Cup and I watched one of Spain's matches in his cave home. Spain had scored and his family were cheering in celebration. Like the cave of Albaicín, Heredia's cave restaurant is full of photographs of Sacromonte past: Gitanos working with wicker and collecting water; bullfighters; people playing music. There is one blown-up portrait of one of Heredia's descendants, a blacksmith working at the forge in a cave.

Through Heredia I met one of the last remaining Gitano blacksmiths of Granada, who was another of his relatives.

I was given my great grandfather's death certificate by my father's cousin. Like Juanillo, my great grandfather and grandfather were Heredias, although from another part of Granada. My great grandfather's name was José Heredia Maya and he died in 1976.

In Spain, Gitanos were forced to adopt a Spanish surname and usually took the name of the man for whom they worked or served. This explains why many people have the name Heredia, as well as Montoya and Maya, which are also common amongst Andalusian Gitanos.

In his poem, 'Arrest of Antonio Camborios on the Road to Seville', Garcia Lorca writes about a character called Antonio Torres Heredia and narrates the reality of Gypsy life targeted and persecuted by the Civil Guard.

However, many Gitanos, including my

***"The weddings were colourful and loud, with Gitano Rumba music; fast up-tempo rhythms; clapping; flamenco guitar, and brass"***

Grandfather, served in the Civil Guard. My Grandfather fought in the Civil War for Franco: he was shot in the hand and lost two fingers. I only met my grandparents as a baby and they had both died by the time I had returned to Granada.

I often wonder about my grandfather's decision to fight for the dictator. Like other Gitanos who fought for Franco, they may have seen it as a means of survival.

As a child there was no one like me and I was made aware of this by others and even beaten up because of it. I didn't have any cultural reference points and I was confused. Then at the turn of the new millennium I discovered my identity and many of those issues could be resolved. Sometimes it was as straightforward as being able to see my facial characteristics in other members of my family.

Having grown up with my grandmother and mother, the only male role models I had were in books, magazines and on the TV. Being able to speak to elders in the Gitano community, intelligent men and artists, has also been important to me and it has connected me to a deep Andalusian Romany culture and tradition that is still lived in Sacromonte.



Jamal Jimenez inside the famous Romany cave of Curro Albaicín

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